

BLACK THEORIES OF CITIZENSHIP IN THE EARLY
UNITED STATES, 1793-1860

By

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To Daisy and Nafissa. The strongest people I know.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Between November 1837 and August 1839, the *Colored American* reprinted entries of “Dr. Smith’s Journal,” an account of James McCune Smith’s journey from New York to Glasgow in 1832 to attend medical school at the University of Glasgow. The journal charts not only Smith’s impressions of his shipmates and encounters in Scotland, but also his understanding of U.S. politics and culture. In an August 1832 entry, he watches as his ship, the *Caledonia*, catches and then passes the *Druid*, a British ship from Bristol. The exhibition of superior shipbuilding inspires Smith to reflect on the nation’s prospects more broadly:

an American ship is an epitome of the great and rising country, whose Star Spangled Banner proudly floats o’er her deck. “E Pluribus Unum” “From many nations” were the men gathered who felled the trees and chipped the timbers and moulded them into “one” harmonious and beautiful craft.¹

The competition between these craftsmen in an open market, unencumbered by artificial strictures of patronage or “ancient methods,” creates a higher-quality product. Yet the ship, inasmuch as it represented the genius of U.S. institutions, also invoked its “malignant prejudice... a canker and a curse to the soil, whence she sprung.”² U.S. ships were the fastest on the sea, in part, because they needed to outrun British ships patrolling the Atlantic for illicit slave trade activities. And though Smith was recently emancipated in 1827 under New York’s gradual emancipation law, he was attending the University of Glasgow, because neither Columbia College nor Geneva College (now Hobart and William Smith Colleges) was willing to admit a black student.³ In Smith’s account, this combination of emancipatory ideals and oppressive

practices makes the ship “beautiful but baneful object,” a symbol the nation’s potential, but also a potential instrument of its horrors.

Smith’s reverie pivots from the ship’s conflicted symbolism to a scene of resistance that offered one path to reclaiming the U.S.’s democratic promise:

John, a boy of nineteen, whom the Englishman had brought from the coast of Africa, took possession of one of the catheads in order to get a good view. An Irishman coveting the place, desired the boy to leave it, and after vainly using other arguments, pulled him down, saying he had no right there because he was black!⁴

Evocatively and perhaps like Smith, John seizes the freedom and opportunity represented in the ship and nearly falls victim to a moment of race making. When the Irishman cannot reason John from his perch, he resorts to force, offering John’s blackness as reason enough for supplanting John’s position. John, however, deviates from the expected script and meets the racialized violence with “a blow on the nose which drew blood.”⁵ Passengers and crew side, not with the Irishman, but with John—a fact all the more significant because Smith notes that nine-tenths of the passengers were Irish. By claiming a visionary position and refusing to play his part in the now-predictable drama of white supremacy, John, the scrappy young African, “is dubbed the belt of the ship.” Like the iron plates protecting the waterline of armored vessels from attacks and obstructions, the passengers hail John as the ship’s protector.⁶

Smith’s *Caledonia* journal is not explicitly about citizenship as such. But he and other black writers nevertheless tell us much about citizenship in the early U.S., both in theory and in practice. The ship serves as a stage on which Smith reenacts the drama of aspiration, racialization, resistance, and community formation involved in early U.S. citizenship. John’s actions call his fellow passengers to reorganize the ship’s communal landscape as they assume responsibility for defending his right to the cathead, the ship’s most forward position.⁷ They ignore their countryman’s call to ethno-racial and national solidarity, voting instead for a more

just community that eschews Smith's original vision of cankerous prejudice. While the *Caledonia* may have inspired Smith to theorize the kind of citizenship U.S. institutions could and should produce, it is John who models the kind of subjectivity and practices that could bring such institutions into being. John's actions catalyze a ship-wide recognition and defense of his rights, resulting in a reconfiguration of the ship's institutional structure. Shipmates hold the young African and the strength of his convictions, not as an intruder, but rather as the ship's protector ("belt"), the symbol and preserver of its integrity.

Black Theories of Citizenship in the Early United States, 1793-1860, tells a story about how black writers like Smith theorized and practiced citizenship in the early U.S, beginning in 1793 with events recorded in Absalom Jones and Richard Allen's *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People during the Late and Awful Calamity in Philadelphia in the Year 1793* (1794) and ending in 1860 with the last issues of the *Anglo-African Magazine*. It places understudied writers and texts like Smith, William J. Wilson, the *Anglo-African Magazine*, and black state convention proceedings in conversation with Frederick Douglass and Henry David Thoreau and periodicals like *Douglass's Paper*, and positions these black citizens—unsung and celebrated—as some of the most important theorists of citizenship.⁸ Indeed, we cannot fully understanding citizenship in the early nation without engaging the ideas of the writers who were often at the center of national and local debates and who built communities out of the literal enslavement that provided one the revolution's most powerful metaphors. As contemporaries debated the nature of the bonds between citizens in a republic and the kinds of institutions best suited for managing tensions between self-interest and the common good, black writers and activists were theorizing citizenship practices based on their own readings in political history and experiences in self-governance that included framing constitutions for civic institutions, organizing state and

national conventions, and attempting to create political coalitions within and between diverse communities. They were participant observers whose work indexed and contributed to what citizenship was becoming even as it imagined alternative possibilities out of their own “peculiar” understandings of difference, republicanism, economics, and self-government.⁹

While drawing on understandings of black civic texts as a part of broader traditions of protest, I emphasize how black critiques, engagements, and theories generated new paradigms for citizenship as an active and expansive practice, rather than a static identity. They offer a collective social theory of citizenship as an ongoing process of community building based on four principles: neighborly contact across social-economic boundaries, the free circulation of civic power, economic equality, and critique as a civic duty. Like the young Smith, black writers and activists saw great potential in U.S. institutions and framing ideals—its civic republicanism, the comingling of peoples and ideas, participatory politics, and shared sovereignty—, and they also recognized that, like the *Caledonia* itself, these same ideals, could and did accommodate systems of oppression as readily as they did egalitarian polity. Like John, their critical practice produced a different vision—a different sensibility of what citizenship could be—often forcing the state and other institutions to react to their assumption of rights and demands for recognition. Black citizens did this work not simply as a response to white oppression, but more importantly as a matter of course in the shaping of their own communities and in the process of meeting their own political, social, and cultural needs. Towards this end, each chapter analyzes key literary and historical flashpoints—from the 1793 yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia to the market revolution to *Dred Scott vs. Sanford* and the Lincoln-Douglas debates—to consider how these episodes and the responses of black civic actors and intellectuals contribute to our understanding of these principles in terms of cultural and political practice and the kinds of citizen-subjects

such practices might cultivate.¹⁰ Not only do these texts offer theoretical readings of citizenship—that is, the content of black theories—but their articulation of civic practices and their very structure model the theories they sought to outline, both how republican institutions should look and the critical sensibilities of the citizens who would constitute and, in turn, be constituted through them.¹¹

1. Citizenship and Early African American Print Archives

The prevailing narrative of early African American literature has been the movement from slavery to freedom, and rightly so.¹² Approximately ninety percent of the black population in the U.S. was enslaved and most free persons of color were either descended from slaves, self-emancipated or emancipated through state law, and the anti-slavery movement created one of the most robust cultural markets in the antebellum U.S. The slave narrative genre in particular, and anti-slavery culture more broadly, provided fertile ground and a durable framework for the literary imagination, simultaneously following and cultivating public taste for particular kinds of representative blackness. Describing the 1850s as “the First Afro-American Literary Renaissance,” William Andrews argued in 1981, “the fugitive-slave narrative...[was] the only one [literary genre] in which black writers had achieved any fame,” but this success “presented a no-win choice for most aspiring Afro-American literary people.” “A writer who had not been born a slave” or was not telling a story about enslavement “had no story to tell.”¹³

Yet, even before the 1850s, burgeoning print cultures told precisely the kinds of stories Andrews’s description of the literary market of the 1850s would seem to belie. Scholars like Dorothy Porter have called our attention to “early Negro writings” from a variety of collectives including mutual aid societies, religious and fraternal organizations, sermons, confessionals, and

constitutions. These texts bring to light a different set of intellectual, social, and cultural problems and insights into what Porter describes as “the beginnings of the Afro-American’s artistic consciousness...the first articulations of the appeal of beauty and the moral sense.”¹⁴ More recently, Elizabeth McHenry’s work on literary societies, John Ernest’s analyses of “liberation historiography” and the chaotic contingency of racial formations, and Frances Smith’s call for narratives based in a robust Afro-Protestant print culture invite us to tell “interesting narratives” about early African America. These stories take shape in what Eric Gardner describes as “unexpected places,” those print and geographical sites including periodicals, texts from the western states and territories, black writing in languages other than English, and massive collections of poetry that have yet to be fully explored or theorized.¹⁵

These projects are not just about the recovery of texts or troubling the cannon, nor do they seek to diminish the importance of the slave narrative or experiences of enslavement; rather, they are invested in creating a deeper understanding of the expressive print cultures. These print cultures were generated not only out of protest, but also, as Foster suggests, out of communities’ needs “to speak to and for themselves about matters they considered worthy of written words.” These communities worked, Foster continues, “to communicate physical and metaphysical realities and to develop their moral, spiritual, intellectual, and artistic selves. They wrote about civil rights, economic enhancement, love, and marriage.”¹⁶ In those spaces we still find early African Americans wrestling with issues of enslavement, but also very much invested in local, everyday issues, slavery being one, sometimes tertiary, issue among many.

One of the stories we can tell from this print-culture oriented approach to early African American literary history, the story *Black Theories* excavates, is how black Americans thought about and practiced citizenship and through them, how citizenship changed as a concept and

practice in the early U.S. When we read the early African American archive, citizenship quickly emerges as a key term and vexed concept. “Citizen,” as the 1854 National Emigration Convention put it, was “a term desired and ever cherished” throughout early African American print.¹⁷ A perusal of Porter’s *Early Negro Writings* reveals a collection of addresses on the abolition of the slave trade from 1808 to 1815 that begin, “Fathers, Brethren, and Fellow Citizens,” or simply, “Citizens.”¹⁸ Martin R. Delany dedicates *Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People in the United States* (1852) “to the American People, North and South. By Their Most Devout, and Patriotic Fellow Citizen, the Author;” Douglass addresses his July 5th “Oration” to “fellow citizens,” even as he positions himself outside the “nation;” and many of the collective addresses black citizens issued to the public were addressed to “fellow citizens,” often as a common denominator set against the particularistic discourses of ethnicity, class, or nation.¹⁹ And while the Emigration Convention argued explicitly for emigration, it nonetheless makes useful claims about the meaning of citizenship, perhaps more so because it highlights its abrogation for black Americans.²⁰ From this perspective, even texts that do not argue for citizenship *in* the U.S. provide productive analyses *about* citizenship more broadly—what it was in the moment and what it could become.

The proliferation of the phrase “fellow citizen,” then, was more than a rhetorical device or ironic signifying. As Smith asserted in 1859, citizenship describes “the relation between a person to an elective form of government,” but it also operated as a guiding ethic, describing a relation between people in variously configure communities and, in the context of black public address, as a performative invocation of a relationship between writer and audience that asserted access to the very civic imaginary and moral equality from which black citizens were being barred.²¹ Absalom Jones’s 1799 petition to the “President, Senate, and House of

Representatives,” for instance, claimed citizenship for his fellow petitioners and for enslaved people, “believing them to be objects of your representation in your public councils, in common with ourselves and every other class of citizens within the jurisdiction of the United States.” They were included in the Constitution’s “We, the people of the United States,” and, as such were not outsiders asking for inclusion in the body politic or for a special dispensation. Rather, they were “guardians of our rights, and patriots of equal and national liberties.”²² Thirty years later, when David Walker addressed his *Appeal* to “colored citizens of the world, but in particular, and very expressly, to those of the United States of America,” Walker was similarly calling on “coloured citizens” to assume the rights and subjectivity citizenship, just as John assumed his position on the *Caledonia*. “America is more our country, than it is the whites [sic],” Walker argues as he calls on his black readers to be responsive to their fellow citizens in slavery. At the same time, Walker takes white “Americans” to task for not heeding previous generations’ calls to take responsibility for the crime of enslavement by “mak[ing] a national acknowledgement to us for the wrongs they have inflicted on us” as an affront to natural law and Christianity.²³

The texts and institutions free people of color produced—the constitutions and meeting minutes, newspapers, pamphlets, confessionals, and a host of other ephemeral media—reveal that the titular freedom of emancipation was part of a larger, highly creative democratic project. Walker and others recognized that, in addition to emancipation, the state and white citizens had a responsibility to ameliorate the material and psychic effects of enslavement and white supremacy as a part of a larger democratic-republican project. (As Hosea Easton aptly put it in 1837, “Merely to cease beating the colored people, and leave them in their gore, and call it emancipation, is nonsense.”²⁴) While for Walker, this project is inextricable from an expansive

understanding of Christian ethics, as my discussion of neighborliness in Chapter Two suggests, this ethical understanding and critique of enslavement also offers the framework for a secular critique of liberal self-interest and the management of participatory politics more broadly. “True patriotism,” as Delany asserts in an 1848 *North Star* article, “consists not in a mere professed love or country, the place of one’s birth,” but rather in “an impartial love and desire for the promotion and elevation of every member of the body politic, their eligibility to all the rights and privileges of society.”²⁵ In each reiterative instance, “citizen” invoked a civic ethos and protocols of recognition and justice that called on audiences to think about their relation to citizens and others as one of mutual responsibility, responsiveness, and active engagement, a relation in which membership and individual rights come with moral obligations to a collective, not to be reducible to individual interest or managed by racial, economic, or other forms of hierarchy.²⁶

Black Theories offers a diachronic narrative of black theories and practices of citizenship. It argues for the specificity of each moment in terms of historical context, geographic scale, and the exigencies of needing to persuade a wide range of audiences, from hostile white auditors to ambivalent black citizens to fellow black activists with opposing views. If, as Rogers Smith has argued, U.S. “civic ideals” were constructed out of multiple traditions that combined “varying civic conceptions blending liberal, republican, and ascriptive elements in different combinations,” so too do black theories and practices of citizenship combine elements of civic republican, liberal, religious, nationalist, and other traditions and discourses in ways that reflect the breadth and depth of black intellectual history.²⁷ Even critics writing in the same region, about the same population, had vastly different conceptions about the role of and relation between “color,” “condition,” labor, morality, wealth, education, etc. in defining and countering

oppression.²⁸ As I argue in Chapter 4 through Wilson and Smith's economic debates in *Douglass's Paper*, these differences arise not only from conflicting personalities and local differences, but also point to conflicting "conceptions of truth" and epistemological commitments.²⁹

The public debate over the causes of racism and prejudice and the constantly changing attitudes towards violence, emigration, the Constitution and myriad other issues suggests a dynamic discursive community, not easily reducible to one or two representative figures.³⁰ The periodical press and composite documents like convention proceedings are particularly useful for analyzing black theories precisely because their heteroglossic structure, a structure that calls for multi-vocal, dialogic narratives. Indeed, as Caleb argues in "A Note on Leaders," an 1861 article in the *Weekly Anglo-African*, formal piety and education "at a time when knowing the alphabet seemed extraordinary" may have once vaulted any man to community leadership, but that time had long passed; black people could and were thinking and writing for themselves.³¹ Top-down notions of black leadership would no longer work, if they ever had. The black print archive, then, offers not only theoretical frameworks for thinking about citizenship, but also useful models of democratic exchange and the kinds of spaces and institutions (print, galleries, conventions, markets, etc.) that support it.

2. Early U.S. Citizenship: Narratives Decline and Erasure

By the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850, legal and popular consensus saw black Americans as not fully citizens, neither in the rights-bearing sense nor in the eyes of most of the white citizenry. This was not always the case, nor was it an inevitable outcome of the revolution. The Articles of Confederation had been explicit about who was a citizen at its adoption: "The

free inhabitants of each of these States, paupers, vagabonds, and fugitives from justice excepted shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of free *citizens* in the several states.”³² The 1789 federal constitution, however, was silent on the subject, in part because slavery and the status of black people was a minefield for the constitutional convention, but also because distribution of power between federal and state governments was not settled. The Naturalization Act of 1790 restricted naturalization to “free white persons,” but it did nothing to clarify the status of those already in the country, at least not in law. Instead, as historian Douglass Bradburn explains, it along with the 1792 Militia Act both clearly demonstrated “an awareness” on the part of the federal government “of the type of citizens the act expected to create” and placed people of color in the double bind of not being accepted as native-born citizens and not having a clear institutional way to secure full citizenship.³³ Citizens in the early republic were identified more by what they could and could not do within states (e.g. vote, own land, marry) and between states (e.g. those rights protected in the Privileges and Immunities Clause) than by federal statute or race. And, because the state, not the federal government, legislated almost all of these rights, early U.S. citizenship itself was state-based, not national.³⁴

Some of the earliest attempts to define U.S. citizenship, however, quickly began the process of linking those rights and social markers that identified the citizen to white men, in principle if not yet in law.³⁵ David Ramsay’s 1789 *A Dissertation on the Manners of Acquiring the Character and Privileges of a Citizen*, for instance, used the example of “Negroes” as the key point of differentiation between sovereign citizens and mere inhabitants:

Any person living within a country or state, is an inhabitant of it, or resident in it. Negroes are inhabitants, but not citizens. Citizenship confers a right of voting at elections, and many other privileges not enjoyed by those who are no more than inhabitants. The precise difference may be thus stated: The citizen of a free state is so united to it as to possess an individual’s proportion of the common sovereignty; but he who is no more than an inhabitant, or resident, has no farther connection with the state in

which he resides, than such as gives him security for his person and property, agreeably to fixed laws, without any participation in its government.³⁶

Citizens were sovereign; voting was a sign of sovereignty; therefore, anyone who voted was implicitly a U.S. citizen. Ramsay builds on an generally understood connection between citizenship and the specific set of rights and social practices associated with sovereignty and collective governance, but he does so in a way that fixes the range of people who could conceivably perform these practices, suggesting that Negroes were and could only be inhabitants without a share in collective sovereignty. The fact that at the time Ramsay was writing, free black people *could* legally vote in every state except Georgia and his own South Carolina, and so were *in fact* citizens by Ramsay's own definition, was less important in practice than the conventional wisdom that black people were not "original citizens." They were not, from Ramsay's perspective, part of the original constitutive people, so citizenship was something they would have to be given with the consent of white sovereigns.³⁷

Ramsay's *Dissertation* maps a trajectory that first linked citizenship to political rights generally assumed to be restricted to white men but that increasingly linked citizenship to white manhood itself.³⁸ Whites repeated his argument throughout the nineteenth century along with erroneous assertion that "Negroes" did not and had never "possess[ed] an individual's proportion of the common sovereignty."³⁹ The prosecution in *Crandall v. State of Connecticut* (1834), for instance, based its definition of citizen—those whose rights were protected under the Privileges and Immunities Clause—in part on voting: "as it [voting] has been denied to the coloured race generally, it is evidence, that that race were not embraced by the framers of the constitution, in the term citizen."⁴⁰ Georgia similarly justified its detention of black sailors based both on disenfranchisement across many states and laws explicitly preventing marriage between black and white people in states like Massachusetts. They did not have a claim to all the privileges and

immunities of federal citizenship, because they did not enjoy all the privileges of citizenship in their home states.

As states revised their constitutions to restrict political rights to white men and as new states adopted constitutions with black codes, Ramsay's assumption became more the reality and took on the timeless character of what had always already been. Where Ramsay argued in 1789 that since Negroes could not vote, they must not be citizens, Chief Justice Roger Taney and Stephen Douglas, backed by revisionist history, racial science, and popular opinion, would argue in 1857 that black people could not be and were never intended to become citizens; they could never be more than inhabitants, because they were not white. *Black Theories*, then, tracks how black citizens creatively responded to and grappled with what Bradburn describes as "denization," a process that "extended only *some* rights and privileges of citizens" to black people without considering them "part of the body politic." Black Americans were not "aliens," as such, but the state did not treat them as full citizens, either; their status "remained conditional, and privileges once extended could be revoked."⁴¹ The difference here, however, is that states removed (rather than extended) rights from them.

As Ramsay's *Dissertation*, myriad federal and state judicial decisions, and the 1789 Federal Constitution demonstrate, the denization of free black citizens was a long political and economic process of selective inclusion and exclusion requiring constant institutional and cultural maintenance. When black people actually appeared to claim rights not explicitly reserved for white men, they increasingly met violent resistance and negative judicial decisions, and, as I discuss in Chapter 3, many states revised their constitutions to make the restrictions more explicit. Reading early national citizenship from this perspective—through processes of denization and systematic racial domination—offers a narrative of closures and narrowing

instead of expanding rights and liberties. Potentially more fluid ways of thinking about citizenship and the constitution of “We the people” became increasingly more restrictive as ideas about racial difference became clarified and institutionalized. The politics of racial exclusivity and rhetorics of white male equality consolidated a normative white manhood that authorized anti-democratic practices across the board.

Against processes of denization and a U.S. civic imaginary that was becoming increasingly racially ascriptive, black writers invoked histories of black civic activity and cited black civic practices as performances of citizenship, using such performances not only to justify their claims but also to do the very work of citizenship from which law and custom was excluding them. The Robert Purvis and those who signed the 1837 “Appeal of Forty Thousand Citizens, Threatened with Disfranchisement, to the People of Pennsylvania,” for instance outline the legal and historical basis for black citizenship in Pennsylvania with a blistering critique of justifications for black disenfranchisement.⁴² They cite black military service and taxpaying, moments during the framing of the Articles of Confederation when delegates struck down attempts to affix “white” as a modifier of freeman or free inhabitant, and passages from the *Journal of Congress*, “citizens of the United States, as are free person’s of color,” that confirm black citizenship from the nation’s founding.⁴³

Like many of the texts in *Black Theories*, the “Appeal’s” materiality—its circulation and literal presence on the table at the convention—was a key element in the work it did in constituting a black civic presence assumed absent or in the process of being forcibly removed.⁴⁴ The “Appeal” was read during Pennsylvania’s Reform Convention in 1837, sparking a prolonged debate amongst delegates (almost twenty pages), first over printing and distributing the petition to the convention, and then over a wide range of questions including the petitioners’ status as

citizens, what some delegates saw as the “Appeal’s” “injurious” language, and the implications of accepting the petition for Pennsylvania’s relation to slaveholding states. The convention eventually decided to at least print and distribute the petition (56 for, 45 against), though it kept the language restricting voting rights to white men. This moment of claims making, like so many instances on both small and large scales, was a civic act that called those in power to recognize and admit how central black citizens and their claims were to national politics and the very nature of democracy in the Union.⁴⁵ As one delegate to Pennsylvania’s constitutional convention put it, the “Appeal” “involved questions of the utmost importance not only to the character of our deliberations, but to that of the State, and to the Union itself, of which it forms an important part.”⁴⁶ While the “Appeal’s” content revealed the sham of Pennsylvania’s disenfranchisement of black citizens, debates over its formal status as a petition, appeal, or memorial, and the debate over how the convention should accept it, if at all, had ramifications for the nature of representation and the relation between government and the governed more broadly. As I argue in Chapter 3, black civic texts pushed at the limits of early U.S. republicanism and revealed the ease with which the state could disempower one segment of the citizenry ostensibly in the name of empowering another. Most states, like Pennsylvania, erred on the side of preserving the Union for “every white freeman,” but the debate within the 1837 convention also points to the antagonism among white citizens themselves around black citizenship.⁴⁷

3. Black Theories: Practice, Style, Critical Method

While state policies and public discourse around citizenship were becoming more racially restrictive, black activists articulated an expansive theory of citizenship, not as a common

identity as such, but rather as a set of practices—political participation, mutual aid, critical debate, and the myriad daily interactions between people living in the same spaces, both physical and virtual—and as a civic ethos reciprocally activating and activated by these practices through a permeable civil society. Hosea Easton’s *A Treatise on the Intellectual Character, and Civil and Political Condition of the Colored People of the U. States* (1837), for instance, theorizes citizenship as a complex of social interactions, a commons essential to the functioning of any society and the livelihood of individuals within that society. “A withholding of the enjoyment of any American principle from an American man,” Easton asserts, “either governmental, ecclesiastical, civil, social or alimental is in effect taking away his means of subsistence; and consequently, taking away his life.”⁴⁸ Easton and others figure citizenship practices as a conduit for channeling a human need for political activity and recognition, a vital force connecting and animating individuals and communities, and a promoter of civic virtue and productivity, not a reward for them. These practices create citizens by enabling them, as Michel de Certeau would later put this point, “to take up a position in the network of social relations” made up not only of citizens but of people who, by virtue of their engagement with and contribution to the whole, could become citizens.⁴⁹ Refusing access to this network constitutes, for Easton, an act of violence that makes the perpetrator a “murderer of the worst kind,” because such restrictions would in effect create the very material inequalities that were paradoxically used to justify them, stripping individuals or groups of their means of existence.⁵⁰

By analyzing citizenship as a practice, *Black Theories* combines formal paradigms of *de jure* membership within a political body (a state or governmental group) with the *de facto* social recognition and relationships (ecclesiastical, social, and alimental or economic) that enable individuals and groups to claim and these rights.⁵¹ It reveals the degree to which citizenship

involves equal access to state and civic institutions and an understanding of mutual dependence within and between communities that, as historical sociologist Margaret Somers posits, only “an alliance of public power, political membership, and social practices of equal moral recognition” can maintain.⁵² Indeed, black writers argued that the state and civic institutions should work to strengthen the “social intercourse” that enables people to practice citizenship rather than allowing private racial and economic interests to create artificial barriers. And, like Smith’s meditation on the *Caledonia*, they argued that this free contact and circulation was vital not only to individuals but also to the nation as a whole, as individuals worked collectively to create the institutions that could sustain them. Like the human body, the body politic could only grow stronger when power circulated evenly amongst its members, and, like the human body, it would suffer if this circulation were blocked.

Nineteenth-century black writers look forward to twentieth- and twenty-first century human rights discourse and engage debates still central to theorists of democracy, both of which frame citizenship as a basic building block of social life. Justice Earl Warren echoes Easton in his 1958 dissent in *Perez v. Brownell*: “Citizenship is man’s basic right, for it is nothing less than the right to have rights. Remove this priceless possession and there remains a stateless person, disgraced and degraded in the eyes of his countrymen” potentially without the ability to assert or defend any rights at all.⁵³ And, just over one hundred years after Easton, Hannah Arendt derives the “right to have rights”—the right “to live in a framework where one is judged by one’s actions and opinions...and a right to belong to some kind of organized community”—from experiences of alienation and deprivation, most fundamentally executed in institutionalized enslavement.⁵⁴ More recently, social geographer Anna Secor has identified “the everyday life-spaces of the city—its neighborhoods, parks, streets, and buildings” as “both the medium

through which citizenship struggles take place and, frequently, that which is at stake in the struggle.”⁵⁵ That is, citizenship and struggles for citizenship happen in those very spaces Easton and others cite as life sustaining as much as they do in official state institutions, and it is through these sites that oppression can be contested and in which alternate models can be enacted. And while Secor’s work focuses on urban spatial practices, *Black Theories* demonstrates that the principle holds for spaces of all kinds, both physical and imaginary, and for texts like Absalom Jones and Richard Allen’s 1794 *Narrative* or William J. Wilson’s 1859 “Afric-American Picture Gallery” in which “citizen” is not the operative term in play. As my discussion of neighborliness and economic citizenship reveals, black writers often found useful models for civic practices in places like the early American backcountry, among laboring sorts, or in constructs like the republic of letters.

Reading citizenship as a practice also means attending to how political acts are encoded and received or “styled” in ways that we can analyze in terms of form and genre. Certeau usefully clarifies, practices as

more or less the coherent and fluid assemblage of elements that are concrete and everyday (a gourmet menu) or ideological (religious, political), at once coming from a tradition (that of a family or social group) and reactualized from day to day across behaviors translating fragments of this cultural device into social visibility, in the same way that the utterance translates fragments of discourse into speech.⁵⁶

Practices are both formal and performative—governed by rules and conventions that are nonetheless both subject to reception and misfire and open to “narrative” acts of revision and improvisation.⁵⁷ Considering citizenship practices in terms of style offers several advantages: 1) it calls us to focus on how, as Robert Hariman posits, “relations of control and autonomy are negotiated through the artful composition of speech, gesture, ornament, décor, and many other means for modulating perception and shaping response.”⁵⁸ That is, style also offers language for

thinking about how people come to desire particular modes of citizenship—a desire that I analyze in Chapter 4 in terms of representivity and in Chapter 5 in terms of taste—and how this desire is managed through aesthetic sensibilities. 2) It provides an analytic for attending to audience, to the interplay between convention and improvisation, and to the synergy between speech, embodied public performance (manner of dress, labor, public demonstrations, etc.), and print.⁵⁹ 3) It offers a paradigm for talking about civic ideals like republicanism and liberalism in terms of how writers were using them as tropes and as frameworks for organizing social and political interactions rather than as a coherent ideology.⁶⁰ As Kirsten Silva Gruesz suggests in a Latin American context, black theories of citizenship “illuminate the cultural values distinct to the immediate world of each, as well as the ones they shared.”⁶¹ By analyzing political discourse in terms of style *Black Theories* attends to how black citizens were attempting to mold emergent republican ideals into a more inclusive practice of citizenship while remembering Joanna Brooks’s caution that we not read early black writers as grafting wholesale dominant discourses, but rather to take into account their active engagement with and tactical use of language and an array of intellectual traditions.⁶²

Black activists were often well aware of and very explicit about how language, form, and performance produced a sense of rationality, particularly as notions of deliberation and rational debate were leveraged against them and others (women, lower class folk of all kinds, and so on). Their reflexivity around racialization and their own performance of politics reveals the measure of stagecraft inherent to civic acts, whether in the context of official governing bodies following parliamentary procedure or in the context of dress and the everyday publicness of streets and markets. Racial performance and political performance were mutually constituted and shaped by power relations between embodied subjects. Under such conditions, the character of a given

utterance and its reception become predicated on presenting recognizable forms and, more importantly, on the power to set the conditions of recognition. Even as early U.S. print culture “rejected the notion of ‘power embodied in special persons,’” following Jay Fliegelman, black writers expose the mechanisms through which this print culture designated a new set of special persons whose capacity for republican politics was underwritten not by property or civic virtue as such, but by whiteness.⁶³

Nineteenth-century black activists highlighted tensions between the rhetorical protocols of civic practice and the racial protocols of whiteness in a way that, like John’s act of resistance, impressed upon white audiences the arbitrariness of racial distinctions and how this arbitrariness ultimately undermined basic principles of collective governance. Such was the case as Pennsylvania’s 1837 Reform Convention debated Purvis’s “Appeal of Forty Thousand Citizens.” Some delegates took issue with the document’s tone, calling it “a mere argumentative paper” with “nothing in its character which entitled it to receive any special attention,” a document that contained language “not very courteous. . . indeed, for petitioners.”⁶⁴ These comments prompted Thaddeus Stevens (Adams County) to counter: “When a petition was couched in language respectful to the body to which it was presented, they were bound to receive it. Was this memorial, then, to be rejected? He would never give his vote for that. Such a memorial, coming from white men, would not be considered offensive.”⁶⁵ For Stevens, it seemed clear that to some of his fellow delegates the “respectful” nature of the petition hinged on the racial identity of the petitioners, which itself was under question and admittedly artificial, as “[p]robably many of those who signed the memorial are as white as many of us, although they do not rank according to the technical terms of ‘white’ and ‘black.’”⁶⁶ The debate highlights the degree to which

notions about racial hierarchy colored the reception of political acts and even whether or not an act would be received as political at all.

Stevens's commentary, enabled by the "Appeal," also reveals the critical sensibility that black theories have to contribute to citizenship, a method that white allies from Stevens to William Lloyd Garrison to Benjamin Rush would learn from and appropriate. The blackness of black theories is not attached to racial identity as such, but rather from this critical approach to civic practice, what Samuel Ringgold Ward, writing in 1840, would call seeing through a "different medium."⁶⁷ I join critics from Richard Wright to Ifeoma Nwankwo and John Ernest who link, in differing contexts, blackness to a critical perspective or, as Wright posits, an "angle of vision," "the frame in which the picture is hung."⁶⁸ In the same decades that the constitutional convention shaped the federal compact and factions contended over models of political and economic representation, community leaders like Absalom Jones and Richard Allen were framing constitutions for the Free African Society and new religious and fraternal organizations. As the 1791 "Address of the Representatives of the African Church" posits: "men are more influenced by their moral equals than by their superiors...and...are more easily governed by persons chosen by themselves for that purpose, than by persons who are placed over them by accidental circumstances."⁶⁹ In the process of making claims to the right of religious assembly and independence, the Representatives of the African Church also theorize representation more generally in a way that critically highlighted the philosophical challenge black theories of citizenship presented to contemporary civic practice. While the church's appeal resonated with late-eighteenth-century republicanism, especially as contemporaneously articulated by Thomas Paine, it was perhaps "peculiar" in the eyes of Benjamin Rush because it emanated from the a different "angle of vision": experiences of former slaves and carried with it an explicit critique

of the racial and civic republican politics underlying in the federal and state constitutions that Rush helped frame.

4. Chapter Outline

Using the interpretive insights of James McCune Smith, Hosea Easton, Free African Society, and others as a guide, *Black Theories* is organized around four basic, interrelated citizenship practices and the stylistic and subjective schemas each practice cultivates: neighborly contact across social-economic boundaries, the free circulation of civic power, economic representation, and critique.

The shift from British subject to U.S. citizen had no road map: What was to be the relation between citizens and between citizens and the state? Did all citizens share equally in sovereignty and governing? How were citizens to define the common good and, more, how were they to navigate between the dictates of this common good and their own commercial interests? These were precisely the questions at the heart of James Madison, Thomas Hamilton, and John Jay's articles in support of the 1789 federal constitution, not categorically defining the citizen as such, but rather articulating rubrics for civic virtue and outlining the ways of engaging in a political community that would create a sense of citizenship as shared sovereignty. Chapter 2, "Neighborly Citizenship," takes up these questions terms of civic republican ethics and enlightened self-interest through Absalom Jones and Richard Allen's *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People* (1794) and Matthew Carey's *A Short Account of the Malignant Fever, Lately Prevalent in Philadelphia* (1793, 1794). I first read Carey's *Account* as indicative of a two-tiered civic republicanism in which citizens able to maintain a more classical standard of virtue and duty manage and protect those citizens following a civic ethos more amenable to

commerce and self-interest. Jones and Allen's examples of black relief workers during the 1793 yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia models an ethics of neighborliness. An alternative to Carey's mix of sociability and enlightened self-interest, neighborly citizenship is a cooperative, active civic practice based on a sense of mutual dependence and activated by a "real sensibility" that identifies with the stranger as a neighbor, as a fellow mortal of equal moral worth in a neighborhood based on horizontal networks.

Narrative's neighborly citizenship provides further grounding for Jones and Allen's plan for emancipation, an "experiment" in institutional neighborliness that would educate the children of slaves as full citizens. And yet, the tension between economic and civic registers in *Narrative* also suggests that actual civic practices tend to produce possibilities that exceed the boundaries of the stories that frame them. This chapter, then, models how careful readers can extrapolate theoretical paradigms from how black activists wrote about civic practices, sometimes in a way that extends beyond the explicit intentions of the original argument. As subsequent chapters demonstrate, these paradigms arise as much from the structure and circulation of the texts as they do from their content.

Chapter 3, "Circulating Citizenship," positions the black state conventions of the 1840s as central to our understanding of citizenship and the operation of participatory politics as a citizenship practice more generally. Through readings of convention proceedings from New York (1840) and Pennsylvania (1841, 1848), I trace a shift in U.S. political culture from potentially more direct and public forms of political participation, like extra-governmental conventions, to more managed and proprietary forms of representation. To counter arguments that black people were either too irredeemably degenerate or too dependent on waged and manual labor to warrant full citizenship, convention addresses built on natural rights theory and

contemporary physics to suggest a circulatory model of civic power. Fellow citizens, they suggest, are not linked by common ancestry or political agreement, as such, but rather by their faith and participation in a republican style of politics. Just as blocking access to major waterways could destroy a city, blocking the free circulation of civic power could result in either civic and social deterioration or explosive revolt among those disenfranchised. Scholars rightly point to the expansion of voting rights in the 1830s and 1840s as a moment when representation became increasingly abstracted and sustained populism as such was effectively precluded, but the work of black activists suggests a moment of tension in which this foreclosure was resisted by the disenfranchised and by voices of dissent seeking alternative routes to counter anti-republican practices.⁷⁰

My discussions of neighborly citizenship and the circulation of civic power reveal that citizenship practices and economic practices were inextricably linked. Chapter 4 “Economic Citizenship,” turns to periodical literature in *Douglass’s Paper* during the early 1850s—James McCune Smith’s “Heads of the Colored People” series and William J. Wilson’s “Letters from our Brooklyn Correspondent”—to excavate changing understandings of citizenship in the wake of the market revolution. Both Wilson and Smith read the U.S. as tending towards economic citizenship, a structure in which the market displaces civil society as the privileged space of citizenship practices and civic identity. Yet, where Wilson argues pragmatically for the cultivation of a “black aristocracy,” economic representatives for what he saw as a solidifying U.S. oligarchy, Smith valorizes the “best average colored” person as the embodiment of a new urban republicanism, the foundation for a strong democratic polity of laboring folk. Wilson and Smith use their pseudonymous narrators, “Ethiop” and “Communi paw,” and the generic flexibility of the sketch to lay out the kinds of fluid subjectivities best suited to navigate the new

civic-economic terrain, the former offering a street savvy businessman viewing the economic landscape from the “heights,” the latter a “whitewasher,” a skilled laborer who transgresses boundaries and insists on a horizontal configuration of politics. Their collection of fictionalized case studies, ethnographic observations, and flâneur-like urban narratives highlights the degree to which black conceptions of citizenship unfold not just in speeches, conventions, and pamphlets, but also through a highly creative community of letters.

Throughout the *Black Theories*, I foreground how the codification of white male citizenship in the nineteenth century operates as a form of civic management that freezes, not critique as such, but critique of how citizenship is structured. Chapter 5, “Critical Citizenship,” examines the meaning of critique and the means for cultivating a critical sense among a diverse citizenry. Through the *Anglo-African Magazine* (1859-1860), I outline a collective and participatory project of building different idioms of citizenship and peoplehood as a counter to the “limits placed on humanity” and “truth,” following editor Robert Hamilton and Frederick Douglass, that national fantasies of a white republic authorized. The work in the *Anglo-African*—serialized fiction, scientific and historical treatises, and polemics—cultivates readers’ tastes for understandings of collective memory, the constitutional “we the people,” and politics more broadly as messy, sometimes contradictory, and always in-process. In particular, William J. Wilson’s “Afric-American Picture Gallery” series posits that the proper attitude of citizen to national symbolic is the attitude of the critic to the work of art. While the three preceding chapters take up citizenship’s incorporative aspects, this chapter posits the essential function of politics as disruption and intrusion. The role of the citizen becomes inciting disruption, a process modeled in figures like Wilson’s “Thomas Onward” who embodies what Jacques Rancière describes as a delinquent story, one that “call[s] into question the distribution of roles, territories,

and languages.”⁷¹ For Wilson, Watkins, and others, the “thrillingly sublime courage” of slave resistance catalyzes this disruptive process and serves as a warning that critique, without a concomitant impulse to action, risks reproducing the very closures it is meant to defy.

Though each chapter focuses on a specific citizenship practice, these practices are mutually constituting and always simultaneously in play. One requires the other to create a viable polity: neighborliness depends on circulation and critique to give it boundaries; economic citizens should behave ethically, not as agents in an ostensibly liberal market, but rather as participants in collective neighborhood. Yet, writers’ emphasize one approach over another in response to political and historical moments of crisis and change. There were more possibilities for citizenship when Absalom Jones and Richard Allen formed the Free African Society than when Robert Hamilton founded the *Anglo-African Magazine*, and these tactical shifts reflect that declension. The state conventions’ emphasis on voting rights in the 1840s, for instance, seems out of place in the 1850s after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law and the Kansas-Nebraska Act and in the wake of *Dred Scott v. Sandford*. Jones and Allen’s foregrounding of neighborliness in the 1790s speaks to their sense of hope that the young nation would hold to the promises of equality and commonwealth articulated in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. The rapidity with which the two former slaves rose to prominence in Philadelphia gave them cause to believe in a generally progressive trend, despite many setbacks. Yet, by 1860 calls for neighborly citizenship—that is the ability of fellow citizens to engage each other on terms of mutual responsibility and good faith—seem misplaced in light of an ascendant capitalist citizenship and the sense that deep institutional and cultural changes were needed before any kind of democratic society could be constructed.

Events, then, did not unfold as resolutely or as positively in the early republic as they did on the Smith's *Caledonia*. The journal suggests a younger man's conviction—in the 1830s, just a decade after emancipation in New York—that white supremacy could and would be overcome as black citizens asserted their rights and white citizens recognized and joined in their efforts. It is a story that perhaps could not account for historical contingency, the power of capital and self-interest, and the tenacity of racism and white supremacy. To the extent that this dissertation tells a story, then, it is a story about the tension between black citizens' creative struggle for civic and social justice based on the promises they saw in representative governance set against the developing national predilection to foreclose such possibilities through increasingly restrictive legal and social practices. The continued pressure of such a volatile landscape forced black theorists to rethink and re-articulate their relation to the state continually, resulting in a body of political literature that offers some of the most incisive analyses of citizenship available today. Moreover, their attention to and experimentation with form, style, and the relation between politics and aesthetics challenges us to rethink our narratives of early African American literary history. Their work, from Jones and Allen's 1794 *Narrative* to Frances Ellen Watkins's 1859-1860 "Fancy Sketches" in the *Anglo-African Magazine*, suggests this history has routes that do not lead inexorably from slave narrative to novel, but rather, like early national citizenship practices, proliferates in multiple directions. If in 1832, James McCune Smith viewed U.S. citizenship as a "beautiful but baneful object," Watkins and others writing in 1860 frame citizenship as beautiful but baneful process, the central figure of which is less a ship—the product of democratic practice—and more the critical citizens themselves.

¹ James McCune Smith, "Dr. Smith's Journal," *Colored American*, 2 December 1837, in *The Works of James McCune Smith*, ed. John Stauffer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 13.

² *Ibid.*

³ U.S. passenger ships also tended to segregate passengers, while British ships observed equality on ship. On Smith's educational background and subsequent work in professional medicine, see David W. Blight, "In Search of Learning, Liberty, and Self Definition: James McCune Smith and the Ordeal of the Antebellum Black Intellectual," *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* 9, no. 2 (July 1985): 7-25; Thomas M. Morgan, "The Education and Medical Practice of Dr. James McCune Smith (1813-1865), First Black American to Hold a Medical Degree," *Journal of National Medical History* 95, no. 7 (July 2003): 603-614; John Stauffer, introduction to *The Works of James McCune Smith*, ed. John Stauffer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), xiii-xlii, and his introduction to "Dr. Smith's Journal," 8-9; and Carla Peterson, *Black Gotham*

⁴ Smith, "Dr. Smith's Journal," 13.

⁵ Ibid. 13.

⁶ See "belt, n.5.d". OED Online. March 2012. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oed.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/Entry/17530?rskey=p8HW0K&result=1&isAdvanced=true> (accessed April 19, 2012).

⁷ See "cat-head, n.". OED Online. March 2012. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oed.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/Entry/28933?rskey=fkkeDn&result=1&isAdvanced=false> (accessed April 19, 2012). 1. *Naut.* "A beam projecting almost horizontally at each side of the bows of a ship, for raising the anchor from the surface of the water to the deck without touching the bows, and for carrying the anchor on its stock-end when suspended outside the ship's side; it is furnished with sheaves at the outer end, and the inner end, which is called the cat's-tail, fays down upon the cat-beam."

⁸ Whenever appropriate, I use the term "black citizens" to describe black people, particularly free black people, in the United States, to reflect how free people of color referred to themselves and to reinforce my contention that, in lieu of explicit federal policy (which the nation doesn't have until the Fourteenth Amendment), black citizens became citizens when they engaged the state and the nation *as* citizens.

⁹ Theorists from W.E.B. Dubois to Richard Wright and Paul Gilroy have made similar observations about the relation between African descended people and enlightenment or "Western" traditions. Slavery was more than a powerful metaphor for the lack of liberty and freedom for early African Americans; it was a lived experience and, as Paul Gilroy observes in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), "a living intellectual resource in their expressive political culture" that "helped them to generate a new set of answers to" questions raised in the enlightenment and post-enlightenment world they inherited from and with their former masters (39). Indeed, Celeste Michelle Condit, John Louis Lucaites have argued that "the strivings of African-Americans" provide "the generative center of egalitarian rhetoric of the nineteenth century." See *Crafting Equality: America's Anglo-African World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 1993), 72. See also W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Bantam, 1989); and Wright, *White Man, Listen!* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1995), 71-75.

¹⁰ Part of my project in *Black Theories* is outlining a methodology for analyzing black civic texts. Following Ifeoma Nwankwo's use of texts in *Black Cosmopolitanism*, I present the texts in each chapter as "case studies that, while born of specific local conditions, index trends in approaches to conceiving and articulating" (9) theories and practices of citizenship that are articulated and enacted across multiple texts and locales. Nwankwo, *Black Cosmopolitanism: Racial Consciousness and Transnational Identity in the Nineteenth-Century Americas* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

¹¹ My thinking here is informed by Wendy Brown's noting of the "Rousseau's paradox." Concluding her argument that liberal arts education has long promised the "knowledge, discernment, and orientation" necessary for democratic citizenship, Brown notes that if the liberal arts in higher education continues to be dismantled, we will be faced with the paradox Rousseau posits in *The Social Contract*: "in order to support good institutions, the people must antecedently be what only good institutions can make them into" (36). In context, Rousseau was articulated what he saw as a central dilemma for the legislator: how to convince the people to sacrifice self-interest for the greater good of the state. The legislator would need the kind of people who could only be produced by the institutions for which he needed their consent to build in the first place: "For a nascent people to be capable of appreciating sound maxims of politics and of following the fundamental rules of reason of State, the effect would have to become the cause, the social spirit which is to be the work of the institution would have to preside over the institution itself, and men would have to be prior to laws what they ought to become by means of them" (71). In a way, citizens of the early U.S. faced the same dilemma as they imagined the kind of institutions that would create the ideal republican citizen even as these institutions could not exist without republican citizens to create and sustain them. See Wendy Brown, "The Humanities and the Crisis of The Public University" *Representations* 116, no. 1, (Fall 2011): 19-41, doi:10.1525/rep.2011.116.1.19; and Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Of the Social Contract in The*

Social Contract and other Later Political Writings, ed. and trans. Victor Gourevitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997)

¹² As Houston A. Baker, Jr., put it, “The locus classicus of African American literary discourse is the slave narrative.” See Baker, “Archaeology, Ideology, and African American Discourse” in *Redefining American Literary History*, edited by A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff and Jerry W. Ward, Jr., (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1990), 169.

¹³ William Andrews, “The 1850s: The First Afro-American Literary Renaissance,” *Literary Romanticism in America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 44.

¹⁴ Dorothy Porter, introduction to *Early Negro Writing, 1760-1837* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1995), 3. Robert Stepto usefully outlines “the quest for freedom *and* literacy” as the “Afro-American pregeneric myth” (18, emphasis original). “If an Afro-American literary tradition exists,” Stepto observes, “it does so not because there is a sizeable chronology of authors and texts but because those authors and texts seek collectively their own literary forms—their own admixtures of genre—bound historically and linguistically to a shared pregeneric myth” (19). Both Porter and Stepto call our attention to the deep connection between the movement towards freedom and the search for aesthetic form. See Robert Stepto, “Teaching Afro-American Literature: Survey or Tradition, The Reconstruction of Instruction” in *Afro-American Literature: The Reconstruction of Instructions*, eds. Dexter Fisher and Robert Stepto (New York: The Modern Languages Association of America, 1978), 8-24.

¹⁵ See for instance: Elizabeth McHenry, *Forgotten Readers: Recovering The Lost History of African-American Literary Societies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); John Ernest, *Liberation Historiography: African American Writers and the Challenge of History, 1794-1861*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), and *Chaotic Justice: Rethinking African American Literary History*, (Chapel Hill: University North Carolina Press, 2009); Carla Peterson, “Capitalism, Black (Under)Development, and the Production of the African-American Novel in the 1850s,” *American Literary History* 4, no. 4 (Winter, 1992): 559-58, and “Doers of the word”: *African-American Women Speakers and Writers in the North (1830-1880)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Eric Gardner, *Unexpected Places: Relocating Nineteenth-Century African American Literature* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009); Jordan Alexander Stein and Lara Cohen, eds. *Early African American Literature in Theory and Practice* (Philadelphia: University Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Foster, “A Narrative of the Interesting Origins and (Somewhat) Surprising Developments of African-American Print Culture,” *American Literary History* 17, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 714-740; Ivy Wilson, *Specters of Democracy: Blackness and the Aesthetics of Politics in the Antebellum U.S.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Robert Levine and Ivy Wilson, eds. *The Works of James M. Whitfield: America and Other Writings by a Nineteenth-Century African American Poet* (Chapel Hill: University North Carolina Press, 2011); and Joanna Brooks, “The Early American Public Sphere and the Emergence of a Black Print Counterpublic,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 62, no. 1 (2005): 29 pars. 4 Aug. 2008.

¹⁶ Foster, “A Narrative,” 715. Another way to think about Foster’s framework is that early African Americans were crafting their own “constitutive stories,” that is, narratives that, following Rogers Smith, structure and link all other “institutional practices and customs, demographics, socialization systems, psychological drives, and other such structural features of political life.” See Rogers Smith, “Citizenship and the Politics of People-Building,” *Citizenship Studies* 5, no. 1 (2001): 73-96.

¹⁷ “Political Destiny of the Colored Race, on the American Continent to the Colored Inhabitants of the United States,” *Proceedings of the National Emigration Convention of Colored People of Colored People Held at Cleveland, Ohio* (Pittsburgh: A. A. Anderson, 1854): 37.

¹⁸ See for instance, Peter Williams, Jr., “An Oration on the Abolition of the Slave Trade Delivered in the African Church in the City of New York, January 1, 1808,” 343; Joseph Sidney, “An Oration, Commemorative of the Abolition of the Slave Trade in the United States” (1809), 355; “Constitution and By-Laws of the Brotherly Union Society” (1833), 51; William Whipper, “An Address Delivered in Wesley Church” (1828), 105.

¹⁹ Martin R. Delany, *Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People in the United States*; Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” in *Douglass Autobiographies*, 431.

²⁰ The claim of “fellow citizen” had such a strong resonance, that the 1854 Convention drew attention to its refusal to use the term citizen to signal its departure from a U.S.-based politics: “We have not addressed you as citizens--a term desired and ever cherished by us--because such you have never been. We have not addressed you as freemen,--because such privileges have never been enjoyed by any colored man in the United States” (“Political Destiny,” 37). The absence of the salutation, the break with what had by then become a standard convention of black political address, spoke as loudly as the convention’s agenda in favor of emigration.

²¹ Smith, "Citizenship," *The Anglo-African Magazine*, 1.5 (May 1859), 145. As Wayne D. More argues of Frederick Douglass's constitutional politics, by exercising their right to sovereignty, the delegates become a part of the sovereign people. See Moore, *Constitutional Rights and Powers of the People* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). See also Singh, *Black is a Country*, 18-19; and Butler, *Gender Trouble*, particularly "Subversive Bodily Acts."

²² "Petition of Absalom Jones and Seventy-Three Others" (1799) in *Early Negro Writings* ed. Dorothy Porter (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1995), 330.

²³ Walker, *Appeal*, 73, 80.

²⁴ Hosea Easton, *A Treatise on the Intellectual Character, and Civil and Political Condition of the Colored People of the U. States* (Boston: Isaac Knapp), 53

²⁵ Delany, "True Patriotism" in *Martin R. Delany: A Documentary Reader* ed. Robert S. Levine (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 137.

²⁶ "Petition," 331.

²⁷ The state conventions, for instance, varied not only from state to state based on the particularities of each state's policies, but also from year to year as policies and the makeup of the conventions themselves changed.

²⁸ See Xiomara Santamarina, "Thinkable Alternatives in African American Studies." *American Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (March 2006): 274.

²⁹ Ethiop, "From Our Brooklyn Correspondent," *FDP*, 8 April 1852. That Smith and Wilson's *tete-a-tete* occurs within a larger periodical landscape that was itself a part of a broader print public reveals the degree to which they, like Douglass, were "not a gigantic abnormality in black American history, but in many ways a typical black American man of the class and region he represented." See William J. Moses, *Creative Conflict in African American Thought: Frederick Douglass, Alexander Crummell, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Marcus Garvey* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 48.

³⁰ Ernest observes, "the periodical press was uniquely suited to the task of telling the story of African American history—because the story it could tell would be marked by narrative disruption and because, in telling the story, the press could only be multivocal and multiperspectival" (279). Todd Vogel has argued similarly argued that the ephemeral quality of the press "made the writers nimble. They could plunge into the public conversation and get their views out immediately" ("Introduction" 2), and, I would add, in a way that to some degree sidestepped the policing and paternalistic behavior of other abolitionists, both white and black. See Vogel, Introduction to *The Black Press: New Literary and Historical Essays*, ed. Todd Vogel (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 1-14

³¹ "A Note on Leaders." *Weekly Anglo-African*, 4 May 1861, 2 vol. 42 (94).

³² Article IV, Section 2, Clause i.

³³ See Bradburn, *Citizenship Revolution: Politics and the Creation of the American Union, 1774-1804* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 260; and Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 119.

³⁴ See Bradburn, 1-19, and Rogers Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 167-170.

³⁵ Early U.S. citizenship law was based in common law understandings of people distinguished by "a series of social markers, which ultimately meant not an 'equal' status as citizens, with the same specific rights, but a variegated one, defined by 'office, property, household position, race, gender, infirmity, and age.'" See Bradburn, *Citizenship Revolution*, 51 and 260.

³⁶ David Ramsay, *A Dissertation on the Manners of Acquiring the Character and Privileges of a Citizen* (Charleston, 1789) AAS, 3-4.

³⁷ See, Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 7-30; Bradburn 48-49; and Rogers Smith, *Civic*, 165-67.

³⁸ See Dana Nelson, *National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998); Theodore Allen, *The Invention of the White Race: Racial Oppression and Social Control* v. 2. The Origin of Racial Oppression in Anglo-America (New York: Verso, 1994); Bruce Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind*; Jared Gardner, *Master Plots: Race and the Founding of an American Literature, 1787-1845* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 1-24; David Kazanjian, *The Colonizing Trick: National Culture and Imperial Citizenship in Early America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Rogers Smith, *Civic Ideals*; David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991); Alex Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States*, (New York: Basic, 2000); Mark S. Weiner, *Black Trials: Citizenship from the Beginnings of*

Slavery to the End of Caste (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004); Cheryl Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (1993): 1707–91; and Bradburn, *Citizenship*.

³⁹ Ramsay, *Dissertation*, 3–4.

⁴⁰ See *Crandall v. State of Connecticut* 10 Conn. 339 1834; and Smith, *Civic*, 257–258; and Weiner, *Black Trials*, 95–115.

⁴¹ See Bradburn, *Citizenship Revolution*, especially Chapter 7, "White Citizen, Black Denizen," 335–371. Bradburn takes the concept from British law to describe those who were given some rights associated with citizenship, but none of its security. In contrast to naturalization, which raised "aliens" to the status of "natural-born" citizens, denization allowed only certain rights and privileges that could be applied unevenly and contextually. The denization of free black citizens was supported and sustained by the "soft racism of elision and indifference, along with the overt racism of retrenchment offered by the slaveholding class" assuring "that black rights would not, and could not, become an issue for national legislation" (261). Bradburn's denization paradigm is useful here, because of its flexibility, emphasis on contingency, and the space it gives for considering instances where black citizens were recognized as citizens.

In the context of Northern gradual emancipation, Joanne Pope Melish invokes the notion of "slaves of the community," the sense that white communities assumed responsibility for free people of color as recompense for emancipation. And in "The 'Condition' Debate and Racial Discourse in the Antebellum North," she further traces a post-emancipation, New England "narrative of free white labor in which free people of color were marooned as permanent, unaccountable strangers" (655). James Brewer Stewart argues somewhat differently that by the 1830s the U.S. was shifting into a full blown racial modernity in which "color lines" that had hitherto been so sharply contested around conflicting claims of 'respectability' now had become indelibly drawn. Nearly impossible to revise, they were buttressed by a system of democratic white politics premised on the modern assumption that 'nature' had always divided 'black' and 'white' as inferior and superior, and always must" (693). In politics, racial modernity translated into "institutionalized selective racial egalitarianism," what Jennifer R. Mercieca has called one of the ironies of the democratic style in Jacksonian America in which a rhetoric of white male equality masks undemocratic practices. See Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and 'Race' in New England, 1789–1860* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 84–118, and "The 'Condition' Debate and Racial Discourse in the Antebellum North," *Journal of the Early Republic*, Special Issue on Racial Consciousness and Nation-Building in the Early Republic 19, no. 4 (Winter 1999): 651–672. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3125137>. Stewart, "Modernizing 'Difference': The Political Meanings of Color in the Free States, 1776–1840," *Journal of the Early Republic* 19, no. 4 (Winter, 1999): 691–712; and Mercieca, "The Irony of the Democratic Style," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 11, no. 3 (2008): 441–449, <http://muse.jhu.edu.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/> (accessed January 26, 2009); and William H. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay, 1776–1854* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 450.

⁴² Black Americans fought in the revolution and War of 1812, were made citizens by the Articles of Confederation after the revolution, had been issued U.S. passports, and new generations had claims to birthright citizenship. One justification for disenfranchisement was the "remembrance" of Chief Justice Gibson's father of a supposed court ruling against black suffrage. See "Appeal of Forty Thousand Citizens, Threatened with Disfranchisement, to the People of Pennsylvania" in *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African American Protest Literature, 1790–1860*, ed. Richard Newman, Patrick Rael, and Phillip Lapsansky (New York: Routledge, 2001), 132–142. See also Chapter Four of Ernest, *Liberation*.

⁴³ "Appeal," 136.

⁴⁴ As Richard Newman observes, "Print... provided a public voice to a political powerless people. Where the rules of party politics and the very sites of political venues blocked black expression, the public sphere of print—decentralized, virtually impossible to shut down, and long enshrined in American culture as an open forum—offered room for black views." See Newman, "Protest in Black and White: The Formation and Transformation of an African American Political Community during the Early Republic" in *Beyond the Founders: New Approaches to the Political History of the Early American Republic*. eds. Jeffrey L. Pasley, Andrew W. Robertson, and David Waldstreicher. (Chapel Hill: U North Carolina P, 2004), 181; and Joanna Brooks, "The Early American Public Sphere and the Emergence of a Black Print Counterpublic," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 62, no. 1 (2005): 67–92.

⁴⁵ My argument here builds on Alejandro de la Fuente's work on claims-making in the Cuban context. As de la Fuente argues, "it was the slaves, as they made claims and pressed for benefits, who gave concrete social meaning to the abstract rights regulated in the positive laws. Through these interactions with colonial authorities and judges, slaves acted (and were seen) as subjects with at least a limited legal standing." In the context of *Black*

Theories, I argue that black citizens created the very legal standing or recognition denied them when they make their cases to the state. See especially my discussion of Circulating Citizenship in Chapter 3. See Alejandro de la Fuente, "Slave Law and Claims-Making in Cuba: The Tannenbaum Debate Revisited," *Law and History Review* Summer 2004 <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/lhr/22.2/forum_fuente.html> (23 Apr. 2012): para 7.

⁴⁶ *Proceedings and Debates of the Convention of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, to Propose Amendments to the Constitution*, vol. 3, (Harrisburg: Packer, Barrett, and Parke, 1837), 683.

⁴⁷ Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania 1838, Art. 3 Sec. 1.

⁴⁸ Easton, 49. As subsequent chapters will suggest, writers throughout the nineteenth century will return to this theme of the unnaturalness of racial discrimination.

⁴⁹ See Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, vol. 2, trans. Steven Rendall, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 9. As Margaret Somers argues, "identity is both constitutive and a product of citizenship institutions, practices, and expectations, even when – or perhaps especially when – the rights of citizenship are not delivered." See *Genealogies of Citizenship: Markets, Statelessness, and the Right to Have Rights* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 25.

⁵⁰ The notion that the denial of citizenship or, in other contexts, personhood amounts to a kind of violence or murder appears in multiple contexts and under multiple names. Franz Fanon describes the centrality of both psychological and physical violence to the processes of colonization and decolonization, particularly in the project of reshaping or reclaiming national identities in *The Wretched of the Earth*. In *The True Worlds: A Transnational Perspective*, (New York: The Free Press, 1980), Johan Galtung uses the concept of "structural violence" to highlight a level of intentionality and responsibility states, institutions, and individuals have for maintaining systems of inequality. Such acts of structural violence, Galtung argues, "may be so repressive that it virtually leads to the psychological death of the people exposed to it, or so exploitative that it leads to their physical death by keeping them well below the limit of fundamental need satisfaction" (107). See Galtung, *The True Worlds: A Transnational Perspective* (New York: The Free Press, 1980).

See also Orland Patterson's introduction to *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Analysis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 1-14.

⁵¹ See Somers, *Genealogies*, 5. As David Batstone and Eduardo Mendieta posit, "as an ideal, citizenship stands for the autonomy, self-legislation, and sense of civic solidarity that members of a group extend to one another." See Batstone and Mendieta, introduction to *The Good Citizen* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 3.

⁵² Somers, *Genealogies of Citizenship*, 5. This model of citizenship goes well beyond legal status; rather, it entails, following Margaret Somers, a "cluster of rights," including "legal and civil freedoms, and equal access to justice; participatory rights in democratic governance; and the social inclusionary rights that allow for the meaningful exercise of all the others." See Somers, *Genealogies of Citizenship*, 5.

⁵³ *Perez v. Brownell*, 356 U.S. 44 (1958). See also Somers, *Genealogies*, 1-29; Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 369-384.,

⁵⁴ See Arendt, *Origins*, 376-377.

⁵⁵ Anna Secor. "'There Is an Istanbul That Belongs to Me': Citizenship, Space, and Identity in the City." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. 94, no. 2 (2004): 353.

⁵⁶ Certeau, *Practice*, 9.

⁵⁷ Rogers Smith has similarly argued that "institutional practices and customs, demographics, socialization systems, psychological drives, and other such structural features of political life" are shaped by "constitutive stories" in which myths of white wholeness are a central element. These narratives, are, nevertheless, open to what what Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and others have framed as signifyin(g) or masking, the repetition of "received tropes and narrative strategies with a difference," which suggests that the writer or speaker not only appropriates the dominant discourse but also changes, if only slightly, its resonance. See Rogers M. Smith, "Citizenship and the Politics of People-Building," *Citizenship Studies* 5 no. 1 (2001): 73. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 217; and Rafia Zafar, *We Wear the Mask: African Americans Write American Literature, 1760-1870* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 10.

⁵⁸ Robert Hariman and James Arnt Aune analogize political style to style in music in the sense that we can identify a political style, like musical style such as jazz, classical or blues, through a discrete set of aesthetic conventions. Yet, like jazz, for instance, political styles maintain a certain dynamism even within these conventions and often incorporate structures from other styles and from the cultures that create them. See Aune, "Democratic Style and Ideological Containment." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 11, no. 3 (2008): 482-490. <http://muse.jhu.edu.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/> (accessed January 26, 2009).

⁵⁹ As Shane White and Graham White have observed, “To a considerable extent, the struggle over what freedom meant centered on the bodies of African Americans, that is to say, on the appearance of black individuals and on the ways in which they collectively presented themselves in public.” See Shane White and Graham White, *Stylin’: African American Expressive Culture from Its Beginnings to the Zoot Suit* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 124.

⁶⁰ See Hariman, *Political Style: The Artistry of Power* (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1995), 2, 9. In the words of Jeffery Engels’s introduction of the 2008 special issue of *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, an examination of style “offers an entryway into conversations about the multifaceted relationships between rhetoric and democratic culture by focusing our attention on style, on form, and on the ways in which democratic politics is managed and practiced through aesthetic resources.” See also Jeremy Engels, “Some Preliminary Thoughts on Democratic Style.” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 11, no. 3 (2008), 440. Caroline Levine argues in “Strategic Formalism: Toward a New Method in Cultural Studies,” “Literary forms matter politically because they are indexes of social forms, expressing or fostering dominant social and economic relationships” (626). As subsequent chapters show, literary forms can also shape social forms.

⁶¹ Kirsten Silva Gruesz, *Ambassadors of Culture: The Transamerican Origins of Latino Writing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 5.

⁶² See Brooks “The Early American”

⁶³ For more on the distinction between deliberative and persuasive models of civil society, see John L. Brooke, “Consent, Civil Society, and the Public Sphere in the Age of Revolution and the Early American Republic,” in *Beyond the Founders: New Approaches to the Political History of the Early American Republic*, ed. Jeffrey L. Pasley, Andrew W. Robertson, and David Waldstreicher (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 207–50; Jeannine Marie DeLombard, “Apprehending Early African American Literary History” in *Early African American Print Culture in Theory and in Practice* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 67-68; Catherine Squires, “The Black Press and the State: Attracting Unwanted (?) Attention” in *Counterpublics and the State*, eds. Robert Asen and Daniel C. Brouwer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 112; Marie Miranda, *Homegirls in the Public Sphere*, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 133; Seyla Benhabib, “Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, the Liberal Tradition, and Jürgen Habermas” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 73-98; and Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. (1962, 1989). Trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991). For discussions of the specificity of the early Republic, see Christopher Looby, *Voicing America: Language, Literary Form, and the Origins of the United States* (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1996); Lara Langer Cohen “Democratic Representations: Puffery and the Antebellum Print Explosion.” *American Literature* 79, no. 4 (December 2007): 643-672; Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990); and Alessandro Portelli, *The Text and the Voice: Writing, Speaking, and Democracy in American Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

⁶⁴ *Proceedings and Debates of the Convention of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, to Propose Amendments to the Constitution*, vol. 3, (Harrisburg: Packer, Barrett, and Parke, 1837), 685.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 685-686.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 686.

⁶⁷ “Samuel Ringgold Ward to Nathaniel P. Rogers.” in Peter C. Ripley, ed., *Black Abolitionist Papers*, vol. 3, *The United States, 1830–1846* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 3:341.

⁶⁸ In other words, the blackness of black citizenship “inheres,” following Ifeoma Nwankwo’s analysis of black cosmopolitanism, “in the ways individuals and entities seek to define people of African descent and articulate the relationship among them and between them and the world at large.” See Wright, “Blueprint for Negro Writing” (1937) in *Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from the Harlem Renaissance to the Present*, 3rd ed. Ed. Angelyn Mitchell, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 103-104; Ifeoma Nwankwo, *Black Cosmopolitanism: Racial Consciousness and Transnational Identity in the Nineteenth-Century Americas* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 10; Ernest, *Liberation Historiography*, 2-4 and 306-313.

⁶⁹ “Address of the Representatives of the African Church,” in *Extracts of a Letter from Rush*, 6-7, quoted in Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 113.

⁷⁰ Nelson, “Representative/Democracy: Presidents, Democratic Management, and the Unfinished Business of Male Sentimentalism,” in *No More Separate Spheres*, eds. Cathy N. Davidson and Jessamyn Hatcher (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 224-230; Jeffrey Sklansky, *The Soul’s Economy: Market Society and Selfhood in*

American Thought, 1820-1920 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War*. (1970). 2nd ed. (New York, Oxford University Press, 1995); and Joyce Appleby, *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

⁷¹ Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. by Gabriel Rockhill (New York: Continuum, 2006), 40.

¹ “Reply of the Free African Society (Philadelphia, PA) to the Union Society of Africans (Newport, RI) October 1789” in William Douglass, *Annals of the First African Church in the United States of America, Now Styled the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: King & Baird, 1862), 28-29.

CHAPTER II

NEIGHBORLY CITIZENSHIP IN ABSALOM JONES AND RICHARD ALLEN'S *A NARRATIVE OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE BLACK PEOPLE DURING THE LATE AND AWFUL CALAMITY IN PHILADELPHIA IN THE YEAR 1793*

With regard to the emigration to Africa you mention, we have at present but little to communicate on that head, apprehending every pious man is a good citizen of the whole world. Reply of the Free African Society (Philadelphia, PA) to the Union Society of Africans (Newport, RI) October 1789.¹

1. Introduction

The Free African Society's (FAS) 1789 response to the African Union Society of Rhode Island's proposal for a settlement in Africa reflects the officers' optimism at the close of the eighteenth century. Rather than cite the new federal Constitution or the spread of "republicanism," the FAS sees a cosmopolitan citizenship manifesting in the "expressive language of conduct" of those "persons who are sacrificing their own time, ease and property for us, the stranger and the fatherless, in this wilderness."² Piety works as an active principle of citizenship, the pious citizen reaching out to those in need according to an ethic of neighborliness suggested in the golden-rule logic: "do unto all men as we would they should do unto us."³ More than an article of faith, the FAS provides a statement about citizenship practices by way of what the good citizen *does* and, as important, how the good citizen views and engages others, stranger and friend alike. The pious man may be a good citizen of the world, but he demonstrates this citizenship through concrete local, everyday interactions. Even as federalists and anti-federalists debated the nature of the bonds between citizens in a republic, the role of human interests in maintaining and/or disrupting those bonds, and the kinds of institutions best

suiting to managing those (particularly economic) interests, societies like the FAS were forming citizenship practices based on their own experiences and understandings of political and religious texts. Though early African Americans' formal citizenship was in flux, the accounts of civic activity they left behind provide key critiques and modifications of developing civic republican logics, suggesting that even as civic republicanism took shape in the late-eighteenth-century U.S., other civic schematics were not only possible, but concurrently being developed and enacted.

This chapter takes up one such account, Absalom Jones and Richard Allen's *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People*, to develop a social theory of citizenship as a practice of neighborliness.⁴ The 1793 yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia and the print exchange between Matthew Carey and Jones and Allen, founders of the FAS, offer a flashpoint through which to read neighborly citizenship against late-eighteenth-century civic republicanism.⁵ Building on the image of the pious citizen of the world and the notion of an "expressive language of conduct," *Narrative* clarifies neighborly citizenship as a set of actions: the proactive engagement with the suffering stranger out of what *Narrative* calls "real sensibility."⁶ This active principle offers a pointed critique of how the bifurcation of civic responsibility suggested in the civic republican model of Carey's *Account* encourages a more passive approach to fellow citizenship through protocols of politeness and enlightened self-interest.

Moreover, the form and point of view each narrative takes models the kinds of bonds and citizenship practice each schematic offers. In contrast to Carey's emphasis on the virtues of a managerial elite, *Narrative* reproduces some of *Account*'s key scenes from the perspective of the citizens *on the ground*, very ordinary "poor black" men and women, whose actions are otherwise unnoted or vilified.⁷ *Narrative*'s vignettes describe specific encounters amongst strangers in the

style of the parable of the Good Samaritan, fleshing out neighborliness as a citizenship practice robust enough to promote mutual responsibility yet open enough to promote more democratic engagement. This shift in perspective suggests that fellow citizenship did not fail during the crisis, but rather, yellow fever narratives sought it in the wrong places, ignoring the citizenship practices and potential fellow citizens right in front of them.

Responding to Carey allowed Jones and Allen to use the style of public “*Refutation*” to make claims against Carey and the nation more broadly. The appended “Address to Those Who Keep Slaves, and Approve of the Practice,” in turn, uses the proceedings of the black people as a case study that justifies and provides a framework for further “experiments”: emancipation, abolition, and the full incorporation of black citizens after slavery. In the moments characterized by Myra Jehlen as “history before the fact” or, in this case, citizenship before the fact, the terms of fellow citizenship were unsettled, not just in Philadelphia in the immediate aftermath of the epidemic, but also across a new republic still unsure of its federal compact.⁸ Even as Jones and Allen recounted events in recognizably republican terms, their narrative structure represents an attempt to reshape the discourse of citizenship in the messy moments when the city and the nation were trying to make sense of what seemed to be wholesale civic failure during the crisis.

2. Fever: A Crisis in Fellow Citizenship

The yellow fever hit Philadelphia in August of 1793, killing between 4,000 and 5,000 people (10-15 percent of Philadelphia’s population), approximately 400 of them free Africans, in a little less than three months. An additional 20,000 fled the city for safety.¹⁰ The federal government was in recess during the epidemic, leaving the recovery efforts to a Relief Committee of voluntary citizens led by Mayor Matthew Clarkson. As the fever dissipated in November, Matthew Carey, an Irish immigrant, printer, and entrepreneur was charged with

composing the city's official account, including theories about the fever's causes and progression, the activities of the Relief Committee, and the general state of the city during those three horrible months.

More than a chronicle of the immediate crisis, Carey's *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* presents Philadelphia as a metonym for the nation's civic and economic climate.¹¹ His and other yellow-fever narratives present two problems: 1) the "dissolution" of "natural" bonds, including familial, neighborly, and formal; and 2) a concomitant crisis of commercial regulation, relating to the role of the state in guiding markets and the market's ability to regulate itself.¹² As he navigates these political and economic problems, Carey employs standard tropes of an early national civic republican style: luxury vs. temperance, sober vs. sanguine behavior, virtue vs. corruption, regulation, etc. This style mixed classical republicanism's emphasis on sacrifice, the common good, and a fear of luxury and corruption with a more favorable attitude towards commerce as an expression of liberty and a path towards and sign of stability and competence, all moderated by a sense of divine consequences for intemperance.¹³ In this flexible constellation of concepts, Carey links progress to regulation: "virtue, liberty, and happiness of a nation," he posits, depend on its "temperance and sober manners."¹⁴ Virtuous citizens are not necessarily the yeomen attributed to Jeffersonian mythology, but rather the "plain and wholesome" city dwellers whose daily commercial interactions knit them into a community that prized respectability, politeness, temperance, and industry.¹⁵ Life in the city and commerce may provide opportunities for corruption, but the sober citizen could resist these temptations with proper self-regulation and institutional oversight, if not on their own merits, then because maintaining a public image of

self-regulation and politeness could be profitable. Moreover, when otherwise self-regulating individuals fell victim to the temptations of success, strong civic and financial institutions could help rein them in, providing a safety net for the innocent and a bulwark against the market's (or individual) unpredictability for society as a whole. In such a climate, virtuous citizenship did not require the sacrifice of individual interest for the common good so much as the prudent regulation of an enlightened self-interest—do no harm, rather than do good.¹⁶

Based on the premises of his civic republican style, Carey's prefatory remarks about pre-1776 Philadelphia strike a tenuous balance between the pursuit of commerce and the regulation of extravagance, individual liberty and culpability, and institutional oversight. For Carey, the stability of the Federal Constitution brought the new nation from the brink of "anarchy": commerce flourished, and "property of every kind, rose to, and in some instances beyond its real value."¹⁷ The economic boom of the mid-1780s and 1790s, however, undermined the sober ethic and political economic stability: "prospects formed in sanguine hours" replaced the prudent deliberation of less prosperous times, and "luxury, the usual, and perhaps the inevitable concomitant of prosperity, was gaining ground in a manner very alarming."¹⁸ Carey's ambivalence about the relation between economic prosperity and corruption (is luxury "usual," but avoidable, or is it an "inevitable" natural consequence) mirrors fluctuations within early national debates about such correlative or causal relations, but most agreed luxury had consequences: the extravagance and economic intemperance of citizens primed the city for "something...to humble" their "pride."¹⁹ Even so, the revival of the Bank of Pennsylvania in 1792-1793 and the "liberal conduct of the bank of the united states," a combination of private and public management, looked to have stabilized the market, regulating currency and "saving many a deserving and industrious man from ruin."²⁰ The consequences of the previous years'

glut and speculation had apparently taught these “deserving” men a valuable lesson, while the banks softened the economic blow. With the federal government managing politics, the banks watching over commerce, and the common citizen sufficiently chastened, the middling and economic elite was looking forward to a prosperous fall quarter in 1793.

The yellow fever tipped the balance of this system, removing the stability and confidence that made common prosperity and individual interest compatible if not complimentary. *Account* registers the schism between the two as competing principles of human nature, two orders of natural law at odds. Carey describes a mass of “people at the lowest ebb of despair” whose actions were dictated by “the great law of self preservation.”²¹ In one of *Account*’s most often quoted passages, Carey observes:

we cannot be astonished at the frightful scenes that were acted, which seemed to indicate a total dissolution of the bonds of society in the nearest and dearest connections.... A wife unfeelingly abandoning her husband on his death bed—parents forsaking their only children—children ungratefully flying from their parents, and resigning them to chance...masters hurrying off their faithful servants to Bushhill... [and] servants abandoning tender and humane masters.²²

The danger the fever presented (real or imagined) overrode the natural familial bonds that had served as a model for good citizenship.²³ Family units disintegrated and every other form of relation followed suit. Readers should “not be astonished,” however, because the consequent flight was equally natural and perhaps stronger than inducements to stay. “Self-preservation,” observes Carey, is a “law,” stronger than kinship, governing not just human behavior, but the “whole animated world.”²⁴ This law led those with means to flee, while those who could not flee either hid, avoiding their neighbors, or took advantage of the crisis to make a profit. In the latter case, while these people may have risked their lives in the process, the profit motive undermined their claims to good will; profit was a seemingly unnatural substitute for other failing bonds.

This general un-neighborliness revealed holes in the civic republican matrix outlined in Carey's prefatory remarks and mirrors both Federalist and anti-Federalist concerns during the constitutional debates in the previous decade.²⁵ These debates asked the same fundamental questions about social and civic relations that Carey's *Account* investigates: what is the role of self-interest in shaping civil and economic society, what are the duties that citizens have to each other and to the community at large, and what is the role of government in directing and/or cultivating these interests and duties. The disintegration of fellow citizenship in Philadelphia becomes reproduced on the national scene as surrounding counties, states, and other "strangers" abandoned those seeking refuge. "The universal consternation," Carey reports, "extinguished in people's breasts the most honourable feelings of human nature...suspicion operated as injuriously as the reality."²⁶ Philadelphians' inhumanity towards each other revealed the weakness of societal bonds between friends and neighbors while the inhumanity of the surrounding communities uncovered a deeper lack of feeling (or substance in that feeling) between citizens within the new republic. If societal bonds could not survive a climate that demanded more of its citizens than politeness and sociability, could the new federal compact? The yellow-fever epidemic made "strangers" out of neighbors and fellow citizens alike.²⁷

Despite the dire image of a more general un-neighborliness, Carey presents the singular achievements of individuals like Stephen Girard and members of the Relief Committee, led by Mayor Matthew Clarkson, as models of the kind of virtuous citizenship that sustains a republic. When "government of every kind was almost wholly vacated," including the caretakers for the poor and orphaned, these men stand in as the stabilizing force, mirroring the influence of the Federal Constitution and Bank of Pennsylvania in the years before the crisis. Girard, a French immigrant and one of the wealthiest merchants in the city, and Peter Helm are representative

republican citizens in this instance. “[A]ctuated by...benevolent motives,” the wealthy Girard eschews the safety of retreat to serve the common good.²⁸ Their sacrifice is twofold: they sacrifice their business interests to oversee matters at Bush Hill without regard for compensation (and they can do so because they are wealthy, a prerequisite for the virtuous republican), and they risk “little less than certain” death.²⁹ Girard and Helm, Carey continues:

without any possible inducement but the purest motives of humanity...came forward, and offered themselves as the forlorn hope of the committee.... [F]rom the time of undertaking this office to the present, they have attended uninterruptedly, for six, seven, or eight hours a day, renouncing almost every care of private affairs.³⁰

Carey’s style here reflects more the rigidity of early eighteenth century’s classical republicanism than the more fluid late-eighteenth-century model of sobriety and polite sensibility outlined in his description of the pre-fever commercial and political climate.³¹ Girard, Helm, and other “benevolent citizens” comprise a core managerial elite whose affluence and position give them the ability to flee but whose sense of duty compels them to stay. Carey’s emphasis on the voluntary nature of their work—sacrificing private interests without the possibility of repayment—enhances Girard’s republican credentials as the prototype of benevolent disinterest. In short, Girard exemplifies the temperance, sobriety, and service that sustain republican virtue as a rationale for elite enterprise.

These few bright spots are just enough to bring the city through the crisis and offer hope for its recovery. Carey’s *Account* exudes confidence about the city’s speedy return to its pre-fever form and optimism: “streets, too long the abode of gloom and despair, have assumed the bustle suitable to the season,” and, as people return (including the President Washington), commerce is picking back up.³² Even the flight out of the city retroactively symbolizes the success of “the nature of our government,” because it “did not allow the arbitrary measures” that a “despotic” government would have initiated in attempting to curtail the epidemic.³³ Overall,

then, Carey's *Account* simultaneously excoriates the general inhumanity, naturalizes it as concomitant with crisis itself, and suggests that the nation should not read the episode as indicative of behaviors under normal conditions. This tripartite description was calculated to explain events during the fever in a way that would protect Philadelphia's economic interests in trade and the city's political (and economic) interests in remaining the nation's capital.

Carey ultimately presents a two-tiered protective civic republicanism, a citizenship practice in which citizens able to maintain the classical republican standard of virtue and duty watch over—either in government or in philanthropy—those citizens for whom the classical model is much too demanding or rigid.³⁴ These citizens, guided by a civic republicanism more amenable to commerce, become a sign of republican freedom in the sense that the state allows, if not encourages, them to be as self-interested as their morality, material circumstances, and the market permit.³⁵ As a citizenship practice, the two-tiered civic republican model allows citizens to act on their own interests in the comfort that government institutions and benevolent citizens like Girard and Helm would help direct those interests through prudent regulation and could protect citizens from each other. This vertical management made the marketplace less the breeding ground of distrust and corruption of classical republicanism and more a safe place to display and exercise fellow citizenship, which, in turn, opened citizenship practice to a wider range of citizens, identified by their ability to observe protocols of politeness and sociability.³⁶

Yet, could the city, let alone the nation, depend on such a division of civic responsibility? How could these citizens reconcile the apparent weakness of fellow citizenship in the face of crisis with its ostensible success in more stable times? In the absence of a robust civic structure, the relief effort—at least in Carey's *Account*—turned into a market, and the benignly self-interested turned into inhumane deserters or extortionists, their activities too unethical for civic

republican discourse to absorb and their work too dependent on wages, their bodily sacrifice too tainted by profit-motive, for his classical virtue to applaud. The problem, then, turns not simply around inclusion or exclusion, but rather around notions of the common good and, ultimately, the role of interests in constructing or obstructing the pursuit of this good, and how persons—strangers and friends alike—ought to relate to one another when the “law” of “self-preservation” and the needs of the community collide.

Carey’s *Account* does offer possible solutions outside of this tiered structure, even if his narrative perspective tends to obscure them. Carey mentions neighboring cities like Springfield, NJ, and Elkton, MD, that offered refuge to their fellow citizens, suggesting that such towns offer models for the “humanity and tenderness” other states ought to show their neighbors if such a crisis should return.³⁷ While elaborating on scenes of horror, Carey also reveals that people *were* on the streets of Philadelphia assisting the suffering, but these others were not included in the “nearest and dearest relations” nor were they “respectable citizens” or members of the relief committee. While his narrative calls the audience’s attention to the “cries” of a pregnant woman surrounded by her dead family and without a midwife, he also mentions “one of the carters employed by the committee for the relief of the sick,” who helped her deliver her child.³⁸ Elsewhere, “respectable women” depend on “servant women for assistance.”³⁹ Each instance provides an opportunity for Carey to meditate on the potential virtues of these lesser sorts who also risked their lives during the crisis to help neighbors in the same way that neighboring cities offered assistance to fleeing Philadelphians, yet both of these scenes foreground the abandonment, rather than the service, ending with reiterations of the “dreadful spectacle.”⁴⁰ Moreover, in calling attention to Girard’s wealth, Carey’s narrative implies that only citizens of

means and “respectability” could muster the requisite resolution to act and that their force of will carried the common folk with them.

Among the workers overlooked in Carey’s *Account* were Philadelphia’s black citizens. Even when they make positive contributions, Carey uses the necessity for the presence of *these* people as a sign of the community’s breakdown: without the people representing the “nearest and dearest” connections in society, the “wives, children, friends, clerks, and servants,” Carey explains, “many men of affluent fortunes...have been abandoned to the care of a negro.”⁴¹ Carey’s distinction between waged service and benevolence becomes even more apparent as he excepts the Negroes from the “nearest and dearest” of the community, and their aid does not fit within the expected system of civic recovery. The civic republicanism that depended on notions of “natural” relationships, like familial bonds, or disinterested benevolence to define social relations had no interpretive frame for valuing their work as legitimate practices of citizenship. These scenes instead signal the overall breakdown of white community during the epidemic: white readers see images of an abandoned city, left to pilfering, poor black people without having to acknowledge white absence or cowardice.⁴²

More than symbols of white absence, however, black Philadelphians come to represent corruptive elements at work during the crisis. Just after praising Absalom Jones and Richard Allen for organizing free African relief workers, Carey accuses (some) workers of extortion:

The great demand for nurses, afforded an opportunity for imposition, which was eagerly seized by some of the vilest of the blacks. They extorted two, three, four, and even five dollars a night for services that would have been well paid by a single dollar. Some of them were even detected in plundering the houses of the sick.⁴³

He further undermines their contribution by quoting from John Lining’s 1753 observation of black immunity in South Carolina, implying that the risks involved for them were minimal.⁴⁴

Tainted with commercial interest yet incompatible with civic republicanism’s regulatory schema,

black citizens presented both a visible threat to and a handy release valve for Philadelphia's post-fever anxieties.⁴⁵ They provided filler for the gaps in Carey's two-tiered civic republicanism, filler that could then be easily excised from the state's civic imaginary. Carey's *Account* reduces Jones, Allen, and Gray's efforts at best to the exceptions that proved the rule of the general dissipation of social bonds, at worst to shady market exchanges and outright theft.⁴⁶ It is not just that Carey's *Account* gives the impression of widespread black theft; rather, by emphasizing the distress of helpless citizens and the general abandonment while, as Jones and Allen suggest, upholding a select few, he often deemphasizes those who do offer assistance, missing an opportunity to explore citizenship practices that might actually work beyond the managerial elite. Even his account of black citizens enhances the notion that only a managerial elite of a community can access civic virtue. Jones, Allen, and Gray, like Girard and Helm, preside over an otherwise unsung and unruly laboring mass.

Where Carey sought to reassure people that the system works, that state and financial institutions could properly manage potentially destructive interests in normal conditions, Jones and Allen's *Narrative* suggests that perhaps this management is a crutch, a shell game in which citizens take advantage of the potential individual benefits of civic republicanism's adaptability to commerce while refusing to assume moral and political responsibility for how this commercial ethic could turn fellow citizens into antagonistic strangers.⁴⁷ The rest of this chapter focuses on *Narrative*'s account of individual citizens, contrasting it to Carey's managerial narrative to suggest a neighborly ethics of citizenship that could provide a stronger basis for active citizenship than the "natural" bonds or elite benevolence cited in Carey's *Account*. Whether or not Jones and Allen are explicitly taking on civic republican models of citizenship—they use terms like "sensibility" and "duty," sometimes ironically and at other times in ways that

implicate them within civic republican logic—we might usefully frame what *Narrative* offers as a third way, navigating between the layers of Carey’s tiered civic republicanism.⁴⁸

3. Response and Diagnosis: The Problem with Citizenship as Commerce

Published in January 1794 after the third edition of Carey’s *Account, A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People during the Late and Awful Calamity in Philadelphia in the Year 1793 and A Refutation of Some Censures, Thrown upon Them in Some Late* provides a chronology of black work during the epidemic, beginning with Jones, Allen, and William Gray’s voluntary efforts and the FAS and Free African Church’s (FAC) response to Mayor Matthew Clarkson’s call for assistance and ending with an accounting of the group’s expenditures and disposal of beds.⁴⁹ Jones and Allen also contest “kind assurances” of black immunity and set out counter “partial, censorious” accounts of the black workers as a response to not only Carey, but also, in Jones and Allen’s words, “the many unprovoked enemies who begrudge us the liberty we enjoy, and are glad to hear of any complaint against our colour, be it just or unjust.”⁵⁰

Read through *Narrative*’s analysis of the labor market during the epidemic and Jones and Allen’s experience as former slaves and free Africans, the civic breakdown during the epidemic was not unexpected. Rather, the stress it put on the civic body brought into sharp relief the structural instabilities of a civic republicanism predicated, as Gordon Wood explains, on “more a willingness to get along with others for the sake of peace and prosperity” than on the sense of shared responsibility for the common good, or fellow citizenship.⁵¹ While contemporaries like Carey claimed that Federalist regulatory structures could prevent fellow citizenship from collapsing under normal circumstances, *Narrative*’s account of the inability of institutions to regulate the market for relief workers emphasizes the limits of market structures in creating

relations between citizens when the underlying ethic governing citizenship practice depends on and encourages atomization and exploitation. Moreover, even as *Narrative* offers a productive critique of civic republicanism's economic valences, its inversion of Carey's style underscores how readily the economic rhetoric of interests can be manipulated to justify anything from benevolent service to the slave trade.

The commercial ethic that remained submerged or managed before the fever comes to a head during the crisis and seems to overpower official regulation. Mayor Clarkson, Jones, and Allen all attempted to regulate the cost of the relief efforts by employing workers through the city and other civic institutions.⁵² The presence of these regulations highlights the economic similarities between the moment of crisis and the city under normal conditions. Jones and Allen recount their meeting with Matthew Clarkson about the rising fees:

[Clarkson] sent for us, and requested that we would use our influence, to lessen the wages of the nurses, but informing him of the cause, i.e. that of the people over-bidding one another, it was concluded unnecessary to attempt any thing on that head; therefore it was left to the people concerned.⁵³

As Clarkson's response suggests, inflation not only overcame the city's ability to influence its workers, but also changed the nature of economic exchange itself. Clarkson, Jones, and Allen could "influence" the workers to lower their fees, because the workers were their employees and they provided a flat wage intended to make these services available to all, but the bidding war took the workers out of their direct employ. People offering *these* payments were operating squarely within a market in which their individual means and interests were their own concern. Since the workers were not setting the prices, but rather were responding to the effects of supply and demand with individual consumers dictating the price ceiling, neither the Mayor nor, perhaps, Jones and Allen saw a need to intervene, and even if they did, they could not.

Jones and Allen's emphasis on the forces of supply, demand, and self-interest reveals that the black workers' response to the market during the epidemic worked by the same logics that governed white activities before, during, and after the epidemic.⁵⁴ The "difficulty" of finding "persons...to supply the wants of the sick" and the increasing "applications" for services that *Narrative* describes during the fever parallels Carey's earlier description of the "number of applicants for houses" before the fever.⁵⁵ The "extravagant prices...paid" (the "two, three, four, and even five dollars a night" in Carey's *Account*) mirror the pre-fever increase of property values to "double, and in some treble what it would have been a year or two before."⁵⁶ In both Carey's *Account* and Jones and Allen's *Narrative*, the syntactic focus on environmental forces rather than individual choices—the presence or absence of an agent—absolves the actors of moral responsibility. Rents "had risen" in Carey's *Account*, without mention of the property-owners' agency as a factor in driving up prices. The nursing fees, however, increased because "the vilest of the blacks...eagerly seized" the "opportunity for imposition."⁵⁷ Here, Carey also mentions the increase in demand, but where the demand for housing drove rents (passively) up, the demand for nurses provided an opportunity for corruption that black workers actively pursued. Jones and Allen use much the same strategy, but inverted, contrasting the bidding war and those who were (passively) paid exorbitant prices to a "white woman" who "demanded" "six pounds" for her services.⁵⁸ Their inversion disarms Carey's racialization of economic corruption, demonstrating black virtue in the face of white inhumanity.

The facility with which Jones, Allen, and Carey manipulate commercial language demonstrates the slipperiness of the economic discourse more generally when applied as an ethical tool. The mirroring between *Narrative* and *Account* destabilizes the economic discourse they both use, however tenuous, ironic, or adversarial that use may be.⁵⁹ This indeterminacy

disrupts both Carey's and Jones and Allen's attempts to situate virtue or corruption in any one group.⁶⁰ Good citizenship from this perspective depends less on adhering to a set of ethical precepts than on maintaining the authority to set those precepts and to justify one's actions accordingly.

The parallels between commerce before and during the fever and *Narrative's* vindication of black laborers, then, offer a larger critique of how civic republican logic "protected and facilitated" the economic interests of a white elite, making self-interest, as Joyce Appleby posits, "a functional equivalent to civic virtue" that masks the maintenance of inequality.⁶¹ *Narrative's* juxtaposition of pilfering and privateering illustrates how official discourse produces this functional equivalency and its uneven results: "We know as many whites who were guilty of it [theft and extortion]," Jones and Allen write, "but this is looked over, while the blacks are held up to censure. —Is it a greater crime for a black to pilfer, than for a white to privateer?"⁶² The comparison indicts both black and white citizens for taking advantage of the breakdown during the fever to make a profit. Compared to "pilfer," however, "privateer" invokes a more pernicious attitude towards commerce that may be legal, strictly speaking, but also involves an antagonistic ethic that perhaps causes the waning virtue Carey notes in *Account's* opening lines.⁶³ Coming directly after a sentence focused not on white theft, but rather on people offering accounts that "[look] over" white theft while highlighting black criminality, "privateer" confronts the duplicity of official narratives and structures that essentially legalize white theft.⁶⁴ Just as a state's *letter of marque* authorizes the private citizen to approach "foreign" ships in a way that would amount to piracy under other conditions, the collective attitude towards commerce authorizes, if not encourages, citizens to approach each other in ways that would otherwise amount to theft, as if they were not just strangers, but also enemies.⁶⁵ During the

fever, white “victims” attempting to out-bid each other, though operating within accepted parameters of the market, were behaving in ways that turned neighbors into strangers, fellow citizens into foreigners.

The “functional” equivalency of self-interest and civic virtue breaks down when citizens are forced to choose between what the rules of commercial exchange allow them to do and what civic duty or fellow citizenship suggests they ought to do. Economic inequalities in place before the fever exacerbate this war-like relation, stripping the polite trappings of the market structure Kloppenbergs aptly describes as the “natural harmony of benignly striving individuals,” revealing it to be instead a free-for-all.⁶⁶ Jones and Allen explain:

when we procured [workers] at six dollars per week, and called upon them to go where they were wanted, we found they were gone elsewhere.... [U]pon enquiring the cause, we found, they had been allured away by others who offered greater wages, until they got from two to four dollars per day. We had no restraint upon the people. It was natural for people in low circumstances to accept a voluntary, bounteous reward.⁶⁷

People followed their “natural” inclinations, and individual means would control just how far these inclinations could go. If it was natural for people in Carey’s *Account* to abandon the “nearest and dearest,” was it not more natural for citizens to lay aside questions of fairness to strangers in the name of self-preservation and economic self-interest? This principle holds doubly true for “people in low circumstances,” who, unlike Girard and Helm, were not financially secure even before the fever.

Even as the fever brings this atomizing and antagonistic tendency to the surface, Jones and Allen had a ready analogue in an everyday reality sanctioned in civic republican society: the slave trade.⁶⁸ Just as Philadelphians attempted to outbid each other for services at the expense of their neighbors’ lives, slave owners battled each other for the lives of other human beings. And just as the “purchasers” of slaves, as Anthony Benezet put it, “[encourage] the Trade, [become]

partaker in the Guilt of it,” so, too, do these bidding citizens bear responsibility for the chaos their bidding engendered.⁶⁹ Notwithstanding Carey’s view of the Federal Constitution as a stabilizing force, black Americans were still subject to enslavement and the caprice of white interests, with the 1793 Fugitive Slave Law being only the most recent in a string of setbacks.⁷⁰ As Jones explains in a 1799 petition to the “President, Senate, and House of Representatives,” the law codified on the federal level the treatment of human beings “like droves of cattle.”⁷¹ While *Narrative*’s bidding war and a slave market are not the same, they do operate by similar premises. Neither Jones and Allen nor Mayor Clarkson has (or takes) authority to regulate these exchanges between yellow fever victims, citing the independence of economic exchanges between individuals in a way that parallels the federal government’s refusal to “interfere” with individual property rights and the rights of the several states for the sake of preserving the union.

The problem does not hinge completely on the absence or presence of regulation; rather, Jones and Allen’s emphasis on the bidding between buyers as the source of inflation coupled with the linguistic slipperiness of economic moralizing in both *Narrative* and *Account* reveal that no matter how enlightened self-interest might be, it is still an atomizing and antagonist ethic, one contrary to the notions of fellow citizenship Carey attempts to extrapolate from it. *Narrative* does not suggest that commerce in itself is corrupt, nor does it suggest that state and civic institutions should not have a hand in regulating commerce or providing a framework and direction for civic activity. Jones and Allen cite several black workers who charged for services, but always with the caveat that the worker “charged with exemplary moderation” or “enough for what she had done.”⁷² Recall also that Jones, Allen, and Gray worked with the city’s government to coordinate their efforts during the crisis, that the FAS and FAC were both institutions created to coordinate civic activities, and that Allen himself was an especially adept

businessman.⁷³ Rather, depending on a managerial elite (either the federal system, heroes like Girard and Helm, or civic leaders like Clarkson, Jones, and Allen) to insure that citizens work towards their own general welfare, or to simply protect citizens from each other, removes the need for citizens to be responsible to and concerned for each other, requiring only that they appear to be so. Even if, as Carey's *Account* claims, citizens' freedom to flee the city during the fever showcases the strength of republican governance, the implication that preventing wholesale abandonment of Philadelphians *by* fellow Philadelphians and those in neighboring states might have required a mandate points to weaknesses in the relation between the citizens themselves.

4. Solution: Neighborly Citizenship

Where Jones and Allen's vindication of black economic practices during the fever reproduces the tensions between interest and virtue in Carey's *Account*, how they narrate the activities of black citizens working outside this economy sets the social world on a different axis.⁷⁴ Even as *Narrative* inserts black citizens into the civic republican polity of feeling and virtue described in Carey's *Account*, its shift in narrative structure and emphasis disrupts not only the discourse's racial-economic valences—that is whether or not “negroes” and “servants” can be respectable citizens—but also undermines respectability as a measure of good citizenship and the individualistic ethos that measure promotes. Using Jones and Allen's distinction of a “real sensibility” and the FAS's reference to an “expressive language of conduct” as guides, we can frame what *Narrative* offers in its account of black citizens during the fever as an alternative practice of citizenship based on an ethics of neighborliness.⁷⁵ Neighborliness corresponds with the duty to the common good suggested in classical republicanism and embodied in Girard and Helm in Carey's *Account*, but with a potentially more democratic ethos of equality and inclusion,

demanding instead that neighbor-citizens serve the common good by serving each other, by being neighborly towards the individuals encountered in everyday life. This openness results in a permeable civic space, resembling more a dynamic web of associations based in mutual aid than a single sphere, a neighborhood rather than a market.

I use the term neighborliness to describe *Narrative*'s civic ethics here rather than piety, "Golden Rule," mutual aid, charity, or the like for three reasons: 1) Neighborliness emphasizes that this ethic operates between individuals in a way that creates a collective and that these interactions occur on terms of moral equality. This emphasis on horizontality, moreover, distinguishes neighborliness from cultures of benevolence, classical virtue, or sensibility. 2) The term connects Jones and Allen's investment in Christian ethics via the narrative formula of the parable of the Good Samaritan with their equal investment in developing a strong political structure for not only emancipation, but also full citizenship.⁷⁶ *Narrative* responds to a parallel question raised in the late-eighteenth-century U.S.: "Who is the good citizen?" 3) Consolidating this question under the term "neighbor" or "neighbor-citizen" also allows me to map how the Samaritan parable's emphasis on neighborliness as a matter of civic law informs Jones and Allen's larger project of emancipation and structural adjustment.

Rather than emphasize economic exchanges, *Narrative* registers neighborliness as a cultural practice in black citizens' "real sensibility": their quest to "be useful" and their "rendering services where extreme necessity called for it."⁷⁷ One case, mirroring familiar scenes of abandonment in Carey's *Account*, features the actions of a poor black man set against two others. The comparison between the three upends accepted civic roles and creates space for a more substantive critique and revision of not only how commentators like Carey applied civic republican logic, but also of the civic republican logic itself:

A poor afflicted dying man, stood at his chamber window, praying and beseeching every one that passed by, to help him to a drink of water; a number of white people passed, and instead of being moved by the poor man's distress, they hurried as fast as they could out of the sound of his cries until at length a gentleman, who seemed a foreigner came up, he could not pass by, but had not resolution enough to go into the house, he held eight dollars in his hand, and offered it to several as a reward for giving the poor man a drink of water, but was refused by every one...⁷⁸

The first half of this story follows the trajectory of Carey's account: Carey also mentions the plight of "poor" persons "without a human being to hand them a drink of water," "men of affluent fortune...abandoned to the care of a negro," and those whose money could not "procure proper attendance."⁷⁹ In these instances, Carey's two-tiered model falls apart. With expected neighbors failing and no one willing to risk infection for even a considerable fee of "five dollars," the suffering either die alone, die in the presence of a negro (which amounts to the same thing in Carey's *Account*), or, as in the case of a servant girl, die in a cart as the guardians of the poor attempt to find a home willing to take them in.⁸⁰ Where Carey's illustrations typically end, however, *Narrative* offers "a poor black man" who "came up" and not only "supplied the poor object with water," but also "rendered him every service he could."⁸¹ Punctuating the insufficiency of money as a motivating factor, when the gentleman offers to pay the black man to help the dying man, the black man responds: "Master...I will supply the gentleman with water, but surely I will not take your money for it."⁸²

While the poor black man's story undoubtedly offers a direct rebuttal to Carey's assertion of black inhumanity, particularly in his refusal of the gentleman's money, the black man also provides a more general view of citizenship practices missing in Carey's *Account*: an immanent sense of civic responsibility uncoupled from social status or economic motivation. The man's action demonstrates a "real sensibility" that compels him and other black citizens to move forward even as white neighbors hide or stand by because "the dread...was so general" as to

make friends “afraid of each other.”⁸³ Both groups show a kind of sensibility when confronted with a nearly overwhelming emotional tide—fear, horror, despair, pity, etc.—but black citizens’ sensibility becomes “real” through the “expressive language of conduct,” that is, when at sight of “others being so backward” they take responsibility for the abandoned.⁸⁴ *Narrative*’s sensibility becomes “real” or concrete only as it produces measures to alleviate the scene of suffering or need that initiated the sensible response. (Hence Jones and Allen’s position that their “services were the *product* of real sensibility.”⁸⁵)

The gentleman in *Narrative*’s vignette offers a useful point of contrast between a productive “real sensibility” and familiar eighteenth-century cultures of sensibility and benevolence. Despite the appearance of virtue in his attitude, the gentleman’s sensibility is no more effective than other citizens’ abandonment. His concern for the dying man results in inertia: “he could not pass by, but had not resolution enough to go into the house.”⁸⁶ He fulfills the expectation that a cosmopolitan gentleman be able to “relate to strangers, to share in the feelings of others, including social inferiors and even animals.”⁸⁷ The anonymous writer of “Observations on Sensibility, or Felling, as Opposed to Principle,” a 1791 article in Carey’s *American Museum*, explains, “This [concern] is the work of an *unprincipled man of feeling*, whose nerves with peculiar irritability, can tremble every hour at the touch of joy or woe; whose finely-fibred heart would thrill perhaps with horror at the sufferings of—a fly.”⁸⁸ The public display of sensibility, “Observations” continues, “supplies the want of religion...[,] appears more lovely than all the virtues,” and provides a benevolent analogue to the functional equivalency of self-interest.⁸⁹ The gentleman *feels* for the stranger very publically (he was standing on the streets) without a concomitant identification of the stranger as one who, more than an “inferior,” requires the gentleman to overcome his irresolution.

In contrast to the poor black man who moves to help the dying man, the gentleman tries to move capital instead, “[holding] eight dollars in his hand,” implicitly valuing the poor dying man’s needs or the value of his own good citizenship at eight dollars in the process.⁹⁰ His willingness to use capital as a proxy, to stand by until the market produced an agent, alienates him from a potential neighbor, resulting in the kind of complacency that created the economic crisis before the fever, and a climate of exploitation during the fever. His attempt, like Carey’s *Account*, shifts attention away from his inability to help, calling attention instead to those for whom his fee is not a sufficient motivator. Perhaps the gentleman even sees himself as a helpless victim of both the dread the man’s wails cause and the manifest inhumanity of passersby.⁹¹ Juxtaposed against the poor black man, the gentleman’s inertia becomes less about the gentleman’s helplessness in an unwilling market than about the insufficiency of simple sensibility in general as a guide for civic action.

Narrative’s analysis of those like the “gentleman,” people of status and means looking to pay others for services, suggests that looking upward for models of good citizenship reveals a civic inadequacy that may be all the more dangerous because it is cloaked in performances of sensibility and class expectations rather than in an active “real sensibility.” Where the seemingly “natural” bonds between citizens (family, friends, servants, and neighbors) fail and the gentleman’s sensibility and finances prove ineffective (or, as in the previous discussion, counterproductive), the poor black man offers a third way, a neighborly ethics predicated neither on the claims of sociability or kinship nor on performances of sensibility and benevolence. Like the rank-and-file citizens, the man has no claim to respectability—*Narrative* describes him simply as “good natured”—; like the gentleman, he cannot simply walk by. Absent any obvious tie to the dying man or social expectation of virtue, the poor black man nevertheless steps

forward, his “real sensibility,” or piety in the FAS’s terms, providing the cosmopolitan link with the stranger even as the gentleman’s sensibility fails.

Through the comparison between sensibility and real sensibility, Jones and Allen, like many late-eighteenth-century writers, were attempting to distinguish between sensibility as a physiological and performative response to outside stimuli and an ethical imperative to act regardless of the presence or absence of a sensible reaction or empathy.⁹² These pedagogical and literary discussions turned to schemes for regulating sensibility through the cultivation of reason, contrasting sensibility to teachable principles like charity. “Observations,” for instance, claims the person who “possessed but a small degree of feeling” could still exercise charity, because charity “consisteth in the subjection of the mind to known duties.”⁹³ “A steady, uniform principle, unconnected with passion, and founded on reason and on truth,” charity was thus available to all citizens willing to submit to its teachings.⁹⁴ Indeed, charity more obviously aligns with the notion of piety that the FAS forwards, contrasting to sensibility as it prompts one to “heal the wounds of the afflicted, to soften their sorrows, and to succour the wretch that struggles with adversity,” whether one emotionally identifies with this suffering or not.⁹⁵ And while *Narrative* does not use separate terms to differentiate between “sensibility” as a physiological response and “real sensibility” as a principle, the contrast between the gentleman’s inertia and the poor black man’s activity, his “language of conduct,” suggests that the difference between the two—sensibility and real sensibility—corresponds to “Observation’s” opposition of sensibility to charity and the FAS’s invocation of piety.

The parable of the Good Samaritan provides a useful parallel text, connecting events in *Narrative* to the FAS’s notion of the pious person as good citizen of the world, and offering a vocabulary for articulating the kind of relation between citizens that “real sensibility” or charity

should produce.⁹⁶ Reading the *Proceedings of the Black People* through the parable's narrative formula, a formula that would have been familiar to Jones and Allen's readers, we see how the strategy of inversion moves beyond setting black virtue against white inhumanity.⁹⁷ The conversation between Jesus and a lawyer about law and civic responsibility frames a moment in which Jesus pivots on received understandings of the law to offer a more expansive notion of who is the neighbor, or to whom the good citizen should be responsible and responsive. When a lawyer questions Jesus about eternal life, Jesus responds with a question of his own: "What is written in the law?" The lawyer replies, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul...strength, and...mind; and thy neighbor as thyself."⁹⁸ Jesus tells the lawyer that he has answered correctly, but, not to be outdone, the lawyer asks a logical follow-up question: "And who is my neighbor?" Rather than answer the lawyer's question—"who is my neighbor?"—by describing the set of people whom the lawyer should love, and thus offering a restricted notion of neighborliness, Jesus offers a parable, a case study, outlining the characteristics of the neighbor as the subject, sensible to another's suffering, in action⁹⁹:

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.¹⁰⁰

As in Jones and Allen's vignette, the parable features an injured man in need of assistance. Respected community leaders and fellow Jews—symbols of the civic and moral good—recognize the man's suffering, but go out of their way to avoid helping him. Instead, a Samaritan not only aids the man, but also insures his safety until his recovery. The Samaritan, seeing past the mutual enmity between Jews and Samaritans, "discover[s] the neighbor" in the injured man and becomes the good neighbor, the keeper of the law who will "inherit eternal life," because he

acts as the neighbor rather than looking for the neighbor.¹⁰¹

This response has deep implications for the construction of community and citizenship as a point of civil law going beyond a simple moral query. In the context of the Mosaic Law, legal scholar Jeremy Waldron explains, love thy neighbor “is emphatically not a moralistic add-on to a legal code,” but rather, the maxim “sums up the spirit of the legal code.”¹⁰² Using a Samaritan—a people viewed by Jesus’ audience as a lower caste or culturally and religiously abject—as the model of neighborliness, Jesus shifts the audience’s focus from finding the neighbor amongst themselves to finding the neighbor-citizen within themselves, and, in so doing, expands the boundaries of “my neighbor” beyond respectability (“respectable citizens”), genealogy (whiteness), or political status. The onus falls on the sensible citizen’s ability to see the neighbor-citizen in the other person rather than on the other to demonstrate respectability to an already-constituted community.¹⁰³ The mark of the good neighbor-citizen, and the good community by extension, becomes not simply the ability to extend boundaries over an increasingly diverse set of neighbors, but rather the ability to make this extension on terms of equality.

Each case, the parable of the Good Samaritan and Jones and Allen’s *Narrative*, inverts audience expectations to reveal an ethics of neighborhood that foregrounds the citizen’s choice to be the good neighbor. Just as the parable uses narrative inversion to critically re-evaluate the terms of the lawyer’s question, “And who is my neighbor?” *Narrative* interrogates late-eighteenth-century questions about the ethical relation between citizens by thinking about the kinds of relations the good citizen should actively produce rather than the inverse, how to produce the good citizen (an idea to which I will return shortly). *Narrative* answers *Account*’s implicit query—who is my fellow citizen, who is the good neighbor—by reproducing some of

Account's key scenes from the perspective people of a caste—"servant," "negro," "foreigner"—neglected in Carey's *Account*. Through this narrative formula, *Narrative* suggests that the good citizen has a duty "to do all the good" he or she can towards "suffering fellow mortals,"¹⁰⁴ that is, to approach others as equals, not simply out of a desire not to offend, but rather out of a position of proactive goodwill. Such contact, "conducted in a mode of good will" across social boundaries (between Samaritans and Jews, free African and white citizens, strangers, etc.), as Samuel R. Delany would later explain, "is the locus of democracy as visible social drama," providing "the lymphatic system of a democratic metropolis."¹⁰⁵ In other words, Jones and Allen realized that the vision of and action towards others as neighbors (*Narrative*'s real sensibility) could create spaces that fostered horizontal relationships more conducive to democratic citizenship than could contemporary notions of tiered civic republicanism.

In the context of the fever, the implication of mutual responsibility in "suffering fellow mortals" should not be overlooked. Jones and Allen's multiple references to those in need as "suffering fellow mortals," rather than distinguishing between themselves and the people they helped as in Carey's repeated "respectable" or "benevolent" citizens suggests a sense of moral equality in the contingency of mortality and the "frailty of human nature," an acknowledgement that circumstance is the only difference between those in present need and those currently able to meet that need.¹⁰⁶ Everyone was susceptible to the fever—Gray dies of the fever and Allen and Alexander Hamilton (who lived just a few houses down from Allen) contract the fever but recover—making death, or the threat of death, the great equalizer and making the shared vulnerability, the notion of fellow mortality, much more visceral.¹⁰⁷ If the fever itself offers an immediate social equalizer, the notion that everyone is vulnerable and that no one can "survive on self-interested negotiation alone," as Daniel Vickers posits of the early national backcountry

context, suggests a more fundamental codependence and equality.¹⁰⁸ This recognition of fellow mortality, of a shared condition, between individuals presupposes and affirms each person as having equal moral worth regardless of prior social, political, or economic status. That is, the neighborly citizen understands that benevolence means more than appearing virtuous; it means mutual aid: collective action against needs that threaten individual competence, in the recognition that a threat to the individual is, ultimately, a threat to all.

In this framework, neighborly citizenship happens in the day-to-day interactions between individuals, not as commercial agents, but rather as members of a community, collectively engaged in being “useful” to each other and sharing responsibility for their mutual wellbeing. *Narrative* illustrates this everydayness in figures like an “elderly black woman” who asks simply for “a dinner master on a cold winter’s day” as she “went from place to place rendering every service in her power without an eye to reward.”¹⁰⁹ The kind of exchange represented in the poor black woman’s movements across the city creates neighborhood rather than a market: a link between neighbors based on a “mutual relation,” as Jonathan Edwards explains, “equally predicable of both those between whom there is such a relation.”¹¹⁰ If we take seriously *Narrative*’s distinction between the woman’s request for dinner and her not having “an eye to reward,” the exchange—meeting a present need in return for security against a future need—fits within the framework of societies like the FAS in which members contributed to a general fund against the needs of its collective membership or others. In this case, the poor black woman makes an informal contribution to the collective and acknowledges her codependence with those to whom she makes her contribution in the same move. And while the woman’s example comes from a moment of extreme duress, like the Samaritan’s narrative, her actions in the crisis yield lessons for the post-fever world.

Such a practice could serve as a bulwark against the ballooning system of credit and atomizing market exchanges dominating the opening pages of Carey's *Account* and the echoes of the slave market that haunt Jones and Allen's *Narrative*. The elderly woman understands that while the "reward" may not be immediate or public, so long as the overall community follows the ethic of neighborliness, everyone benefits. This neighborliness corresponds with Thomas Paine's figure of society as a "great chain of connection" created by "the mutual dependence and reciprocal interest which man has upon man, and all the parts of civilised community upon each other."¹¹¹ Such a dynamic form of association suggests a turn from the capitalist citizenship proffered by Carey to a classical republican notion of civic duty—recognition that being a good neighbor-citizen means sharing responsibility for the community's well being. Yet, it also builds on a late-eighteenth-century sense of democratic voluntarism and equality that shrinks the scope of neighborliness from a broad notion of the "common good" and abstract humanity to more of an everyday sense of individual relations.¹¹² It retains the openness of late-eighteenth-century politeness and sociability, but focused less on their middle-class or performative valences and more on the material usefulness of such gestures.

By reading *Narrative* through the parable's familiar formula, then, we see real sensibility as a mode of neighborly citizenship, the good neighbor-citizen producing neighborhood through an immanent impulse not only to identify with the stranger, but to approach the stranger as neighbor, as a fellow mortal of equal moral worth in a mutually dependent community.¹¹³ This account of black citizens during the fever, then, not only shows the weakness of social status as an indicator of civic virtue, but also offers neighborliness as a citizenship practice that creates horizontal relationships between citizens where civic republicanism would suggest hierarchy and allow abandonment. In this framework, the poor black man's labor deserves as much "credit" as

Girard's; or, rather, their efforts during the fever represent a common, neighborly citizenship that white neighbors in *Narrative's* vignette do not practice.

5. Experiments in Structural Neighborliness

In the preceding sections, I have contrasted the civic and narrative schematics of Carey's *Account* and Jones and Allen's *Narrative* to outline an ethics of neighborliness, a civic ethos animated by a sensibility made material or "real" through concrete actions. The neighborly focus on being useful to others, on being a good neighbor rather than finding the good neighbor, creates bonds between citizens independent of other forms of association—familial, racial, economic, national, etc. While, as I have suggested, neighborliness ultimately manifests in concrete actions between individuals, its logics have implications for how civic institutions take shape and the criteria by which people are integrated as citizens. Neighborly practices ultimately produce neighborly institutions; the ethos and actions that characterize the neighborly citizen also characterize the neighborly institution.

Granville Sharpe and other anti-slavery activists, for example, take up the political resonances of neighborliness via the Samaritan's narrative to articulate a global notion of belonging.¹¹⁴ In *The Just Limitation of Slavery in the Laws of God* (1776) Sharpe explains, "No nation therefore whatever, can now be lawfully excluded as *strangers*, according to that uncharitable sense of the word *stranger* in which the Jews were apt to distinguish all other nations from themselves... *all men* are now to be esteemed '*brethren and neighbours*.'"¹¹⁵ Benjamin Banneker uses a similar approach in his 1791 letter to Thomas Jefferson, reprinted as a pamphlet with Jefferson's response in Philadelphia in 1792 and in *Banneker's Almanac for 1793*:

it is the indispensable duty of those, who maintain for themselves the rights of human nature, and who possess the obligations of Christianity, to extend their power and

influence to the relief of every part of the human race, from whatever burden or oppression they may unjustly labor under.¹¹⁶

Sharpe and Banneker use logics of neighborliness to combine an appeal to moral equality with a call for social justice. First, they establish the equality of all people—enslaved and free, European and African—as a moral and, in Sharpe’s argument, a legal principle extending beyond the confines of a single nation or state, an equality stated in religious precepts yet applicable to a secular state. For Sharpe, the Samaritan parable’s articulation of neighborliness suggests that nations can no longer use national differences, however defined, to justify the oppression or exclusion of others: all nations and peoples are to be respected. Second, they argue that acknowledging this moral equality, what Banneker translates into secular terms as “those inestimable laws, which preserved to you the rights of human nature,” requires the state and/or the individual to actively work so that not only slaves, but also “every individual, of whatever rank or distinction” can “equally enjoy the blessings thereof.”¹¹⁷ For Sharpe, this principle underwrites part of the legal case against British slavery. For Banneker, it sets up emancipation and social justice as litmus tests for the “sincerity” of early U.S. republicanism.

Read through Sharpe, Banneker, and the FAS, the ethics of neighborliness modeled in *Narrative* is not a supplement to republican citizenship. Rather, neighborliness gets to the heart of the kind of society republican governance is meant to produce: one in which citizens feel a duty to apply, in Banneker’s words, “the most active effusion of [their] exertions” to ensure that all people have equal access to the benefits thereof.¹¹⁸ Or, to put it in terms familiar to *Narrative*, they have a “duty to do all the good” they can for their “suffering fellow mortals,” because it is the best way to secure the good of all.¹¹⁹ Just as the good neighbor makes neighbors out of strangers, the good citizen or the good state makes citizens out of strangers.

Narrative's other components, including addresses to "Those Who Own Slaves, and Approve of the Practice," "To the People of Color," and to the "Friends of Him Who Hath No Helper," take up these principles and shift focus from immediate events to "a refutation of some censures."¹²⁰ Jones and Allen's "*Refutation*"—a term commanding the same typeset in the pamphlet's title as "*Narrative*," suggesting that the two modes of address were coextensive—encompasses answers to developing theories of racial difference and political solutions to Thomas Jefferson's query: "What further is to be done with them?"¹²¹ The *Narrative* proper was of paramount importance, but not necessarily the document's central focus, providing a case study for the kind of citizenship that could take shape after emancipation, a test not only of black civic freedom, but also of the kind of civic space that could result from contact between ostensible strangers. The addresses, in turn, make explicit the paradigms implicit in the *Narrative*'s account of neighborliness, applying its example to a broader agenda centered not just on emancipation, but also the full incorporation of free Africans as U.S. citizens.

During the fever, the FAS and FAC became increasingly integrated with Philadelphia's civic structure: they paid workers, bleed victims, vet volunteers, and Clarkson went to Jones and Allen for help regulating rising fees. They provided a bridge between the work of the official committee and city government and those citizens outside this official organization. Prisoners wanting to volunteer, for instance, applied to the elders of the FAC "who met to consider what they could do for the help of the sick," and it was under their supervision that the prisoners "were liberated, on condition of their doing the duty of nurses at the hospital at Bush Hill."¹²² The transaction showed the FAC supplementing and, in some cases, replacing the gutted government infrastructure with their own chain of command. Instead of calling on the mayor or the official

relief committee, prisoners, many of them black, “apply” to the elders of the African Church. In the absence of a court, the black religious organization filled in the judicial gap.

Where, as several critics have suggested, yellow fever accounts typically linked blackness with the chaos and “dissolution” the crisis caused, *Narrative* links it with good management and restoration.¹²³ As the crisis increased, so did the FAS and other black citizens’ role in the city’s infrastructure.¹²⁴ Tellingly, it is in the context of this work that Rush calls Jones and Allen “two African citizens” in his own *Account*.¹²⁵ Similarly, while describing the state of disorder at Bush-hill, *Narrative* reports, “only two black women were at this time in the hospital, and they were retained and the others discharged, when it was reduced to order and good government.”¹²⁶ These women of “good character” symbolize the ordinary black folk whose significance has only now reached the light of day.¹²⁷ And through them, black presence becomes a central ingredient in the city’s return to “good government.”¹²⁸ Rather than a threat to citizenship and government, as in Carey’s *Account*, the yellow fever epidemic opens up avenues for citizenship for Jones, Allen, and other black citizens called upon to fill in the gaps in white civic organization.

This confidence and managerial acumen presents a measure of stability within Philadelphia’s moment of crisis as well as the suggestion that internally, the free African community has its *own* institutions that shadow and, during the fever and the crisis of white government, function *more efficiently than* the white-run government. In this context, the *Narrative* not only showcases black benevolence or sentiment, but more importantly, it demonstrates the strength of black *institutions* with their own “peculiar” brand of republican self-government providing an ethics and structure to guide a black civil society, Jones and Allen acting as representatives between it and the city’s other institutions.¹²⁹ These institutions

provided a tactical position, that is an internal organization and public presence, from which black citizens could not only “make use of the cracks” in established structures of power, but also structure their own projects in republican governance.¹³⁰ They had limited and uneven involvement with the city’s civic sphere before the fever, often petitioning the city for the ability to provide services for black communities that no other institution would.¹³¹ The FAS, for instance, arranged to lease part of Potter’s Field (formerly the city’s Stranger’s Burial Ground) from the city in 1790, conducted marriage ceremonies, and kept records of marriages and births.¹³² At times parallel to, and at times intersecting with white publics, this black counterpublic represented by the FAS and FAC “oscillates” between positions in relation to other publics.¹³³ The epidemic presented a momentary break in public and civic institutions that gave free Africans, the institutions they built, and other marginal groups the opportunity to practice citizenship on the public stage in ways heretofore limited by racial logics governing access to the public sphere.

Each of these moments demonstrates black citizens’ civic power, their desire for and implementation of modes of self-government, not just as free persons of color treated as “slaves of the community,” but as citizens who take control of their own civic presence and activities as partners in an increasingly dynamic civic arrangement.¹³⁴ The notion of management suggested in Carey’s civic republican model shifts from how institutions and the state can reign in or control variously interested constituencies to how institutions and the state can best empower and facilitate mutual aid amongst citizens. That is, the ethics of neighborliness animating individual actors in *Narrative* changes the relation between citizens and civic institutions. Where Carey’s respectable citizens show their respectability in terms of their management, *Narrative*’s leaders (Jones, Allen, Rush, Clarkson) enable other citizens to join in the collective recovery effort:

Clarkson reaches out to free Africans (even if under false pretenses), Rush trains Jones and Allen to bleed and tend the ill, the FAS, in turn, liberates and superintends prisoners, Jones and Allen train people as nurses, etc.¹³⁵ While *Narrative* does not eliminate all criteria for authority or inclusion—Jones and Allen report that they screened prisoners before releasing them—it does suggest that these criteria should be dynamically based on meeting the community’s needs. This ever-widening cast of societies suggests that the successes in Philadelphia’s recovery were not based on the strength of a virtuous elite, per se, but rather on the ability of its various constituencies to recognize the potential partner in each other.

The “Address to Those Who Own Slaves” expands the purview of their print exchange beyond Jones, Allen, and Carey to include “late publications” like Jefferson’s *Notes*, the correspondence between Jefferson and Banneker, and the ongoing struggle with Episcopal and Methodist governing bodies over the status of St. Thomas and Bethel churches.¹³⁶ At the same time, it builds on *Narrative*’s examples of the individual and collective efforts of black citizens during the fever and its model of an incorporative neighborly ethics of citizenship to propose an “experiment.” “We believe,” they write, “if you would try the experiment of taking a few black children, cultivate their minds with the same care, and let them have the same prospect in view, as to living in the world, as you would with your own children, you would find upon the trial, they were not inferior in mental endowments.”¹³⁷ Such a proposal responds to Jefferson’s wish in his reply to Banneker “to see a good system commenced, for raising the condition, both of their [slaves’] body and mind, to what it ought to be” as well as worries on both pro- and anti-slavery fronts that, once free, Africans would still be incompatible citizens.¹³⁸ Jones and Allen’s framing their response to racist logics as an experiment based on observation and experience combines Enlightenment and late-eighteenth-century empiricism and views of character as

malleable, open to “cultivation” through proper care.¹³⁹ Ultimately, “Address” harnesses neighborliness as both citizenship practice and empirical method to produce a formula for black citizenship.

To claims that the slaves’ “baseness is incurable” or, as Jefferson argues, “the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind,”¹⁴⁰ Jones and Allen present their own “degree of experience”:

a black man, although reduced to the most abject state human nature is capable of, short of real madness, can think, reflect, and feel injuries, although it may not be with the same degree of keen resentment and revenge, that you who have been and are our great oppressors, would manifest if reduced to the pitiable condition of slave.¹⁴¹

Just as black citizens displayed more real sensibility during the fever, enslaved Africans have maintained a remarkable degree of humanity even in the midst of their enslavement. The passage directly confronts Jefferson’s claims that enslaved Africans’ “griefs are transient,” that “afflictions...are less felt, and sooner forgotten,” with not only the suggestion that Africans feel as deeply as Europeans, but that Jefferson and others’ expectations of “resentment and revenge” bespeak more a white propensity for violence or revenge than the lack of feeling on the part of the enslaved.¹⁴² The “Address” opens with the suggestion that looking for “superior good conduct” from the enslaved would be “unreasonable,” and yet “experience” has shown Jones and Allen that enslaved Africans also exceed reasonable expectations. The double move questions standard paradigms for measuring the humanity of slaves and recalibrates the comparison from one between ancient Greeks and Romans to one between contemporary enslaved Africans and their white masters. Again, the comparison gestures back to *Narrative*’s scenes of black citizens overcoming the dread of the moment—a dread they shared with white citizens—as they went about their work. Both points emphasize black self-regulation over white self-interest; both

points build on Jones and Allen's experiential authority and narrative perspective, not necessarily to question the effects of enslavement or standards of civilization, but rather to suggest that white observers like Jefferson do not have sufficient experience to report accurate data.

Narrative establishes the importance of first-hand observation from the outset, suggesting that "respectable citizens" could not relate the proceedings of the black people, but rather had to solicit Jones and Allen's authority, "[seeing] that from our situation...we had it more fully and generally in our power, to know and observe the conduct and behavior of those that were so employed."¹⁴³ Jones and Allen's observations of the efficacy and nuances of bleeding as a cure—they note, for instance, that bleeding at the early onset of symptoms had greater effects than at later stages and that the patient's positive emotional state was correlated with recovery—further establish their empiricist credentials, their ability to analyze evidence and practically apply their conclusions. The "Address," in turn, applies this observational "power" as a counter not only to Jefferson, who appeals to scientific "experience" and his own "observations" in *Notes*, but also advocates like Rush, who eventually admits the fallacy of black immunity to the yellow fever, but who also thought black skin a curable condition.¹⁴⁴

Jones and Allen's request for the experiment of education combines this sensory empiricism with a neighborly civic and social ethos. Education was essential to the production of future citizens, and national debates about education swirled around questions of how best to educate citizens for republican citizenship. Rush, for instance, argues, "our Schools of learning, by producing one general, and uniform system of education, will render the mass of the people more homogeneous, and thereby fit them more easily for uniform and peaceable government."¹⁴⁵ He saw these institutions as training grounds "to convert men into republican machines."¹⁴⁶ The homogeneity many saw as essential to republican government could be produced through a

unified system of education, offsetting other points of difference. The students coming out of this system, joined in the same program of intellectual and physical instruction, will form “such ties to each other, as add greatly to the obligations of mutual benevolence.”¹⁴⁷ These ties reproduce the structures of neighborly contact created during the fever, structures that, if temporary, created a society based in mutual aid rather than competition or hierarchy.

The proposal of educating black children “with the same care” and “prospect in view” as white children challenges those who would try this experiment to try it in a neighborly frame. This “care” demands the same degree of rigor and breadth as that for white children, the same training for republican government, creating the same “ties” between them. Training black children with the same “prospect in view” suggests that they be trained for full political and economic participation in the republic as members of what Rush calls a “great, and equally enlightened family” in which benevolence flows horizontally between fellow citizens, rather than vertically between citizens and (their) former slaves or lesser sorts.¹⁴⁸ That is, they should be educated with the expectation of their contribution and with the assurance that access to the full range of liberties will be available to them. Beginning with children in their formative years would produce a new generation fit for participation in a “uniform and peaceable government,” because they would have received the same republican training that commentators like Rush prescribed for the general public. This approach contrasts sharply to the rhetoric of Jefferson or even antislavery activists like the Quaker-dominated PAS who viewed Africans, free and enslaved, as objects of study or benevolence, a problem to be solved, but rarely as partners or fellow citizens.¹⁴⁹

Neighborliness as an approach to emancipation, then, goes beyond momentary benevolence in the face of inequality and oppression, requiring instead structural adjustments

and long-term planning.¹⁵⁰ By suggesting a trial of educating children, rather than the trial of unaided emancipation (gradual or immediate) or a trial of giving freed slaves land and independence, the “Address to Those Who Own Slaves” subtly critiques the efficacy of gradual emancipation programs (or at least the logics of pupilage underwriting them), suggesting that emancipation and equal access to central institutions like education were inseparable. Just as the Samaritan of the New Testament or *Narrative*’s poor black man attend to the suffering beyond the immediate, short-term, injuries, so too must any project of emancipation be accompanied by a program of structural adjustment. This experiment requires a scientific approach to policy that rejects conventional wisdom, producing the fellow citizenship that racist logics preempt by encouraging a view of free and enslaved Africans as neighbor-citizens rather than potential threats. Such a program follows the neighborly logic articulated in both Banneker’s letter and *Narrative*: make the good neighbor’s incorporative move; do unto black children as you would your own, and they will become as your own children in the process.

Jones and Allen’s call for an educational experiment requires less a leap of faith on the part of white citizens and more a larger study building on the data Jones and Allen’s Philadelphia and other like “experiments” already provide. Though many were born into slavery, black Philadelphians have nevertheless learned how to be true republican citizens through their own experience and the tutelage of Anthony Benezet, Rush, and others.¹⁵¹ In the short time during the epidemic, and under intense duress, Jones, Allen, and others learn bleeding techniques from Rush (or more accurately from “copies of the printed direction for curing the fever”), coordinate a corps of nurses, carters, and other relief workers, and manage convict laborers.¹⁵² Individual black Philadelphians and black societies acted out of an ethics of neighborhood that sustained them where the bonds of society appeared to fail almost everywhere else. How much more

could black citizens, or any other marginalized group, contribute to the common weal if their children were given the advantage of a formal instruction under conditions in which success was expected? *Narrative* demonstrates that this community of black citizens, finding freedom during the crisis, has proven itself more than ready for the task of republican citizenship.

Recognizing the platform Carey's *Account* provided, Jones and Allen take the opportunity to extend their public liberties into spheres that were otherwise out of reach. They present neighborliness as a citizenship practice animated by a real sensibility that creates the permeable civic space. They then mobilize this political argument in the service an antislavery appeal and call for structural readjustments that would ease the transition between enslavement and citizenship. *Narrative* reveals the extent to which black print production reflects the inner-workings of black counterpublics, but it also suggests that even in such spaces, black writers sought and found ways to assert their own authority within civil society. Despite Jones and Allen's efforts, however, the coming decades were characterized more by decline and retrenchment than progress, a trend that would lead both men to reconsider their future in the U.S. and to give serious consideration to emigration projects.¹⁵³

Still, *Narrative* had an effect. On April 4, 1794, about four months after *Narrative*'s first printing, Carey issues a pamphlet ostensibly in response to a flyer by "Argus" accusing Carey of opportunism, but he also pointedly confronts Jones and Allen's *Narrative*.¹⁵⁴ By then, Carey's fourth edition had replaced his quotes from Lining about black immunity with a paragraph debunking the theory, and in the fifth edition he changes the section accusing black workers of extortion from the "vilest of the blacks" to "some of those who acted in that capacity [as nurses], both coloured and white."¹⁵⁵ Jones and Allen's words also inspired the coming generation of black activists. David Walker builds on their notion of world citizenship and piety in his *Appeal*;

Hosea Easton picks up the Samaritan formula in his *A Treatise on the Intellectual Character, and Civil and Political Condition of the Colored People of the U. States* (1837), arguing that only by acting “the part of the good Samaritan” can the nation “open an effectual door through which sympathies can flow, and by which a reciprocity of sentiment and interest can take place”;¹⁵⁶ and Robert Purvis cites events during the fever in his 1837 defense of black suffrage in Pennsylvania, asking, “Does this speak an enmity which would abuse the privileges of civil liberty to the injury of the whites?”¹⁵⁷ Purvis’s words seem to echo Jones and Allen’s. Each case references 1790s Philadelphia as a touchstone in the theoretical and historical development of black citizenship.

Narrative combines two central threads that subsequent chapters will unfold in more detail: black writer’s engagement with the critical political concerns of their day as a function of their own lived experiences and how the texts they produce operate within a web of publics and audiences.¹⁵⁸ Neighborliness does not eliminate interests or disagreement altogether. Indeed, a neighborly approach to citizenship requires a mode of participatory politics that maximizes contact and exchange between citizens to ensure that one citizen’s neighborliness does not turn into unilateral oppression.¹⁵⁹ It is to the role of participatory politics in citizenship that this dissertation now turns. The activists in the coming years become even more focused on formal political participation, but, as the black state conventions reveal, the results are also more paradoxical. As the next chapter demonstrates, negotiating the contending imperatives of practical political ends, contemporary political discourse, and the need to persuade an increasingly hostile white public produced performative texts that provide a meta-commentary on the nature of U.S. citizenship.

¹ “Reply of the Free African Society (Philadelphia, PA) to the Union Society of Africans (Newport, RI) October 1789” in William Douglass, *Annals of the First African Church in the United States of America, Now Styled the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: King & Baird, 1862), 28-29.

² Ibid., 28-29. David Walker picks up this same notion of global citizenship in addressing his Appeal to “The Colored Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America.”

³ Ibid., 29.

⁴ While civic republicanism was a more consolidated philosophy than either liberalism or market capitalism by the late-eighteenth century, how speakers and writers deployed its concepts was not. My discussion of republicanism in this chapter follows scholars like Gordon Wood, Rogers Smith, Joyce Appleby, and others who suggest that the meanings of these ideas were amorphous, more a “style” of speaking about and organizing social and political interactions than a coherent ideology. Not every invocation of republicanism invoked these concepts in the same way or towards the same ends.

Thinking about political discourse in terms of style allows me to attend to how Jones and Allen were attempting to mold emergent republican ideals into a more inclusive practice of citizenship while remembering Joanna Brooks’s caution that we not read early African American writers as grafting wholesale dominant discourses, but rather to take into account their articulation and construction of “counterpublics” and “countercultures” of modernity in constant negotiation with the white publics surrounding them. Jones, Allen, and others were engaged quite deeply in questions of self-governance and representation, as evidenced in the constitution of the Free African Society and their negotiations between the Episcopal and Methodist denominations in the late eighteenth century, and Protestant Christian and republican discourses provided useful vocabularies through which they could navigate these political problems. See Gordon S. Wood’s Preface to the 1998 edition of *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), v-xiv, and *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1992); Dean Hammer, *The Puritan Tradition in Revolutionary, Federalist, a Whig Political Theory: A Rhetoric Of Origins* (New York: Lang, 1998); Robert Hariman, *Political Style: The Artistry of Power* (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1995); Joyce Appleby, “Republicanism in Old and New Contexts,” in *William & Mary Quarterly* 43 (January 1986): 3–34; and *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); James T. Kloppenberg, “The Virtues of Liberalism: Christianity, Republicanism, and Ethics in Early American Political Discourse,” *The Journal of American History* 74, no. 1 (June 1987), 9-33; and Daniel T. Rodgers, “Republicanism: The Career of a Concept” *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 1 (June 1992): 11-38.

Roger Smith’s multiple traditions hypothesis in *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) has been useful in helping me think about how these discourses, though separate, have worked together to shape racially ascriptive civic policies in the U.S. More recently, see Andreas Kalyvas and Ira Katznelson *Liberal Beginnings: Making a Republic for the Moderns* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2008), which argues that republicanism characterizes the spirit, the style in Hariman’s account, or the discourse through which the problems of government and politics were confronted and articulated.

⁵ Recently, several literary critics and historians have focused particular attention on this exchange between Matthew Carey and Absalom Jones and Richard Allen. While the general critical consensus seems to be that Jones and Allen’s *Narrative* functions not only as a response to Carey’s claims, but also, as a complex interaction with figurations of race, rights, and citizenship in Philadelphia and the nation at large, analysts tend to disagree over how exactly the narrative accomplishes this end or, more importantly, how effectively. For the sake of brevity and clarity, I have divided these critical strains into three groups: 1) appropriation of and engagement with enlightenment principles and market capitalism; 2) religious revision; and 3) African-American community cohesion and engagement with slavery.

The first reading suggests that *Narrative* appropriates the language of the enlightenment and republican values in a way that, while gaining them entrance into the reading public, nevertheless destabilizes Jones and Allen’s claims. Phillip Gould, for instance characterizes the rhetorical tension in *Narrative* as a contradiction in Jones and Allen’s attempting to claim enlightened benevolence based on their sacrifice, while simultaneously characterizing price inflation as a result of market capitalism rather than individual greed. The result, argues Gould, is a narrative that at once dismisses economic loss as irrelevant and at the same time is obsessed with recouping the losses. The second critical frame places *Narrative* within the African-American literary tradition of using biblical tropes and metaphors to engage with political oppression. In this vein, Joanna Brooks has argued that *Narrative* uses identifications with biblical narratives to create a “covenant theology as an overarching context for African-American experience” that, while echoing republican rhetoric, did so to create their own political thought based on “the African-American experience in America.” Reading early African American writing through the lens of dominant structures like republicanism and liberalism, Brooks warns, elides the “processes of contestation” through

which these writers mobilized dominant discourses as tropes in the service of articulating a politics “faithful to collective experience and useful to black emancipation” (“Early” para 24-25).

The third assessment of *Narrative* tends to come from historians who place the text’s concerns within the context of Jones, Allen, and other African Americans’ lived experience and their engagement with white anti-slavery activists. They tend to focus on ways that early African-American writers like Jones and Allen used affect to persuade their readers. As Richard Newman observes, “[w]hereas white reformers used learned arguments to ‘persuade the liberal mind’ of the elite, blacks sought to stir the ‘feelings’ of a broader American public by means of literary tactics like pamphleteering” (*Transformation* 88). More recently, Newman has called critical attention to Jones, and particularly Allen, as “black Founders” whose work we should read as participating in common with white founders in the project of “nation-building and republican citizenship” (*Freedom’s Prophet* 22-23). Other scholars like Philip Lapsansky link Jones and Allen’s narrative to the African-American population’s efforts to demonstrate “social progress” in order to make claims for equal rights and abolition.

Because these arguments exist on more of a continuum, my divisions among their strategies are provisional at best. And, while it may be tempting to read these paradigms as oppositional, we will gain a more productive understanding of early African American politics and letters if we think of them as imbricated modes within the same expressive political culture. The very nature of Jones and Allen’s text resists attempts to pinpoint one overarching strategy. Rather, as we shall see, *Narrative* works on several registers at once through metaphor and form. African-American writing actively engaged in the early national print sphere even as it developed traditions and conventions (or an interlocking sphere) of its own. *Narrative* demonstrates African-American writers’ attempts to shape dominant religious and political discourses towards their own purposes, through their own unique experiences of slavery, semi-freedom, and oppression.

See Philip Gould, “Race, Commerce, and the Literature of Yellow Fever in Early National Philadelphia.” *Early American Literature*. 35, no. 2 (2000): 176-78; Joanna Brooks, *American Lazarus: Religion and the Rise of African-American and Native American Literatures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 154, and “The Early American Public Sphere and the Emergence of a Black Print Counterpublic” *William and Mary Quarterly* 62 (January 2005): par 25, historycooperative.org.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/journals/wm/62.1/brooks.html; Richard S. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 88, *Freedom’s Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black founding Fathers* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 22-23, and the *William and Mary Quarterly* Forum on “Black Founders in the New Republic” 64, no. 1 (January 2007). See also Gary Nash’s *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia’s Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988) for a discussion of Philadelphia’s African-American population’s building civic organizations in Philadelphia as a counter to white exclusion. Nash links the events during the yellow-fever epidemic to a larger “Black Revolution in Philadelphia” (Nash, 120-123).

⁶ Jones and Allen, *A Narrative of The Proceedings of the African American People, During the Late Awful Calamity in Philadelphia, in the Year 1793: And a Refutation of Some Censures, Thrown upon Them in Some Late Publications. By A.J. And R.A.* (Philadelphia: William W. Woodward, 1794), galenet.galegroup.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/servlet/ECCO, 10. Further References to *Narrative* refer to this imprint.

⁷ *Narrative* forms a part of a rich tradition of African American writing that Henry Louis Gates, Jr., characterizes as “signifyin(g),” the repetition of “received tropes and narrative strategies with a difference,” which suggests that the writer or speaker not only appropriates the dominant discourse but also changes, if only slightly, its resonance. That is, just as scholars have characterized early African American discourse as “double-voiced,” I am suggesting that the paradigms we use to think about them be equally flexible. If race was a “multi-headed hydra,” then it stands to reason that black politics was equally multi-headed. See Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 217. See also instance Robert B. Stepto’s germinal text on African-American narrative, *From Behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991) and Houston Baker, Jr.’s *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) for a discussion of the “artful evasion and illusion...in interracial exchange” (195-96). As literary critic Rafia Zafar explains, “[t]hrough literary masking, the use of literary genres and styles familiar to whites, black American writers gained access to an audience that had not previously believed the Negro had any rights worth respecting.” *We Wear the Mask: African Americans Write American Literature, 1760-1870* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 10.

⁸ “History before the fact,” Jehlen explains, “is uncertain, apparently redundant, and contingent; only retrospectively does it take on direction and determination” (690). See Myra Jehlen, “History before the Fact: Or, Captain John Smith’s Unfinished Symphony,” *Critical Inquiry*, 19 no. 4 (Summer 1993), 688, 690-691.

¹⁰ See Martin S. Pernick, “Politics, Parties, and Pestilence: Epidemic Yellow Fever in Philadelphia and the Rise of the First Party System” in *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation: The Public Response to the 1793 Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic*. eds. J. Worth Estes and Bill G. Smith, (Canton: Science History Publications, 1997), 11; and A. Kristen Foster, *Moral Visions and Material Ambitions: Philadelphia Struggles to Define the Republic, 1776-1836* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2004), 132.

¹¹ Carey, Matthew. *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* 2nd edition. (Philadelphia, 1793), galenet.galegroup.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/servlet/ECCO. All subsequent references to Carey’s Short Account refer to the second edition unless otherwise noted both because this is the edition to which Jones and Allen most likely respond, and because Carey alters later editions in part because of Jones and Allen’s critique. For an extended treatment of Carey’s publication history, including Short Account, see Sally Griffith’s “‘A Total Dissolution of the Bonds of Society’: Community Death and Regeneration in Matthew Carey’s Short Account of the Malignant Fever” in *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation: The Public Response to the 1793 Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic*. eds. J. Worth Estes and Bill G. Smith. (Canton: Science History Publications, 1997), 45-59. *Short Account* ran through five editions published in the U.S. and Europe and eventually sold “over 10,000 copies” (Griffith 47). The publication helped sustain Carey’s faltering career.

¹² See for instance Teresa A. Goddu, *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.); Philip Gould, “Race”; Robert S. Levine, *Conspiracy and Romance: Studies in Brockden Brown, Cooper, Hawthorne, and Melville* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Shirley Samuels, “Plague and Politics in 1793: Arthur Mervyn,” *Criticism* 27, no. 3 (Summer 1985), 225- 246; and Pernick, “Politics.” Statesmen like Alexander Hamilton, who was in the city during the crisis and survived his own bout with the fever, lamented that if fellow citizenship failed in the city during the crisis, then, as Richard Newman aptly summarizes, “the republic could not survive.” See Newman, *Freedom’s Prophet*, 87.

¹³ Benjamin Rush, for instance, argues that this belief in a higher power and a “future state” underwrites the virtue that leads to liberty and good republican government: “Without this, there can be no virtue, and without virtue there can be no liberty, and liberty is the object and life of all republican governments.” See *A Plan for the Establishment of Public Schools and the Diffusion of Knowledge in Pennsylvania; to Which Are Added Thoughts upon the Mode of Education, Proper in a Republic. Addressed to the Legislature and Citizens of the State* (Philadelphia: Dobson, 1786), 15

¹⁴ *Account*, 11.

¹⁵ *Account*, 11. As Joyce Appleby explains, “Far from pitting merchants against farmers, rich against poor, or the commercially inclined against the self-sufficient, the Jeffersonians assumed that a freely developing economy would benefit all.” See Appleby, *Liberalism*, 275. As “An Essay on the Utility of Newspapers in the United States,” an January 1, 1794 editorial in the *Philadelphia Gazette and Universal Daily Advertiser*, explains, the “property” provided a stronger call to patriotism in the early nation than did love of country, customs, religion or any number of other calls to nationalism: “Will not a Turk, or a Spaniard fight as bravely for his Koran or his Crucifix, as any Republican for his property? Let history; let facts decide.”

¹⁶ As Wood and others observe, the austerity of classical republicanism had become softened: “Virtue became less the harsh self-sacrifice of antiquity and more the willingness to get along with others for the sake of peace and prosperity” (216). Structures of politeness, love, and fellow feeling replaced fear and obligation; the market became a space where citizens could strengthen these bonds rather than the space of inherent corruption. By 1780s, no one was under the illusion that people were not self-interested. “As a result,” argues Eric Foner, “it was necessary to take great care in constructing governments, so as to balance competing group interests and prevent any one faction from attacking the liberty of others” (88). See *Radicalism*, 189-216, Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 88-93; Rogers, “Republicanism”; Kalyvas and Katznelson, 3-7; and Rogers Smith, *Civic*, 137-164. For a discussion of the “language of sin” used to suggest that political inactivity or inability to hold to the civic values of the community caused retribution, see Hammer, *Puritan Tradition*, 114.

¹⁷ *Account*, 9-10. Carey’s use of the term “anarchy” resonates with the Federalist’s fear of the spread of anarchy from the French Revolution. See Pernick, 120-122.

¹⁸ *Account*, 11. As Foner’s discussion of price control in the 1780s suggests, many these debates focused on merchants or other suppliers’ inflating prices in times of scarcity (*Tom Paine*, 146-148).

¹⁹ *Account*, 11-12.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 30, 31.

²² *Ibid.*, 30-31.

²³ The breakdown of familial ties crystalized the overall absence of “republican affection” during the crisis. The “self-love” that thinkers like John Adams argued worked outward from self to family to nation, etc., turned completely inward. See Wood, *Radicalism*, 219-221.

²⁴ *Account*, 31.

²⁵ Carey’s rhetoric, for instance, reproduces Hamilton’s warning of war between states in Federalist No. 8, the conditions of war between individuals in Philadelphia demonstrating the potential collapse resulting from the absence of a strong federal system: “The populous states would, with little difficulty, overrun their less populous neighbors. Conquests would be as easy to be made as difficult to be retained. War, therefore, would be desultory and predatory. PLUNDER and devastation ever march in the train of irregulars. The calamities of individuals would make the principle figure in the events which would characterize our military exploits.” Publius, “Federalist No. 8” in *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Clinton Rossiter (New York: Signet, 2003), 61.

²⁶ *Account*, 78-79.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 78.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

³¹ See Wood, *Radicalism*, for a description this republican “character” or civic humanist ideal that includes “integrity, virtue, and disinterestedness” (103). In this discourse, virtue depended on independence from the market and was less concerned with the “private virtues” Carey outlines in *Account’s* opening (e.g. “prudence, frugality, and industry), but rather what Wood describes as “public virtues”: “sacrifice of private desires and interests for the public interest...[, and] devotion to the commonweal” (104). Wealthy men, presumably like Girard and Helm, “had an obligation to serve the state” (104). By the end of the eighteenth century, this version of republicanism had been softened to a less demanding standard of politeness or sociability. Carey’s *Account* suggests that, stripped of the economic and political stability that rewarded this genteel behavior and made it more available to a wider range of people, this standard could no longer induce people to work towards a common rather than individual good. Put slightly differently, the yellow fever epidemic created a climate in which individual interests that once worked towards a general prosperity now worked against it. See also Kalyvas and Katznelson, 3, and David F. Ericson who differentiates between the “classical republicanism” of Cicero and the modern republicanism of Jefferson and Adams, which, in his analysis, reads more like a subset of liberalism in its emphasis on “liberty and happiness.” See Ericson, *The Shaping of American Liberalism: The Debates over Ratification, Nullification, and Slavery* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993), 3-5. Like Ericson, I read republicanism more as a political style, a set of ideas and rhetorical tropes, than as a coherent ideology or “historical force,” yet I do not read republicanism as a subset of an ascendant liberalism either. I am more persuaded by the argument of Wood and those who follow him that republicanism morphed into something resembling what we call liberalism in the U.S. between roughly the mid-eighteenth century and the mid-nineteenth centuries.

³² *Account*, 68.

³³ *Ibid.*, 95.

³⁴ My reading of Carey is informed by Ed White’s caution that we not lose sight of republicanism as a “lexicon” with “roots in the top-down managerial project of colonization” through which the battle to control the nation’s direction was waged. See *The Backcountry and the City: Colonization and Conflict in Early America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 9-10. This two-tiered model also corresponds with traditions of protective democracy that, as Michael Marinetto explains, “regarded the state as providing a legal and institutional framework that enabled individuals to live ordered lives whilst pursuing their selfish interests in a free market” (105). The active citizen becomes “banished” as governing is separated from the governed, allowing the citizen to pursue his or her own interests more freely. I use two-tiered civic republicanism here rather than “protective democracy” or other variant because I want to emphasize that this management structure includes both the state/government and the workings of civil society and the public sphere and to distinguish between the classical democracy of ancient Greece and the less directly democratic classical and civic republicanism of early modernity. See Marinetto, “Who Wants to Be an Active Citizen?: The Politics and Practice of Community Involvement” *Sociology*, 37, no. 1 (February 2003), 105; and David Held, *Models of Democracy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 74.

³⁵ As David Held explains of Madison's logic in the *Federalist Papers*: "The theoretical focus is no longer on the rightful place of the active citizen in the life of the political community; it is, instead, on the legitimate pursuit by individuals of their interests and on government as, above all, a means or the enhancement of those interests." See David Held, *Models of Democracy*, 74

³⁶ See Wood, *Radicalism*, 189-216; and Foner, *Tom Paine*, 88-93

³⁷ *Account*, 54-55.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 30-31.

⁴² Even before the yellow fever, Benjamin Rush was looking for a cure for black skin (Dain, 24). One of the most famous examples of the fear of blackness both as a contagious physical or moral disease and as the nation's original sin is Jefferson's "Fourteenth Query" in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, which expresses both a fear that the African-American presence in the U.S. will be its downfall as the two races cannot co-exist and a sense of dread for the day when a vengeful God would strike down the nation for slavery: "I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep for ever... The Almighty has no attribute which can take side with us in such a case" (*Notes*, 289). Jefferson's rationale evolved into justifications for black colonization by both whites and black, while Rush's science was a part of the burgeoning American ethnology. See Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* in *Writings* (New York: Library Classics of America, 1984); and Bruce Dain *A Hideous Monster of the Mind*; Jared Gardner *Master Plots: Race and the Founding of an American Literature, 1787-1845* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

Racial markers provided convenient signifiers for civic and social collapse. Black presence becomes metonymically linked to white absence such that the former takes moral pressure and culpability off of the latter during the fever. Brooks argues that Carey's language "reflects postemancipation anxieties about the meanings of race" as well as "the frailty of white fellow-feeling." Carey and others, Brooks continues, sought to establish "an inverted, oppositional relationship between the well-being of Philadelphia's white and black communities" through which vilifying and ostracizing one group could become the rallying cry of another. Brooks continues, "the medical error [African-American immunity] that endangers the black community is 'salutory' for whites; the fever which endangers the white community benefits black criminal 'opportunism': the fever seized upon whites, and blacks seized upon the fever. Black care givers become but another element of the epidemic assault on the white population" (*American Lazarus* 165-66). Philip Gould situates Carey's use of African-American Philadelphians as a metonym for the "failure of white benevolence" as well as fears of a mercantile economy spinning out of control "by likening 'blackness' to the specter of market forces," and Sally Griffith suggests that extensive praise of the African-American community "would undercut [Carey's] dramatic narrative of community regeneration." Gould "Race," 172, and Griffith 54. See also Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Black Gothic: The Shadowy Origins of the American Bourgeoisie" in *Possible Pasts: Becoming Colonial in Early America*, ed. Robert Blair St. George (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 252-255. The literature on ways in which white populations used black communities and as their unifying foil is expansive. See for instance: Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*; Dana D. Nelson, *National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998); Theodore Allen, *The Invention of the White Race: Racial Oppression and Social Control v. 2. The Origin of Racial Oppression in Anglo-America* (New York: Verso, 1994).

⁴³ *Account*, 77. The same sentence appears in Carey's Fourth edition, but with a footnote debunking the error of black immunity.

⁴⁴ *Account*, 77-78. See also, John Lining, "A Description of the American Yellow Fever in a Letter from Dr. John Lining Physician at Charles-town in South Carolina, to Dr. Robert Whytt Professor of Medicine in the University of Edinburgh" in *Essays and Observations, Physical and Literary. Read before a Society in Edinburgh, and Published by Them*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: G. Hamilton and J. Balfour, 1756), 407. <http://galenet.galegroup.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/servlet/ECCO>. According to Everett Mendelsohn, Benjamin Rush had an earlier copy of Lining's account that was published near the end of the century. See Mendelsohn, "John Lining and His Contribution to Early American Science" *Isis* 51, no. 3 (September 1960), 278-292. <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/stable/226508>

⁴⁵ See Goddu, *Gothic*, 31-51, for an insightful reading of commerce as "diseased discourse" in the early nation in Charles Brockden Brown's yellow fever novel, *Arthur Mervyn* (1800).

⁴⁶ Jones and Allen were aware of this tendency in public logic, explaining: "Mr. Carey pays William Gray and us a compliment; he says our services and others of their colour, have been very great &c. By naming us, he

leaves these others, in the hazardous state being classed with those who are called the ‘vilest.’” See *Narrative*, 12-13. Carey’s motivations for his account of the African-American volunteers remain unclear, particularly given his “seemingly impeccable eighteenth-century antislavery credentials,” which include publishing anti-slavery essays and works by Phyllis Wheatley and Prince Hall in his periodical, *The American Museum*. As historian Philip Lapsansky notes, if we believe that Carey’s attempts to praise and placate Jones and Allen individually may have been well intentioned, Carey’s text still underwrites a larger negligence: “if the selfless efforts of this unnamed mass of most humble Philadelphians could be minimized and dismissed, what hope was there for the wider acceptance of blacks as freemen and citizens?” Lapsansky, “‘Abigail, a Negress’: The Role and the Legacy of African Americans in the Yellow Fever Epidemic,” in *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation*, 69.

⁴⁷ See Nelson, “Representative/Democracy: Presidents, Democratic Management, and the Unfinished Business of Male Sentimentalism,” in *No More Separate Spheres*, eds. Cathy N. Davidson and Jessamyn Hatcher (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002) for a discussion of managed democracy (330-332, 348n19) and White, *The Backcountry and the City*, 9-10, for how this management operated through republican discourse in the early U.S.

⁴⁸ Indeed, much of the scholarship on *Narrative* posit Jones and Allen as attempting to show how black citizens were somehow better republicans than their white counterparts. These scholars then evaluate *Narrative* in terms of how well it succeeds in positioning black virtue. Gould, for instance, suggests that *Narrative* ultimately fails, or at least falls victim to the same tensions it critiques, precisely because Jones and Allen’s concerns with their financial losses undercuts their claims to benevolent disinterest. Other lines of argument emphasize *Narrative* as a vehicle of institution and community building, as an indication of what Richard Newman, Joanna Brooks (following Paul Gilroy’s *Black Atlantic*) and others theorize as a black print counterpublics and countercultures of modernity. Paralleling my argument about Jones and Allen’s *Narrative* in the context of late eighteenth-century discourses of citizenship, is my own contention that *Narrative* offers a third way, one that situates Jones and Allen within a broader social history of citizenship even as we continue to theorize how they and other black activists structured communities outside of official civic spaces. See Gould, *Barbaric Traffic*, chapter 5; Brooks, *American Lazarus*, Introduction, and “Early American”; Newman, “Black Founders,” and his introduction to *Freedom’s Prophet*.

⁴⁹ *Narrative* 7. *Narrative* is the first publication to be copyrighted by African Americans. See Brooks “Early American,” 19; and *American Lazarus*, 168.

Jones and Allen formed the FAS in 1787, just a few months before the adoption of the federal Constitution, “to support one another in sickness, and for the benefit of their widows and fatherless children.” Though Allen parted ways with the FAS in 1787 in part because of the society’s increasing adoptions of Quaker customs, he again worked with Jones to found the FAC in 1791. The two again part societal ways when the majority of the FAC voted to affiliate themselves with the Episcopal Church, Jones remaining with the majority to become Bishop of the African Church of Philadelphia at St. Thomas and Allen leading the Methodist contingent to found Bethel Methodist Episcopal Church. “Preamble,” 15. Du Bois famously describes the FAS in Philadelphia Negro as “more than a mere club,” but rather the “the first wavering step of a people toward organized social life” (19). Du Bois, *Philadelphia Negro*, 19. See also Newman, *Freedom’s Prophet*, Julie Winch, *Philadelphia’s Black Elite: Activism, Accommodation, and the Struggle for Autonomy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 5-7; Nash, *Forging*, 112-133.

⁵⁰ *Narrative*, 13. As the fever set in, many observers became away that descriptions of black immunity were inaccurate, but they continued to promote the idea. Carey may have known as early as October 1793. In a letter possibly addressed to Carey, Rush explains, “the merit of the blacks in their attendance upon the sick is enhanced by their not being exempted from the disorder. Many of them had it, but in general it was much milder and yielded more easily to art than in white people.” Letter, 29 October 1793 in *Letters of Benjamin Rush*, ed. L. H. Butterfield (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 731. Other yellow fever narratives also admit the error of assumed black immunity, the “lessons” of black fatalities, Lapsansky observes, “were not lost on whites.” See Lapsansky, 68.

⁵¹ Wood, *Radicalism*, 216; Smith, *Civic*, 137-164.

⁵² Indeed, “the black people were looked to” in the first place because the “few people were willing” to cart away the dead even “when offered great rewards.” See *Narrative*, 4.

⁵³ *Narrative*, 8.

⁵⁴ Samuel Otter similarly notices how *Narrative* shifts the cause of inflation from racial/character explanations to market forces. My argument here builds on Otter’s observation about how Jones and Allen “turn Carey’s scenario and syntax against him” to suggest that *Narrative*’s inversion of Carey’s specific syntax provides a useful point of departure for a critique of commercial syntax more broadly. See Samuel Otter, *Philadelphia Stories*:

America's Literature of Race and Freedom, Kindle Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 508-510 [Kindle edition], 36 [print edition].

⁵⁵ *Narrative*, 7; *Account*, 76-77.

⁵⁶ *Narrative*, 7; *Account*, 10-11.

⁵⁷ *Account*, 77.

⁵⁸ *Narrative*, 9.

⁵⁹ We might think of this mirroring in terms of signifyin(g) or “rewriting the received textual tradition” in a way that clears space for black citizens in republican discourse, but what I want to get at here is how, intentionally or not, *Narrative*’s economic angle deconstructs its own logic even as it exposes white duplicity. See, Gates, *Signifyin(g)*, 123. Again, my argument here builds on Gould’s observation that economic discourse seems to pin Jones and Allen into a corner (*Barbaric*, 186-187); however, as the next section suggests, *Narrative*’s civic intervention operates on a different register altogether.

⁶⁰ Both white and black workers could stand to gain political ground through their efforts during the fever, though neither did, at least not much. Pernick explains, “The white Republican mechanics who served as volunteers were ignored by the city’s Federalist elite and were resented by the many voters who had fled, but their political exclusion was less severe than the scornful ingratitude shown to Richard Allen’s and Absalom Jones’s black followers” (137).

⁶¹ Appleby, *Liberalism*, 275.

⁶² *Narrative*, 8. This passage has been central to the recent debate between Gould and Brooks over how to situate *Narrative* vis-à-vis dominant early national discourses and black countercultures of modernity. The equivalency between pilfer and privateer, Gould argues, “is the *Narrative*’s major flaw. While demonstrating the unmatched benevolence of African Americans, it also tries to establish the equivalence between Anglo- and African Americans, an equivalence that is problematically predicated on economic self-interest” (*Barbaric*, 186-187). Joanna Brooks has argued that Gould’s reading is symptomatic of a larger tendency to read early black political discourse as an appropriation of republicanism and other dominant discourses. This tendency ignores the ways that early black writers built their own countercultures and traditions out of their collective experiences of oppression and successes in institution building. Taking into account the specificity of the African American experience in Philadelphia, Brooks observes: “However civil and politic the phrasing of the *Narrative*...it is also a text that condemns the failures of market forces during the 1793 yellow fever epidemic. This tract resonates with the impassioned and embittered voices of two men who are themselves only a few years free from chattel slavery, who witness that the slave trade continues with the legal sanction of the U.S. government...who daily face the well-meaning but noxious paternalism of white community advocates...and who have seen the fragility of fellow-feeling and sympathy revealed during the yellow fever epidemic” (“Early,” par 24).

My own take is that while the passage does suggest the equivalency Gould notes, it does so in a way that signifies acerbically on how one must prove benevolence—in terms of money lost instead of lives saved—and on the tendency of whites to hold black people to a standard that they, themselves, cannot attain. From this perspective, Jones and Allen are not necessarily arguing that black citizens are more virtuous than their white counterparts, but rather that racial expectations taint question of virtue or benevolent disinterest from the start.

⁶³ The reference to and legal ambiguity of privateering would not have been lost to Jones and Allen’s readers. Accusing whites of privateering resonated with the still-fresh Citizen Genet Affair in which Edmond-Charles Genet’s privateering activities in Charleston, SC, and Philadelphia threatened the U.S.’s policy of neutrality. On Privateering during the Revolutionary era, see Robert H. Patton, introduction to *Patriot Pirates: The Privateer War for Freedom and Fortune in the American Revolution* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2008), xix-xxi. On Citizen Genet see Douglas Bradburn, *Citizenship Revolution: Politics and the Creation of the American Union, 1774-1804* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 110. Moreover, as Otter observes, “Alluding to the lawful pirates who had been involved in the international slave trade since the seventeenth century, the term ‘privateering’ expands their comparison to include local and systemic violations: the extortion of money and the appropriation of lives.” Otter, *Philadelphia Stories*, 523-535 [Kindle], 37 [print].

⁶⁴ *Narrative*, 8.

⁶⁵ Privateering requires a negotiation between at least two parties: a private ship-owner and a government issuing a letter of marque. The letter of marque authorized the non-military vessel to “capture...merchant ships belonging to an enemy nation” (“Privateer,” *OED*).

⁶⁶ Kloppenberg, 22.

⁶⁷ *Narrative*, 7.

⁶⁸ Both Jones and Allen were former slaves whose family members had been sold when both men were relatively young—Jones’s mother and siblings in 1762, Allen’s parents and younger siblings in the 1770s to settle his master’s debts. See Daniel C. Littlefield, “Revolutionary Citizens, 1776-1804” in *To Make Our World Anew: A History of African Americans to 1880*, ed. by Robin D.G. Kelley and Earl Lewis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 142-143; and Newman, *Freedom’s Prophet*, 34.

⁶⁹ Anthony Benezet, “Observations on the Enslaving, Importing, and Purchasing of Negroes” (Philadelphia: Henry Miller, 1766), 4.

⁷⁰ In February 1793, President George Washington signed the Fugitive Slave Act, creating a means for enforcing the Constitutional right of slave owners to recover their “property.” Other measures hostile to black citizens included the Naturalization Law of 1790, restricting naturalization to “free white persons” and the Militia Act of 1792, restricting militia service to white men. These two Acts are related in their articulation of white manhood as the standard for citizenship. While the 1790 Naturalization Law “guaranteed that Indians and blacks would not be welcomed as future equal citizens,” the Militia Act of 1792 “effectively ratified” this guarantee by restricting militia service, “one of the most potent symbols of male citizenship in the new American republic,” to white men. As Douglas Bradburn has observed, that a racial designation in the Naturalization Law “needed to be stated represented an awareness of the type of citizens they act expected to create.” The lack of debate about this language in Congress, he continues, further “reflected a racist indifference to the status of blacks in the new American nation.” See Bradburn, *Citizenship*, 260; and Nash, *Forging*, 119.

⁷¹ “Petition of Absalom Jones and Seventy-Three Others to the President, Senate, and House of Representatives,” 330-331, in *Early Negro Writings*, ed. by Dorothy Porter. Congress overwhelmingly resolved to condemn the petition. See Bradburn, *Citizenship*, 254; and *Annals of Congress*, 6th Cong., 1st sess., House of Representatives, 229-45.

⁷² *Narrative*, 12, 11.

⁷³ While the FAC was a religious institution, it served as a center for civic activity. On the history of the FAS and FAC and the importance of religious institutions to black politics and civic life as well as an account of Allen’s business ventures see Newman, *Freedom’s Prophet*, Julie Winch, *Philadelphia’s Black Elite*, 4-25; Nash, *Forging*, 112-133; James T. Campbell, *Songs of Zion: the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); George, Carol V. R. *Segregated Sabbaths: Richard Allen and the Emergence of Independent Black Churches, 1760-1840*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); Cornel West and Eddie S. Glaude, Jr.’s Introduction to *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology*, edited by Cornel West and Eddie S. Glaude, Jr. (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2003), xi-xxvi; and Glaude, “Of the Black Church and the Making of a Black Public” in *African American Religious Thought* 338-365.

⁷⁴ Neighborliness was one avenue by which political thinkers were attempting, in s/f writer and cultural critic Samuel Delany’s terms, to “[cut] the world up in different ways socially and rearranging it so that [they] may benefit from the resultant social relationship” (193). My discussion of neighborliness is influenced in part by Delany’s notion of “contact,” in *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*. Delany observes, “in a democratic city it is imperative that we speak to strangers, live next to them, and learn how to relate to them on many levels” (193). See Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*, 126-129, 193.

⁷⁵ Though neither *Narrative* nor the FAS letter use the term “neighborliness,” the term is useful for connecting all of the concepts both documents outline as characteristics of the “good citizen”: piety, charity, concern for the stranger and the suffering, etc. Moreover, neighborliness connects *Narrative*’s ethos to other texts that trade in a similar discourse of neighborliness articulated through readings of the Samaritan’s narrative. It was foregrounded in Quaker debates about commerce and slavery and, as I point out later in this chapter, Granville Sharpe uses this logic as part of his argument against slavery. Benjamin Banneker also references Golden Rule logics by way of Job in his letter to Thomas Jefferson: “put your soul in their souls’ stead;” thus shall your hearts be enlarged with kindness and benevolence towards them (326-327). Consolidating these concepts: “real sensibility,” charity, caring for the orphaned, widowed, and estranged, mutual aide, etc. under the term neighborliness allows me to connect *Narrative* to how others were using similar forms to espouse more capacious notions of belonging.

See Thomas L. Haskell, “Capitalism and the Origins of Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 2” in *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as Problems of Historical Interpretation*, edited by Thomas Bender, John Ashworth, and David Brion Davis (Los Angeles: University California Press, 1992), 156-160.

⁷⁶ John Saillant’s reading of Lemuel Haynes’s politics and theology also informs the way I am reading Jones and Allen’s *Narrative*. Saillant reads Haynes as using the rationalism of New Divinity sermonizing to combine theology with natural rights discourse to argue for black liberation and political equality more broadly. See

Saillant, "Lemuel Haynes and the Revolutionary Origins of Black Theology, 1776-1801" *Religion and American Culture* 2, no. 1 (Winter 1992), 79-102.

My use of "narrative formula" builds on Joanna Brooks's "From Edwards to Baldwin Heterodoxy, Discontinuity, and New Narratives of American Religious-Literary History," *Early American Literature*, Volume 45, Number 2, 2010, 428. I find the term useful here, because *Narrative* uses the parable's overall structure and tenor without explicitly referring to it. Jones and Allen's audience would have readily recognized such a narrative formula. As historian Gary Nash conjectures of the black citizens' attitude as they began their efforts, "Philadelphia's black Christians would act as Good Samaritans, reenacting the drama of the despised man who aided a fellow human in desperate need when all the respected men of the community turned their heads." Yet, beyond the allegorical value of this narrative trajectory and its social inversions, the Good Samaritan formula offers a civic grounding from which we can draw a critique of civic republican logics. That is, rather than read the formula as a suggestion that black Philadelphians were better republican citizens, I want to suggest that the formula and the overall *Narrative* offer an alternative to civic republicanism in much the same way that Jesus of Nazareth uses the parable to offer an alternative to what had become traditional interpretations to Mosaic Law.

The structure of a parable works particularly well in this capacity, because, as Paula M. Cooley has observed, parables are not reducible "to a single ethical or religious teaching, but [consist] instead of a constellation of features and interactions." "Chief among these features," Cooley continues, "is a characteristic inversion of economic, political power that further subverts conventional expectations." Cooley, *Willing and the Good*, 6. The suggestion that early African-American writing worked through Old and New Testament scriptures is not new; however, further study might demonstrate that the strategic use of particular scriptures from different testaments might have contrasting and even conflicting meanings: one as a book of divine election and retribution, the other as a book of divine forgiveness and equality. In reference to the Bible and race, Joanna Brooks argues: "By adapting, politicizing, and indigenizing mainline religious discourses, African Americans and Native Americans also established a platform for their critical interventions into early national formulations of race" (*American Lazarus*, 3).

See also Nash's *Race and Revolution*, 75, and Newman's *Transformation*. Both offer a discussion of the role of religious doctrine and the church played in forming African-American communities as enclaves for resisting political, social, and psychological oppression. In his intervention into the still-prevalent republicanism/liberalism binary, James T. Kloppenberg posits a Christian ethical doctrine as a third countervailing and contrapuntal principle in Revolutionary era and early national political writing. See Kloppenberg "The Virtues of Liberalism."

⁷⁷ *N.*, 3, 10. The word "sensible" or "sensibility" appears at least five times in *Narrative*'s first pages. *Narrative* cites sensibility as the motivation for responding to Mayor Clarkson's call for assistance and advertising their services in newspapers. The elders of the Free African Church join the relief efforts because they were "sensible that it was our duty to do all the good we could to our suffering fellow mortals," later in the *Narrative*, they reiterate the point: "Our services were the production of real sensibility;--we sought not fee nor reward, until the disorder rendered our labour so arduous that we were not adequate to the services we had assumed," and black citizens on the street show "more humanity, more real sensibility" than their white counterparts. See *Narrative* 3, 4, 5, 10.

⁷⁸ *Narrative*, 10-11.

⁷⁹ *Account*, 32-33.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

⁸⁴ *Narrative*, 18.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 4 emphasis mine.

⁸⁶ *Narrative*, 10.

⁸⁷ Hammer, 224. As Hammer explains, "This willingness to believe that 'the other' had a reality equal to one's own was a powerful force in the sentimental revolution that swept through Western culture in the latter half of the eighteenth century" (224). The gentleman's reaction reflects the intermixture of two concepts: Adam Smith's logic of sympathetic identification and Edmund Burke's sense of a "natural order" structured through "decidedly theatrical and hierarchical relations." See also Stern's discussion of Adam Smith's "liberal idea that sympathy involves a dedicated imagination of the plight of the other, an act of fancy that allows both identification and compassionate transport" (*Plight of Feeling* 6-7). Stern suggests that the early American novel reflected the culture's mixing this Smithian logic with Burkean conservatism (6). Wood registers this same oscillation in early

Federalist discourse as a tension between Lockean sensationalism's "frightening implications" of basic equality and a notion of sensibility as a "natural social disposition" or "moral instinct." See *Radicalism*, 238-239.

⁸⁸ "Observations," 92.

⁸⁹ "Observations," 92.

⁹⁰ *Narrative* 10. The gentleman is not without virtue. He does call attention to the dying man's need, after all, and in some ways, concern for the dying man supplants class and racial boundaries: the "gentleman" foreigner asks a "poor black man" to help "a poor afflicted dying man" (*Narrative* 10). Yet, his willingness to use capital as a proxy, to stand by until the market produced an agent, results in the kind of complacency that created the economic crisis before the fever, and a climate of exploitation during the fever. He shouldn't be condemned for trying to hire workers, as such. Jones and Allen also hire men to help, but only when the "labor [became] so arduous that we were not adequate to the service we had assumed" (*Narrative* 4). That is, their managerial position results more in response to the needs of the situation than a performance of social position.

⁹¹ See Ellis, *Politics of Sensibility*, 135-137 for a discussion of how sensibility (or sentiment) could become a sort of "specular economic voyeurism" (135) through which a rising middle class could reveal its virtue in benevolence to the "disserving poor" even as it reinscribed the social hierarchies and capitalist practices that maintained a permanent underclass. As Ellis explains through the mid-eighteenth century sentimental fiction like Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* and Henry Brooke's *The Fool of Quality* (1766?), "benevolence is a selfish virtue: it serves the giver's interests," allowing the giver to negotiate between "the classical aristocratic concept of virtue" and the new protocols of benevolence and sociability growing out of "the new commercial society" (137). See also Merish's discussion of "sentimental ownership" in *Sentimental Materialism* (3).

⁹² Benjamin Rush, for instance, characterizes sensibility as the "avenue to the moral faculty," one that needed careful supervision and development in the education of youth and the maintenance of a republican citizenry." See Rush, "An Oration, Delivered before the American Philosophical Society, held in Philadelphia on the 27th of February; Containing an Enquiry into the Influence of Physical Causes upon the Moral Faculty" (Philadelphia: Charles Cist, 1786), 32. As Burstein posits in *Sentimental Democracy*, sensibility "was an important part of politics, at once art and strategy" (10). See Burstein, 10-21.

⁹³ "Observations," 93.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Indeed, the parable's notion of neighborliness is a common source text for all *Narrative*, the FAS letter, and "Observations."

⁹⁷ Contemporary readers would have recognized the Jews and Samaritans as enemies, perhaps as peoples from different "nations." Jonathan Edwards explains, "the Jews and Samaritans were bitter enemies one to another, and there was the greatest national enmity between them. . . . The Samaritans and Jews were looked upon by each other as wicked, vile and accursed, and were bitter enemies one to another." Elsewhere, he writes, "To be called a Samaritan among the Jews was exceedingly reproachful, for the Samaritans were a people above all others in the world hated by the Jews." See Jonathan Edwards, *Ethical Writings* (WJE Online Vol. 8), ed. Paul Ramsey, 210, 197. Granville Sharpe uses the parable of the Good Samaritan in *The Just Limitation of Slavery in the Laws of God, Compared with the Unbounded Claims of the African Traders and British American Slaveholders*.

⁹⁸ Luke 10:25-27 New King James Version

⁹⁹ As Ramsey's work suggests, the parable of the Good Samaritan focuses on "neighbor-love" (rather than love for neighbor) in its attention to the subject loving, rather than the identity (or restricting the identity) of the one who is loved. *Basic Christian Ethics*, 92; and Jeremy Waldron, "On the Road: Good Samaritans and Compelling Duties," 1060.

¹⁰⁰ Luke 10:29-32 New King James Version

¹⁰¹ See Ramsey, *Basic Christian Ethics*, 94. Ramsey observes, "neighborly love in the Christian sense, discovers the neighbor in every man it meets and as such has never yet met a friend or an enemy."

¹⁰² Jeremy Waldron, "On the Road: Good Samaritans and Compelling Duties," 1060.

¹⁰³ As Waldron explains, the parable "supposes that people can see right through the layers of convention, commonality, and difference, and respond directly—as the Good Samaritan responded—to the immediate presence of the person underlying the layers of community" (2000).

¹⁰⁴ *Narrative*, 3.

¹⁰⁵ Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*, 198.

Nelson, "a less culturally recognized countermodel, where citizens develop their social and political subjectivities in relation to multiple, local, and nonidealized relationships with others."

Nelson, "Representative/Democracy," 220.

¹⁰⁶ *Narrative*, 3, 5, 20.

¹⁰⁷ See Newman, *Freedom's Prophet*, 87.

¹⁰⁸ Vickers, "Competency and Competition," *William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 47, No. 1 (January 1990), 27-28.

¹⁰⁹ *Narrative*, 11.

¹¹⁰ Jonathan Edwards, *Ethical Writings (WJE Online Vol. 8)*, edited by Paul Ramsey, 210.

¹¹¹ Paine, Rights of Man (1791) in *Common Sense, Rights of Man, and other Essential Writings of Thomas Paine*, edited by Sidney Hook (New York: Signet Classics), 279. As Vickers notices a similar framework in his analysis of the early national backcountry:

On the one side, by calling on each neighboring family for unpaid help, the owner admitted that he could not survive by self-interested negotiation alone. And on the other, by voluntarily lending a hand—not only to the owner but to everyone assisting—the neighbor made quietly but in common view a simple gift to all.

These neighbors, as Crevecoeur's account of Andrew and the "neighborhood frolic" to raise his house, literally make a neighborhood as they help each newcomer build a home and help each other over the course of the year. See Vickers, "Competency," 27-28; and Crevecoeur, *Letters from and American Farmer*, 80-82.

¹¹² See Ramsey, *Basic Christian Ethics*, 95. Ramsey contrasts this "bifocal 'self-regarding concern for others,' a selfish sociability," to neighbor love, positing that neighbor-love is universal in the sense that each person the neighbor encounters becomes the object of love, a fellow neighbor. Yet, it is not the same as the universal "love of humanity," because "it begins by 'loving the neighbor,' not mankind or manhood" (95). Ramsey goes so far as to posit, "neighbor-love...stands at an opposite pole from love for mankind generally" (95). As such, the good neighbor focuses more on the day-to-day, concrete encounters with people in the street, in the market, at home, etc.

¹¹³ "Reply," 28.

¹¹⁴ The masthead for the *Liberator* from May 1850 forward, for instance, was an image with the banner: "Thou Shalt Love Thy Neighbor as Thyself."

¹¹⁵ Granville Sharpe, *The Just Limitation of Slavery in the Laws of God*, (London, 1776), 40-41, emphasis original.

¹¹⁶ Benjamin Banneker, "Copy of a Letter from Benjamin Banneker to the Secretary of State, with His Answer," (Philadelphia: Daniel Lawrence, 1792) in *Early Negro Writings 1760-1837*, edited by Dorothy Porter, (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1995), 325.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 325.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 325. Here, I am building on Waldron's observation about the relation between the parable of the Good Samaritan and Mosaic Law. Just as being the good neighbor summarizes the central principle of Mosaic Law, neighborliness, as Banneker, Jones, and Allen articulate it, encapsulates the central premise of fellow citizenship. See Jeremy Waldron, "On the Road: Good Samaritans and Compelling Duties," 1060. Joanne Pope Melish observes a similar connection between benevolence and the nation's responsibility for ameliorating the effects of slavery in Lemuel Haynes's 1801 "The Nature and Importance of True Republicanism." See "The 'Condition' Debate and Racial Discourse in the Antebellum North," *Journal of the Early Republic*, Special Issue on Racial Consciousness and Nation-Building in the Early Republic 19, no. 4 (Winter 1999): 663-664. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3125137>.

¹¹⁹ *Narrative*, 3.

¹²⁰ As Otter observes, these appended addresses "underscore the fact that their entire text serves as a demonstration of character and a testament of their own sensibility." See Otter, *Philadelphia Stories*, 564-567.

¹²¹ Jefferson, *Notes*, 270. Indeed, the expanded cadre of "some late publications" undoubtedly included recent legislation such as the Fugitive Slave Act (February 1793) and the Naturalization Law (1790) as well as the recent exchange between Banneker and Jefferson, whose *Notes on the State of Virginia* was published in Philadelphia in 1788. Moreover, Jones and Allen's strategy builds on Banneker's: though Banneker's letter is most well known as a refutation of Jefferson's statements about Africans in *Notes*, Banneker argues, "it was not originally my design; but having taking up my pen in order to direct to [Jefferson], as a present" his 1792 *Almanac*, he was "unexpectedly and unavoidably led thereto" (Banneker, 327). For a slightly different account of the "Address's" possible relation to *Notes* and Jefferson, see Newman, *Freedom's Prophet*, 107-108. As Newman postulates, it is not hard to imagine either Jones or Allen's having Banneker's *Almanac*, printed in Philadelphia, and/or Jefferson's *Notes* in mind if not in hand as they crafted the "Address."

My reading of the exchange between Jones and Allen and Carey as an opportunity for asserting a black political presence also builds on Jeannine DeLombard and Samuel Otter's readings of gallows literature. Otter

compares *Narrative* and Allen's later "Confession" as sharing "an association between blackness and criminality, split address, a discursive probation, and a verbal intricacy." See Otter, *Philadelphia Stories*, 41, and DeLombard, *Slavery on Trial: Law, Abolitionism, and Print Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007, 5-7.

¹²² *Narrative*, 5.

¹²³ See for instance, Otter *Philadelphia Stories*, 482 [Kindle], 35 [print]; *American Lazarus*, 165-66; Gould, Philip. "Race," 172; Griffith; 54; and Smith-Rossenburt, "Black Gothic," 252-255.

¹²⁴ As Richard Newman aptly describes the situation, "African Americans were de facto medical examiners and notaries, telling city authorities about each day's run of dead and ill. For a brief period of time, black Philadelphians seemed to have real power over white citizens' lives." Newman, *Freedom's Prophet*, 91.

¹²⁵ Rush, *An Account of the Bilious Remitting Fever, As It Appeared in Philadelphia in the Summer and Autumn Of The Year 1780* (Philadelphia: Dobson, 1794) American Antiquarian Society Copy, 113.

¹²⁶ *Narrative*, 9-10. Again, their narrative pinpoints an omission in Carey's *Account*, which mentions a "profligate, abandoned set of nurses and attendants...hardly any of could character" who "rioted on the provisions and comforts prepared to the sick" without the "smallest appearance of order" (*Account* 61).

¹²⁷ *Narrative*, 9.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹²⁹ Commenting on the progress of the Free African Church in a 1791 letter to Granville Sharpe, Benjamin Rush observes, "They [the congregants] have adopted articles and a form of church government (purely republican) peculiar to themselves." See "Rush to Granville Sharp," August 1791, *Letters*, 608.

¹³⁰ See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, vol. 2, trans. Steven Rendall, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 37. We can think of these institutions as tactical positions, "a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power," but of a more permanent and secure position than Certeau suggests in the concept of a "tactic." That is, these institutions were in constant negotiation, if not outright warfare, with racial structures, and though they never supplanted them, they did gain footholds. This is not to suggest that early black activists were passively waiting for opportunities. They were actively engaged in, as Richard Newman observes, "building a power base in a time and place that stripped blacks of every vestige of power" (67). With Newman, I want to suggest that a civic presence was just the beginning, the foundational requirement, of countering structures of racism. See Newman "'A Chosen Generation': Black Founders and Early America" in *Prophets of Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism*, eds. Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John Stauffer (New York: New Press, 2006.), 59-79.

¹³¹ As scholars have suggested, the *Narrative* and African American politics in general may not be an expression of a liberal public sphere, but it still operates *within* and engages with these terms. The *Narrative* telegraphs a double-move at once exposing the print manifestation of an African American counterpublic, but at the same time serving as a vehicle for this counterpublic to participate within larger publics. Nancy Fraser describes this movement in her description of subaltern counterpublics:

The point is that, in stratified societies, subaltern counterpublics have a dual character. On the one hand, they function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment; on the other hand, they also function as bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics. It is precisely in the dialectic between these two functions that their emancipatory potential resides. (67-68)

Even as *Narrative* offers insight into the formation of free African counternarrative, it also operates within a (rather than *the*) larger public sphere. This sphere is less the statically liberal or bourgeois public sphere associated with Habermas's European context, and more, in Carey's words, a space of "open and direct warfare," a space of rhetorical battle, competition, and rhetorical framing through print. Counterpublics fashioned as a response to inequalities are fashioned to eliminate these inequalities within the public sphere. Not simply to allow excluded others to enter the public sphere, but to make their entrance a part of its normative makeup, to reshape the public sphere such that their specific interests become part of the common good or to reshape the meaning of the common good. See Nancy Fraser "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 67-68; and Carey, "Address of M. Carey to the public Philadelphia April 4, 1794. or Reply to a printed attack, signed Argus, and to Absalom Jones and Richard Allen's *Narrative of the proceedings of the Black people*, both regarding Carey's conduct during the yellow fever epidemic," 5 in *Pamphlets and Papers by M. Carey*, Vol 3 (Philadelphia: Joseph R. A. Skerrett, 1826).

¹³² They also partnered with the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery for various projects, including a survey of the condition of black Philadelphians. See Nash, *Forging*, 109.

¹³³ Modifying Fraser's subaltern counterpublics, Squires identifies at least four models of minority engagement with and within the public sphere: enclave, oscillating, counter public, and parallel. The oscillating

model most directly fits the work Jones and Allen's *Narrative* does on behalf of the free Africans. It, "systematically [projects] their previously enclaved ideas toward the state and wider publics," under conditions in which legal and social barriers, while not completely rigid are still rigorously maintained, allowing only limited and circumscribed incursions." Catherine Squires, "The Black Press and the State: Attracting Unwanted (?) Attention" in *Counterpublics and the State*, eds. Robert Asen and Daniel C. Brouwer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 112. See also Marie Miranda, *Homegirls in the Public Sphere*, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 133

¹³⁴ Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and 'Race' in New England, 1789-1860* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 60-61; *Narrative*, 3.

¹³⁵ Rush, letter dated 29 October 1793, *Letters*, 731, perhaps in response to Carey's request for information,

¹³⁶ *Narrative*, 1.

¹³⁷ "Address to Those Who Keep Slaves," 24.

¹³⁸ "Copy of a Letter from Benjamin Banneker to the Secretary of State, with His Answer," 327-328.

¹³⁹ On early national attitudes towards education, especially its Lockean resonances see Wood, *Radicalism*, 149. On the role of education in the overall efforts of the PAS and Philadelphia's black community, see Nash, *Forging*, 202-211.

¹⁴⁰ *Narrative*, 23; *Notes*, 270.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁴² Jefferson, *Notes*, 265; *Narrative*, 23.

¹⁴³ *Narrative*, 3. The two reemphasize their privileged observational position later in the text as they offer detailed descriptions of the symptoms and treatment of the yellow fever and their own mortality rate, because their "opportunities of hearing and feeling them [those with the fever] have been very great" (15-17).

¹⁴⁴ To add weight to his argument about inherent difference between races, Jefferson appeals to a collective scientific experience: "It is not against experience to suppose, that different species of the same genus, or varieties of the same species, may possess different qualifications." Jefferson, *Notes*, 270. "Is the color of the negroes a disease?" Rush asks, "Then let science and humanity combine their efforts, and endeavor to discover a remedy for it" (19). "Observations, Intended to Favour a Supposition that the Black Colour of the Negro is Derived from Leprosy," *Transactions of the Philosophical Society*, Vol. 4 (1792), qtd. in *The Monthly Review; or Literary Journal, Enlarged*. Vol. 38 (May to August, 1802), 19. See also, Dain, *Hideous*, 24, and Winthrop Jordan, *White over Black*, 517-525.

¹⁴⁵ Rush, "A Plan for the Establishment of Public Schools," 14.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁴⁹ As David Brion Davis put it, "there can be no greater disparity of power than that between a man convinced of his own disinterested service and another man who is defined as a helpless object. As representatives of the emerging capitalist order, extending charity to the lowliest segment of laborers, Quaker reformers could not view Negroes as even potentially autonomous beings." Such a perspective short circuits the neighborly move, as the benefactor never sees the beneficiary as "like me." See David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 254; and Nash, "Absalom Jones and the African Church of Philadelphia: 'To Arise out of the Dust,'" in *The Human Tradition in the American Revolution*, eds. Nancy L. Rhoden and Ian K. Steele (Wilmington: SR Books, 2000), 245.

¹⁵⁰ As Albert J. Raboteau has argued, the "Address" suggests "charity must be institutionalized." My argument here builds on Raboteau's observation, suggesting that "Address" points toward a more radical program of national structural adjustments. See Raboteau, *A Fire in the Bones: Reflections on African-American Religious History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 96.

¹⁵¹ As Nash notes, Philadelphia was ahead of most of the nation in providing for the education of free Africans. See *Forging*, 203-204.

¹⁵² Rush, letter dated 29 October 1793, *Letters*, 731, perhaps in response to Carey's request for information,

¹⁵³ As Gary Nash's work catalogues, despite efforts by black and white activists alike, education did not have the widespread effects they may have hoped for. Over the next decades, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania continued to debate and enact laws hostile to black citizens, in part to appease the state's southern neighbors. 1813 proposals to sell black criminals into slavery and to require black residents to register with the state, for instance, prompted James Forten to pen his *Series of Letters by a Man of Color* (1813). Moreover, a declining economy coupled with an influx of European immigrants increased both class and racial tensions, leaving black

Philadelphians, like many black citizens in U.S. citizens, caught in a vice between class and racial oppression. By the 1830s, Philadelphia's black citizens were beset with the threat of violence, poverty, and a solidifying racial ceiling. See Nash, *Forging*, 182, 203-205, 227, 273-279.

¹⁵⁴ Ironically, Carey reproduces Jones and Allen's (and Banneker's) strategy of misdirection.

¹⁵⁵ See Carey, *Short Account*, 4th ed., Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1794, 63; and *Short Account*, 5th ed., in *Miscellaneous Essays...by M. Carey* (Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1830), 68. As Brooks and others have pointed out, Carey presents the error of black immunity as a boon for white Philadelphians: "The error that prevailed on this subject," he writes, "had a very salutary effect; for at an early period of the disorder, hardly any white nurses could be procured; and, had the negroes been equally terrified, the sufferings of the sick, great as they actually were, would have been exceedingly aggravated" (63). Even as Carey recants an earlier mistake, he does so in a way that takes away from the merit of black workers.

¹⁵⁶ Easton, *A Treatise on the Intellectual Character, and Civil and Political Condition of the Colored People of the U. States* (Boston: Isaac Knapp), 51-52.

¹⁵⁷ "Appeal of Forty Thousand Citizens, Threatened with Disfranchisement, to the People of Pennsylvania" (1837), in *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African American Protest Literature, 1790-1860*, edited by Richard Newman, Patrick Rael, and Phillip Lapsansky (New York: Routledge), 2001, 140.

¹⁵⁸ Otter astutely concludes, Jones and Allen "negotiate stance and limit. Their mixture of bitterness and entreaty, sense of discursive probation, riven audiences, high rhetorical stakes, and concern with black elevation all will be echoed in the mid-nineteenth-century" (567-570).

¹⁵⁹ The importance of deliberation to neighborly institutions is highlighted in Jones and Allen's constant references to their own deliberations, amongst themselves and with the Mayor, during the crisis.

CHAPTER III

CIRCULATING CITIZENSHIP IN THE BLACK STATE CONVENTIONS OF THE 1840s

We have launched into a new position. Our fathers sought personal freedom—we now contend for political freedom. “An Appeal to the Colored Citizens of Pennsylvania” (1848)

...behind the mask of deference lies the authentic demand.
Samuel Otter, *Philadelphia Stories* (2010)¹

1. Introduction

While the Pennsylvanians’ distinction between personal freedom and political freedom understates the political nature of the previous generation’s work, the comparison does signal a change in the practices of citizenship between the 1790s and the 1840s. Jones and Allen’s neighborly citizenship emphasized a permeable civic sphere maintained through an ethics of committed neighborliness and the imperative to care for the suffering stranger. By the 1840s, voting had become one of the central practices of citizenship and means of policing the civic imaginary: it was a symbol of fellow citizenship among the men who voted and a reminder that those not allowed to vote were not only inferior, but also under the power and protection of those who did.² Recognizing the changing significance of voting in national civic discourse and their own explicitly political needs beyond emancipation, black activists interpreted suffrage as *the* defining right of citizenship, the right that connected citizens in a community, and a citizen’s most powerful defense in a republican government. Just as the struggle against slavery and kidnapping spawned the National Conventions of the 1830s, activism for political rights fueled the state conventions in the 1840s. The proceedings of the state conventions offer key arguments

about participatory politics as a practice of citizenship, while the form itself offers an alternate trajectory for how participatory politics could be enacted.

This chapter examines the *Proceedings of the Black State Conventions* of the 1840s as political documents central to an understanding of citizenship practices in the antebellum U.S. Philip S. Foner and George E. Walker rightly claim, “for keen analyses of the issues outlined and for breadth of research and argument, these addresses are among the outstanding political documents of the period,” reflecting “a cross-section of this community” more than any other aggregate of texts outside of the black press itself.³ While many scholars quote from these texts, here, I foreground the black state conventions as distinct and important political and cultural phenomena, as important as the black press, the slaves’ narratives, and the National Conventions to our understanding of early African American political culture and U.S. political culture more generally.⁴ The conventions provide, in the words of the 1848 “Appeal to the Colored Citizens of Pennsylvania,” “a living commentary on the *principle* that governs American legislation, and controls American justice.”⁵ Though the state conventions focus on voting rights rather than on citizenship as such, their articulation of the relation between participatory politics and citizenship in terms of the circulation of civic power indexes the changing meaning of citizenship and political participation in the antebellum U.S. more broadly. The state conventions’ focus on voting rights as “the life blood of political existence” helps us understand the cultural work of voting in creating a functional civic network out of an increasingly diversified citizenry.⁶

Circulation also provides an apt heuristic for analyzing how the conventions functioned as a political form. Conventions offered a means for black citizens to pool their collective civic power, circulate this power more freely in public space, and attempt to harness the civic powers of a broader public for their cause. Moreover, as they submitted petitions and appeals to state

constitutional conventions, delegates to the black state conventions and the people they represented participated, if often in a limited way, in the processes of constitutional revision. Even if such revisions ended in or upheld black disfranchisement, black citizens' presence as a political cohort was still recorded in official archives.⁷ The printed proceedings of the conventions (including minutes, addresses, petitions, and reports) extended and circulated this civic presence via the periodical press and pamphlets, formally modeling and enacting the delegates' vision of republican citizenship as the texts moved among white and black audiences and state institutions.⁸ In the state conventions' most radical appeal directly to voters, delegates invoke the people's authority over state institutions and their power to revise or dissolve the civic compact when these institutions fail to be responsive to the people. This new community becomes connected not through the formal franchise, but rather through audiences' reading, consuming, and acting on these civic texts. The *Proceedings of the Black State Conventions*, then, are important not only because of the arguments they make for and about suffrage, but also for the work they do *as* texts, as performative speech acts that seek to manufacture the very citizenship practices from which the delegates had been excluded.⁹

2. Why Voting? Why State-Based?: Citizenship Practices in the 1840s

Maintaining and circulating a public presence as an explicitly political community was crucial to the conventions' overall project. Even as suffrage served as one of the primary political and cultural points of identification for white manhood, it became an even more powerful symbol of dis-identification and political and legal disempowerment for black citizens. In the decades before the Fourteenth Amendment provided a national standard of birthright citizenship, citizenship was measured in large part by what the citizen could or could not do: e.g.

pay taxes, vote, travel between states, own property, run for political office, etc. The Federal Constitution is notoriously silent on the definition of citizenship except in the context of naturalization, while the several states simply use “citizen” (or “citizen and inhabitant”) as part of the criteria for office holding and various protections, without actually defining citizenship beyond inhabitance. Each state had its own criteria for these rights and protections, with the Federal Constitution’s Privileges and Immunities Clause knitting these disparate rules into a patchwork approximating national citizenship.¹⁰ As states began instituting universal white manhood suffrage, democratic governance, particularly in the form of voting, became increasingly identified as *the* defining act of full citizenship. The linkage of voting and white manhood resulted in an ascriptive conflation of citizenship practice with race and gender that provided a national standard for citizenship identity in the absence of explicit Federal guidelines.

Citizens who could not vote or had limited access to other rights, then, were not fully citizens before the law.¹¹ Instead, as Georgia state courts argued in 1843, such people were in a perpetual “state of pupillage.”¹² The restriction of the right to vote contributed to what historian Douglas Bradburn describes as the “denization” of black citizens. States increasingly defined black Americans as “inhabitants,” “denizens” or wards of the state who had some basic rights and obligations (rights to property and public education in some states, tax requirements, etc.) but whose status varied from state to state.¹³ By the end of the 1840s, only Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont, and Rhode Island offered unrestricted suffrage to black citizens.¹⁴ Over the previous two decades, other states had instituted or were in the process of instituting universal white male suffrage, but disenfranchised virtually all of the black population in the process. The loss of the franchise became foundational to further state-sanctioned stripping of black civil rights and symbolized a forcible removal of black citizens from the civic imaginary

itself.¹⁵ This logic created a circular argument: black people cannot vote, so they are not full citizens; black people are not full citizens, and therefore should not be allowed to vote.¹⁶

The state-based nature of the functional institutions of racial oppression, that is how civic and social exclusion operated in public policy and social custom, created some of the tensions historians have noted within more national movements.¹⁷ In New York, for instance, the state's \$250 property requirement for voting sanctioned, if in a limited way, black political participation, but this participation was tempered by the recent history of enslavement and the state's 1821 gradual emancipation provision, which at the very least, fostered the perception of dependence on the state's Whig and abolitionist establishment.¹⁸ If black activists in New York seemed more willing to emphasize direct involvement with the political process through voting and supporting specific parties, it might also be because they had Pennsylvania as an example of where inactivity on these fronts could lead. Pennsylvania, in contrast, did not constitutionally restrict black suffrage until the 1838 constitution explicitly limited voting to "every white freeman."²⁰ However, the threat of white violence coupled with the success of some black communities, particularly in Philadelphia, in creating civic organizations and working through and with white politicians and activists made politics in the form of seem voting less urgent. When the state did ratify the constitutional revision restricting the vote to white men, black Pennsylvanians were just as insistent as their New York counterparts in protesting the change and, when that failed, pushing for revision, but a constitutionally required ten-year hold on any amendments in Pennsylvania made appeals for legislation less productive than calls for wholesale constitutional change. The difference in the two populations' historical experience and the difference in *how* the states enacted their policies—property qualification vs. outright denial—had a dramatic effect on how each group proceeded.²¹ Western states like Ohio, Illinois,

and Michigan had even stricter rules governing black movements that made convention participants question whether the state and federal government even recognized them as citizens, particularly in the wake of the Compromise of 1850.²² The complexities that local policy presented for national movement-building prompted McCune Smith to lament in an 1854 article for *Douglass' Paper*: “You cannot pick out of five hundred free colored men in the free States who equally labor under the same species of oppression.”²³

In light of these interstate differences, black activists were continually balancing the benefits of national conventions (particular for anti-slavery initiatives, fundraising, and institution-building) and more local associations calibrated to deal with the specificity of local politics and variations in racist practices.²⁴ During an 1840 debate about reviving the national conventions, the *Colored American* typifies many antebellum commentators’ vacillation between national and local forms:

State conventions called for a local and special object, fixed upon by the people, would be likely to be regarded as matters especially their own, matters with the continuance or overthrow of which, depended their own rise or fall, and they would be likely to adopt measures with greater harmony, and carry them out with more efficiency, than in our opinion, would be done by a National Convention, and each State taking into consideration their own local disabilities, would answer all the purposes of a National Convention.²⁵

Local specificity was critical, because where the rhetoric of citizenship had nationalist tones, the instrumentalities of citizenship, the institutions that outlined the contours and limits of who could or could not be a citizen were primarily under state control.²⁶ It was a matter of scale: focusing on the national, as the *Colored American* suggests, obscured the many more local modes of political organization that were successful, at least for a time, in creating a sustained black political presence.²⁷ Our scholarly focus on national black organizations and a national “black press” to obtain answers to questions about black political strategy and theory, operates

anachronistically, imposing post-Civil War Federal politics on what was essentially a far more locally-determined political field. These activists were thinking nationally, but their national political sensibilities were in dialogue with and framed by local exigencies and interests.

The state conventions of colored citizens were a central feature of this changing political paradigm. As the national convention movement lost its steam in the early 1840s and as the rift between black activists and the white anti-slavery establishment widened, these local meetings provided a forum for discussing issues germane to the particularities of each state's brand of racial oppression. As the *Colored American* posits, success on the state level could more efficiently accomplish change on the national level, because organizations at the state level could focus on single issues—education, suffrage, desegregation, etc.—that were of more immediate concern to activists of all stripes, allowing for tighter organization and strategic alliances. And, for them, any progress on this political and social front translated to progress in the antislavery cause.

Groups organized specifically to address constitutional franchise restrictions date back to at least 1837, when Robert Purvis and group of black activists meeting Pittsburgh, PA, formally protested the soon-to-be-successful attempt to disenfranchise black men in Pennsylvania.²⁸ Their “Appeal of Forty Thousand Citizens, Threatened with Disfranchisement, to the People of Pennsylvania” outlines the legal and historical basis for black citizenship in Pennsylvania, with an blistering critique of justifications for black disenfranchisement.²⁹ The “colored inhabitants” of New York were the first to organize a statewide convention expressly addressing franchise rights in 1840, and the New Yorkers met in 3 subsequent conventions between 1841 and 1845 for the express purpose of repealing the property requirement.³⁰ Michigan, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Ohio all held at least one state convention during the 1840s. After the passage of

the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, black citizens would hold similar conventions in most other states focused more on coping with new threats of re-enslavement in addition to local issues.³¹

The conventions were more than a single event; rather, they were a constellation of events and texts ranging from debates on the necessity for a convention and initial meetings and advertisements to select delegates, to the convention itself and the circulation and public reading of “Proceedings” afterwards.³² Indeed, much of the convention process, issuing calls, passing resolutions, committee reports, debating, voting, etc., was geared towards generating this publicity. The conventions began in print with calls issued months before the meetings and circulated in black and abolitionist newspapers such as *Colored American*, *Liberator*, *North Star* (in the late 1840s), and *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, as well as more mainstream papers like the *New York Daily Tribune*.³³ These Calls for a Convention usually included a list of grievances, solicited statistical data and reports on the state of the black population, and asked cities and counties to organize locally to elect delegates and raise money.³⁴ The highly publicized organizing process—the resulting calls for local public meetings, the local meetings themselves with their voting on resolutions either supporting or condemning the intended convention, and the printing of these resolutions in newspapers—was all part of the convention’s showcasing black civic power and citizenship in practice.

The delegates usually convened in the state’s capital city (Harrisburg, PA; Albany, NY; Columbus, OH; etc.) or another major city in a church or public meetinghouse for daily and evening sessions.³⁵ While some conventions were open to the public or allowed participants to sign in on site, others required delegates to submit credentials, proving their participation in the local nomination process.³⁶ During the convention, delegates nominated officers, selected committees, and debated and passed resolutions on staple topics such as education, economic

development, temperance and other moral reforms, and general resolutions encouraging the community to continue to work towards its own elevation. The conventions commissioned county and city committees to develop the conventions' programs, including petition drives and "other matters in connection with our rights."³⁷ The conventions commissioned committees to collect statistical data on the state of their communities: the number of temperance and literary societies, employment spreads, the availability of education, etc. During the evening sessions or public meetings, delegates and other activists offered speeches on pertinent issues, such as education, temperance, and economic development.³⁸

Finally, delegates issued the "Proceedings" or "Minutes" of the convention along with two to three addresses to the public, one to the white "voters" or "people of the state," appealing to them for constitutional amendments and general support in the form of petitions.³⁹ The other, addressed to their "colored fellow citizens" requested their continued support of uplift programs and their participation in the statewide petition drive. Most state conventions printed limited copies of their proceedings in pamphlet form, distributing them to states' assemblies and selling them to support the costs of the convention itself and the costs of carrying out its programs. They also circulated their addresses, if not the entire proceedings, through the period press.⁴⁰ The documents were often much shorter than AASS conventions or the Nation Colored Conventions (probably due to the costs of printing), containing the order of business and election of officers, the convention's resolutions, and the convention's addresses to the public.⁴¹ Some conventions strategically delayed reprinting the proceedings in newspapers to maximize the distribution of pamphlets; the convention organizers could then cite this consumption as a sign of public approval.⁴² Even so, the conventions cite the periodical press as *the* medium through which its cause would be fought.⁴³

After the state convention, delegates returned home to organize county and city auxiliaries to carry out the convention's petition drive and other programs.⁴⁴ This proliferation of documents, a veritable cacophony of voices, and constant agitation created a politicized space—different from a periodical, pamphlet, fair or other form of publicity, yet combining elements of each—that resonated with recognizable events ranging from the Continental Congress and the U.S. “Declaration of Independence” to contemporaneous states’ conventions.⁴⁵ These conventions, then, began and ended in print, producing and circulating documents at each juncture in a way that kept their claims to full citizenship constantly in the public eye.

The rest of this chapter focuses on the Convention of the Colored Inhabitants of the State of New York in 1840 and the 1848 State Convention of the Colored Citizens of Pennsylvania. I turn to New York, because it was the first statewide convention and provides a model for how black activists used the form. Through a theory of civic circulation and power, the delegates destabilize race or condition-based arguments against black suffrage by demonstrating how the lack of franchise rights, that is blocking the circulation of civic power, creates the very conditions used to justify the restriction of these same rights. Even as they argue on the basis of common manhood, however, the delegates’ circulation-based arguments justify a more radical expansion of republican citizenship. The 1848 Pennsylvania convention suggests a potentially revolutionary practice. In the tradition of David Walker’s *Appeal* and sublime appeals to the people more generally, the convention calls for citizens to take responsibility for an electoral system that, they argue, has substituted arbitrary standards for republican principles of self-government. By circulating new civic texts in the form of petitions, these citizens could harness their collective civic power to re-assert their authority over the state. Exploring these two conventions together helps reveal the synergy between staging, print practices, and political

participation in offering an alternative mode of citizenship practice even as official channels continued to close.

3. Power and Circulation: The Making of a Citizen

The 1840 “Convention of the Colored Inhabitants of the State of New York” convened in Albany, NY, from August 18-20; approximately 140 delegates represented counties across the state.⁴⁶ Building on petition drives begun in the 1830s, the convention was organized to create auxiliary committees to facilitate a concerted petition drive.⁴⁷ Delegates proposed and voted on resolutions mostly concerned with the significance of suffrage and the most practical means of convincing the State Assembly to abolish property requirements. Finally, the convention appointed a committee of six to draft an “Address to the People of the State of New York,” outlining the convention’s arguments for unqualified suffrage, and a shorter “Address to Their Colored Fellow Citizens,” admonishing them to lend their full support to the petition drive.⁴⁸ Both addresses were printed and sold in pamphlet form with the convention’s proceedings in New York City.⁴⁹ In subsequent years, Henry Highland Garnet, McCune Smith, and other convention participants would submit the convention’s proceedings and petitions to the State Assembly.⁵⁰ When delegates carried the convention’s 2,093-signature petition to the Assembly’s Judiciary Committee in 1841, they represented black political interests physically and textually.⁵¹

The New York delegates recognized the cultural work of voting as the central conduit of civic power, creating the abstract (if not material) equality essential to citizenship practice. The delegates to the New York Convention of Colored Citizens claim that even “the poorest and humblest citizen” has access to public “respect, deference, and consideration,” because he is a voter, a member of the civic trust.⁵² All voters, the delegates posit, participate in common and

have a common share in sovereignty insofar as their votes counted equally, regardless of political, cultural, or ethnic differences. Whatever qualified a citizen to vote, by default, made that citizen a part of the sovereign body, a primary citizen responsible for how the government was constructed. Citizens who did not meet these criteria become secondary citizens.⁵³ Without a share in sovereignty, the ability to give or refuse consent, these secondary citizens were the responsibility of the primary citizens. In a republican sense, they were politically and materially dependent on the primary citizens. Including them in the electorate would taint the political process, because these citizens could not be counted on to vote rationally or independently. Like children, they had not reached (and never could reach) the age of majority, and so depend on the primary citizens to make decisions for common protection and common weal.⁵⁴ In this sense, electoral politics linked manliness and voting as mutually constitutive elements of citizenship.⁵⁵

In the context of this direct conflation of voting with manliness, the convention's "Address to the People of the State" emphasizes their own manhood in order to dislodge the conflation of whiteness with manhood: "we base our claim upon the possession of those common and yet exalted faculties of manhood. WE ARE MEN."⁵⁶ Even though some of the delegates can trace their ancestry through several generations of free men, some of whom fought in the Revolution and the War of 1812 and helped build the Erie Canal, for them, manhood supersedes any other qualification (historical or material) or other differences between disenfranchised black men and the unrestricted voting population. "We can find no nation," they write "that has the temerity to insult the common sense of mankind, by promulgating such sentiment as part of its creed" as skin color. The black delegates are men: patriarchal protectors of home, property owners (or at least those with the potential for it), taxpayers, fathers, husbands, producers, defenders of the state, and so on.

They isolate common manhood, without racial distinction, or more accurately, as *inclusive* of black men as the foundation for republican citizenship and suffrage as the defense and manifestation of that citizenship. They are men (or not women or children), therefore not only are they inherently capable of political participation, but, more importantly, their nature as men dictates that they seek it out. “Man is a creature of law,” the “Address” posits, “his nature adapted to government and its various functions.”⁵⁷ Man’s essential nature compels members of a community to desire to participate in the political affairs of that community. Black men, just as white men, are therefore compelled by natural law to pursue politics.

While the convention’s emphasis on manhood as the least common denominator of politics limits the scope of their democratic intervention from our current vantage, their emphasis on political participation as essential to republican citizenship and appeal to a broader notion of human political desire suggests more radical implications. To their appeal to natural rights, the delegates add a natural law of civic power and circulation: 1) a human being’s innate drive to political participation and self-determination does not disappear in the absence of institutional structures or sanction; rather, it manifests through other forms and outlets; 2) citizens most productively pursue politics as a collective and in a climate where this civic power can flow freely; 3) republican governments provide structures through which citizens can exercise this power productively, but do not create this power.⁵⁸ The resulting configuration of civic power reverses the temporal logic that a citizen must in some way demonstrate respectability and gain public trust *before* earning political rights. The practice of citizenship, rather than the citizen’s identity, creates the virtue and independence characteristic of the republican citizen. By restricting black access to the franchise, the state has not acted to protect republicanism, but rather has “manifestly violated” its “principles.”⁵⁹ In so arguing, the 1840 New York convention

separates the formal structures of consent and deliberative politics from their racially ascriptive underpinnings, instead figuring political participation as the source of respectability and public trust.

Participatory politics, including voting, function as a “channel” connecting citizens in a political community, gathering and directing their collective civic powers. Without access to its “pure and refreshing waters” of free political exchange, the black citizens have been “made aliens and strangers in the country of our birth.”⁶⁰ Rather than an individual property or privilege (a “franchise” in the literal sense), the delegates frame the franchise as a public resource (*res communes*) like flowing water.⁶¹ This trope of flowing water had potent political and economic ramifications in the age of the Erie Canal. Opened in 1825, the Canal connected the Hudson River at Albany, New York, (the state’s capital) to the western “frontier” of Buffalo, NY, opened new territories to settlement, led to an economic boom, and symbolized the free circulation of ideas and national unity more generally.⁶² Preventing access to the Canal or other waterways could practically isolate a community, hindering economic expansion and communication with the rest of the nation, and could deprive the nation of that region’s resources. Similarly, the convention suggests, preventing access to franchise rights effectively isolates the disfranchised, cutting the means to accumulating wealth, power, and property, as well as their ability to contribute to the civic good. Ultimately, both the state and the disenfranchised lose.

The race-based property qualifications turn the means of citizenship practice, a public property, into private property, an end in itself to be passed down from favored son to favored son in a way that reproduces the “stale primogenital fallacies of the blood-dyed political institutions of the old world.”⁶³ It effectively creates an aristocracy masquerading as

republicanism and produces the hierarchies it purports to simply reflect. That is, if republican citizenship is based on equal ownership of and access to political institutions, then the state's racial qualification makes its government something other than republican, instead making New York a feudal state.⁶⁴

If the circulation of waterways offers a central trope for how the franchise connects citizens as a functional collective, the trope of circulating blood reveals how this common network promotes material and social prosperity for those with access and material and social degradation for those without it. The franchise is, as the convention's form petition put it, an "instrument of their elevation," not a goad or reward for it.⁶⁵ Blocking access to the franchise "is like extracting the living principle from the blood of the system."⁶⁶ "Is it any wonder," they ask, "that our energies have been relapsed, that our powers have been crippled, our purposes nerveless, our determinations dead and lifeless?"⁶⁷ "From this" outside repression, the convention tells its fellow colored citizens, "proceeded our degradation. This has been the source of our suffering and oppression."⁶⁸ The cultural and political advantages of the franchise open access to political and economic opportunities: "those resources of pecuniary and possessional [sic] emolument, which an unshackled citizenship does always ensure"—inaccessible to the disfranchised.⁶⁹ Where the framers of New York's 1821 constitution argued that black men needed the property qualification because their blackness signified inferiority (either because of prolonged enslavement, in which case the qualification would serve as a spur, or because of immutable racial differences), the black delegates argue that the state's policy had functioned to create an ontological and teleological signification of black skin that was not empirically evident before.⁷⁰

Figured in terms of either waterway or vital force, the differences in access produce the material distinctions apparent in 1840 that white citizens then anachronistically read as the basis for the \$250 qualification. A generation removed from enslavement, black New Yorkers remained “shackled” to slavery’s legacy of political oppression and economic exploitation, not because slavery made them unfit for citizenship, but because New York’s constitution reproduced slavery’s subjugation.⁷¹ Prescriptive franchise requirements create material and political conditions of dependence and corruption (or the perception of it). The state and white voters, in turn read the effects of the voting restriction as justification for their original implementation and continuation. What the delegates analyze as the effects of unnatural voting restrictions, the white voters read as the manifestation of natural differences. Causes (franchise requirements) become the effects, and effects (dependence and degradation) become the causes.⁷² Put somewhat differently, the delegates model of civic power suggests that condition-based arguments have confused the means of citizenship practice (political participation) with their ends, a sense of community and shared responsibility for the common good.⁷³

The delegates’ analysis of how civic power circulates and accumulates, confronts how white citizens have used condition-based arguments to truncate the exercise of black civic power by first positing that political participation makes citizens better political agents; the responsibility creates the traits that political participation requires. Political participation “unshackle[s]” citizenship, *makes* citizens functional, providing a structure of identification by dividing civic responsibility (responsibility to and ownership of the civic good) among citizens and making each accountable to the other.⁷⁴ Far from requiring inherent virtue or racial and gender homogeneity, political participation fosters the characteristics it requires through communal practice. The trope of circulating blood illustrates how the suffrage creates

commonality within a body politic without requiring homogeneity. In a passage calibrated to demonstrate the importance of franchise rights to the convention's black readers, the convention argues: "the possession of the franchise right is the life blood of political existence. It runs through all the convolutions of our civil state. It connects itself with our literary immunities, enters into our ecclesiastical associations, and blends with our social and domestic relations."⁷⁵ Franchise rights, as formalized and institutionally protected political participation (a "self-protecting instrument") and a gateway to other rights and resources, would protect other political and public spaces from the encroachment of a hostile racial majority or a powerful economic minority.⁷⁶ The franchise protects public discourse ("literary immunities") and links all the interest-based civic and social institutions that could otherwise atomize a community, creating a common network (as either waterway or circulatory system) through which differences can be mediated. Citizens' dedication to republican citizenship, with its "eye to individual freedom" as articulated in the "Declaration of Independence" and the U.S. Constitution, provides "the connecting chain that runs through the whole mighty mass of humanity...the common sympathies and wants of the race," that is, the human race. Figured as blood, the franchise displaces the biological bases for fellow citizenship; fellow citizens become "related" through their joining of civic power under the auspices shared political channels.⁷⁷ Citizens do not have to share the same political or cultural views or even particularly like each other so long as they agree that republican government is the medium through which these differences should be worked out.

But there is something more basic to this theory than the belief in a specific mode of participatory politics. Even if franchised and disfranchised citizens do not share the common blood of suffrage, they do still share the basic human need for political self-determination, the need to expend civic energy. Legislation cannot alter this need. As such, the convention further

argues, the will to participation may dull due to disuse or appear fragments due to disorganization, but the power itself never disappears entirely. If black citizens' civic "powers" do not appear in evidence, it is not due to their absence. The civic energy remains, but it lacks the circulation and "natural and legitimate exercise" that directs it into citizenship practice.⁷⁸ "The powers that should have been thus employed, have not lain dormant," the convention's "Address...to the Voters of the State" explains: "Powers will have exercise, either healthy or unhealthy. The impartial and proscriptive non-suffrage act, has been to us hurtful in the extreme. The powers that should naturally have been thus exercised, were wrested from their legitimate employment."⁷⁹ Without an outlet for the natural inclination towards self-determination, excess civic power will flow into political rebellion, violent revolution, criminality, or movements like the "Convention of the Colored Inhabitants of the State of New York." The convention's language echoes Alexander Hamilton's contention for a strong federal government in Federalist No. 13: "Civil power, properly organized and exerted, is capable of diffusing its force to a very great extent; and can, in a manner, reproduce itself in every part of a great empire by a judicious arrangement of subordinate institutions."⁸⁰ Where Hamilton's arguments focus on creating a federal government strong enough to direct a diverse and wide-ranging civic body, the 1840 New York convention warns that such a government must be able to encompass *all* of its citizens to be productive. Unable to pursue happiness by means of political engagement, debate, compromise, agitation, etc., disenfranchised citizens will naturally seek extra-governmental and eventually extra-legal means. This lack of an outlet could also result in civic atrophy. Like a gangrenous limb, the rot can and will spread to the rest of the community, because, despite the social boundaries, the root republican principles that provide the community's foundation and

facilitates exchanges between individuals will always be compromised. Moreover, the buildup of unfocused, unused energy, like the buildup of water at a dam, could simply explode.

The New York convention's theory of circulation and civic power reveals the relation between conventions and citizenship practice, suggesting that we read the convention itself as a manifestation of black citizens' desire for political participation. With only restricted access to the electoral mechanisms that were quickly becoming the dominant instrument of citizenship in the antebellum U.S., black citizens worked through extralegal conventions, a potentially more democratic and revolutionary citizenship practice that electoral politics were beginning to replace. Just as Jones and Allen framed their *Narrative* as a response to an encroachment on their liberty, so too do the state conventions situate their claims as a call for restoration and fulfillment rather than dissolution. The black state conventions eschew complete dissolution, however, because, some argue, the U.S. Revolution already established the break from monarchy and the Federal Constitution already guarantees their rights of citizenship.⁸¹ Rather, they situate themselves in the tradition of nonviolent, constitutional revolution.

4. Why Conventions? Why Colored?: Citizenship through a "Different Medium"

What I have suggested is that the conventions mobilize a theory of civic power in which the circulation of civic power through political participation makes citizenship functional, especially in lieu of a national standard for citizenship. The New York convention leverages this argument to frame their claims to suffrage as a fulfillment of natural law, rather than a "foreign issue" or imposition on the rights of white citizens. Yet, presenting these claims through a "Convention of the Colored Inhabitants of New York" is just as important as their theoretical arguments. Antebellum conventions were an outgrowth of the democratic practices that hearken

back to pre-revolutionary committees of correspondence and turn-of-the century democratic-republican societies. Initially organized to facilitate communication between colonial resistance groups in the years preceding the revolution, committees of correspondence lacked official standing, instead basing authority in the local voting processes.⁸² As colonists became increasingly frustrated with colonial authority in the 1770s, these committees began assuming the power and responsibility of official governance, ultimately providing, contends Edward Countryman, “the means by which people excluded under the old order entered fully into politics.”⁸³ These committees forged crucial infrastructure for the Continental Congresses, the framing of state constitutions, the break with Britain, and for the preservation of the Revolution in the nation’s first decades.⁸⁴

After the revolution, the political framework modeled in the local committees of correspondence remained in the form the democratic-republican societies and other associations of the late eighteenth century that were not quite political parties or official organizations, but also not ancillary to the political process.⁸⁵ By the 1830s, this direct engagement with government produced the sense that citizens “speak in the language of command, and not of prayer, to their Representatives.”⁸⁶ People who did not or could not assume this civic tone were apparently not citizens. Between 1835 and 1849, seven states held constitutional conventions to revise standing constitutions or to frame new ones in their path towards statehood.⁸⁷ These local organizations and the public and deliberative process of constitution drafting and ratification created a democratic ethos from the bottom up that netted what we now popularly describe as Jeffersonian and Jacksonian Republicanisms.⁸⁸ Each of these instances shares the sense that government rules through the consent of the governed, and when established representational structures fail to reflect the views of the consenting people, the people need to take more

radically democratic measures. When states were no longer responsive to citizens' needs, these local structures could become agents of revolutionary change—often rhetorically channeling the Revolution—manifesting in violence as in the Whiskey Rebellion and the U.S. Civil War or, as was increasingly the case, in conventions seeking constitutional change.

The Dorrite Convention of 1841 demonstrates the potential of the convention as a political form and outlet for civic power.⁸⁹ During the early 1840s, disenfranchised white citizens in Rhode Island organized suffrage associations that petitioned the state legislature initially for suffrage rights and then for a state constitutional convention to reform Rhode Island's suffrage requirements. When the 581-signature petition and subsequent state constitutional convention both failed, the suffragists “responded by affirming the right of citizens, inherent in the people's sovereignty, to call a constitutional convention on their own—to bypass the assembly, elect delegates, draft a constitution, and ratify it in the manner of states during the Revolutionary period.”⁹⁰ The subsequent People's Convention and constitution seriously threatened to supplant the incumbent government of Rhode Island in part because, like the pre-revolutionary committees of correspondence, the Dorrites had begun to act as if they were the state government. They presented themselves as more able to set aside private interests for the common good than the (apparently) self-serving Charterites. They elected representatives on a more democratic basis, drafted and ratified a new state constitution, and planned to legislate at the beginning of the session, falling short when the representatives balked at occupying the statehouse.⁹¹ Though the Dorrites never supplanted the incumbent state government, and the subsequent changes to the state constitution fell short of the movement's aspirations, the Dorr rebellion demonstrated the potential power of appealing to the public's sense of sovereignty and serves as a prominent, if extreme, example of the hopes people invested in conventions.

Moreover, if movements like the People's Convention demonstrate the potential power of this extra-governmental form, their emphasis on franchise rights reflects a moment in U.S. political history when citizens exchange more direct citizenship practice—in the form of conventions and the like—for more abstracted political participation in the shape of voting.

My argument here is not necessarily that the black conventions did anything particularly differently from other conventions, but rather, that the choice of this form—the convention and circulated proceedings—signifies in certain recognizable and performative ways that an address or addresses (without the accompanying frame) could not. The countless petitions, conventions, meetings, parades, and other non-governmental forms of citizen participation during the 1830s and 1840s were not, from the antebellum citizen's view, ancillary or symbolic political demonstrations. Rather, they were a viable, visible, and a potentially revolutionary mode of civic engagement in which voting was just becoming accessible to masses of white men.⁹² Though not seeking to supplant state governments, as such, the black state conventions worked through the same logic: by serving in the capacity of political representatives who had a share in the state's collective sovereignty and by taking their entitlement to such rights as given even in the absence of official sanction, the delegates conventions engaged in the political process in fact even if they do not do so in law.

The problem facing black activists from the outset, however, was that this populist impulse, as it resulted in a more democratic public sphere for white men, often did so through explicitly excising white women and people of color from the consenting public, resulting in a majority apathetic, if not outright hostile, to further democratic expansion.⁹³ Ironically, had the People's Convention extended their program to include rather than exclude black Rhode Islanders, the coalition may have succeeded in overthrowing the Rhode Island oligarchy.⁹⁴ In

this way, the Rhode Islander's prove the New York convention's point: refusing a more expansive circulation of civic power, the Dorrites fell short of their political goals. And, like the 1841 People's Convention, the delegates to the black state conventions needed to either convince state legislators that enfranchising them was worth risking the ire of their white constituents or convince both legislators and a majority of white voters that their claims were not only just, but critical to the state's continued prosperity.

Even as the 1840 New York convention presented a reasoned argument for suffrage rights, then, its success depended on the performance and presentation of these arguments to the public.⁹⁵ As Ray observes, the impressions the convention left on the attending audience—"many of the leading men in Albany of the Whig political party, and of public matters"—and readers of the convention's proceedings were at least as important to the delegates as the outcome of the debates and their theoretical soundness.⁹⁶ The Whig onlookers provide a moment of Hegelian recognition, but with an ever-present caveat of difference—"as one of their own class said to us"—that reemphasizes the power differential between the convention delegates (since many could not vote) and the white voters and legislators who make up part of its audience.⁹⁷ The need for formal recognition exposes tensions inherent in these conventions as simultaneously practices in and signs of citizenship and at the same time stagings adhering to certain stylistic conventions and dependent on voter affirmation for validation.⁹⁸ Ray's comments reveal the measure of aesthetic judgment and persuasion always attendant to deliberative politics, especially in lieu of a civic space fraught with inequity.⁹⁹

While the convention, the event itself, staged black citizenship practices, providing an outlet for black civic power, the documents surrounding the convention—the Calls and debates leading up to the event and the Proceedings and reports following the event—circulated to gather

the public approval needed for constitutional change. Integral to this staging, then, was how convention organizers shaped the political community of “colored” citizens the delegates claimed to represent. The delegates needed to define colored citizens as a group with shared political claims against the state while not reinforcing the sense that they were a separate people. The 1840 New York convention’s analysis of how differences in political rights produced material distinctions not peculiar to black citizens as a people was one point of attack, but the battle over black political identity began before the first delegates ever arrived in Albany. The debate about the necessity, efficacy, and purpose of a convention of *colored* inhabitants, before the 1840 New York convention also reveals the political exigencies that influence how these conventions shaped their public presences and approached their respective audiences.

White and black activists alike were often ambivalent towards the “complexional” nature of these conventions. William Whipper, James McCune Smith, and other black activists opposed the 1840 convention because of the expense, the possible diffusion of labor, and their sense that the suffrage movement would be better served by an interracial coalition under the umbrella of human rights.¹⁰⁰ After the convention, William Whipper famously penned a set of three letters to the *Colored American* critiquing the 1840 Convention’s emphasis on color as “in direct opposition to the ‘rights of humanity.’”¹⁰¹ White anti-slavery activists like Nathaniel Rogers, editor of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, accused the organizers of repeating the prejudices of white men in addressing their call to colored citizens. Rogers’s June 18, 1840, editorial addresses itself to the organizers as a “friend” and then argues: “We oppose all exclusive action on the part of the colored people, except where the clearest necessity demands it.”¹⁰² Rogers continues, “time should be taken to discuss the measures to be employed deliberately; and the people should be made distinctly to understand that *our* country is *your*

country; our God your God.”¹⁰³ The language implies that at best the conventioners’ actions were too hasty, showing a lack of rational deliberation; at worst, Rogers’s commentary implies that this deliberation could only occur with their (white) legitimating presence and direction.¹⁰⁴

Defending the convention against such attacks forced supporters to grapple with the meaning of “color” as an organizing principle, questions of agency vis-à-vis fracturing anti-slavery organizations, and the tensions between presenting black citizens as autonomous individuals and the public’s tendency to read their political actions as the result of white patronage or pawns in the jockeying of political parties.¹⁰⁵ In these terms, the exclusive gathering is merely provisional—when the caste system no longer exists, “there will then be no longer special interests to be attended to.”¹⁰⁶ One such defender, “Sidney,” responds to William Whipper’s letters in one of the clearest articulations of a pragmatic political black nationalism in early African America: “Whenever a people are oppressed, peculiarly (not complexionally), distinctive organization or action is required on the part of the oppressed, to destroy that oppression. The colored people of this country are oppressed; therefore the colored people are required to act in accordance with this fundamental principle.”¹⁰⁷ In much the same vein, Samuel Ringgold Ward responds to Rogers’s *Standard* editorial by pointing out white abolitionists’ racial privilege and myopia: their inability “to see a colored man when in the company of other whites necessitates such a convention.”¹⁰⁸ Ward upbraids Rogers: “had you a colored skin from October ‘17 to June ‘40, as I have, in this pseudo-republic, you would have seen through a very *different medium*.”¹⁰⁹ Sidney and Ward connect being “colored” to a historical experience of oppression and to a mode of seeing this oppression as an issue of political power and representation. Being colored in this instance signifies in much the same way as being property-less might in other circumstances. To have a “colored skin,” their

analysis suggests, is to be without property in whiteness, a property worth about \$250 in New York.¹¹⁰ This material and historical perspective gave Ward and Sidney a theoretical and experiential understanding of politics different from their white partners in anti-slavery activism.

The convention welcomed white attendance—even needed their approbation—but Ray maintains that any political progress will require the kind of publicity that only a gathering arranged by an autonomous black political collective could provide. The political exigencies and the way race frames and suffuses these politics supersede the sentimental affiliation Rogers suggests in proclaiming, “every abolitionist should be a colored person in this case.”¹¹¹ Every abolitionist, Ray argues, cannot be a colored person, because being “colored” is a function of social and political constraints that white citizens do not share. This division is evident in anti-slavery conventions in which the black participants are “looked upon as playing second fiddle to” the white callers.¹¹² Black abolitionists could lecture and even preside over the meetings, but the decisions would always come down from the white leadership.¹¹³ Such an event, a “different medium,” would demonstrate to the state that, rather than operating as puppets to abolitionist organizations, black citizens desired the franchise for their own and the state’s benefit, “that as citizens we should possess the privileges and immunities of citizenship: and...we are as capable of appreciating and exercising those rights as others.”¹¹⁴ It would position them as political *agents* rather than objects of legislation or the political wards of the Whig establishment. It would allow black citizens to exercise their own civic power.

The debates preceding the convention positioned the delegates as representatives of a political community of colored citizens. After the convention, the delegates use print to extend the convention’s performance, with the circulation of the collected “Proceedings” or “Minutes”—that included debates, resolutions, addresses, and petitions—and the conventions’

form petitions that articulated the delegates' central position in a shorter form.¹¹⁵ If the suffrage acts as the official conduit of civic power, these Proceedings serve as an unofficial, alternate route, connecting black citizens to an otherwise inaccessible civic sphere. The organizers of the 1840 New York convention were keenly aware that the convention's legitimacy depended as much on how well it executed its business as a deliberative body (or at least how well it presented this execution to the public) as it did on what the convention actually decided.¹¹⁶ Ray reiterates again and again, that the "Proceedings" represents the convention's "respectable and noble" character, revealing the delegates' ability to conduct business without "angry debate," settling differences "amicably and yet without compromise."¹¹⁷ Indeed, the *form* of these debates and resolutions carries at least as much weight as their content because the text confirms Ray's claim that the convention adhered to a republican style of politics.

Adhering to the republican style meant that all of the proceedings needed to observe parliamentary procedure and reflect the delegates' sense of civility. And, because audiences would read any sign of disorder as confirmation of black difference, the minutes needed to be especially scrupulous on this point. Rather than including transcriptions or details of debates between delegates, —as the National Conventions are notorious for doing and as state constitutional conventions did—the proceedings mention the disagreement as a matter of procedure. The minutes for the New York convention include the substance of disagreements (no matter how heated), but not the actual back and forth, in a way that frames it as a democratic process of revision. For example, when some delegates (C. B. Ray, T. S. Wright, E. P. Rogers) supported a resolution encouraging black citizens to buy property to meet the franchise requirements for practical reasons, others (H. H. Garnet, U. Boston, A. Crummell) opposed it

because the resolution implied consent to the current requirement. The convention records the debate over the resolution as follows:

A very spirited debate arose on this resolution, owing to the exception taken to that part of it which asserted that the obtainment of a certain amount of property, "*elevates us to the rights of freemen*".... The discussion on the resolution, continued till near the close of the session, when Mr. Ray introduced an amendment, which was strongly opposed, owing to its containing...the same objectionable feature as the original resolution.

The minutes exclude the actual back and forth, instead offering the procedural commentary:

“spirited debate,” “discussion,” introduction of an amendment, opposition to the amendment, etc.

They adjourn without a resolution and return to the question later, but “after some further discussion...laid [it] indefinitely upon the table.”¹¹⁸ This presentation offers enough description to give readers a sense of the stakes involved in the resolution’s language, the delegates’ astute attention to this language (mirroring similar debates about semantics during constitutional conventions), and the democratic process through which the convention negotiated this impasse. Without the messy details of individual arguments, however, even this clearly divisive issue (it consumes the better part of two sessions after all) reads relatively smoothly.

The minutes do not mention the debate again, but later that evening, after several reports, two resolutions appear that resolve the tensions around the original proposal: “Resolved, That we recommend to our people to become possessors of the soil within the limits of this State” and,

Resolved, That in recommending our people to possess themselves of the soil, we no less protest against that clause in the Constitution of the State which requires a property qualification of us...considering it wrong in principle, sapping the foundation of self government, and contrary to all notions of natural justice.¹¹⁹

These two resolutions register and synthesize the primary disagreements over the original proposal as dialectical progression. Like other resolutions, the proceedings do not record the vote count, nor do they give the names of who proposed which parts of these adopted resolutions. Where the debate account registers the political fault lines, the new resolutions

appear as if none of the earlier exchange and deadlock had occurred. In its linear progression, this presentation functions dialectically to meld discordant voices into a, coherent representative civic voice. But the differences themselves do not disappear. The proceedings, as Mark Schoenfield has suggested in the context of eighteenth-century British periodicals, produce an “institutionally heteroglossic” structure, at once ephemeral—the record of a singular event, situated in a particular political moment—and at the same time “compiled” and “collected” as a record of the political moment.¹²⁰ Internally, the resolutions relate to each other dialogically in a call-and-response sequence mediated, as it were, by the “third party” of the overall corporate author as a product of public democratic exchange.¹²¹ The pieces of the proceedings also dialogue with each other: the preamble with the resolutions, the resolutions with the addresses, the resolutions with each other, etc. This formal structure, at once a dialectical progression through compromise and at the same time a dialogic interplay between distinct voices and sections, no less than the resolutions’ content demonstrates the deliberative politics that opponents claimed were beyond black citizens’ mental capacities or social conditions. The convention itself shows the delegates doing the work of the republican citizenship through a form that models how republican governments should channel and focus citizens’ civic energy. As the next section suggests, the convention’s staging reaches full effect when audiences encounter the parts of the proceedings as a package.

5. “Not very courteous language, indeed, for petitioners”: Convention as Sublime Appeal

So far, I have used the 1840 Convention of the Colored Inhabitants of New York to outline the relation between citizenship practice and political participation in terms of circulation: the circulation of civic power through channels of participatory politics vitalizes

citizenship practice. Restricting this circulation can result in the distressed social conditions a white public has increasingly ascribed to racial difference. The state conventions themselves are a manifestation of black citizen's civic power, and delegates use this specific form in lieu of official franchise rights to press for constitutional change.

More than the 1840 New York convention, the 1848 State Convention of the Colored Citizens of Pennsylvania explicitly cites the creation and movement of collective texts (petitions) as a tool for textually joining politically separate communities. The convention issued "An Appeal to the Colored Citizens" and "An Appeal to the Voters of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania," printed with the original proceedings and reprinted in Samuel Ringgold Ward's *Impartial Citizen* a year later.¹²² Composed by the same committee, the "Appeals" make up most of the Proceedings.¹²³ Aimed at separate audiences but printed side by side, the "Appeals" mirror the dialectic-dialogic model of deliberative politics presented in the debate-to-resolution sequence during the convention itself. While the "Appeals" position each audience dialogically, addressing white voters and colored citizens separately, the call for each audience to work towards expanding citizenship rights through drafting petitions operates dialectically, creating fellow citizenship. This circulation of petitions from both groups could connect civic power through citizenship practices that reaffirm citizens' commitment to republican governance. Just as the Erie Canal connected separate segments of the nation, the "Appeals" serve as a conduit connecting citizens' civic power. Just as the lines separating newspaper columns signal that each article belongs to the same institutional structure, the 1848 convention's "Appeals" institutionally heteroglossic structure connects its separate audiences as fellow citizens.

The oscillation in how the "Appeals" deploy the term "appeal" produces the institutionally heteroglossic relation between audiences and maps how the 1848 Pennsylvania

convention's transition between seeking approval and redress from white voters (supplication) and a more radical sense of sublime appeal more in the strain of a jeremiad or manifesto. The *OED* offers several definitions of "appeal" in play during the 1840s: an appeal to authority for vindication or to overturn the ruling of a lower court; to level a criminal charge before a tribunal or "impeachment of treason or felony"; and an appeal to country, "the people," or a higher principle.¹²⁴ Where the first two instances maintain a separation between voters and nonvoters—citizens without civic authority addressing citizens with civic authority—, the last instance calls on the collective civic power of Pennsylvania's citizens to revise or draft a new constitution.

The "Appeal to the Colored Citizens" offers court proceedings as the guiding metaphor for both "Appeals": "We intend suing for our rights as *men*; where the Executive and Legislative branches of the government is the Court, and 400,000 legal voters the jury, our own conduct being the witnesses, and true republican principles the law."¹²⁵ The "Appeal" defines "true republican principles" through reference to the Declaration of Independence: "that all just governments derive their powers from the consent of the governed."¹²⁶ Regardless of perceived deficiencies in the black population, the fact that colored citizens are "governed" by the state of Pennsylvania forms the basis of a contract that entitles them to franchise rights. Pennsylvania's 1837/38 constitutional convention, by denying colored citizens the right to give consent, and yet requiring their obedience and loyalty, violates this fundamental republican law. The "Appeal to the Voters," then, applies to the state and voters (addressed as "Sirs") as institutional superiors, "the source of power from which the fundamental Laws of this Commonwealth must derive their origin, power and sustenance," able to overturn the constitutional convention's initial ruling.¹²⁷ Yet, by appealing to the voters in this legal context, the "Appeals" present the delegates as equals—advocates rather than supplicants—critiquing institutional errors from a position of

moral and legal authority. Just as the act of organizing and addressing the public through a convention enacts citizenship even as it speaks from outside the official sphere, appealing to the voters rather than simply addressing them implies the moral equality of the appealers as recognizable legal agents, despite the imbalance in institutional authority.

Like their New York counterparts, the Pennsylvanians' refuse the calculus that black citizens must elevate themselves before enfranchisement, yet they also recognize that the means to enfranchisement requires a publicity campaign. Even as the "Appeals" lay their case before the voters, seeking impartial justice based on the laws of republicanism, the "Appeal to the Voters" reveals the inherent danger to minorities when contract-based arguments meet consent-based structures or when republican principles meet racist public opinion.¹²⁸ Where Lord Mansfield based the 1772 *Somerset* judgment on the "language" of British law, Pennsylvania's voters will be judging colored citizens based on their actions, even though such "evidence... has no foundation in established precedents."¹²⁹ Even if the voters were to judge colored citizens based on republicanism, the voters are so diverse in "every quality of prejudice" and interpretation of republicanism (which "they are not bound by oaths to support") that their judgment is capricious.¹³⁰ As such, while the delegates appeal to law and principle in the "Appeal to the Voters," the "Appeal to the Colored Citizens" still requests that colored citizens not give white voters an excuse for relying on their prejudices. Colored citizens should "avoid any unjust cause of offence," but instead, should work to gather support from a wide a range of citizens. This anxiety over public whim suggests that while the practices of citizenship should be open to all citizens, this same openness makes achieving equality for disempowered citizens or non-citizens difficult in practice, especially when voters decide exactly who qualifies and are not obligated to follow any standard outside the one of their own making.

And it is precisely because the 1837-38 constitutional convention manipulated white prejudice for political gain that the 1848 convention comes before the public, ten years later, to “sue” for their rights, rather than simply request them. In this sense of “appeal,” the delegates “accuse” voters “of a heinous crime whereby the accuser has received personal injury or wrong, for which he demands reparation.”¹³¹ Despite explicitly positioning the voters as members of the jury and the state government as judge in the “Appeal to Colored Citizens,” both the “Appeal to Colored Citizens” and the “Appeal to the Voters” ultimately take on a tone of accusation and judgment, resting on republican law.¹³² In rhetoric that prefigures Douglass’s “Oration,” the “Appeal to the Voters” reviews the state’s history of republicanism through its own documents:

We need not search among the antiquated records of the past for a successful vindication of our claims to impartial laws. These emblems, of our State’s humanity are imperishably recorded in the sublime appeals of her distinguished statesmen.

We do not appear before you as the supplicants for any new form of government which is opposed to the foundation principles of republicanism; we only ask the favor of the application of your own principles to your civil code.... You claim that your own Independence Hall is the sacred spot where your republicanism was born, cradled and received a national baptism, and from whence the same vestal fire of freedom is encompassing the globe.¹³³

The black population, the delegates write, have watched the white population’s “soul stirring appeals in behalf of republicanism, in foreign lands,” and cannot help but believe that voters would want the same “progress of free principles” in their “own dearest Pennsylvania.”¹³⁴ The delegates situate Pennsylvania as the exemplar of republicanism to the world. The proliferation of documents (quotes from the state constitution, the declaration of independence), monuments (Independence Hall, etc.), and events within the “Appeal to the Voters” form the basis of a covenant between the state and its citizens.¹³⁵ The “you’s” throughout the “Appeal to the Voters” punctuates the voters’ responsibility for their own laws and how these laws violate the state’s self-proclaimed republican principles.¹³⁶ As outside witnesses, the “we” of the “Appeal

to the Voters” excoriates the “you,” the “Appeal’s” audience: they should be humiliated by the contemplation of what is written in the law. The emphasis on the contractual or covenant nature of republicanism the “Appeal to the Voters” shifts the argumentative burden from the meaning of blackness and ostensible material and ontological differences between types of citizens to the principles of republicanism as applied to *all* citizens.

While the “Appeal to the Voters” engages the Voters’ responsibility and patriotism, suggesting that the current voters risk forsaking the legacy of their forebears, the “Appeal to Colored Citizens” excoriates these same voters for breaking their state’s republican contract for personal gain. In so doing, the “Appeals” offer an incisive analysis of how electoral politics structured through racial hierarchies worked to limit democratic citizenship even as it appears to create a more democratic public sphere. The “Appeal to Colored Citizens” argues that racism functioned as a “*passport to power*” that allowed white citizens to limit potential political opposition as much as they could. They suggest that the state’s elite and white citizens more generally have deliberately refused to base their decisions on the very standards they themselves claim to use, and have instead used suffrage restrictions to suppress republican governance and to disfranchise not only citizens who could not vote, but also to better control those citizens who could. As the “Appeal to the Colored Citizens” argues with chagrin:

They [Reform Convention] were cunning logicians, and well knew that no argument founded on *condition* would meet the *false prejudices of their* constituents. They knew that the period had long since passed when it would be *possible to frame* a standard of *condition* that would separate the *white* from the *colored* people.

So they disfranchised us... assuming *condition* as their *reason*, and *complexion* as their standard.¹³⁷

The constitutional convention delegates based the franchise requirements on social and economic condition only to make whiteness the standard for measuring them in a way that smoothed over differences between white men.¹³⁸ Race was never an indicator of civic worth, but rather the

“*capital*” funding a shell game in which race substituted for reason or republican principle, giving the sense that all white citizens were abstractly equal, when the delegates were actually trying to make the political field as unequal as they could.

In one sense, electoral politics worked in preventing this more wholesale power grab; in another sense, the ratification reveals just how vulnerable the electorate can be to manipulation. Just because universal white manhood suffrage seems to work in favor of all white men, does not mean that a more democratic sphere was the intent. Many of those who supported the suffrage restriction “would not only have *disfranchised us*, but the *poor of every nation*, and whole *political parties*, that were opposed to them in the bargain.”¹³⁹ By focusing voters’ attentions on protecting their shared interests in whiteness against incursions from a black mass or any easily isolated “others,” those in power could more easily mask their maneuvering for more control.¹⁴⁰

Where the 1840 New York convention theorizes and stages citizenship based in part on the prevailing logic of the republican style, the 1848 Pennsylvania convention theoretically dismantles white civic duplicity. Though the delegates to the constitutional convention are guilty of pandering to racial prejudices, their white constituents are equally guilty for holding and acting on these “false prejudices.”¹⁴¹ The *problem* of racial condition is not in black identity, but rather in the gaze. So long as white voters give ontological, normative, and moral value to skin color, black citizens will never become “elevated” enough. For the “Appeals” black readers, giving an account of racial oppression that indicts white duplicity and arbitrariness instead of black condition or behavior eliminates the improvement-then-rights tactics even as it provides reasons for continuing to support moral and material uplift, not for the sake of impressing a white public, but rather as good in and of themselves.

As appeal to a higher authority, then, the “Appeals” acknowledge the authority of white voters as ultimate sovereigns of the state. As appeal of a crime, the “Appeals” call white citizens to account for breaking the nation and the state’s founding compacts, when Pennsylvania, as the former capital and birthplace of some of the most renowned patriots, should be at the vanguard, protecting these compacts. 3) Lastly, because the racialization of rights threatens the very fabric of republican government in the state, the “Appeals” appeal to all citizens to revise or dissolve the existing contract.¹⁴² The invocation of “the sublime appeals of [Pennsylvania’s] distinguished statesmen,” particularly the “Declaration of Independence,” through the structure of a convention that calls its own addresses to the public “appeals” directly links the 1848 convention to a national tradition of government by consent and continuing revolution.¹⁴³ This approach shifts voters’ attention away from a systems-off citizenship in which the would-be citizen must attain a certain standard before earning full rights to a systems-on citizenship in which, according to the state and nation’s founding contracts, all governed citizens receive all the rights of citizenship until they “[forfeit] their rights” by committing a crime.¹⁴⁴

The “Appeals” reference the “Declaration” in a way that suggests conservation of the current form of government while justifying revolution. The “Appeal to the Voters” reassures the public that the convention is not calling for a radical change in government, citing the Declaration’s assertion “‘that governments long established should not be changed for slight and transient causes,’ and all experience has proved, that as a people we are disposed to suffer present evils ‘rather than fly to others we know not of’.”¹⁴⁵ The “Appeal to the Colored Citizens” likewise justifies its claims through the Declaration’s assertion “that all just governments derive their powers from the consent of the governed,” again suggesting that the “Appeals” are simply citing the basic premises of the current government.¹⁴⁶ Yet, despite the

reassurance that the colored citizens are not seeking radical change in the quoted passages from the Declaration, the ellipsis between the clause invoking the consent of the governed and the clause invoking the conservation of institutions suggests a more radical edge. Nested between these justifications for working within the current system, the Declaration offers reasons for dissolution: “That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.” The call to a more radical democracy in the ellipsis between the two clauses quoted separately in the two “Appeals” mirrors the unspoken, yet insistent call for a more radical interpretation of republicanism between the two “Appeals” more generally, an appeal to directly confront racist state policies as a danger to the legitimacy and stability of the civic compact as a whole.

As recompense for their collective negligence in allowing the state to compromise its republican creed, the state convention appeals to citizens, both white and black, to exercise their collective sovereignty and draft a new civic compact. More than referencing founding documents, then, the convention asks white voters to join them in producing new texts: “Our object in assembling is not only to petition the Legislature *ourselves*, but also to solicit *you to petition...to instruct [legislators] in a course of action.*”¹⁴⁷ Together, the “Appeals” seek to build an interracial coalition of petitioners, a new interracial majority, around the issue of voting rights. Like the “Dorr War” earlier in the decade, this call to petition had revolutionary potential, provided the white public cooperated, but they refuse the race-based exclusions that were part of the Dorrites’ failure. The collective action on the part of the whole people could make the state of Pennsylvania stronger, allowing it to join other states that have “succeeded in establishing a

republican form of government where men of all complexions enjoy an equality of rights” like Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Vermont.¹⁴⁸ The act of petitioning—not simply signing a pre-formulated petition, but actively creating and circulating them in conjunction with the convention’s work—could realign the terms of community affiliation in a way that matches the boasted efforts to spread republicanism abroad and could establish and demonstrate consensus about a more egalitarian notion republican government. This sense of appeal, with its framing through a convention of representative citizens and its resonances with the Continental Congress’s “Declaration” allows the delegates to “reframe the meaning of popular sovereignty” by invoking a ritual of consensus that supersedes any existing government.¹⁴⁹

The Pennsylvania Convention’s more confrontational style reads less like the theoretical treatise on the meaning of the franchise from the 1840 New York addresses and more like a manifesto in the tradition of David Walker’s *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World* (reprinted in 1848 by Garnet with his 1843 “Address to the Slaves” and biography of Walker) and the 1837 “Appeal of Forty Thousand Citizens,” respectfully asking the state for redress, but maintaining a position of moral and legal judgment. Invoking these more familiar documents in their title and tone, the Pennsylvania convention’s appeals call for the black population to work towards their own political liberation with or without the state’s sanction even as they argue that the Constitution secures black citizens’ rights: “Slaves have but learned to lick the dust, and stifle the voice of free inquiry; but we are not slaves—our right to natural liberty, and qualified citizenship, is guaranteed to us by the Constitution.”¹⁵⁰ Like Walker’s *Appeal* and the 1837 “Appeal of Forty Thousand,” the “Appeal to Colored Citizens” dismantles the racial illogic by which colored citizens had been disfranchised as a part of a larger call to colored citizens to take control of their own political fates. In this way, the “Appeals” may begin with notes of

deference, but they have elements of the manifesto at their core: an articulation of a new political position and policy for black Pennsylvanians and an ultimatum directed at the state that these citizens will no longer equivocate about their political rights as citizens.

If the voters do not overturn the legislature's ruling, it will not be a verdict on the "condition" of the colored citizens, but rather, an admission that the state cannot hold up to its own professed standards. Where New York's Charles Ray emphasizes the recognition of Whig onlookers and the presentation of the New York Convention, the Pennsylvanians take the white gaze out of the equation:

We shall live and labor in the glorious anticipation of success; but if it should prove otherwise, and you should not consent to repeal the sentence you have passed on Providence, we shall derive the rich consolation that in making this appeal we have discharged a duty we owe to *ourselves*, to freedom, and republicanism—to posterity and to God.¹⁵¹

Even though colored citizens need the voters' support to regain the suffrage, they do not depend of these voters for their political identity. If the voters reject the "Appeal," then the voters have failed, ultimately usurping the natural order and rendering their constitution invalid via its own republican logic. The declaration echoes the warning the "Appeal of Forty Thousand Citizens" issued a decade earlier: "no amendments of the present Constitution can compensate for the loss of its foundation principle of equal rights, nor for the conversion into enemies of 40,000 friends."¹⁵² Ultimately, colored citizens will be justified in separating from a government that refuses consent from its whole people.

Focusing on one meaning of "Appeal" obscures the whole and misses the complexity of the Pennsylvania delegates' position. More than the "Appeal to the Voters," the "Appeal to Colored Citizens" directly confronts the voters' criminal negligence in accepting truncated republicanism; yet, because the two Appeals were printed side-by-side as a part of the same

Proceedings, the “Appeal to the Colored Citizens” speaks to the white audience even as it ostensibly addresses a black audience. The result is that while the “Appeal to the Voters” acknowledges white voters and legislators as the governing authority, inheritors of the state’s revolutionary heritage, and responsible (if not contractually obligated) to continue the progress of republican governance, the “Appeal to the Colored Citizens” accuses the white voters of using this power to corrupt the form of government they claim to protect. This doubling allows the convention to request even as it condemns, to ask for judgment even as it dispenses its own judgment, and to approach the voters as non-threateningly as possible even as it shapes a unified black political community through a sense of righteous indignation.¹⁵³ Each instance represents an algorithm depending on audience reception, a step-by-step protocol leading to either citizenship practices that are more democratic on one end or grounds for disassociation on the other.

The common belief in republican governance (stronger than racial, political, or cultural homogeneity) should be the central point of identification between citizens, not the many differences that might otherwise separate them. The 1840 New York convention frames disfranchisement as the death of citizenship; the Pennsylvanians’ invocation of the sublime appeal reveals that the collective struggle to correct institutional wrongs may well be where the practice of citizenship truly begins. It is no coincidence that prominent figures in the conventions of the 1840s—Garnet, Alexander Crummell, and Martin R. Delany—would later argue that, if the nation continued to be unresponsive, the colored citizens of the U.S. should take their civic power elsewhere.¹⁵⁴ If the good citizen in Jones and Allen’s *Narrative* makes neighbors out of strangers through empathetic identification, the black state conventions attempt to join citizens through participatory politics, making their fellow citizenship stronger. Yet, as

the next chapter suggests, the economic changes of the early nineteenth century were as important to citizenship practices as political changes, and as white voters in Pennsylvania and New York reaffirmed suffrage restrictions, black activists collectively and individually made the case that economic interest might offer routes to political power that persuasion and electoral politics could not.

¹ Minutes of the State Convention of the Colored Citizens of Pennsylvania Convened at Harrisburg, December 13th and 14th, 1848, “An Appeal to the Colored Citizens of Pennsylvania” in Philip S. Foner and George E. Walker, eds., *Proceedings of the Black State Conventions, 1840–1865*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979–80), 1:126. Cited hereafter as PA 1848; and Otter *Philadelphia Stories: America’s Literature of Race and Freedom*, Kindle Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 572 [Kindle], 40 [Print].

² As Leon Litwack has described it, the New York “Reform Convention” of 1821 has “come to symbolize the expanded democracy which made possible the triumph of Andrew Jackson seven years later” and helped usher in the age of the common man. See Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790–1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 82. See also Alex Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic, 2000), 54-59; Dana D. Nelson, *National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998), 6. On rituals of consensus, see Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Rites of Assent: Transformations in the Symbolic Construction of America* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 132-136. I reference Bercovitch’s work throughout this chapter, because I think he and the black state conventions are both analyzing and tapping into the rhetoric of errand and national destiny through similar terms. The black state conventions were well aware of the synergy between the symbolic and instrumental functions of franchise rights.

³ Foner and Walker, introduction to *Proceedings*, xv-xvi. Anyone interested in the black state conventions should begin with Foner and Walker’s collection.

⁴ The black state conventions form the core of Jane and William Pease’s 1974 analysis of the resurgence political action in black activism of the 1840s. Historians, Leon Litwack, Benjamin Quarrels have further elaborated on the general history of the conventions and the arguments they make as a part of a larger history of black politics. See Leon A. Higginbotham Jr., *Shades of Freedom: Racial Politics and Presumptions of the American Legal Process* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Litwack, *North of Slavery*; Jane and William Pease. *They Who Would Be Free: Blacks’ Search for Freedom, 1830-1861*; Patrick Rael’s *Black Identity & Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002) also draws from the black state conventions, but relies much more on the national convention movement for his analysis of black political thought. Phyllis Field, *The Politics of Race in New York: The Struggle for Black Suffrage in the Civil War Era* (Cornell University Press, 1982); David E. Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice: Activist Clergy before the Civil War* (LSU Press, 1989), 122-128; and Leslie M. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863* (University Chicago Press, 2003). More recently, Leslie Alexander’s *African or America?: Black Identity and Political Activism in New York City, 1784-1861* (University of Illinois Press, 2008) presents New York’s black state convention movement as central to black politics and identity formation during the 1840s (102-119).

Xi Wang has recently pointed to the development Frederick Douglass’s arguments about suffrage rights to suggest that African American discourse on black suffrage from the antebellum period to the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870 demonstrates the persistence and creativity of what might be called African American constitutional thinking or African American constitutionalism” (118), but by focusing on Douglass, obscures how these arguments developed over several decades before Douglass came to prominence and how, over these same decades, both black activists and those arguing for black disenfranchisement were *already* linking suffrage to citizenship. See Xi Wang, “Make ‘Every Slave Free, and Every Freeman a Voter’: The African American Construction of Suffrage Discourse in the Age of Emancipation” in *Contested Democracy: Freedom, Race, and Power in American History*. ed. Manisha Sinha (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 118-121.

⁵ PA 1848, 132.

⁶ “Convention of the Colored Inhabitants of the State of New York. August 18-20, 1840,” in Foner and Walker, *Proceedings*, 1:16. Cited hereafter as NY 1840.

⁷ Nancy Isenberg, *Sex and Citizenship in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 15

⁸ See Isenberg 15-41. Isenberg suggests that “such conventions had a constitutional precedent derived from the right of the people to assemble and petition the government” that offered a recognizable venue and structure for politics despite the participants’ legal status.

⁹ As Wayne D. Moore argues of Frederick Douglass’s constitutional politics, by exercising their right to sovereignty, the delegates become a part of the sovereign people; *Constitutional Rights and Powers of the People* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 8-10. See also Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black Is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 18-19.

¹⁰ As Rogers Smith’s account suggests, however, this patchwork was porous at best in terms of providing a basis for the federal court and Congress for “giving national content to the rights” of citizens, especially given the opposition from the Jeffersonian and Jacksonian advocates of state-centered interpretations who were in control of the government in the early nineteenth century. The interpretation of the Privileges and Immunities Clause was nevertheless at the heart of many of the sectional crisis to come, including the question of the status of black citizens in the Missouri Territory in 1820. See Smith, *Civic Ideals* 149-152, 173-180, and 187-189.

¹¹ While some of these laws and decisions were based on a person’s status as non-citizen (as in the case of the criminal or foreign national), when that status was not explicitly detailed, whether or not that person exercised all of the rights in a particular state became a guiding precedent for how the law treated that person in the several states.

¹² In 1842 and 1843 the Georgia legislature passed resolutions in direct response to Massachusetts attempts to protect black sailors from imprisonment and enslavement “that negroes, or persons of color, are not citizens, under the Constitution of the United States, and that Georgia will never recognize such citizenship” because they were not regarded as citizens at the time of the framing (“Georgia,” 129, *Civic Ideals* 257-258). Even if certain states granted them limited rights, Georgia argued, these states did not grant them rights in “equality with white men” (Massachusetts, for instance, prohibited interracial marriage) these states had no right to expect other states to honor these rights as if they were white men (qtd. in *Civic Ideals* 257-258). See also Litwack, 50.

¹³ Specific state code also depended on if that state was a slave state, bordered a slave state (as did Pennsylvania), or wanted to restrict African American access from its inception (as was the case when some territories petitioned for statehood. The U.S.-Mexican War, the European Revolutions, and the westward expansion later in the decade forced states, courts, and the federal government to articulate more explicitly policies concerning slavery and the movement of free African Americans, further codifying race as the defining symbol of citizenship. See Bradburn, *Citizenship Revolution*, 238-240; Litwack, 82; Nelson, 6; and Smith, *Civic*, 255-268.

¹⁴ In a reversal of the national trend, Rhode Island actually extended the franchise to black men in 1843, partially as way for the controlling political party to gain crucial votes against the Dorrites, who threatened to install a new state constitution and government through a populist revolution. For more on the elective franchise in northern states see For more on the elective franchise in northern states, see Phyllis Field, *The Politics of Race in New York*; Harris, *Shadow*; Higginbotham Jr., *Shades of Freedom*; Alex Keyssar, *The Right to Vote*; Litwack, *North*; Christopher Malone, *Between Freedom and Bondage: Race, Party, and Voting Rights in the Antebellum North* (New York: Routledge, 2008); Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, *They Who Would Be Free: Blacks’ Search for Freedom, 1830–1861* (New York: Athenaeum, 1974); Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); Rogers Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997); Wang, “Make”; Mark S. Weiner, *Black Trials*; and Nicholas Wood, “‘A Sacrifice on the Altar of Slavery’: Doughface Politics and Black Disenfranchisement in Pennsylvania, 1837–1838,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 31, no. 1 (2011): 75–106.

¹⁵ For instance, the state of Connecticut’s argument against black citizenship in *Crandall v. State of Connecticut* (1834) offers the following historical argument:

This right of suffrage was denied, as a right, and the flames of the revolution burst forth, and taught those who denied the right, that it was one which freemen should enjoy. Take away this right, and American liberty will cease. It is an immunity which belongs to these states—one which they never will give up. It belongs to them as citizens, and as it has been denied to the coloured race generally, it is evidence, that that race were not embraced by the framers of the constitution, in the term citizen.

This argument, as the defense for *Crandall* points out, ignored “that in Pennsylvania and New-York, (as well as in Maine, New-Hampshire, Massachusetts, Vermont, New-Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, North-Carolina and

Tennessee,) they *can* vote.” The defense ultimately attempted to unlink voting and citizenship by citing instances of which citizens could not vote (naturalized citizens, women and children), but who were nevertheless recognized as citizens. The state eventually sided with the prosecution.

Other states and Attorneys General, following *Crandall* and echoing Georgia, argued that because black Americans did not exercise *all* of the rights of white citizens (never mind that all white men did not exercise all the rights of their fellow citizens) they should not be considered citizens of the U.S., or if citizens, a special kind of second-level citizen whose rights other states were not obligated to respect. Instead, these courts and legislatures read claims for black people under the Constitution’s Privileges and Immunities Clause (Article IV, Section 2, Clause 1) as one state’s encroaching on the jurisdiction of another. South Carolina justified the imprisonment of free black seamen through the states’ police powers, arguing that such men would be disruptive to state and national security. See *Crandall v. State* (1834) and Smith, *Civic*, 257-258; and Weiner, *Black Trials*, 95-115.

¹⁶ Early U.S. notions of consent “rested on deeper commitments to ascriptive notions of who was capable of consent, and enhance who America’s true citizens were and who could join their number” (*Civic*, 167). By this same logic, states could discount claims by black citizens to birthright citizenship: British colonists became U.S. citizens after the revolution via implicit consent and military service. Their decedents, inherited this citizenship at birth. Because, the antebellum argument went, people of African descent were not included in this initial dispensation as either British subjects or giving implicit consent, their descendants could not have inherited citizenship as a birthright. They were inhabitants at the time of the revolution, but not included in the original formation of the government; moreover, antebellum arguments tended to ignore or conveniently forget black military service during the revolution or the War of 1812.

¹⁷ On the ongoing friction between groups within the national convention movement, see Rael, *Black Identity, Black Protest*; Litwack, *North of Slavery*; Quarels; *Black Abolitionists*; and Pease and Pease, “Negro Conventions and the Problem of Black Leadership,” *Journal of Black Studies* 2 no. 1 (September 1971), 29-44. Each of these works to some degree argues that the many ideological and personal differences between would-be black leaders undermined any attempt at organizing the black population nationally.

I am not arguing that intrastate differences between activists like Henry Highland Garnet and James McCune Smith disappear just because the spatial scale is smaller; indeed, they often intensify, as when Garnet and Smith’s disputes over the Liberty Party threatened to dismantle the state’s convention movement. Smith initially opposed the New York State Convention in 1840, and he and others formally protested and walked out of the 1844 convention, because the Garnet’s faction wanted to formally endorse the Liberty Party, thus, in Smith’s view, tethering the success or failure of the campaign for black suffrage to a political party. After 1845, New Yorkers did not have another convention until the 1850s, perhaps because of this disagreement or because New York’s electorate voted to keep the property requirement, probably a combination of both. The New York conventions resumed in 1850 as a direct response to the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law. As Malone explains in his study of New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island, strategic differences between state groups resulted in part from the “contingent interaction” between what he identifies as three variables: the variability of economic structures, partisan structures, and “the changing discursive structure of racial coalitions” (6). Moreover, the tensions between city and rural populations, occupational differences, and political philosophy that historians note within U.S. politics more generally, also appear among the state conventions. See Foner and Walker, *Proceedings*, 2; “State Convention of the Colored Citizens of New York, Held at Schenectady, September 18-20, 1844,” 32-36.

¹⁸ See Harris, *Shadow*, 97-101; and Graham Russell Hodges, *Root & Branch: African Americans in New York and East Jersey, 1613-1863* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 190-202.

²⁰ Article 3, Section 1. The Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, as Amended by the Convention of One Thousand Eight Hundred and Thirty-Seven-Thirty-Eight. The full clause read:

In elections by the citizens, every white freeman of the age of twenty-one years, having resided in the State one year, and in the election district where he offers to vote, ten days immediately preceding such election, and within two years paid a State or county tax, which shall have been assessed at least ten days before the election, shall enjoy the rights of an elector. But a citizen of the United States who had previously been a qualified voter of this State, and removed therefrom and returned, and who shall have resided in the election district, and paid taxes, as aforesaid, shall be entitled to vote after residing in the State six months: Provided, That white freemen, citizens of the United States, between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-two years, and having resided in the State one year and in the election district ten days, as aforesaid, shall be entitled to vote, although they shall not have paid taxes.

The previous 1790 constitution made the franchise available to “every freeman, of the age of twenty-one years, having resided in the State two years next before the election, and within that time paid a State or county tax, which

shall have been assessed at least six months before the election.” These requirements remained until the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment. For a good overview of black voting in Pennsylvania, see Winch, “Free Men and ‘Freemen’: Black Voting Rights in Pennsylvania, 1790-1870,” *Pennsylvania Legacies*, 8, no. 2 (2008) and the 2008 special issue, “The Democratic Promise: Suffrage in Pennsylvania” for a more general treatment of suffrage in Pennsylvania.

²¹ By the end of the 1840s, only Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont, and Rhode Island offered unrestricted suffrage to black voters. New York’s 1821 constitution retained a \$250 freehold estate requirement for black male suffrage while eliminating the same requirement for white men; Pennsylvania’s 1838 constitution restricted suffrage to “white men,” and New Jersey’s 1844 convention did the same. For black citizens in the western territories, the question was not protesting and then lobbying to regain the loss of the franchise, but rather a struggle to become enfranchised from the start or, as was the case in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, and Oregon, simply to live in the state. In a reversal of the national trend, Rhode Island actually extended the franchise to black men in 1843, partially to gain crucial votes against the Dorr Convention. See Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War*. (1970). 2nd ed. New York, Oxford UP, 1995, 261; Keyssar, *Right*, 43-49; and Pease and Pease, *They Who Would Be Free*, 189-191.

²² When William Howard Day argued that the Constitution was the “foundation of American liberties,” during an exchange at the 1851 State Convention of the Colored Citizens of Ohio, for instance, H. Ford Douglass quipped: “The gentleman may wrap the stars and stripes of his country around him forty times, if possible, and with the Declaration of Independence in one hand, and the Constitution of our common country in the other, may seat himself under the shadow of the frowning monument of Bunker Hill, and if the slaveholder, under the Constitution, and with the ‘Fugitive Bill,’ don’t find you, then there don’t exist a Constitution” (*Proceedings* 262). At the same time, John Mercer Langston conceded to Douglass’s pro-slavery construction of the constitution, but still maintained that he vote under that constitution “on the same principle...that I would call on every slave, from Maryland to Texas, to arise and assert their *liberties*, and cut their masters’ throats if they attempt again to reduce them to slavery” (*Proceedings*, 263). The exchange gets to black activists’ view of voting as an act of structural violence, its direct connection to the anti-slavery cause, and the tension between the local and national valences of voting.

²³ “Unity in Action,” *Frederick Douglass’s Paper*, 12 May 1854 in in *The Works of James McCune Smith*, ed. John Stauffer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 98. Smith continues, “In each one of the free States, and often in different parts of the same State, the laws, or public opinion, mete out to the colored man a different measure of oppression; in Maine and Massachusetts, no political rights are denied him.... In Pennsylvania, on the contrary, the colored man has everything to contend for, in matters political, religious and social.... Midway between these extremes, we have New York, Ohio, Michigan, and the northern part of Illinois, in which either statute law, or public opinion accords some rights to, and withholds other rights from, the man of color” (*Works*, 98-99). See also Santamarina, “Thinkable,” 247.

²⁴ The National Conventions of Colored Citizens addressed these local issues through Phoenix Societies. Pennsylvania’s Phoenix society transitioned into the American Moral Reform Society in 1836. While some scholars have read the 1840s as inaugurating a more radical style of black politics, a move away from the rhetoric of moral reform and an emphasis on a more identifiable political nationalism in particular, I suggest that the 1840s represents a resurgence of an earlier politics represented in the work of Jones and Allen, Prince Hall, and Lemuel Hayes. This politics includes, but is not limited to, various types of moral reform. More importantly, as Samuel Otter’s recent work among others suggests, oppositions between assimilationist and nationalist, accommodation and protest, moral and political, tend to obscure more than they illuminate. See Otter, *Philadelphia Stories: America’s Literature of Race and Freedom*, Kindle Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), particularly his discussion of William Whipper in chapters two and three; and Foner and Walker, xii.

²⁵ “State Conventions,” *Colored American*, September 12, 1840.

²⁶ In this way, the state convention movement reflected the state-centric politics of the Jacksonian era. Bradburn rightly describes the states as “arbiters of American rights” (2). The interstate variation and the continued centrality of slavery to all legislation concerning black people made claims of national citizenship through the Privileges and Immunities Clause, one of the primary judicial frames for a federal citizenship before the Fourteenth Amendment, nearly impossible.

²⁷ For a discussion of how attention to scale can produced nuanced readings of early African American print culture, see Lloyd Pratt, “The Stranger and the City of New Orleans: Racialization, Americanization, and Literary Print Culture” in *Early African American Print Culture in Theory and Practice*, eds. Jordan Alexander Stein and Lara Cohen (Philadelphia: University Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

²⁸ See for instance Absalom Jones and others, “The Petition of the People of Colour, Free Men, within the City and Suburbs of Philadelphia. To the President, Senate, and House of Representatives, December 30, 1799”; and James Forten, “Letter Addressed to the Honourable George Thatcher, Member of Congress” (1799) and “Letters from a Man of Colour, on a Late Bill before the Senate of Pennsylvania” (1813).

²⁹ One such justification was the “remembrance” of Chief Justice Gibson’s father of a supposed court ruling against black suffrage. See “Appeal of Forty Thousand Citizens, Threatened with Disfranchisement, to the People of Pennsylvania,” in *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African American Protest Literature, 1790–1860*, ed. Richard Newman, Patrick Rael, and Phillip Lapsansky (New York: Routledge, 2001), 132–42.

³⁰ In 1821, at the same time they extended suffrage to all white men, the New York Constitutional Convention added (or retained) a \$250 property requirement for black men. Women, black or white, could still not vote. I suspect that New Yorkers held conventions so often during this short period in part because the balance of political power between ostensibly pro-suffrage Whigs and anti-suffrage Democrats was always in flux and also because New York state held a constitutional convention in 1846.

³¹ Between 1840 and 1865, state conventions occurred in New York, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, New Jersey, Connecticut, Maryland, Illinois, Massachusetts, California, Kansas, Missouri, Louisiana, Virginia, and South Carolina. The New Yorkers did not hold a convention between 1845 and 1850, probably due to a combination of the 1846 state constitutional convention in New York, which resulted in a public vote in favor of upholding the \$250 property requirement and growing division between leading activists over participation in and endorsement of political parties.

³² These state proceedings are important to our sense of African American writing and thought in that they are complex documents “that [include] committee reports, debates, declarations of sentiment, and addresses to the populations, white and black, beyond the convention” (252). Literary historian John Ernest has described the proceedings of the national conventions in similar terms. They are, Ernest writes, “important historical texts not simply in content but in their mode of presentation, in their representation of a black historiographical mode that accounts for and responds to the contingencies of a scattered community, that represents the untold stories without attempting to tell more than can be told, and that presents black history as a mode of address, a consideration of history geared toward an intervention in history” (252). In fine, they are “collective performances designed to be a representative embodiment of an imagined African American community” (252). In addition to the historiographic significance, which is the focus of Ernest’s study, these conventions, both national and local, not only represent an “imagined African-American community,” but also telegraph the terms under which that community is and desires itself to be a part of the larger U.S. national community. That is, they resist narratives that attempt to denaturalize African Americans through the erasure of black participation in the nation’s founding, and they resist attempts to make the free black population wards of the state, incapable of or not interested in self-government, present under the sufferance of white hegemony. Instead, they, like Jones and Allen before them, construct themselves as fellow laborers, bearing an equal burden of responsibility, and there for entitled to an equal measure of rights, as their white counterparts. See Ernest, *Liberation Historiography: African American Writers and the Challenge of History, 1794–1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004)

³³ While some conventions were open to the public or allowed participants to sign in on site, others required delegates to submit credentials, proving their participation in the local nomination process.

³⁴ See for instance “A Call for a Convention of the Colored Inhabitants of the State of New York,” *Colored American*, June 6, 1840.

³⁵ The 1849 State Convention of the Colored Citizens of Ohio actually met in the Hall of the House of the Representatives in Ohio, spatially linking their activities to the official state government. See “Minutes and Address of the State Convention of the Colored Citizens of Ohio, Convened at Columbus, January 10th, 11th, 12th, and 13th, 1849” in Foner and Walker, *Proceedings*, 1:218-240.

³⁶ The organizers of the 1840 State Convention of Colored Citizens of New York refuted claims that they were racially exclusive by pointing out that anyone (white or black) could attend the convention, but only black citizens could vote, because the convention was designed to treat issues affecting only black citizens. See “The Convention” in the 27 June 1840 issue of the *Colored American*, which implores all abolitionists to attend the convention in eleven points, ending with: “We have called the convention - come on then - let the Abolitionists attend - let every one who is in favor of removing the disabilities under which we groan and suffer attend. True the call is to colored men, and our thoughts must be put forth, our wrongs made known, and our wishes represented. The Convention is ours, but we will not shut the door against our white friends.”

³⁷ “New York State Convention.” *Colored American*. 29 August 1840.

³⁸ The convention minutes, however, did not usually include the text of speeches and rarely commented on them beyond occasional approval.

³⁹ Foner and Walker, xvi.

⁴⁰ These proceedings appeared in whole or in part in papers like *Colored American*, *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, *Pennsylvania Freeman*, *North Star*, *The Impartial Citizen* and *Northern Republic* (PA).

⁴¹ Where other conventions, particularly those of the American Anti-Slavery Society featured copious speeches from individual members, printed over several weeks in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* and the *Liberator*, the state conventions of colored citizens seldom recorded addresses other than the collective addresses to the citizens.

⁴² The 1840 New York convention, for instance, sold pamphlets for one dollar per dozen out of the office of the *Colored American* in New York City. Charles B. Ray delayed reprinting the proceedings in the *Colored American* until those pamphlets had nearly sold out.

⁴³ As the delegates to the 1848 State Convention of the Colored Citizens of Pennsylvania argue, “we must draft on the benevolence and liberality of the *press*; for without its favourable influence, no cause, however pure, may hope to succeed, and with it truth and justice must prove invincible.” A report by John Mercer Langston during the 1851 State Convention of the Colored Citizens of Ohio likens the press to a field of battle: “Of the means for the advancement of a people as we are, none are more available than a press. We struggle against opinions. Our warfare lies in the field of thought. Glorious struggle! Godlike warfare! In training our soldiers for the field—in marshaling our hosts for the fight—in leading the onset, and throughout the conflict, we need a Printing Press, because a printing press is the vehicle of thought—is a ruler of opinions.” PA 1848, 125; and “Minutes and Address of the State Convention of the Colored Citizens of Ohio,” in Foner and Walker, *Proceedings*, 1:265.

⁴⁴ The *Colored American*, for instance records a series of smaller public meetings taking place in Manhattan and the surround boroughs where groups passed resolutions in approbation of the state convention’s resolutions and passed form petitions. See *Colored American*, 21 November 1840, 5 December 1840, 19 December 1840, 12 December 1840.

⁴⁵ See Jay Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence: Jefferson, Natural Language, and the Culture of Performance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 144-151.

⁴⁶ Phyllis Field, *The Politics of Race in New York*, 4; and Pease and Pease, *They Who Would Be Free*, 182-186..

⁴⁷ See Harris, *Shadow*, 222. The petition drives began in 1837 and continued throughout the 1840s. Initially led by Charles B. Ray and Philip Bell, the drive generated a Standing Corresponding Committee of “colored young men” that expanded to the New York Association for the political Elevation and Improvement of the People of Color by 1839, and ultimately resulted in the New York State convention movement.

⁴⁸ This committee included a who’s-who of established and up-and-coming black activists: Alexander Crummell, J. Sharp, Theodore S. Wright, Patrick H. Reason, Charles B. Ray, and Charles Lenox Remond.

⁴⁹ When they appeared in the *Colored American*, however, the addresses were separated by about a month, the address to colored citizens appearing on 21 November and the address to the state appearing on 19 December of 1840.

⁵⁰ Phyllis Field reports that between 1837 and 1842, “the legislature received equal suffrage petitions from blacks in New York, Albany, Oneida, Dutchess, Erie, Onodaga, Schenectady, Orange, Queens, and Rensselaer counties among others” (45). See also Pease and Pease, 182-186.

⁵¹ Swift reports that the petition carried 2,093 signatures, a significant increase from the 620 collected in 1837. Garnet was invited to speak before the judiciary committee on February 18, 1841. Garnet left the capital confident that the state assembly would repeal the franchise qualification, writing to the *Colored American* on March 13, “I think therefore, gentlemen, we may not hesitate saying to our brethren throughout the Empire State, that the God of Israel has written with his omnipotent finger upon our future prospects, those all-glorious words: - ‘Hold up your heads, ye wronged and injured people, for victory is declared unto you,’” only to see the provision voted down (forty-six to twenty-nine) that April. See Swift, *Black Prophets*, 125-127, and *CA*, 13 March 1841.

⁵² NY 1840, 20.

⁵³ As Rogers Smith observes in the context of the *Crandall* ruling, states increasingly separated democratic citizenship from “political self-governance,” instead insisting, writes Smith, “citizenship had multiple classes, with only the most fortunate or worthy receiving full political privileges.” See Smith, *Civic*, 256. See also Bradburn’s denization thesis in *Citizenship Revolution*, 335-371.

⁵⁴ See Smith, *Civic*, 256-257.

⁵⁵ As Joyce Appleby explains, “those excluded from voting came to view it no longer as a class distinction but rather as a male prerogative that the avidity of public interest in politics only enhanced.” Appleby, *Inheriting the Revolution*, 30.

⁵⁶ NY 1840, 22. In the face of an individualizing market landscape that fostered competition more than fellow feeling, Nelson argues, the expansion of political entitlement bound white “men together in an abstract but increasingly functional community that diverted their attention from differences between them” (*National Manhood* 6).

⁵⁷ NY 1840, 20.

⁵⁸ Like the *Federalist Papers*, the New York Convention’s “Addresses” engages with developing theories of energy and power. See, Charles R. Kesler, introduction to *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Clinton Rossiter (New York: Signet, 2003), xvii. See also Christian G. Fritz, *American Sovereigns: The Constitutional Legacy of the People’s Sovereignty before the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 236-247, for a discussion of collective sovereignty, especially in the right to “alter, reform or abolish” their government.

⁵⁹ NY 1840, 12. As one resolution asserts, the property qualification is “a violation of every principle of justice, anti-republican, and repugnant to the assertion of man’s equality upon which our government is founded.” NY 1840, 8.

⁶⁰ NY 1840, 20.

⁶¹ In water rights law, moving water belongs to no one (*res nullius*), to the whole community (*res communes*), or is under public control (*res publici*). Even when an individual gains rights to the water for a particular purpose, it is only a “usufructory” right, contingent on that individual’s not wasting the resource or otherwise making it unusable for others. See Vito A. Vanoni ed., *Sedimentation Engineering*, 2nd ed. (Reston, VA: American Society of Civil Engineers, 2006), 378; and Anthony Scott, *The Evolution of Resource Property Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 63-70.

⁶² Then Mayor of New York City Dewitt Clinton’s famously describes the Canal in 1825 as “a bond of union between the Atlantic and Western states.... an organ of communication between the Hudson, the Mississippi, the St. Lawrence, the Great Lakes of the north and west and their tributary rivers,” that would “create the greatest inland trade ever witnessed.” The new avenues of transportation will streamline communication, creating a boom in trade and the arts, and, as the center of this access point, Manhattan “will become the granary of the world, the emporium of commerce, the seat of manufactures, the focus of great moneyed operations and the concentrating point of vast disposable, and accumulating capital, which will stimulate, enliven, extend and reward the exertions of human labor and ingenuity, in all their processes and exhibitions.” *View of the Grand Canal*, 20, qtd. in Frederick Jackson Turner, *Rise of the New West* (New York: Collier Books 1962), 21.

⁶³ NY 1840, 22.

⁶⁴ Historian Benjamin Quarles eloquently summarized, “The central paradox of white American society was to think equality but to practice inequality—a succession of English monarchs had been replaced by an equally divine-right aristocracy of skin color.” See “Antebellum Free Blacks and the “Spirit of ’76.”” *The Journal of Negro History*. 61, no. 3 (July 1976), 229.

⁶⁵ NY 1840, 10. This petition was drafted by a committee led by Patrick L. Reason, ratified by the convention as a whole, and circulated to statewide auxiliaries along with the Proceedings and Addresses.

⁶⁶ NY 1840, 16.

⁶⁷ NY 1840, 16.

⁶⁸ NY 1840, 16.

⁶⁹ NY 1840, 18.

⁷⁰ While New York Whigs argued to keep the property requirement for all male citizens, black and white, the much more popular Democratic party argued for universal white male suffrage. Democrats excluded black men from the suffrage for several practical political reasons, the leading one being that black voters had historically supported Whig candidates, in some places holding the balance in any given election. They also expressed fear that given the concentration of blacks in certain districts (due in no small part to housing and economic discrimination), that black voters would carry these districts entirely. Such empowerment would inevitably result in black men attempting to run for office and participate in jury trials, which would be a “gross insult” to “southern gentleman” visiting the state with their slaves.

Still others relied on more obviously racist rhetoric, claiming that the state’s and the nation’s democratic institutions were created by and for white men, and that only white men were capable of participating in them. As John G. Ross of Genesee County argues,

all men are free and equal, according to the usual declarations, applies to them only in a state of nature, and not after the institution of civil government; for then many rights, flowing from a natural equality, are necessarily abridged, with a view to produce the greatest amount of security and happiness to the whole community. On this principle the right of suffrage is extended to white men only.

Genesee supports this exclusion by arguing first that black men do not contribute significantly to the defense or the “common burthens” of the state, but rather, as another delegate points out, exist in the same state of dependency as women and children. Similar arguments ignored black participation in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 as well as black contributions to the state’s tax base. At the root of many of these arguments was an anxiety that extending the franchise to members of a supposed degraded and inferior race, would somehow contaminate or further weaken the otherwise pure state. Genesee concludes his comments with such an articulation of inherent difference:

they are a peculiar people, incapable, in my judgment, of exercising that privilege with any sort of discretion, prudence, or independence. They have no just conceptions of civil liberty. They know not how to appreciate it, and are consequently indifferent to its preservation.

Under such circumstances, it would hardly be compatible with the safety of the state, to entrust such a people with this right.... neither would it be safe to extend it to the blacks.

When the New York convention of 1846 returns to the issue of black suffrage, rhetoric like Ross’s appears more often, articulated with even more conviction complete with references to the curse of Cain, one delegate arguing that his constituents “believed our own white race were the only ones capable of self-government—that if the negroes should be admitted, our republic would soon be degraded to a level with those of Mexico and South America.” And John J. Hunt would echo Ross’s sentiments at the 1846 New York State Constitution Convention, if in slightly different terms:

We (said he) want no masters, and least of all no negro masters, to reign over us. We contend for self government. We hold that no man who is not a part of the republic’s self—who is not a bona fide citizen, shall have any voice in the state.... They [delegates in support of black suffrage] forgot that negroes were aliens—aliens, not by mere accident of foreign birth—not because they spoke a different language—nor from any petty distinction that a few years consociation might obliterate, but by the born distinction of race—a distinction that neither education, nor intercourse, nor time could remove—a distinction that must separate our children from their children for ever.

For Hunt, the suffrage was not a right, but “a kind of franchise, bestowed or withheld as the public good demanded,” and the public good demanded that it be withheld from blacks, because they were not a part of the “public”—the “republican self”—whose good the convention was intended to promote. See *Reports of the Proceedings and Debates of the Convention of 1821 Assembled for the Purpose of Amending the Constitution of the State of New York: Containing All the Official Documents Relating to the Subject, and Other Valuable Matter*, 180-181, and *Report of the Debates and Proceedings of the Convention for the Revision of the Constitution of the State of New York: 1846*, 777-786.

⁷¹ NY 1840, 18.

⁷² In 1848, the Pennsylvania convention would articulate this reversal more directly: “assuming *condition* as their reason, and *complexion* as the *standard*,” the Pennsylvania State Constitutional Convention disenfranchised black citizens. That is, through a bait and switch, the convention argued that black citizens were too degraded to be trusted with the vote, yet race, not material condition, was their measure of civic worth. I discuss how the Pennsylvania convention confronts this logic later in this chapter. See PA 1848, 128.

⁷³ On the “Condition” debates, see Rael, *Black Identity*, 193-200; Melish, “The ‘Condition’ Debate and Racial Discourse in the Antebellum North,” *Journal of the Early Republic*. Special Issue on Racial Consciousness and Nation-Building in the Early Republic 19, no. 4 (Winter 1999): 651-672. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3125137>.

⁷⁴ NY 1840, 18.

⁷⁵ NY 1840, 16.

⁷⁶ NY 1840, 18. The delegates extend this reasoning in their 1845 “Address to the People of the State of New York,” arguing that in qualifying their right to vote with a property clause, the state government has deprived them of “their check upon oppression, their wherewith to buy friends, their panoply of manhood—in short, they are thrown upon the mercy of a despotic majority.” NY 1845, 39

⁷⁷ NY 1840, 22.

⁷⁸ NY 1840, 20.

⁷⁹ NY 1840, 20.

⁸⁰ *Federalist Papers*, 92-93. As Charles R. Kesler explains, the language of mathematics pervades the *Federalist's* attempt to delineate the powers and necessities of a strong Federal Constitution. The Convention of Colored Inhabitants of New York uses this same language to outline the state governments' responsibilities to all of its citizens, regardless of race. See, Charles R. Kesler, introduction to *The Federalist Papers*, xvii.

⁸¹ This rhetoric of fulfillment aligns with Bercovitch's analysis of the rhetoric of errand and the revolution as "the unfolding of a redemptive plan" that, in the hands of the Federalists, translated into continuing revolution as a ritual of consensus that reaffirmed rather than threatened national identity and stability or at least their ability to manage them. See *Rites*, 37-49. I will deal with the conventions' relation to the Federal Constitution more explicitly in the section of the 1848 Pennsylvania Convention.

⁸² See Edward Countryman, *The American Revolution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), 109.

⁸³ Edward Countryman, *A People in Revolution: The American Revolution and Political Society in New York, 1760-1790* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 294.

⁸⁴ See James Roger Sharp *American Politics in the Early Republic: New Nation in Crisis* (Yale University Press, 1995), 89. It might be useful here to think about these conventions in light of Jay Fliegelman's work on the Declaration of Independence. For Fliegelman, the Declaration operates as both "the description of independence as the necessary consequence of [King] George's actions and the document's own status as a performative utterance." It is both "aggrieved narration and a proclamation of rights."⁸⁴ Similarly, the state conventions are both a narrative of citizenship rights lost, of citizenship lost, and a performance of citizenship—a claim that citizenship rights are inherent to all men, yet a performance in need of affirmative judgment to take effect. See Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence*, 151.

⁸⁵ Massachusetts Republicans, for instance, had been organizing conventions to democratically nominate candidates for office and to conduct other party business since the federalist/anti-federalist battles of the late eighteenth century. Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: Norton, 2005), 120. Wilentz offers an excellent analysis of the complicated interactions between the nascent Republican Party and the democratic-republican societies that helped them unseat Federalists in federal and state governments in the 1790s and early 1800s. See also James Roger Sharp, *American*, 86-89.

⁸⁶ Ingersoll argued against entering the "Appeal of Forty Thousand Citizens, Threatened with Disfranchisement, to the People of Pennsylvania" (1837) into the convention's official record, because, contrary to the notion of a right to petition, Ingersoll argued that citizens instructed their representatives; citizens did not make requests of them. See *Proceedings and Debates of the Convention of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, vol. 3, 687.

⁸⁷ The following states held conventions: Michigan, 1835; New York, 1846; Pennsylvania, 1837-1838; New Jersey, 1844; Wisconsin, 1846 and 1847-1848; Illinois, 1847; and California, 1849. See Bertoff, *Republic*, 158-159n6.

⁸⁸ As historian Sean Wilentz and others demonstrate, this brand of democratic practice developed in the messy back and forth between local, territorial, state, and national institutions, not as a necessarily coherent, coordinated movement as such. See Ed White, *The Backcountry and the City: Colonization and Conflict in Early America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Wilentz, *Rise of American Democracy*; and Woody Holton, *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007).

⁸⁹ Isenberg cites the Dorr Convention as installing "the convention as a new kind of public and political forum and, perhaps for the first time, [sanctioning] revolution as a constitutional rather than a natural right" (14). While the Dorr Convention was certainly the most widely known and most successful convention of its kind, it was by no means the only one. In the flurry of state constitution-making, a sense of political empowerment proliferated throughout the U.S. that put aside the violent protest of the early nation over the form of the government—at least for a time—in favor of change through more formal structures.

⁹⁰ Formisano, 164-165. See also Marvin E. Gentleman, *The Dorr Rebellion: A Study in American Radicalism, 1833-1849* (New York: Random House, 1973); George M. Dennison, *The Dorr War: Republicanism on Trial, 1831-1861* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1976); and Arthur May Mowry, *The Dorr War; or, The Constitutional Struggle in Rhode Island* [1901] (New York: Chelsea House, 1970). Christian G. Fritz's last chapter on the Dorr Rebellion and the People's Constitution in *American Sovereigns: The Constitutional Legacy of the People's Sovereignty before the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), is also useful.

⁹¹ Formisano, 168. In this context, it is worth mentioning again that the convening of the 1849 State Convention of the Colored Citizens of Ohio in Ohio's statehouse was not empty symbolism. Rather, the meeting created a strong metonymic relation between the colored citizens of Ohio's advocacy and the operations of the official state government.

⁹² The Dorr Convention or “Dorr War” of 1841-1842 and their proposed “People’s Constitution” provide a potent example of the revolutionary potential in these movements. Isenberg cites the Dorr Convention as installing “the convention as a new kind of public and political forum and, perhaps for the first time, [sanctioning] revolution as a constitutional rather than a natural right” (14). See also Formisano, 164-165 and Fritz, 246-276.

⁹³ Historians and political scientists alike have identified the inverse relation between the two. Rogers Smith has argued that disenfranchising black men made universal white manhood suffrage possible. The state conventions of New York and Pennsylvania would seem to substantiate Smith’s reading. Even if the delegates do not argue Smith’s point explicitly—that is the price of white suffrage is black suffrage—the anxiety that removing property and other restrictions on the franchise without including some other caste distinction pervades these debates. As Patrick Rael succinctly puts it, “In a sense, blacks paid the price for the white working class’s political participation.” See Rael, *Black Identity*, 202.

⁹⁴ The Charterites maintained property requirements for naturalized citizens, apportioned legislative seats so that power remained in the hands of the rural Democrats, and enfranchised African-Americans who tipped the balance of power in their favor in subsequent elections. Interestingly, Dorr lobbied to include provisions for black enfranchisement in the People’s Constitution, but the majority of his supporters refused, prompting Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, and other antislavery activists to denounce the People’s Constitution as a whole. The resulting political climate in Rhode Island remained resistant to popular democratic practices, and instead continued as what Formisano describes as a “limited, oligarchic republicanism lasting well into the twentieth century.” See Formisano 164-165, 173.

Other states would cite Rhode Island’s strategic enfranchisement of African-Americans as a reason for maintaining racially exclusive voting laws. This rhetoric appeared again and again in the New York debates and New York Press. As one New Yorker argues in just before the 1845 state constitutional convention: “Admit them [supporters of black suffrage], and in a few years these ‘balance-of-power-men’ will increase so rapidly upon our hands, that we shall have not only a negro Chief Magistrate of the State, but they will continue to urge a ‘NEGRO CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENCY,’ around whom the Northern Abolitionists are resolved to cluster in 1848” “Fifteen Thousand Negro Balance-of-Power-Men Wanted, by the Whigs and Abolitionists!” from Daily (NY) Globe, reprinted in *NASS*, 9 October 1845.

⁹⁵ See Isenberg, xiv, and Rogers Smith, *Civic*, 167.

⁹⁶ NY 1840, 6. In some ways, the onlookers’ approval mirrors the function of authenticating documents in narratives by former slaves.

⁹⁷ NY 1840, 6. David Swift has read the regular attendance of Whig politicians as a sign of equality and respect. See David E. Swift, *Black Prophets*, 124. I agree with Swift in the sense that the convention provided a opportunity like no other for spectators of all stripes to see black citizens in their political element. Rays comments, however, also suggest that the black delegates felt the institutionally imposed differences even if the white attendees did not.

⁹⁸ Of conventions in general and minority conventions specifically, Isenberg argues, “given the importance of antebellum constitutional conventions and spontaneous conventions...the conventions had a decidedly performative, staged, and theatrical quality” (213n10).

⁹⁹ For more on the distinction between deliberative and persuasive models of civil society, see Brooke, John L. “Consent, Civil Society, and the public Sphere in the Age of Revolution and the Early American Republic.” *Beyond the Founders: New Approaches to the Political History of the Early American Republic*. Eds. Jeffrey L. Pasley, Andrew W. Robertson, and David Waldstreicher. (Chapel Hill: University North Carolina Press, 2004), 207-250.

¹⁰⁰ Smith eventually attended the 1841 convention as a delegate from New York City in accordance with his popular nomination. See “Reviving the Black Convention Movement,” in Peter C. Ripley, ed., *Black Abolitionist Papers*, vol. 3, *The United States, 1830–1846* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 345–51; and James McCune Smith “Position Defended,” *Colored American*, August 15, 1840. Smith most likely penned this letter because the *Colored American* did not print his remarks in opposition to the convention in two previous meetings; see Ripley, *Black Abolitionist Papers*, 3:349 n. 1. For a detailed account of these tumultuous meetings and competing organizations like Thomas Van Rensselaer and David Ruggles’s American Reform Board, see Alexander, *African or American*, 103–13; and Pease and Pease, 175-182.

¹⁰⁰ *Colored American*, February 6, 1841. Sterling Stuckey has collected Whipper’s letters with a series of responses by “Sidney” in appendix 2 of Sterling Stuckey, ed., *The Ideological Origins of Black Nationalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972).

¹⁰¹ *Colored American* 6 February 1841. Sterling Stuckey has collected Whipper's letters with a series of responses by "Sidney" in appendix 2 of *The Ideological Origins of Black Nationalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972).

¹⁰² "Colored Convention," *NASS*, 18 June 1840.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Ray's anxiety over reception does not completely dispel this implication.

¹⁰⁵ See for instance, "Fifteen Thousand Negro Balance-of-Power-Men Wanted, by the Whigs and Abolitionists!" reprinted in *National Anti-Slavery Standard*. October 9, 1845.

¹⁰⁶ "A Convention." *Colored American*. 2 May 1840.

¹⁰⁷ "William Whipper's Letters No. 4," *CA* 13 February 1841. See also Stuckey, 161.

¹⁰⁸ "Samuel Ringgold Ward to Nathaniel Press. Rogers." *BAP*, 341.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* Emphasis added. Ward's "different medium" works as a particularly apt description of how this debate positioned *Standard* against the *Colored American*, the major publications through which it occurs. The debate over the convention coincides with a changing of the guard at the *Colored American* as editorial duties shift from Samuel Cornish to Charles B. Ray. Indeed, the debate provides an opportunity for Ray to assert the paper's new direction even as he and others use the *Colored American* to frame the convention's public presence. He installs the paper as representative of black public opinion and as a watchdog (and preserver of black rights of oversight) over anti-slavery activism. See Eric Gardner's *Unexpected Places: Relocating Nineteenth-Century African American Literature* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009) for another account of how black editors could leverage state conventions to bolster a paper's legitimacy (5).

¹¹⁰ For a discussion of "whiteness as property" see Cheryl Harris, "Whiteness as Property" in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement*, eds. Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas (New York: New Press, 1995), 276-291

¹¹¹ "Colored Convention." *NASS*. 18 June 1840.

¹¹² "The Convention." *CA*. 27 June 1840. See also Pease and Pease, *They*, 80. In a more instrumental sense, black activists could never showcase their own political views acumen through these organizations because whites "will always form the majority of such Conventions, and the sentiments and opinions thus promulgated will go forth as the sentiments and opinions of white men." Over ten years later, William J. Wilson would describe a similar scene as a "hungry white crowd [...] so large that the black specs pass[ed] unobserved by the chiefs in command" (*Frederick Douglass's Paper*, 15 April 1853, qtd. in Pease and Pease, *They Who Would Be Free*, 80). "The National Anti-Slavery Standard vs. The Convention." *CA*, 11 July 1840.

¹¹³ See for instance Stephen A. Myers 3 March 1842 editorial for the *Northern Star and Freeman's Advocate* (Albany, NY). Writing as "M.," Myers censures white abolitionists for not hiring black citizens, concluding, "while they [white abolitionists] continue to express their disapprobation and indignation of the prejudice on account of complexions, and consider it cruel and unjust in others, we shall labor to inform them that we are not insensible to the prejudice which exists in their minds" (377). In later years, black activists like William J. Wilson and James McCune Smith would direct pointed criticisms along the same lines towards abolitionist leaders like Lewis Tappan. See "Editorial by Stephen A. Myers" in *BAP* vol., 375-379. Pease and Pease summarize the predicament: "There is little question that Negro participation was made as visible as possible. Yet this visibility seldom carried with it the leverage with which to mold the antislavery movement, at least on the national level." Pease and Pease, *They Who Would Be Free*, 80.

¹¹⁴ "The Convention."

¹¹⁵ See Rogers Smith, "Citizenship and the Politics of People-Building," *Citizenship Studies* 5, no. 1 (2001): 73-75.

¹¹⁶ Each juncture was judged by its adherence to formal cues that resemble Robert Hariman's account of a republican style: "the manners of legislative address, seating, and the like...refraining from violence, recognizing social status, observing parliamentary customs, and acting as if oneself and one's opponents always were motivated at least in part by civic virtue and the duties of public office" (122-123). See Hariman, *Political Style: The Artistry of Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 122-23. On the "theatrical" quality of conventions, see Isenberg, *Sex and Citizenship*, 213 n. 10.

¹¹⁷ NY 1840, 6.

¹¹⁸ NY 1840, 10

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹²⁰ Schoenfield uses institutional heteroglossia to describe how the British periodical press managed identities by "[consolidating] distinct authorial voices into single corporate, authoritative voices" through pseudonymy and editorial framing such that the speaker's identity was always "entwined" with the periodical's

institutional structure. Because of this entanglement within the system of the bound periodical, “the periodical article—the language of which was often borrowed from prior texts, quoted from contemporary ones under review, and echoed from one article to the next—was institutionally heteroglossic.” See Schoenfield, *British Periodicals and Romantic Identity: The “Literary Lower Empire”* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 3, 36-37.

¹²¹ Bakhtin writes, “This interaction, this dialogic tension between two languages and two belief systems, permits authorial intentions to be realized in such a way that we can acutely sense their presence at every point in the work; he makes use of this verbal give-and-take, this dialogue of languages at every point in his work, in order that he might remain as it were neutral with regard to language, a third party in a quarrel between two people (although he might be a biased third party).” Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 314.

¹²² Ward reprinted the 1848 appeals almost a year later in *Impartial Citizen* with an article on “Progress Among Colored Men” amid a spirited debate with Douglass over the pro- or antislavery nature of the U.S. Constitution and the need for explicitly political activism.

¹²³ This committee of seven included William Whipper, Abraham Shadd, J. F. Dickson, J. J. G. Bias, Robert Purvis, M. W. Gibbes, and Samuel Van Brakle. Ironically, Whipper, who opposed the first New York convention of colored citizens because of its “complexional” nature, was a key member of the 1848 convention in Pennsylvania. In the intervening years, Whipper had come to realize that white politicians were using condition as a code for racism. From as early as the 1838 constitutional change in Pennsylvania, Whipper’s political outlook had shifted away from the elevation first model. For an excellent treatment of the complexity of Whipper’s evolving positions, see Otter, *Philadelphia Stories*, 107-123, particularly his reading of the striking resemblances between the 1848 Convention’s “Appeal to the Colored Citizens” and “Our Elevation,” Whipper’s 1839 article in the *National Reformer*.

¹²⁴ “Appeal, v.” *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1989. *OED Online*. Oxford University Press.

¹²⁵ PA 1848, 126.

¹²⁶ The Declaration of Independence, *quod*. in PA 1848, 126. In contrast to the AASS’s denial of the Constitution’s legitimacy, the “Appeal” uses the Constitution’s guarantee of a republican government to measure the validity of Pennsylvania’s franchise clause.

¹²⁷ PA 1848, 123. Richard Nobles and David Schiff. “The Right to Appeal and Workable Systems of Justice.” *The Modern Law Review*. 65.5 (September 2002) 676-701: “An appeal body within a given institutional structure is a body with authority to overturn a prior decision or to compel the original decision-maker to reconsider their decision. This feature of appeals, ‘going upwards’ to have a decision changed, points to the hierarchical aspects of the process” (677).

¹²⁸ In *Republic of the Dispossessed: The Exceptional Old-European Consensus in America* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), Roland Bertoff explains the transaction this way: “Suffrage had never been a universal right, New York and Wisconsin lawyers recalled in 1846, correctly enough, but literally a franchise, ‘a privilege...to be conceded by all the citizens of a country to those who will exercise it best, for the common interest of all.’” “On that principle,” Bertoff continues, the New York conventions of the both 1846 and 1867-1868 left the decision on enfranchisement of all black men to a referendum among the ‘sovereign people’—who soundly rejected it” (163).

¹²⁹ PA 1848, 127.

¹³⁰ PA 1848, 127.

¹³¹ This definition of “Appeal” is based on the 1839 usage in the *OED*: 1. To call (one) to answer before a tribunal; in Law: To accuse of a crime which the accuser undertakes to prove. spec. a. To impeach of treason. b. To accuse an accomplice of treason or felony. c. To accuse of a heinous crime whereby the accuser has received personal injury or wrong, for which he demands reparation.

¹³² PA 1848, 123.

¹³³ PA 1848, 123.

¹³⁴ PA 1848, 124.

¹³⁵ PA 1848, 124. In referencing the recent U.S.-Mexican War in particular, the “Appeal” works its own bit of revisionist history. Where common anti-slavery discussions tended to read the war as a sign of the virulent expansion of the slave power, the “Appeal” appropriates the pro-war rhetoric in order to invoke the nationalism upon which it fed.

¹³⁶ The delegates’ use of pronouns prefigures Douglass’s famous invocation of “your nation” in his July 5, 1850 “Oration.” After addressing his audience as “Fellow-Citizens,” Douglass explains the distance between them as citizens inheriting different national legacies: “I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary!

Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you this day rejoice, are not enjoyed in common. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity, and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me. This Fourth of July is *yours*, not *mine*. You may rejoice, I must mourn.” See Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” in *Autobiographies* (New York: Library of America, 1994), 431.

¹³⁷ PA 1848, 128.

¹³⁸ Though not directly related, my phrasing here was inspired by Bercovitch’s analysis of how representative selfhood functioned as a form of social control before and after the revolution even as it traded in a rhetoric of individualism and self-interest: “the spokesmen for the French-Indian War appealed to conscience and self-interest, only to make these synonymous with Protestant patriotism, and the Protestant cause inseparable from the rising glory of America. Both in revival and in war, representative selfhood bound the rights of personal ascent to the rites of social assent.” See *Rites*, 36. In much the same way, the “Appeal to Colored Citizens” argues that the 1837-38 convention appealed to republican principle, only to make republican principle synonymous with white manhood such that to invoke one was to invoke the other.

¹³⁹ PA 1848, 128.

¹⁴⁰ As I mention elsewhere, Rhode Island used a similar tactic along nonracial lines when it enfranchised its black citizens.

¹⁴¹ PA 1848, 128.

¹⁴² The Dorr Convention, and state conventions more generally to a lesser degree, falls under this category of appeal.

¹⁴³ “Appeal to the Voters,” PA 1848, 123. See Bercovitch, *Rites*, 37-49.

¹⁴⁴ “Appeal to the Voters,” PA 1848, 124. Throughout their arguments, the Pennsylvania delegates’ language foreshadows the criteria that will become the national standard in Section One of the Fourteenth Amendment: “All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

¹⁴⁵ The Declaration of Independence, *quid.* in “Appeal to the Voters,” PA 1848, 123.

¹⁴⁶ The Declaration of Independence, *quid.* in PA 1848, 126.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 124. The “Appeal” may have been alluding to Ingersoll’s comments about the “Appeal of Forty Thousand” during the 1837-38 Pennsylvania constitutional convention. As I mentioned earlier, Ingersoll argued that the “Appeal” should not be taken as a petition from citizens of the state, because citizens did not petition; citizens “command.” See *Proceedings and Debates of the Convention of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, vol. 3, 687.

¹⁴⁸ “Appeal to the Voters,” PA 1848, 125.

¹⁴⁹ Isenberg, 21.i

¹⁵⁰ “An Appeal to the Colored Citizens,” PA 1848, 127. The black state conventions reveal the widespread support of Garnet’s “Address to the Slave,” reflecting the narrow margin by which the 1843 National Convention of Colored Citizens voted the address down. Notably, the 1849 State Convention of the Colored Citizens of Ohio passed a resolution endorsing Garnet’s “Address”: “*Resolved*, That we still adhere to the doctrine of urging the slave to leave immediately with his hoe on his shoulder, for a land of liberty, and would accordingly recommend that five hundred copies of Walker’s Appeal, and Henry H. Garnet’s Address to the slaves, be obtained in the name of the Convention, and gratuitously circulated” (229).

¹⁵¹ “Appeal to the Voters,” PA 1848, 125.

¹⁵² The “Appeal” was read during Pennsylvania’s Reform Convention in 1837, sparking a prolonged debate amongst delegates (almost twenty pages), first over printing and distributing the petition to the convention, and then over a wide range of questions including the petitioners’ status as citizens, and the implications of accepting the petition for Pennsylvania’s relation to other states. The convention eventually decided to at least print and distribute the petition. See *Proceedings and Debates of the Convention of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to Propose Amendments to the Constitution, Commenced and Held at Harrisburg, on the Second Day of May, 1837* (Harrisburg: Packer, Barrett, and Parke, 1837), 683-701.

¹⁵³ Samuel Otter describes this multimodal feature as a negotiation between “stance and limit” in the context of Jones and Allen *Narrative*: a “mixture of bitterness and entreaty, sense of discursive probation, riven audiences, high rhetorical stakes, and concern with black elevation all will be echoed in the mid-nineteenth-century writings of Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, and Frank J. Webb and the later nineteenth-century fiction of

Frances Harper and Charles Chesnutt.” See Samuel Otter. *Philadelphia Stories: America’s Literature of Race and Freedom*, Kindle Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 564-574 [Kindle], 40 [print].

¹⁵⁴ Delany was a participating delegate at the 1841 State Convention of the Colored Freemen of Pennsylvania, and the 1848 convention made him and Lenox Remond honorary delegates (PA 1848, 124).

CHAPTER IV

ECONOMIC CITIZENSHIP: LABOR AND REPRESENTATION IN JAMES MCCUNE SMITH AND WILLIAM J. WILSON'S URBAN JOURNALISM

1. Introduction

By the 1840s and 1850s black reformers not only began claiming their labor, slave and free, as “an integral part of their identities” but also, as historian Leslie M. Harris argues, began seeing “in meaningful labor a path to equality.”¹ These activists were responding to the increased linkage of race and labor in political discourse, the material exigencies of a modern U.S. market economy, and the constraints both placed on black citizenship. Even in the decades just before the revolution, labor was a hotly contested concept in terms of citizenship practice. By the 1830s, however, citizens were coming to understand their economic selves and ideals as coextensive with and, in some cases, the same as, their civic selves. This connection between labor and citizenship was even more important for black citizens, whose relation to their own labor and the market was complicated by the economics of enslavement. In the absence of political representation, black activists searched for economic representatives, men and women who could earn “credit” for their communities in the civic economy, advocating for them in a market that was increasingly figured as the space for, rather than threat to, citizenship practice.

This chapter analyzes developing schematics of economic citizenship—the relation between representations of labor and laborers, the civic credit and political power accrued through such representations, and the idealized subjectivity of the economic citizen—through readings of William J. Wilson and James McCune Smith’s pseudonymous correspondences as Ethiop and Communipaw in *Frederick Douglass’s Paper* from 1851 to 1854. Through his

columns as Douglass's Brooklyn Correspondent, Wilson offers a form of economic citizenship in which a "black aristocracy" would "represent" or advocate for its community economically and politically among the nation's "monied class." Wilson develops this tactic out of his understanding of a U.S. political economy resembling more an oligarchy than a republic with economic interest and control of productive resources offering more direct routes to social and political power than public or civic channels. Smith's correspondences, in contrast, investigate the representativeness of the black laborer: how representative is this figure of the overall type, how well does this type match a historical sense of species development, and what can we learn about the trajectory of black citizenship and U.S. republicanism from studying these representatives? For him, the representative citizen belongs to the middling class, the average person of prosperity, if not wealth, forming polity rather than aristocracy.²

Smith and Wilson, moreover, use their various personae to model the subjectivity needed to navigate developing economic structures, often critiquing each other's "conceptions of truth," that is the epistemologies through which each frames the representative economic citizen.³ These correspondences, then, are a part of a larger battle over not only developing capitalist political economics, but also the terms for evaluating the representational structures that transform labor to civic value and shifting understandings of representation and citizenship more broadly. Their example highlights the degree to which black conceptions of citizenship unfold not just in speeches, conventions, and pamphlets, but also through a highly creative community of letters.⁴ Focusing more specifically on Wilson and Smith's negotiation of forms of economic citizenship and black urban life allows us to map the processes by which citizenship was being imagined in the 1850s as neither civic republican, nor democratic, but rather as economic.

2. Economic Citizenship: “Productive” Labor in Black and White

In Chapter 2, I outlined the contours of a two-tiered civic republicanism in which a managerial elite provided the civic regulation that allowed ordinary citizens to safely pursue their own interests in the market. In this model, virtuous citizenship was measured by the citizen’s ability to separate the economic self from the political self, following the dictates of civic duty and protocols of sociability while in pursuit of self-interest in a market that was figured as separate from civil society. The managerial structures that Carey identified in the form of federal institutions provided regulations intended to foster a climate conducive to these economic pursuits while also protecting against corruption and offering a safety net during crises.

The market revolution of the early-to-mid-nineteenth century ushered in new understandings of citizenship and how economic self-interest and labor defined the citizen.⁵ As waged labor spread, wealth became more concentrated, and political participation became untethered from property (for white men), political economic discourse emphasized “productive” labor, rather than wealth or freedom from labor, as enabling virtuous citizenship.⁶ Groups from bankers to waiters claimed their own slice of civic value through reinterpreting the meaning of productive labor, appealing to a flexible labor theory of value.⁷ To capitalists and merchants, production suggested management of people and finances; to manual laborers like “mechanics,” it suggested “honest” work with hands and raw materials, and to an increasing array of entry-level workers like clerks, whose work included menial chores, it suggested access to professional training.⁸ Each group staked claims not only to the productive value of its work, but, more importantly, to the power of that work to cultivate the characteristics of virtuous citizenship: developing sound mental habits and physical vitality, contributing useful services and goods to

the community, and showing the citizen's capacity to redirect excess desire into productive channels that theoretically flowed towards property, the foundation of republican equality.⁹

This labor discourse developed alongside a compensatory narrative of upward mobility in a liberal market.¹⁰ If a man worked hard, spent frugally, and lived morally, the rhetoric went, he could look forward to a change in position and independence, including eventually owning property and/or starting a business.¹¹ As historian Jonathan A. Glickstein suggests, even free labor advocates were attempting only “to democratize and defend, rather than fundamentally transform or jettison, the capitalist order of the North.”¹² In an economic world characterized by an increasing concentration of wealth and an expanding labor market in which mobility, if upward, did not lead inexorably towards independence, these narratives suggested equality of opportunity, if not of success or access. Failure in the market was, in turn, internalized as a failure of the private self, not of the market or the social and political structures constituting it. If each citizen did not become independent or otherwise escape waged labor, if all citizens, while created equal were not equally endowed with property or access to the means of production, the community was at least benefiting from, in Emerson's terms, “the knowledge, that in the city is a man who invented the railroad,” which “raises the credit of all citizens.”¹³ Just as popular participation in electoral politics could valorize a sense of democratic equality despite tending towards less democratic results, popular participation in the market economy offered a sense of corporate enterprise with the assurance that, just as elected officials represented a constituency, the economically successful reflected the (potential) vitality of the whole.

Cultures of respectability buttressed the resulting economic citizenship, modeling the subjectivity best suited to operate in a market society.¹⁴ Like late-eighteenth-century sociability, respectability provided a civic ethos and moral grounding for what otherwise seemed, as

Emerson put it, a “system...of war.”¹⁵ It emphasized competency and the performance of traits that signaled prudence, temperance, and self-reliance, the kind of rational autonomy that industrialization and wage labor seemed to preclude. In a social landscape where identities seemed indeterminate, protocols of respectability—ways of dress, habits of consumption, displays of thrift and self-control, hard work etc.—helped make the status of economic citizens visible to each other while cloaking market antagonisms in a sheen of polite, collective striving.

Moreover, a host of popular entertainments supported by and supporting logics of white manhood offered ways of absorbing even seemingly unruly working classes and immigrants. Figures like the Bowery b’hoj, popularized in plays like Ben E. Baker’s “New York as It Is” and urban sensation literature like George Foster’s *New York by Gaslight*, oriented working whites as civic heroes—flawed, yet essential people of whom audiences should be proud.¹⁶ Figures like the b’hoj, Foster explains, symbolized the “*free development of Anglo-Saxon nature,*” which had only begun to reach its full potential in the U.S.¹⁷ Working class viewers and readers could enjoy a their free-spirited flouting of social convention, even as critics refigured this spirit as part of the development of the white American type, an urban counterpart to Davey Crockett that can be found in any city. Coupled with the extension of the franchise to virtually all white male citizens and the outlet of westward expansion, prospects for the “common [white] man” appeared bright indeed.

While white citizens and European immigrants recouped “productive” labor, variously defined, as a signifier of citizenship and consolidated national identity, the same structures of economic citizenship barred black workers.¹⁸ Black writers continued wrestling with symbolic systems that stigmatized black people through the labor they performed, a hardening racial caste system that saw certain “degraded” occupations as natural for black citizens, and popular

imagery that treated black economic aspirations as at once threats to civic order and at the same time empty comedic performances.¹⁹ Employments that earned more money and had greater prospects for upward mobility, like clerking, were closed to black workers even in abolitionist circles, and discriminatory permit practices often prevented black entrepreneurs from taking advantage of more lucrative opportunities like carting.²⁰ And because of this continued association with black citizens' menial occupations with notions of dependence, white workers felt that working in close proximity to black workers or working at similar tasks lowered their own status.²¹ As a result white laborers enforced racial lines with violence and hostility, and officials used this violence as a pretext for enacting and maintaining restrictive policies.²² When white and black workers did cooperate in unions and for workers' rights, they met opposition from white employers and black activists alike.²³ As European immigration increased in the 1840s, competition stiffened over even the waged jobs African Americans traditionally held.²⁴ By 1855 eighty-seven percent of New York's black workers occupied menial or unskilled positions, including bootblacking, waiting tables, domestic service and the like.²⁵ The trend for most of the black population, then, was one of either stultifying immobility or steady decline.

The fugitive slave law, colonizationist and racial scientific rhetoric, and black labor statistics all coalesced to support a pervasive sense that black people were forming a permanent underclass and could not, nor were ever meant to, become proper U.S. citizens.²⁶ As Horace Greeley, editor of the New York *Daily Tribune*, put it in 1843, "So long as they remain pretty generally bootblacks, tavern-waiters, clothes-scourers, &c., from seeming choice; the right to vote will be of precious little account to them."²⁷ Greeley's conceit that black "condition" was a matter of "seeming choice" further illustrates the sense that black citizens were simply not equipped to operate as economic, let alone as political, agents.²⁸ The civic order represented by

commentators like Greeley and the state constitutional conventions that I analyzed in Chapter 3 saw the representative black citizen as a bootblack or servant, “from seeming choice,” who could not profit from the added burden of politics.²⁹ Moreover, the nation, from this perspective, had nothing to profit by incorporating them as anything more. The cultural representation and economic underdevelopment of black citizens, then, were mutually constitutive.³⁰

Just as labor theory offered new ways for defining white citizenship, however, it also provided new ways for framing black activism.³¹ Even before the market revolution of the 1820s and 1830s, black activists had been developing rubrics of economic citizenship and cultures of respectability, partly as a response to racism, but also for the same reasons as white citizens: they believed the habits associated with respectability—thrift, education, self-control, hard work, etc.—would lead to material success and elevation.³² Yet, if most activists agreed that labor identity was central to black progress, they disagreed about how to resolve the tension between orders of representation, that is between ideal image and material exigencies, or even the language with which to frame their arguments. As one activist asserted in frustration, many were “aiming at the same thing, but...had a different way of getting at it.”³³ Representations of black labor were “of material of double strength,” argues the Committee of Social Relations and Polity at the 1853 Colored National Convention, “having for [their] composition our condition,” that is the lack of economic and political power, “and strong prejudicial feelings generated from that condition.”³⁴ Solutions, then, had to confront both the lack of economic power and policies that, paradoxically, maintained the conditions used to justify them.

During the 1848 National Convention of Colored Freemen, these tensions famously erupted into full debate, revealing not only how activists framed their positions on labor but also how their claims to representative narratives were central to crafting them. John L. Watson

(OH), fugitive slave and prosperous barber and bathhouse owner, and J. D. Patterson, a waiter, confronted activists like Martin R. Delany, “who,” in their view, “were in the editorial chair and others, not in places of servants” for “cast[ing] slurs upon those, who were in such places from necessity.”³⁵ (These “slurs” reportedly included Delany’s claim that he would “rather receive a telegraphic dispatch that his wife and two children had fallen victims to a loathsome disease, than to hear that they had become the servants of any man.”³⁶) Watson and Patterson were less concerned with the *image* of the laborer than with the necessities of a stable income; better a “degraded” bootblack than a beggar.³⁷ They suggest that Delany and others’ vision was not in line with realities on the ground. Watson agreed that the emphasis on gaining better situations was desirable, but the language of condemnation was alienating. “We know our position and feel it,” he protests; black citizens did not need to be told that their work was not respected in the dominant political economy. They needed, instead, both a way to articulate their contributions more positively and to be encouraged even as they worked their way up.

In opposition to Watson and Patterson and in support of the convention’s fourth resolution—“the occupation of domestics and servants among our people is degrading to us as a class, and we deem it our bounden duty to discountenance such pursuits”—A. H. Francis (NY) and David Jenkins (OH) offered narratives of their rise to lucrative self-employment that mapped well onto both popular notions of respectability and the upward trajectory of the classic slave narrative. Francis, for instance, recounts his rise from having “been in nearly all the avocations named in the Resolution” to “owning a mercantile business of \$20,000 or \$30,000 a year.”³⁸ Though the resolution’s language echoed white commentators, who, just two years before, had used the same characterizations in their arguments against black suffrage, it also reflected many of the delegates’ sense that their own success served as templates that others could follow, proof

that the template was successful. Moreover, these delegates were no doubt concerned that readers (both black and white) would take any equivocation on uplift as capitulation. The narratives accompanying these arguments, then, mattered as much as the arguments themselves.

While delegates continued debating, with Convention President Frederick Douglass attempting to mediate with marginal success, a more salient economic model emerged in the Convention's "Address to the Colored People."³⁹ Black communities needed economic power—representatives in trades and industries and proportional ownership of the nation's productive resources—not only to counter prevailing representations of black labor, but more importantly, so "that other members of the community shall be as dependent upon us, as we upon them."⁴⁰ "We must not merely make the white man dependent upon us to shave him," the "Address" continues, "but to feed him; not merely dependent upon us to black his boots, but to make them."⁴¹ As Douglass explained during the debate, there was nothing degrading about useful work; rather, "what is necessary to be done, is honorable to do."⁴² Even so, the "Address" concludes, the greater the utility citizens could fill, the more power citizens could accrue for themselves and their communities, both black and white.⁴³ A more equitable distribution of dependence would bring a more equitable distribution of power.

Respect replaces respectability as the "Address" focuses less on publicity and more on the power of mutual dependence: "To be dependent, is to be degraded," the convention notes in the republican style; however, complete independence "would be absurd and impossible, in the social state."⁴⁴ While "independence" may be "an essential condition of respectability," mutual dependence yields "respect." Black citizens must create systems of mutual dependence for "the necessaries of life."⁴⁵ This notion of mutual dependence carries Jones and Allen's late-eighteenth century neighborly ethics into the mid-nineteenth century market. To secure equal

citizenship, people must not only be willing to be neighborly, they must also have the *material capacity* to be good economic citizens: “the equality which we aim to accomplish, can only be achieved by us, when we can do for others, just what others can do for us,” that is to “render [our] share to the common stock of prosperity and happiness.”⁴⁶ Put differently: make others as dependent on you as you are on them. The state becomes a corporate body as the convention renders the market as a space where equality is produced outside of civil society by means of economic force (figured benignly as dependence), rather than political participation or consent.

Even as the convention’s maxims operate through the rhetoric of respectability, then, its shift to “respect” suggests the delegates’ recognition that, by the late 1840s, respectability was not materially grounded enough to explain prejudice’s cultural and economic matrices fully or to offer a rubric for creating political equality out of economic power.⁴⁷ If black economic power could not persuade white citizens of black equality, at least structures of mutual dependence would mute prejudice’s adverse effects.⁴⁸ The 1848 Convention’s debate and “Address” highlight two movements that this chapter will analyze in more detail through Smith and Wilson’s subsequent correspondences: 1) black activists were refining an economic policy based on mutual dependence that incorporated contemporary understandings of economic citizenship with more traditional uplift strategies; and, 2) this project required not only a shift in political economic thinking, but also new representivities—understandings of the relationship between cultural representation, political and economic power, and the structural conditioning of black and white subjectivities—commensurate with the demands of economic citizenship.⁴⁹

Smith and Wilson’s debate as *Communitipaw* and *Ethiop* is particularly useful here because they explicitly set out to interrogate and create representative structures specific to urban black labor in New York.⁵⁰ Wilson’s *Ethiop* column pushes the convention’s overall argument

further, suggesting a model of economic representation that emphasizes the centrality of the “monied idea” to creating and sustaining the proper position in relation to power. Wilson’s ideal representative would apply the vision modeled in his sketches to the problems of black citizenship, standing in a position to understand the overall circulation of economic power with the savvy of a flâneur, but with the material capacity and ethical commitment to directing this circulation in the community’s interest. Smith’s *Communi-paw*, like Watson and Patterson, resists the diminishing attention given to civic virtue, offering a long historical and sociological point of view in place of their appeals to present exigencies. The subjects of his “‘Heads of the Colored People,’ Done with a Whitewash Brush” offer insights from which he generalizes about the “average colored person,” suggesting that the middling sorts, not an elite, will impel not only black progress, but also national renewal. Ethiop and *Communi-paw*’s debate with each other and other pseudonymous correspondents for *Douglass’s Paper* served as a vehicle for circulating a general economic ethos and, as Todd Vogel suggests of the black press more generally, for “reset[ing] the terms of public conversation” to offer a different “quality of representation.”⁵¹ The correspondences attempt to make visible the often-invisible lives of black workers as something more than an undifferentiated mass, but rather as a heterogeneous and dynamic community with economic and political potential.⁵²

3. “Position is everything”: Ethiop’s Black Aristocracy as Counter to U.S. Oligarchy

Born in 1818 to a family of Shrewsbury, NJ, oyster harvesters, William J. Wilson moved to Brooklyn, NY, in the 1830s where he opened a boot-making shop. He began teaching in Brooklyn in 1842 and was later named principal of Colored Public School No. 1. In later years, he opened a reading room in the city and acted as editor (if not in name) of several papers,

including the *Weekly Anglo-African*. He was active in the New York suffrage movement, a member of the famed Committee of Thirteen, and a regular delegate at the national conventions of the 1850s.⁵³ He began writing for *Douglass's Paper* as Ethiop, the paper's "Brooklyn Correspondent," on December 11, 1851, and continued writing under that moniker for various publications, including the *Anglo-African Magazine*, into the early 1860s. Of Wilson's physical presence, William Wells Brown observes, "he is under the middle size; his profile is more striking than his front face; he has a rather pleasing countenance, and is unmixed in race; has fine conversational powers, is genteel in his manners, and is a pleasant speaker upon the platform," and Brown describes his Ethiop sketches as "some of the raciest and most amusing essays to be found in the public journals of this country," arguing, "few men are capable of greater or more successful efforts than William J. Wilson" when it comes to sketch genre.⁵⁴

Through Ethiop, Wilson wields his descriptive talents to offer his own assessment of economic citizenship's capitalist core, its "monied idea," taking up and revising other activists' arguments that the proper representivity will lead to equality for black citizens. Framed as an urban guide "among ye taking notes," Ethiop sets out to reveal how racism veils the city's economic doings and how focusing on surfaces leads black folk in particular to mistake an insubstantial respectability for the substance of economic power.⁵⁵ Ethiop uses two central metaphors for his analysis: through the metaphor of the stage, he outlines social categories and maps each class's role within the overall economic drama; the figure of the veil, in turn, provides a heuristic for how race obscures the more antagonist and anti-democratic aspects of this structure. He suggests that a change in position in relation to this staging—both economically and narratively—is the only viable solution to counter a speedily solidifying racial caste system. From such a position, Ethiop's proposed black aristocracy would be able to navigate and manage

what Ethiop sees as the functional equivalence of market and civic practices. Viewing the civic and economic landscape through the subjectivity modeled by Ethiop's column, black aristocrats could remove the city's racial veil, a veneer of collective enterprise and "true republicanism" on the surface of mutual antagonism and oligarchy.⁵⁶

Manhattan is "one vast show," Ethiop explains in one of his earliest letters, a stage where, if they could, the "looker on" would "see, as [he] saw," three rather coherent categories of people distinguished by their racial and class performances: "The *whites* exhibited the two features, wealth and poverty; while the *blacks* exhibited an intermediate one."⁵⁷ Rich and poor whites play extreme roles, but they have essentially the same character within the context of the social show, united in the same project of accumulation through a culture of capitalism:

the same white, ghost-like, motionless face, the same hawk-line nose, and thin, livid lip, and restless, wolf-like countenance, indicative of keen scent after what is another's... The propensity for grasping and appropriating, are as indelibly stamped in every face, as the mark of Cain; and though players, all, 'tis all the same, whether priest, prince, or beggar.⁵⁸

Ethiop's reading refigures white enterprise as a string of appropriations amounting, in the end, to mutual hostility, Emerson's "system...of war"; for white characters, upward mobility happens at another's expense, and the features now associated with Anglo-Saxons, like the mark of Cain, serve as a reminder of this principle, both a curse on humanity and an inheritance.⁵⁹ What binds them, then, is not a common ethnic, religious, or national heritage, despite popular belief in one, but rather an "independent, self-interested manhood," what Ethiop calls the "monied idea."⁶⁰

Capital and interest, not religion, republicanism, or participatory politics, are the governing principles of U.S. citizenship practice. "Money," Ethiop posits in his December 25, 1851 correspondence, "is the ruling idea."⁶¹ "The *Alpha and Omega* of everything here," he continues "are dollars and cents; of necessity, therefore, nothing is admissible but what will

produce it.”⁶² Ethiop fills his correspondence with these aphoristic phrases—”It is idle to believe that American prejudice and oppression, have any other than a monied basis,” “Interest *Jonathan’s* pocket, and you have his confidence,” etc.—leading to his penultimate verdict: “*Art, science, philanthropy*, humanity, religion; all the higher qualities and feelings are calculated in dollars and cents, and sacrificed, if necessary, to this same God.”⁶³ Ethiop extends Hamilton’s reasoning in *Federalist* No. 30—“Money is, with propriety...the vital principle of the body politic... that which sustains its life and motion”—to suggest that making money has *become* the nation’s “life and motion,” its end and “essential function,” not a means to that end.⁶⁴ Capital, once seen as a threat to civic virtue, has been raised above it, the standard for measuring all other values. “Whatever does not pay,” Ethiop quips, “answers not Jonathan’s purpose.”⁶⁵

Though he outlines the economic basis of U.S. citizenship with cynicism, Ethiop does not oppose it. Rather, he opposes how racial caste limits opportunities for the black citizens to take advantage of all the market could offer and to have representation in the upper economic class. While “the whites have their poor and degraded,” they also have “their rich and elevated, whose number is legion.”⁶⁶ Black communities, in contrast, “present but one phase—a low flat surface” that only reinforces white assumptions and buoys white efforts.⁶⁷ The problem is not the existence of classes, but rather the relative absence of class diversity within black communities and how this perception and enforcement of uniformity functions within the system as a whole.⁶⁸ Though Ethiop acknowledges the same antagonistic strain in antebellum capitalist culture that *Narrative* outlines in civic republicanism, he is more concerned with unpacking its racial logic so that black citizens can take advantage of its possibilities than with changing its basic operations.

Through the figure of the veil (or curtain), Ethiop illustrates how a strictly enforced homogeneity of black labor structures white cultures of capital. Black performers serve as stable

functionaries; they “hold up, as it were, the veil of the *plot*, and perform certain other easy services.”⁶⁹ Holding up the veil of the plot gestures towards the surplus value that black labor provides—as porters, washerwomen, bootblacks, waiters, etc.—, an economic backdrop against which wealthy whites have made their fortunes and that allows working whites to occupy positions that, if not more productive, gain more civic credit. Even recent European immigrants fleeing oppression in their homelands and unused to U.S.-style racism, he argues, can “build thereon at the expense of the blood, and sweat, and tears, and groans of the oppressed of this land.”⁷⁰ At the same time, black figures provide a nationalizing backdrop, an always-available empty signifier, “sufficient to swivel up about all the Anglo-Saxon courage and energy there is extant in a sizable nut-shell that may be put and worn in any one of their breeches pockets.”⁷¹ Despite the mutual antagonism on rich and poor white faces, the availability of this backdrop of negative blackness, on literal stages as in minstrelsy and on the streets, salves poverty’s wounds, empowering its bearers with a sense of belonging through a “common sense of whiteness,” the promise that their Anglo-Saxon character will win out.⁷²

As a result, while black citizens “hold up the...veil” of the city’s economic play, they remain excluded from its principle action.⁷³ Ethiop sees this material and cultural assault resulting in psychic damage as black communities fall victim to “the *bug-bear* ‘CANNOT’...[,] a *hideous monster* pursuing us everywhere.”⁷⁴ Though the “monster” exists in the overt threat of white violence, it manifests more ominously in the seemingly innocuousness of everyday life, the “mundane and the quotidian,” as Saidia Hartman would later term it: “Well may we scoff at black skins and wooly heads,” Ethiop concludes a year later, “since every model set before us for admiration has pallid face and flaxen head, or emanations thereof.”⁷⁵ This sense of powerlessness “makes a young woman feel she is a negative being,” “drives the trader from the

stand, the mechanic from the workshop,” and “scares our children in the streets.”⁷⁶ Black citizens have internalized the current social order as the *only* possibility out of fear and necessity, preventing would-be entrepreneurs from opening shops of their own because of a cocktail of discriminatory policies, hostile whites, and a lack of support from their own communities. Such is the monster’s power that Ethiop feels its presence himself: “It even now, impudently steals up behind [him], while [he] write, and seizes [his] elbow,” forcing him to conclude his letter.⁷⁷

Under such conditions, “respectability” had been reduced to pageantry as a new generation has learned to value appearances over substance. Ethiop describes black youths who have mastered the signs of respectability—clothing, genteel mannerisms (bordering on “dandyism”), education, etc.—while lacking the economic practices and material power respectability was meant to produce and signify.⁷⁸ Chasing after “petty by-paths” in the market, “the drapery and tinsel of education,” and believing that “appearing well, would make up for not doing well,” they remain “trapped on the wrong side of [the business] curtain, pretending to touch the real in their appearance...but never coming close.”⁷⁹ The public sees “wives and daughters of men, whose occupations are of questionable propriety, promenade our streets, laden with the richest silks of the Indies, and decked with all the gew-gaws of wealthiest whites, often outrivaling them in the splendor of their attire.”⁸⁰ Such men and women decorate the cover of Foster’s collected sketches, overlooking white men at work and business, the black man’s cane curled like a monkey’s tale, suggesting the comical nature of his façade [figure 1].⁸¹ These hyper-visible black citizens totter between working white citizens, who look every bit as poor as the black youth might actually be, black men and women of “questionable propriety,” and rich white citizens who may not look as fashionable and may not be as educated as their black counterparts, but who nevertheless have political power over them.

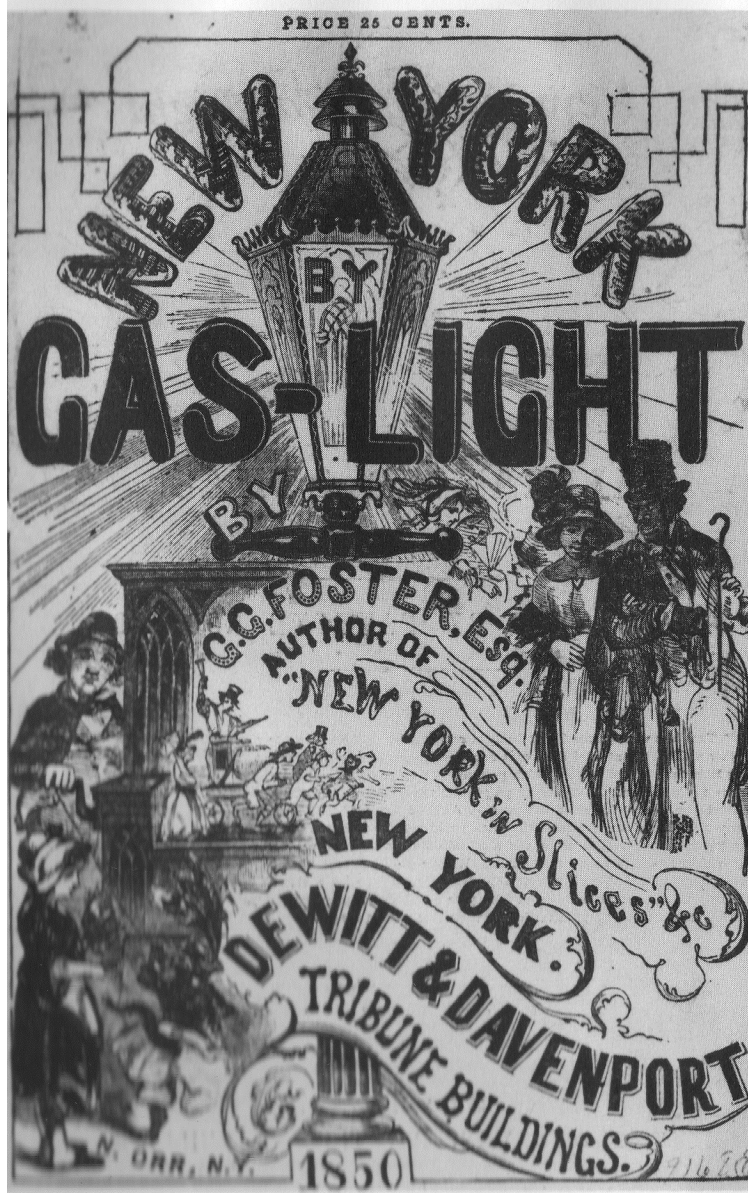


Figure 1: N. Orr's 1850 cover of *New York by Gas-Light*. Courtesy, AAS.

Even as he recasts contemporary arguments faulting black citizens' culture and habits for their political economic position, Ethiop reminds his readers that this labor representivity—these cultural representations of blackness and the structural conditioning of black and white subjectivity they mask—results from a systematic pedagogy of domination. Through the cultural production of racial knowledge, white citizens and “all the world are taught to look at both

[white] deeds and men through a magnifying glass of their own construction, which invariably pronounces upon all favorably. You look and behold! it is good!”⁸² While for Foster, Emerson, and others, Anglo-Saxon power results from hard work, self-culture, and self-reliance, Ethiop contends, “their great men...owe as much, and often more, to position,” to the lens through which they see and are seen, “than to either their own energies or abilities—more to their system of *puff*, *boast*, and *brag*, than to any real merit in them.”⁸³ Put differently, white success is as much a result of a combination of power (position) and control of representation (*puff*, *boast*, and *brag*) in the shape of a mythological whiteness, “at the same time both imperfectable and unquestionable,” as it is of individual labors (merit).⁸⁴

Throughout his column, Ethiop returns to the idea that art and culture work as lenses conditioning ways of being in the world. It’s not (just) that black laborers are in degraded positions, but rather that all things white are exalted over all things black, and, worse, even black successes are veiled, “[receiving] from the same system an amount of hoots, hisses and pious curses.”⁸⁵ If white society has in its service a magnifying glass, Ethiop concludes, “[l]et us have a glass of our own...and we, too, may see and teach others to see our own men and deeds as they ought to be seen—as they are.”⁸⁶ But the black lens must be more than the uplift narratives offered in conventions and papers; it must be coupled with economic leaders able to guide “the people” in productive directions that confront the material conditions framing and codifying the white lens. “Who, then,” he asks, “are the guides of the people.... Who ought to be? Certainly those whose capacities and energies have led them beyond the pale of mere *speculative theories* to palpable and practical results.”⁸⁷ Ethiop’s answer to this query is not to refigure the centrality of economics to U.S. citizenship practices, but rather to reorient black citizens’ relation to the

nation's economic and cultural power structure through black economic representatives, a black aristocracy.

Ethiop introduces the idea of a black aristocracy in one of his earliest correspondences, arguing, "Let those of us who can, (and they are many) turn their attentions to the monied interests in this country; and once fairly in the field, the disabilities complained of, would disappear as an evening cloud."⁸⁸ "A black aristocracy must be had," Ethiop concludes, to cultivate the "best means" for not only producing black economic citizens, but also reconfiguring the operations of economic citizenship more broadly.⁸⁹ Noting that modern industrial capitalism has created untenable inequalities, stripping the city of its humanity, Ethiop nevertheless argues that a black aristocracy can establish balance through proper management and negotiation:

Alas, it is a sad reflection, that amidst so much *brick and mortar*, amid so much splendor, here is so much of misery and degradation; society is organically diseased here. I venture to say that there is more wretchedness, more misery, more degradation, here in this metropolis amidst the superfluity of philanthropy and religion, than can be found in any whole nation outside of Christendom. Society here needs renovating, *soul* and *body*; and it is the office-work of those to whom I belong to effect it; this is their true mission.⁹⁰

Wilson, like Jones and Allen, realized that economic practice and racial structures were integrally connected, dangerous not just to racial minorities, but to all citizens. The inverse relation between the signs of modernity ("so much *brick and mortar*") and general prosperity suggests a greater dissonance, a disease affecting both the city's thought life (*soul*) and its material condition (*body*). The state and established civic structures ("the superfluity of philanthropy and religion") have proven ineffective or collusive in creating these conditions, partly because both were governed by the same antagonisms Ethiop notes on the streets in earlier sketches. Instead of offering a check on the deleterious effects of industrialization, they have become supportive of it.

Rather than need regulation from civil society as a civic republican model might suggest, in Ethiop's rendering, the market's logics of interest become the medium through which the disorder might be corrected. "[Engaged] in the various industrial and accumulating enterprises" of the country, the black aristocracy could cure society of this "disease" from inside the market, forging links between society's dis-integrated constituencies.⁹¹ Where Jones and Allen's *Narrative* rejects self-interest as a viable mode for civic engagement, and Carey's virtuous civic republicans manage the state from a civil society wholly outside the market, Ethiop embraces both interest and the market, if pragmatically. Recognizing that power and representation were already structured hierarchically, most prominently in the "slave oligarchy," but no less so in Northern capitalist cities, Ethiop proposes a means of "renovating" this hierarchy so it works towards more just and humane, if not more egalitarian, ends. The black aristocracy's "business," then, involves managing not only capital, but also communities, both black working classes and white monied classes, "to the one, offering encouragements and affording substantial aid; to the other, acting as a sort of rectifier of errors - a pruner of excesses; a grand conservator of the whole social machinery."⁹² Oscillating between two constituencies, the black aristocracy could understand both, operating at once as visible public guardians and at the same time behind the scenes (or "curtain") as the fraternal organization invoked in "grand conservator."⁹³ They could counter the psychic and material violence of whiteness ("CANNOT"), creating a foundation from which to demand equality for black citizens, while focusing the economic elite's attention on constructing a more just society on the whole.⁹⁴

Two factors contribute to the black aristocracy's ability to balance market interest and community responsibility: 1) Ethiop's conception of the market's function as a surrogate for the participatory politics from which many black citizens have been barred, and 2) the black

aristocrats' ability to move fluidly between multiple spaces and points of view, while "feeling" their "position" in relation to black communities. Ethiop sees the monied classes operating by the same mechanisms of circulation that the black state conventions apply to participatory politics. Channeling Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* and Tocqueville's articulation of "interest rightly understood," Ethiop argues that if black communities focused on cultivating a monied class, "[s]teamboat and railroad stocks would, in the regular course of things, be as much in their [the black aristocracy's] hands as others. Their interests and the *white*'s would be in common; and of necessity, an interchange and similarity of feelings would exist between the parties."⁹⁵ Ethiop takes this economic growth as a natural process in which the properly managed accumulation of assets will lead inexorably to ownership of central resources. As black entrepreneurs engaged more fully in this growth, increasingly common financial interests among the monied classes would outweigh prejudices, and because "money is the ruling idea," changes in and coming from the monied classes would necessarily (or organically) lead to changes in society as a whole, as changes in the head lead to changes in the body. State-supported discrimination in transportation and other business establishments, for instance, would disappear as black investors became owners of significant stock in them or related operations, and their "influence...would forbid the idea of recommending" colonization.⁹⁶

Ethiop realizes that the community's experience with oppression and caste makes the notion of an aristocracy "unpalatable," especially given its contemporary usages in reference to the "slave power" and land monopolies; but, he argues, "it is as much to the interest of our people to sustain it as to the class sustained."⁹⁷ "Happily," he writes in language reflecting Whig notions of the "harmony of interests" and the arguments of contemporaries like Tunis Campbell, "the varieties of our composition make some prefer to arrange, and some to work after

arrangements.”⁹⁸ Because they understand this mutualism, the black aristocrats “naturally discharge” their duties to the community “as do the trees put forth their leaves in summer, or their fruits in due season,” so that they resemble less the European variety, “of *mushroom* growth and existence,” and more Emerson’s “nobles” who “nature provides...in every society” to direct the collective “powers...by love.”⁹⁹ These aristocratic trees remain rooted in the community, bearing fruit in an organic way that contrasts sharply to the “*brick and mortar*” associated with the current landscape, because Ethiop balances the aristocrats’ capitalist individualism with a fellow feeling based on logics of mutual interest and community responsibility.¹⁰⁰

Mapping the civic-market relation in this way reverses the trajectory laid out in the black state conventions in the previous decade—that political equality leads to material equality—suggesting that black citizens can create a more equitable society by force of interest, if not by persuasion or principle. The market would then become a more republican base for broader social renovation—more republican because of the more representative sampling of the population constituting it, even if actual political institutions were not.¹⁰¹ In this way, Ethiop’s economic citizenship foreshadows what historian Jeffrey Sklansky identifies in the late-nineteenth century: “growing acceptance of finance capital and wage labor as the new grounds of economic democracy, not its antithesis.”¹⁰² The dollar supplants the ballot as black aristocrats enter the market as representatives among the power-wielding economic elite, “elevated” by “the community who sustain them” to counter white oligarchy.¹⁰³ They are representative, not in the sense that they reflect every citizen’s character and potential, but rather in a more overtly political sense, through what Nadia Urbinati figures as a relationship of “control (on the part of the represented) and responsibility (on the part of the representatives).”¹⁰⁴ They act as a specialized professional class whose job (“office work”), explains Ethiop, is to carry the will of

their “people” into the economic seat of power, to “[take] advantage of the infant condition of growing Towns by securing good business localities especially, not only as a source of profit to themselves, but as a great means of inducting Africo-America into the business world.”¹⁰⁵ As their economic position short-circuits the power of white representivity, the black aristocrats’ ability to feel and share the views of the community that sustains them would keep them responsive to their constituents. This representativity contrasts to forms offered in either the National Convention of Colored Citizens or in white cultures of capital, which are grounded in a sense of the representative as “like” those represented, instead suggesting a more political notion of the representative as professional advocate. Ethiop’s black aristocrats’ capitalism becomes inseparable from the overall project of community empowerment: they are capitalists in the market, communitarians at home.¹⁰⁶

Black aristocrats would be able to balance these seemingly contradictory impulses because they would operate in the world with the subjectivity modeled in Ethiop’s sketches, constantly moving between spaces oriented on a vertical axis. Harnessing the narrative mobility of the literary sketch, Ethiop oscillates between the “Heights” of Brooklyn, where he can “look down...upon that goodly city” clear of obstructions; and the streets, where he walks about, sometimes in disguise, close enough to “use [his] own eyes and ears, and arrive at [his] own conclusions.”¹⁰⁷ From Brooklyn, the “*bright Eye of the morning* in the back-ground, [guilds] beautifully all before and around,” its position north of Manhattan offering an elevated space for observation and the needed distance and time from the center of activity to interpret the disorienting experiences of city life. These experiences must, nevertheless, be had first-hand for accuracy and to cultivate the proper ethical “feeling.”¹⁰⁸ On the ground, Ethiop acts as a participant observer (sometimes disguised), proclaiming in his first correspondence: “And now.

Good gentle folks,/Ethiop's again among ye, taking notes."¹⁰⁹ Like the flâneur that, as Dana Brand suggests, attempts to make "the rich diversity of modern urban experience accessible to his audience, through the production of images in the context of journalism," Ethiop's columns "paint" day-to-day practices, providing a geographic, cultural, and economic compass for his readers.¹¹⁰ Ethiop, then, has a transcendent vision of the whole from above (Ethiop's images of the "*bright Eye of the morning*" invoking the image of Emerson's floating eyeball) and the personal identification with the community, the confluence enabling Ethiop to draw aside the "dark veil of mystery" to understand the workings of the overall social drama.¹¹¹

The black aristocracy could refigure black representivity with similar movements in relation to political economic spaces, managing the city's contending interests on behalf of black citizens through what Urbinati describes as the "*continuing and mediated relation* between situated citizens and representatives."¹¹² They would become emblems of black "corporate capacity," creating a more materially grounded culture in which coming generations understand how the "great business curtain" works and, with this understanding, can distinguish between "actual" and "imaginary" power.¹¹³ "The presence of such a class to urge, assist and otherwise encourage," writes Ethiop, "would cause the really ambitious to step out from among the masses continually and climb up to it."¹¹⁴ This steady climb would, in turn, create a more representative economic citizenry, disrupting cultures of capital that depend on black surplus labor and a negative blackness and that have resulted in a broader civic breakdown. That is, black aristocrats would build the cultural and material structures through which this class of representatives and civic managers could be reproduced, creating a population that increasingly resembled, at least in part, the productive economic habits of its representatives. No longer holding the veil of the play, no longer functioning as expendable support, black citizens could transform the play itself.

Here, then, is the crux of Ethiop's economic citizenship and the source of the black aristocracy's sense of identity and responsibility: communities will produce economic representatives who understand their relationship to the community as one of responsibility and responsiveness. Their collective work will eventually net a new generation of economic citizens, whose investments will give them the power needed to make themselves competent participants in the structures of economic representation. Just as the proper narrative and visual position allows Ethiop to see through the veils separating black citizens from real power, the proper economic position would allow them to break through to economic power, creating unofficial modes of representation and advocacy in lieu of official political oligarchy.

4. Communipaw's Polity of the "best average colored" Citizens.

Where Ethiop's model of economic citizenship depends on the ascendancy of a representative aristocracy to counter U.S. oligarchy, Smith's Communipaw questions the notion of economic citizenship altogether. His sketches, particularly the "Heads of the Colored People, Done with a Whitewash Brush" series, pull citizenship practice out of the market; or, more precisely, they subordinate market interests to a narrative of civic ideals, highlighting the average citizen's sphere of existence, the little republics they create out their homes and communities. Against Ethiop's calls for an aristocracy to renovate U.S. oligarchy, Communipaw invokes an ethos of commonwealth republicanism, a polity based on the middling sorts and focused on cultivating a "public spirit" that cherishes liberty and freedom as its highest end.¹¹⁵

Communipaw deduces that Ethiop, in his focus on the current relation between civic ideals and economics, has fallen victim to the veil figured in his own analysis, throwing money at what is essentially not a question of capital or management, but rather of ideals and civic

ethos. He responds directly to Ethiop's "monied solution" on 12 February, associating Ethiop with the constant refrain from Sir Walter Scott's popular *Heart of Midlothian* or *Tales of My Landlord* (1818, reprinted in Philadelphia in 1852): "'Jean! will siller do't?'" (will silver do it?).¹¹⁶ Through the allusion, Communipaw implies that Ethiop's "dollar remedy" intensifies the decay his black aristocracy is supposed to renovate. By assuming that, as one of *Heart's* characters famously puts it, "siller [silver] will certainly do it in the Parliament House, if any [any] thing *can* do it," Ethiop and others who suggest an economic solution to racial caste capitulate to structural inequalities, cynicism, and moral ignominy as normative facets of economic citizenship.¹¹⁷ Moreover, just as "everyone" knew Scott, not "Jedediah Cleishbotham," authored *Heart* (and that Wilson was Ethiop!), everyone would recognize that Ethiop's aristocracy would simply be a pseudonymous repackaging of U.S. oligarchy.¹¹⁸

Communipaw agrees with Ethiop's assessment of the centrality of money to U.S. culture and politics—in Communipaw's terms, "gold" has become the "Key Stone of American morals and religion"—but he comes to very different conclusions about solutions for black communities and the nation more generally.¹¹⁹ The pursuit of gold, Communipaw observes, "builds houses, 'nets the land with railroads,' tills the soil – in short, hastens the day of less physical and greater mental labor."¹²⁰ But it also "contract[s] the soul," making one unfit or unable to take advantage of the new capacity for mental development. "Hence," argues Communipaw, "American society is a poor, dumb, blind dog to whom the sun in the heavens and the sweet harmonies of nature, and the deeper harmonies of humanity are as a closed book."¹²¹ Material accumulation has outstripped citizens' capacity to act humanely towards each other or to deal ethically with the demands of the economic citizenship Ethiop himself describes.¹²²

Ethiop's aristocracy, because of its very position in relation to wealth, would not be able to resist cooptation by the overall marketization of the civic ethos and would be unable or even unwilling to cultivate the sense of "feeling" central to Ethiop's model.¹²³ For Communipaw, this lack of feeling is not a fault of the people so much as the logical concomitant of wealth itself. In passages suggestive of late-eighteenth century debates, Communipaw argues that bonds of economic interest are neither substitutes for nor generative of "bonds of sympathy."¹²⁴ "Gold," rather than enabling renovation, "freezes up the humanities and all their surroundings," because "the beginning of such association was money; the middle progress of it, money; the aid of it money."¹²⁵ Communipaw's maxims trump Ethiop's faith that his aristocrats would remain responsive to the communities that nurtured them. "The wealthy," Communipaw continues, "are never a progressive class; they are by necessity conservatives. Cotton would become king. Hundred thousand dollar black men would be no better than hundred thousand dollar white men."¹²⁶ Communipaw invokes the wealthy northern black businessmen and the "rulers of the five-points," who either cater to a white-only clientele or whose money comes from businesses of ill-repute, and the southern black men who own slaves, suggesting that the black aristocrats would not only conserve intraracial class barriers, but would also conserve, and perhaps perpetuate, the racial caste in the name of wealth.¹²⁷ If money is the ruling idea, and Communipaw and Ethiop agree that it is and that it has been bad for society, then producing an aristocracy would only perpetuate its faulty premises, further exposing black citizens to its atomizing properties.

Communipaw's critique of Ethiop and the nation's "monied idea" reflects not only McCune Smith's observation of U.S. culture, but also his training and research in natural history, specifically his understanding of how class worked and his belief that caste systems not only

inhibited progress but could also cause stagnation and regression.¹²⁸ “If we look at the sources whence nations advanced in civilization draw their intellectual power, “Smith argues in “Civilization; Its Dependence on Physical Circumstance” (1859), “these sources will be found to spring from the common people—the physically vigorous.”¹²⁹ Essays like “Lecture on the Haytien Revolution” (1841) and “On the Fourteenth Query of Thomas Jefferson’s *Notes on Virginia*” (1859) further outline his understanding of the relation between labor and progress: laboring classes are the source of a nation’s progress, the “stirrer[s]-up of true civilization”; and, wherever caste is “established...civilization is arrested, and either remains stationary...or sinks back into barbarism.”¹³⁰ Black Americans, free and enslaved, represent the nation’s progressive class those “whose ‘common destiny’ is ‘labor’,” and they will be the guardians of its republican promise and the source of its progress in the arts and in political thought.¹³¹

Where Ethiop sees characters in a social drama, Communipaw, like Smith, sees varieties of the human species contributing to an evolutionary process, a process in which liberty and “human brotherhood,” not money, are the ruling ideas. Through Communipaw, Smith reframes an evolutionary discourse in millennial terms, reading the current fervor for gold as an “intermediate” epoch, the “ichthyosauri and plegiosauri,” linking the past to a future era of more perfect human brotherhood. Just as the prehistoric amphibious reptiles that seemed to Georges Cuvier “best to deserve the name of monster” were understood as links in the evolution of contemporary species, “wealth and caste,” like the “only half lunged” creatures, link two civilizational epochs, but do not represent the more beautiful “systems” to come.¹³² Looking forward to this system, Communipaw sees a millennial reign of “*Liberty*,” calling on readers to “seek *Liberty*,” in a revision of Matthew 6:33, “with the full and entire energies of our soul, and,” he predicts, “the smaller matters of personal comforts will be added to us.”¹³³

Contemporary capitalism may be part of that evolution, but, like the prehistoric reptiles, it is a very crude one. “Our present weal,” Communipaw concludes, “can only be better by a nobler idea,” a return to first principles, rather than an adaptation to current errors. In a model with Aristotelian undertones, Communipaw suggests that the “middle tens...the rising and progressive class,” not a wealthy elite, will continue evolving and perfecting the nation’s civic ideals, because “they seek the upper tendon— not for its wealth, but for its position” through “thrift, punctuality, enterprise and persistent energy, such as the pursuit of mere wealth never stirred up in the human soul.”¹³⁴ Only through the efforts of these middling folk, who, in Aristotelian terms, “possess the gifts of fortune in moderation,” their souls made vibrant through their labor, will the relation between economics and civic ethos be brought into balance. If the majority of the free black population occupies so-called degraded positions at the moment, Communipaw offers a compensatory narrative, similar to Foster’s recuperation of Mose, that black laborers possess the collective experience and the rough moral stuff out of which this class can most productively be formed. Communipaw is not after simple inclusion. Rather, through Communipaw offers a “counter-statement of [a] political subject,” as Nikhil Pal Singh would later posit of black politics more generally, struggling “to widen the circle of common humanity.”¹³⁵ Communipaw’s common folk, even the single mother working as a washerwoman, are the last hope for republican citizenship. “We must work this out *here*,” that is liberty and human brotherhood, “or for ages the chance may not come again.”¹³⁶ That “work,” not waged labor, constitutes black citizens’ civic virtue.

Communipaw’s “Heads of the Colored People” concretizes this evolutionary and salvific process through ten sketches detailing the lives of black citizens identified by trade: news-vender, bootblack, washerwoman, sexton, steward, editor, inventor, and schoolmaster. Two

focus on single women, a washerwoman and a schoolmaster, making a living on their own, while the others follow men (single and married) starting lives and families after New York's 1827 emancipation. Through these installments, often appearing next to Ethiop's column on page three, *Communipaw* rethinks the relation of these people to the civic community, repositioning some of Ethiop's most degraded laborers as representative citizens based on their ideals, not their finances, and resituating citizenship practice in the home and civil society, as personal fulfillment displaces money as the ruling idea. This strategy is particularly evident in "The Boot-Black," "Heds of the Colored People" No. 2. The sketch models how one could and ought to strive towards moral and material success, and at the same time, celebrates those whose lives began in slavery, plodded upward through hard work, and ended established in the middle class. Appearing on 15 April 1852, "The Boot-Black" begins as *Communipaw*'s reminiscence of a formative figure from his childhood, a man who provided an image of responsible manhood: "Man and boy I have known that stride and that smile as long, if not longer, than my earliest recollections of—cake."¹³⁷ More than personal reflection, however, "The Boot-Black" suggests how the virtues associated with labor, regardless of its status, could "stir anew the current of life" and cultivate in post-emancipation New York the same kind of civic ethos associated with agrarianism and the artisan republicanisms of the 1820s and 1830s.¹³⁸

Situating stories of black labor, family, and civic identity in a post-emancipation world was central to *Communipaw*'s project.¹³⁹ The bootblack was a slave, "part of the livestock," at the Livingston manor until he, like many black New Yorkers in 1827, "finding himself in possession of himself...took sloop and came down to the city."¹⁴⁰ *Communipaw*'s reconstruction of Emancipation Day resists what scholars note as "a kind of constructed amnesia" about the legacy of Northern slavery even as the slavery was constantly foregrounded

in (white) labor discourse.¹⁴¹ Similarly, the News-vender, another of Communipaw's characters, spends the better part of his young-adult life evading slave-catchers after his escape from a Virginia plantation (that Communipaw strongly suspects to have been Thomas Jefferson's), until a shipwreck leaves him with both legs amputated at the knee. Both narratives suggest that the insistence on a liberal market contributes to this amnesia, because it ignores how the economics of slavery complicated black citizens' relation to the market and property and continued to frame not only the associations between black labor and "degradation," but also the entire national economy. Ignoring these historical realities by asking black workers to find civic worth in the same market that valued and continued to value them as "livestock" not only alienates black citizens from their newly-acquired (and threatened) freedom to work, but also elides the limitations created by the Fugitive Slave Act and the legacies of Whig patronage and paternalism that continued to haunt black politics in New York.¹⁴²

Communipaw's historicized reading allows him to use the bootblack and others to sketch what he sees as the progressive ideals and habits gained from labor "*made with a will*," ideals and habits important not only for black citizens, but also for the future of the state.¹⁴³ Bootblacks, Communipaw reflects, "as a class are thrifty, energetic, progressive. Free muscles, steadily exercised, produce free thought, energy, progress."¹⁴⁴ The passage plays on "free," signaling the importance of both the physical exertion involved in the work and how the Bootblack's freedom to labor (his emancipated muscles) and to choose a profession produces the progressive energy Smith attributes to laboring classes more generally in "Civilization."¹⁴⁵ Emphasizing physical exertion, moreover, mitigates the image of luxury the bootblacking itself existed to support and strengthens its connection to the kinds of manual labor more often promoted as productive of mental character, like blacksmithing or agriculture. If, as Jefferson

posits in *Notes*, “it is the manners and spirit of a people which preserve a republic in vigour,” then Communipaw’s bootblack would show how this spirit could thrive in the city in the least likely of homes.¹⁴⁶

Indeed, the sketch emphasizes the bootblack’s home as the central location for his civic and economic identity, valorizing its function as a site of resistance even as the sketch recovers the important work of women in the urban economy.¹⁴⁷ The bootblack’s wife is central to the family’s overall success. As Communipaw explains, “at first, business was slow with him, and both were dependent on the labors of the laundress,” her services advertised on “a modest piece of tin announc[ing] ‘*Washing and Ironing done by Mrs.*,’” hung outside their rented basement apartment next to his own sign.¹⁴⁸ Their economic and domestic life reflected the typical economic arrangement of urban New Yorkers. The jobs men, particularly black men, could find were often not enough to support a family.¹⁴⁹ Instead, women were the primary earners. The passage lacks the negative moral judgements often found in contemporary accounts of black women working.¹⁵⁰ In contrast to contemporaries like Ethiop and Martin Delany, who would read her work as, in Delany’s terms, a sign that “we are all a degraded, miserable people, inferior to any other people as a whole, on the face of the globe,” Communipaw weaves it into a narrative of a family’s economic and social emergence after emancipation.¹⁵¹

The bootblack and his wife work so that their children might have an education and a safe economic and domestic environment: “his boy should have as much learning as money could buy.... These hopes and resolutions gave renewed force and longer reach to his studies...lent new vigor to his right arm.”¹⁵² Conforming to gender values of his day, the bootblack hopes for a son who could take full advantage of everything education and his growing funds could offer, but they have daughters instead. The children, however, “only added to the energies of our

hero,” and with these energies, his business and property grow: “now a separate apartment from his kitchen parlor and above ground, yet at a most economical rent.”¹⁵³ Though “Bootblack” reinforces some gender conventions, particularly concerning marriage, the nuclear family, and the patriarchal role of the father, it also suggests that such conventions should not be used to obscure material fact or become grounds for condemning people whose honest labor underwrites the very civic virtues the conventions were intended to foster. The girls grow up to be independent, one “teaching in a private school of her own, assisted by her only surviving sister, and pupil.”¹⁵⁴ The two girls, though unmarried, symbolize the bootblack and his wife’s success, even as the bootblack realizes a personal dream he thought would have to wait for the next generation: he opens his own shop.

Working through this trajectory with a bootblack makes “elevation” accessible to a larger group than Ethiop’s black aristocracy allows. And, in contrast to Ethiop’s reliance on representative and exceptional leaders, “Bootblack” presents an immanent model, an example of a middling type, an example of what the common laborer and his family might achieve: “One former bootblack, is now a merchant tailor in Newark; another a self-relying farmer in Essex County.”¹⁵⁵ It is no accident that Communipaw’s other examples go on to be “self-reliant” on the one hand and a businessman on the other. The two examples echo the 1848 Convention’s revised resolution; they worked at so-called degraded labor “where necessity [compelled them] to resort thereto as a means of livelihood,” and, as Douglass suggested, they left these “situations” once they could.¹⁵⁶ Moreover Smith had real-life, well-known referents for his sketch. One of the great (intentional) ironies of “The Boot-Black” is that Wilson was himself owned a bootmaking shop before becoming an educator and rising to prominence within the community.

Still, the main character of this sketch prospers *as* a bootblack; he does not leave the “degraded situation,” despite knowing “that his calling was looked down upon”:

wiser than dandy opinion, he found it and has proved it - Ethiop and Horace Greeley to the contrary notwithstanding - well fitted for him to exercise by means of it, all the faculties which make a man useful to his family and a credit to the State: he was willing...*to stoop to conquer, and he has conquered:* and he laughs to scorn the capering *principle martyrs* who would rather starve...than handle a shoe-brush.¹⁵⁷

Communi paw links Ethiop to Greeley, accusing both of the same “dandy opinion” Ethiop condemns young men for, namely of mistaking money and status for actual wealth and progress and of refusing to “stoop to conquer,” that is censuring labor that could be instrumentally productive in the name of symbolic dignity.¹⁵⁸ Because of the bootblack’s attitude towards his work, bootblacking becomes, for him, a craft akin to tailoring or writing (Communi paw compares “boot polishing” to “word polishing”), making him less a casual worker and more an artisan who develops his business as he hones his craft and builds his family.¹⁵⁹ Rather than elevate the man out of his labor, then, Communi paw rearticulates the terms for evaluating labor, transforming the bootblack’s relation to the market and society in a way that Ethiop’s “monied idea” could not, by emphasizing the bootblack’s ideals and middling aspirations.

By presenting his representative citizen as average, even in his distinctiveness, Communi paw critiques the tendency to focus on the exceptional man’s individuality and difference from the group, a tendency that leads to statistically skewed results.¹⁶⁰ Bootblacking, Communi paw concludes, “is *the* calling which has produced the best average colored men, and has made men of *character*, not of *wealth*.”¹⁶¹ The sketch seems to bear this progression out, providing a concrete example of Communi paw’s theory of economic citizenship: the bootblack and his wife sought liberty and uplift for themselves and their family first; the business success was added in the process. Indeed, by the time Communi paw offers his narrative, the bootblack

has one of the “most distinguished boots our city boasts of,” he regularly supports the youth at the Free African School, he was “elected church-warden” at St. Philip’s, and he “owns a fine property in sight of the Manor on which he was ‘raised,’ and on which...he and his children might have remained in brutal ignorance.”¹⁶² The bootblack’s home has become a model republic in its own right, and Communipaw’s framing of him as a type suggests that his model can and is being reproduced across the city. One bootblack could never generate the kind of change Ethiop and Communipaw both seek, but as a representative (average rather than exceptional) of a much larger class, his success presages the greater revolution to come. “Heads,” then, intervenes in an economic debate that relied too much on assumptions that a more elevated job, measured against a flawed white standard, was a more (civically) productive one. The bootblack shows the movement from slavery to freedom to citizenship, not through aristocratic management, but through hard-working, critical and self-critical, self-government.

Even as “Bootblack” contests Ethiop’s aristocracy, Communipaw’s narration models a subjectivity calibrated to negotiate competing demands of civic and market spaces. Where Ethiop’s aristocrats “feel” their position through an oscillating perspective on a vertically oriented physical and political economic plane, Communipaw’s representative citizen inhabits an interstitial space on a horizontal axis. Smith situates Communipaw at “the poste of door keeper, not to the Senate...but to the outermost enclosure leading to the Republic of Letters.”¹⁶³ The Republic of Letters invokes a space where, Communipaw explains, “if they be but true” to their ideals, citizens can live “free from *caste*, and Cass and Filmores.”¹⁶⁴ Moreover, contrasting the Republic of Letters to the Senate, Communipaw also implicitly taps into the anti-aristocratic impulses of the French Enlightenment and the revolutions of the 1840s, echoing Paine’s use of the Republic as a model for egalitarian polity: “As the republic of letters brings forward the best

literary productions, by giving to genius a fair and universal chance; so the representative system of Government is calculated to produce the wisest laws, by collecting wisdom from where it can be found.”¹⁶⁵ The young Smith invokes this structure in his 1837 travel journal for the *Colored American* that I discuss in Chapter 1: “the genius of the institutions of America,” he explains is their “gathering around them and fostering mechanical genius and enterprize [sic.] from every portion of the Globe.”¹⁶⁶ The yet-unrealized “genius” of U.S. republicanism is its inclusivity, the promise of a form of government and national culture that could incorporate new peoples and ideas based only on the principles of hard work and ingenuity, not race or class. Figured as a doorkeeper, Communipaw’s ideal representative would ensure that this free circulation remained robust, providing a transformative bridge between the “heads,” or genius, of the colored people, a condemnatory black elite, and a republic that has heretofore rejected them.

Communipaw links the intellectual and civic project of the Republic of Letters to the citizens whose work would disqualify them from a more restrictive notion of a bourgeois public sphere by identifying this project with laborers like bootblacks and whitewashers (“Heads...Done with a Whitewash Brush”). Where “The Boot-Black” outlines the material and ethical grounding of Communipaw’s economic citizen, “The Whitewasher” demonstrates how these citizens view their relation to power, not as elite representatives on the “Heights,” as Ethiop might suggest, but rather as a governing polity of ordinary people, whose silent work belies their deep understanding of how power circulates and their ability (yet untapped) to direct this circulation. Whitewashers, Communipaw explains, exert an “invisible but irresistible power, before which parlor doors, chamber doors, and all other fastenings and hindrances at once give way.”¹⁶⁷ Whitewashers developed this power as a part of their skill at their craft, a perfect combination of physical work and intellectual acumen (“Our whitewasher,” for instance, “is a

chemist...in his way”).¹⁶⁸ Likewise, the “secret of [Douglass’s] power,” Smith’s 1855 Introduction to *My Bondage and My Freedom* explains, is his history as a laborer. Douglass is “a Representative American man— a type of his countrymen,” not despite having been a slave and having worked as a “degraded” laborer in freedom, but *precisely because* he has “passed through every gradation of rank comprised in our national make-up, and bears upon his person and upon his soul every thing that is American.”¹⁶⁹ Labor, in this model, is one of several activities that not only creates material security, but also develops the habits and subjectivity for the work of collective governance.

5. Ideal Projects vs. Real Limitations.

So far, I have outlined how Wilson and Smith map competing logics of economic citizenship and representivity through their correspondences as Ethiop and Communipaw, the one suggesting that a model of black aristocracy could counter white oligarchy, the other suggesting that the nation's civic life must be reoriented away from the market towards a middling laboring polity. While the overall arc of Ethiop and Communipaw's debate responds to a larger trajectory towards economic citizenship, they are also deeply embedded in the everyday happenings in the city, constantly adjusting in response not only to each other, but also to New York's volatile political, economic, and racial milieu. And it is this engagement with contemporary events that provides the criteria by which they evaluate each other and through which each writer frames his response to the other.¹⁷⁰

Where Communipaw's sketches suggest Ethiop's reading of economic citizenship contributes to historical and political amnesia, Ethiop accuses Communipaw of forwarding a dangerous romanticism, too concerned with an idealized past and future and not focused enough on present economic and political dilemmas. In a May 13 response to "Bootblack," Ethiop situates Communipaw's "Heads" in a romanticized past lacking "faithfulness" to the harsher realities of a "monstrous" present. True, Ethiop admits in response to "Boot-black,"

a determined man, no matter how low his condition, or what his color, despite all opposition, may, if he persevere, raise himself up to the highest *niche* in the profession he marks out for himself; and, at the same time, have not only a name and a praise among men, but something more substantial for himself and children.¹⁷¹

Yet, such men are, by and large, exceptions to a general rule of racial oppression and economic mediocrity—they do well on their own for their families, but cannot do much for their communities on the whole. By way of illustration, Ethiop describes a recent trip to St. Philip's Episcopal Church—the church Smith regularly attended and where Communipaw's bootblack

meets his wife. Ethiop reminisces about his own arrival at “Old St. Philip’s!!!” where he heard his “first sermon” after arriving in the city and where he “first saw one whose shadow ever walketh by” his side (a memory further implicating Wilson in Communipaw’s “The Bootblack”). Yet, in direct contrast to the nostalgic “Bootblack,” Ethiop leaves the past to describe a disappointing present.¹⁷² When he arrives expecting to see the lasting effects of the bootblack’s presence, he encounters an “atmosphere” that “seemed cold and strange”:

I listened - but heard not, as once, the short quick-step of the little old man, as his goose-quilled shoes squeakingly glided up the *aisle*, announcing, by their presence, to everybody, that “meeting was now in.” He was not, there!!!

And as I bowed my head in silence, I heard a voice; but oh! it was not the meek and heavenly voice of the *Rev. Peter Williams*; it was another’s.... I looked, and lo!! it was a *white* man!!! a *dictator* sent to dictate to his flock, and he did dictate: and they, I fear, alas! have learned too well how to submissively obey.¹⁷³

Neither the bootblack’s familiar step nor Rev. Peter Williams, first rector of St. Philips, is present. The fact should not have surprised his readers, since Rev. Williams died in 1840. The observation does, however, date Communipaw’s account and suggests that the bootblack and his type are dated as well, symbols, like the church’s “old hanging chandeliers,” of a bygone era.¹⁷⁴

The “relief of the past” eludes Ethiop as he struggles to come to terms with present realities, the irony of contemporary events at St. Philip’s increasing the sense that Communipaw’s sketches describe a historical moment that, perhaps, never was.¹⁷⁵ The paper’s readers had no doubt read “St. Philip’s Church and the Fugitive Slave Law” from two weeks earlier, George T. Downing’s account of the church’s capitulation to its white pastor in support of the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law.¹⁷⁶ As Downing explains, Smith submitted an announcement from the Committee of Thirteen “inviting the congregation to a meeting to take measures against kidnapping” in the wake of Horace Preston’s enslavement.¹⁷⁷ Instead, “his satanic majesty,” the “Reverend Pastor,” pledged his all-black congregation’s support of the law,

and they agreed, not because they supported the law, but rather because “blacks will submit to *whites*, and bear nothing from one of themselves, even though it be proper.”¹⁷⁸ This flashpoint suggests that the bootblack and others may have found a measure of personal success and independence, but without the power to change institutions and black citizens’ sense collective authority (a white Episcopacy appointed the white rectors, after all), this success dies with them. The large Episcopal congregation and black communities by extension will continue to “submissively obey” white authority, simply because it is white, as long as men like the bootblack remain isolated in their success, rather than rising to the occasion like an “[Oliver] Cromwell.”¹⁷⁹

Just as Communipaw’s romantic vision of the past and projected future has very little connection to reality, Ethiop suggests, so too do Communipaw’s economic insights—his quest for a guiding ideal—lose touch with material realities and the mechanics of the “real” economic world. They reproduce the same economic veiling that glosses material inequality in white cultures of capital, “deaden[ing] susceptibilities it should have quickened,” as black citizens become satisfied with individual success.¹⁸⁰ Communipaw isn’t exactly Ethiop’s virtuous, non-materialist adversary. All of his protagonists are deeply imbedded in the market—identified only by trade—, and he validates the “Bootblack” with examples of other bootblacks who left the profession for more lucrative ventures, but Communipaw obscures this fundamental material underpinning in his narration. Communipaw’s call for patience and his long historical *telos* could be read as disingenuous at best and a surrendering of black agency to the regimes of racial power he is resisting to be opposing at worst. Neglecting the “real” of capital in favor of a salvific evolutionary process, Communipaw’s well-intentioned depictions—a perversion of “natural” economic processes—could come back to crush the community he’s working to bolster, “and

he,” Ethiop quips in an April 8 correspondence, “like poor *Frankenstein*, may well exclaim, ‘Oh! horrid monster, was it for this that I created you?’”¹⁸¹ The reference links Communipaw to both Mary Shelley’s novel and contemporary political caricatures. “The Modern Frankenstein” appeared in the January 1852 issue of *Lantern*, featuring a shocked Horace Greeley, who, thinking he was creating black humanity from a pre-figured template, finds himself facing a nightmarish monster [figure 2].¹⁸²



Figure 2: Frank Bellow, "The Modern Frankenstein," *Lantern* 31 January 1852. Notice the stick-like drawing on the wall in the background.

Ethiop's analogy replaces Greeley with a cringing Communipaw, whose ideals, though fascinating in theory, suggest a grotesque, unnatural caricature of citizenship in practice. Perhaps, as Ethiop's visit to St. Philip's illustrates, Communipaw's classical model would create a more docile, but no less destructive monster, one too strong for even Dr. James McCune Smith to subdue. Trapped materially by a changing economic landscape on one side and philosophically by a romanticized past on the other, Communipaw's "conceptions of truth" remain in "shackles."¹⁸³

By concluding this chapter with Ethiop's critique of Communipaw, I do not mean to suggest that Ethiop's vision was either more accurate in his historical moment or that it offers a better vision and critique of economic citizenship. One of Communipaw's central critiques of Ethiop's economic agenda was his sense that "to the mass of us, such pursuit would be vain, as a reality, for the reason we could not" obtain that much wealth under an economic and political regime skewed toward anti-democratic white, not simply self, interest.¹⁸⁴ The following year bore Communipaw's argument out as the real estate opportunities and the already-available foundations for an aristocracy in Manhattan disappeared. In 1853 the city condemned Seneca Village and bought out its black residents to make space for Central Park.¹⁸⁵ This land grab not only destroyed a well-established black community, but also eroded that community's political power, because the state's payment was not enough to allow them to reestablish themselves in the city. Without the \$250 in property the state required for voting, they were effectively disenfranchised.¹⁸⁶ At the same time, the white economic elite Ethiop suggested would yield to the force of black economic power supported the fugitive slave law, and the private owners of the city's public transit system continued requiring black patrons to ride in segregated cars, despite an 1854 court ruling against such practices. The court, in turn, reversed its course not

five years later, ruling in favor of the Sixth Avenue Railway Company against James W. C. Pennington, who the company unceremoniously ejected in 1855.¹⁸⁷

In hindsight, however, Ethiop's analysis turns out to be the more accurate of the two in terms of his assessment of the century's economic and political trajectory as the corporation replaced the "self-employed household" as the primary unit of economic production.¹⁸⁸ Ethiop's notion of black aristocracy combines corporate organization and its concomitant shift in notions of individual autonomy with a guiding ethic of communal solidarity and democratic logics of participation, prefiguring, in a way, the economic philosophy of Booker T. Washington's Negro Business League and the civic philosophy of W.E.B. Du Bois's call for "talented tenth" fifty years later.¹⁸⁹ And, as labor historians point out, Communipaw's vision of a polity of the middling folk, while accurate in its articulation of the increasing significance of middle class values, if not power, misses the mark in its hope that these common folk, black or white, could maintain a sense of artisan republicanism in the face of industrialization.¹⁹⁰ Economic development would become an even more critical point of attack for Wilson, Douglass, and others as they began shaping policy and institutions for freedmen and women after the Civil War.¹⁹¹

Still, Communipaw's emphasis on a polity of middling laborers and on participatory politics poses a productive critique not only of Ethiop's aristocracy, but also of this trajectory: What costs must the "community" pay for ceding their civic ideals and their challenge to the promises of the "true republicanism" Ethiop himself invokes to these structures of economic citizenship? Communipaw's warning against relying on bonds self-interest to counter racism without a concomitant change in the nation's commitment to liberty proves prophetic as state and national institutions continued to articulate, in increasingly explicit and violent terms, the ways

that black interests did not matter. Where black aspirations became more insistent, so did white resistance, culminating in the violence of “Bleeding Kansas” in the middle of the decade and, in New York City, the 1863 Draft Riots. As the decade wore on, the effects of the Fugitive Slave Law, the inconsistencies of state actions and federal decisions favoring then retracting black rights, increasing competition and hostility from working-class whites combined with recalcitrance from white employers and the dearth of masters willing to take on black apprentices, and the constant threat of violence led many black city dwellers to move to Canada and to more rural areas in the state.¹⁹² Even as their newspaper personae attempted to recouperate urban spaces, Wilson and Smith encouraged the in-state movement, outlining with other reformers the city’s deleterious effects in conventions and addresses.¹⁹³

While the *Communi-paw* and *Ethiop* debate may read like a simple binaristic conflict between intellectuals—what Singh usefully frames as the conflict in U.S. between liberal civic-republican tendencies paradigmatically outlined in the Washington-Du Bois debate—, Smith and Wilson were more often than not collaborators in public fora like the state and national conventions and in institutions like the Committee of Thirteen.¹⁹⁴ That they stage this theoretical debate in *Douglass’s Paper* even as they cooperate in practice suggests the importance of public and open critique not only to their activist community, but also to citizenship practices more broadly. The next chapter analyzes the role of critique as a practice of citizenship, returning to *Ethiop* and the questions of access and the national imaginary raised in *Communi-paw*’s “Whitewasher” as black writers grapple with the meaning of citizenship and participatory politics following the violent closures of the Kansas-Nebraska crisis and *Dred Scott v. Sanford*.

¹ See Leslie M. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863* (University Chicago Press, 2003), 218.

² My sense of economic citizenship combines historian's analyses of nineteenth-century free labor republicanism, Appleby's account of a turn-of-the-century 'capitalist culture' fostered by "tributes to individual initiative with explorations of risk and adventure" (5) and Nelson's analysis of a developing capitalist citizenship in which "independent, self-interested manhood will be the governing principle for capitalist citizenship, and here economy (or money) rather than familial sentiment" maintains social and political cohesion (46) in *National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998).

³ Ethiop, "From Our Brooklyn Correspondent," *Frederick Douglass's Paper*, 8 April 1852. References to Ethiop's correspondences cited hereafter as E., Date.

⁴ In making its argument through a consideration of the periodical writings of two neglected political thinkers, this chapter takes up Robert Levine and others' concern with the tendency to put Douglass forward as "the representative black male figure of the time." This tendency, as Levine suggests, has led literary scholars to "elide some of the most significant dialogues and exchanges of antebellum culture—the very debates out of which Douglass's ideas and writings emerged." See Robert S. Levine, *Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, and the Politics of Representative Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 5. Levine, however, paradoxically forwards this agenda by reaffirming Douglass's representativeness, albeit as set against Delany, his representative partner-cum-foil.

⁵ As Charles Seller's groundbreaking work notes, the market revolution "established capitalist hegemony over economics, politics and culture" (5). By "market revolution," I am referring to the shift in economic and cultural life that occurred between roughly 1815 and 1846, when, as Charles Sellers, Sean Wilentz, Melvyn Stokes, and others have variously argued, new technologies, especially in communication and transportation, changes in European manufacturing, and the new manufacturing methods that resulted in the rise of waged labor, urban industrial centers, and the rise of the corporation over the home as the central economic unit. These technological and economic changes coincided with, built on, and created changes in the social order, how citizens' viewed their place in that order, and even the language citizens' used to talk about that place. As Wilentz observes of the New York context, "faced with profound changes in the social relations of production, ordinary New Yorkers began to reinterpret their shared ideals of commonwealth, virtue, independence, citizenship, and equality, and struggled over the very meaning of the terms." See Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 5; Rael, "African Americans, Slavery, and Thrift from the Revolution to the Civil War" in *Thrift and Thriving in America: Capitalism and Moral Order from the Puritans to the Present*, eds. Joshua J. Yates and James Davison Hunter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 183-206; and Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850*, 20th Anniversary Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 14-15.

Work on the social and economic changes in the U.S. during these decades is expansive. I draw my understanding of the market revolution as a conceptual framework for interpreting the years between the War of 1812 and the Civil War from: Joyce Appleby, *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); Stuart M. Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Wilentz, "Society, Politics, and the Market Revolution." in *The New American History*; Jonathan A. Glickstein, *American Exceptionalism, American Anxiety: Wages, Competition, and Degraded Labor in the Antebellum United States* (Charlottesville: University Virginia Press, 2002); Nicholas K. Bromell, *By the Sweat of the Brow: Literature and Labor in Antebellum America* (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1993); Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War*. (1970) 2nd ed. (New York, Oxford University Press, 1995); Melvyn Stokes, introduction to *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880*. eds. Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996); David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991); and Patrick Rael, "The Market Revolution and Market Values in Antebellum Black Protest Thought," in Scott Martin, ed., *Cultural Change and the Market Revolution in America, 1789-1860* (Lanham, Md., Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 13-45.

⁶ As Bromell puts it, "The struggle over their meaning is part of a political struggle, for whoever can claim to be society's foremost workers can lay claim also to social and political prerogatives." See Bromell, *Sweat*, 22.

⁷ As Wilentz explains, this "labor theory could be used either to defend 'productive' capitalist entrepreneurship or to condemn it," and it could give labor still "dependent" on employer wages a sense of independence. See Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 158, and Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery*, 97-98.

⁸ “Mechanic” became a sort of catch-all title for manual laborers with “the capacity to unite craftsmen as proud republican workers.” See Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, 51-52.

⁹ Wilentz observes that this paradigm builds on the republican style, adjusting its emphasis on commonwealth, virtue, independence, and equality to meet the new social demands of the market revolution (*Chants Democratic*, 14). See also, Appleby, *Inheriting the Revolution*, 5-11.

¹⁰ As labor historians like Roediger, Glickenstein, Foner, and Blummin have suggested, realities on the street ran in the opposite direction: wage labor proliferated, upward mobility stagnated (if it existed at all), and labor became more subdivided, requiring less skill, but more work. See for instance Roediger’s *Wages of Whiteness*, Glickenstein’s *American Exceptionalism*, Foner’s *Free Soil*, and Blummin’s *Emergence of the Middle Class*.

¹¹ As Joyce Appleby observes, “A new conception of politics converged with a new appreciation of enterprise, and a new character ideal was created: the man who developed inner resources, acted independently, lived virtuously, and bent his behavior to his personal goals—not the American Adam, but the American *homo faber*, the builder.” See *Inheriting*, 11. Antebellum readers absorbed advice literature from writers like Horace Mann, Henry Ward Beecher, and William A. Alcott that created what Karen Halttunen has usefully framed as the “nineteenth-century version of the Protestant work ethic” along with narratives of self-made men who, by dint of hard work, rose from obscurity to financial success. See Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 26-30.

¹² See also Glickenstein, *American Exceptionalism*, 4-6. As Foner explains, “American economists sought to reconcile wage labor with the idea of the New World as a classless utopia by insisting that in the United States, industrious and frugal laborers could save money, purchase their own homes, and eventually acquire a farm or a shop, thereby escaping the status of wage labor and assimilating into the republic of property holders” (xxi). Though labor advocates posed democratic equality and autonomy in opposition to the market liberalism of nascent capitalists, and free labor republicans protested regimes of “wage slavery,” they all upheld the basic premise that free enterprise nurtured republican character. See Foner, *Free Labor* and “The Idea of Free Labor in Nineteenth-Century American,” an addition to the 1995 edition of *Free Labor*; Mcguir Ian, “‘Who ain’t a slave?’: Moby Dick and the Ideology of Free Labor,” *Journal of American Studies* 37.2 (2003): 287-30.; Glickstein, *American Exceptionalism, American Anxiety: Wages, Competition, and Degraded Labor in the Antebellum United States* (Charlottesville: University Virginia Press, 2002), 25; Sklansky, *Soul’s Economy: Market Society and Selfhood in American Thought, 1820-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 3; and, Wilentz, “Society, Politics, and the Market Revolution” in *The New American History*, 72-78.

¹³ Emerson, *Representative Men in Essays and Lectures* (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1983), 615. As Nelson’s paradigm of “presidential representivity” based on her reading of *Representative Men* suggests, Emerson’s “representative” fosters and then fulfills the citizen’s desire “for self-subordinating civic unity and national ‘wholeness,’ to desire power for our Representative...instead of heading the power we can generate between us” (224-225). Emerson calls for citizens to see in the Representative one who could create a “new field” of thought: the “system...of war, of an injurious superiority” in which “a man comes to measure his greatness by the regrets, envies, and hatreds of his competitors” becomes a place where “there is room,” where there “are no self-esteems, no exclusions” (*Representative Men*, 625). This representivity works, in part, because the office of the President and Emerson’s Representative were modeled after the pyramidal organization of a corporation, linking ways of thinking about the market and politics in terms of management. My argument here builds on Nelson’s to suggest a structure of economic representivity or economic citizenship in which the successful self-made man (be he artisan, banker, capitalist, or land speculator) serves much the same representative function as the President. By buying into the notion of an unbiased liberal market and by ascribing the economic representative’s success to his shrewd and virtuous labor in that market, citizens staked their claim to a piece of the “spiritual and moral rewards” of his success. See Nelson, “Representative/Democracy: Presidents, Democratic Management, and the Unfinished Business of Male Sentimentalism,” in *No More Separate Spheres*, eds. Cathy N. Davidson and Jessamyn Hatcher (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 224-230; Sklansky, *Soul’s*, 3-4.

¹⁴ Antebellum “respectability,” like late-eighteenth century “republicanism,” was a style, a set of diverse tropes deployed in a multiplicity of ways that ultimately tied market success to self-government and hard work, rather than manipulation and exploitation. Scholars have noted that “respectability” developed in response to the uncertainty the market revolution caused. Economic changes created opportunities for self-making as well as opportunities for deception, leading the burgeoning middle classes to look for ways to differentiate themselves from working men and women. Even as varying forms of a middle class emerged, it was becoming difficult to differentiate between this class and the working classes from which they’d sprung. Cultures of “respectability” became the means by which this emerging group created and policed its own identity. Patrick Rael observes,

respectability “served as a master value, encompassing a host of traits—not all of them compatible—that came to define an ideal for human character in an expanding market society” (Rael, “The Market Revolution,” 28). Glickstein has suggested that U.S. working-class respectability developed not only in contrast to slave labor, but also in contrast to “Europe’s ‘pauper’ laborers,” emphasizing the “market rewards” available to American workers. It retooled turn-of-the-century civic republican ethics in the form of the virtues of the liberal market. See Glickstein, *American Exceptionalism*, 34-35; Appleby, *Inheriting*, 21; and Rael, “The Market Revolution,” 28; and “African Americans, Slavery, and Thrift,” 190-193. For a detailed account of how “white collar” jobs like clerking helped shaped the visible performance of respectability even as the work’s changing requirements and increasing resemblance to “degraded” work like portering pushed the discourse’s limits, particularly as it became more closely associated with the black workers who traditionally did it, see Brian Luskey, “Jumping Counters in White Collars: Manliness, Respectability, and Work in the Antebellum City,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 26 (Summer 2006), 173-219.

¹⁵ Emerson, *Representative Men*, 625.

¹⁶ Following Gutman and Rawick, Roediger suggests that part of the impetus for the minstrels and their attendant racism was a white longing for the fetishized pre-capitalist pleasures: drinking, holidays, less regimented workdays, etc. On Mose particularly, he writes: “When Mose appeared in 1848, according to one contemporary account, ‘pit and galleries joined in the outcry’ as many recognized themselves in his performance. He quickly became an American urban hero, a ‘tough melon but sweet at the core’, gracing the parades of artisan based volunteer fire departments even in an outlying city like Nashville by the early 1850s” (*Wages of Whiteness*, 95-96, 99-10). This is not to cover up the real tensions between nascent classes, but rather to give a broad strokes overview of how popular representations compensated for economic inequality through cultures of whiteness.

¹⁷ George Foster, *New York by Gas-light and Other Urban Sketches*, ed. Stuart M. Blumin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 170. Whether intentional or not, Foster’s sentiments echo Emerson’s characterization of the “Saxon race” in *Representative Men*: “Every child of the Saxon race,” writes Emerson, “is educated to wish to be first. It is our system” (625). Both Foster and Emerson’s comments indicate that the general sense of opportunity was not only tied to the expanding purview of economic possibility, but was also linked to and constitutive of racialized ways of thinking about such possibilities. That is, while the market may offer the chance for upward mobility and a fuller expression of republican self-government, only men of Saxon or Anglo-Saxon stock are capable of taking full advantage of it.

Though generally a rogue throughout the play, Mose is also a fireman. True to form, Mose helps the poor, works in the volunteer fire department, and, in the penultimate scene “dashes into [a] Burning Building” to save a child. In so doing, Baker’s character takes the popular image of the unruly hoards of rowdy, usually immigrant, and manual laborers and recovers it as a source of entertainment and pride. Indeed, as Richardson points out, Mose is juxtaposed to a successful businessman, Harry Gordon, who turns out to be “old school chum.” The two may occupy divergent class positions, but they are made of the same stuff. See Gary A. Richardson, “Plays and Playwrights: 1800-1865” in *The Cambridge History of American Theatre*, eds. Don B. Wilmet and C. W. E. Bigsby (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 277; Thomas Allston Brown, *A History of the New York Stage from the First Performance in 1732 to 1901* vol. 1 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1903), 284. On the effects of plays like “New York as It Is” and the cultures it appropriates on the contemporary literary imagination see Andrew Lawson, *Walt Whitman & the Class Struggle* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2006).

¹⁸ See Leon Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 156-157. Indeed, as Litwack frames it, black laborers “allowed the whites to assume aristocratic airs on occasion” (157). That is, as black workers filled menial positions, they helped ameliorate fears of downward mobility and, at the same time, allowed whites, who may not have been in any better economic position, to accrue social capital in whiteness.

¹⁹ Popular images of black work and black workers included Joe dancing for eels, bootblacks and washerwomen pervade public discourse, and those with middle-class aspirations fell into a particularly entertaining kind of dandy. [See figure 1]. Todd Vogel has rightly identified this unworkable position between economic aspiration, duplicitous public sentiment, and shrinking economic opportunities as a “crisis over the relationship between labor and citizenship.” See Vogel, “The New Face of Black Labor,” in *The Black Press: New Literary and Historical Essays*, ed. Todd Vogel (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 39.

²⁰ Litwack observes: “In filling the menial occupations, Negroes not only acted ‘naturally’ but performed, at the same time, a valuable economic and psychological service for white society” (156). As the 1848 convention’s “Address to the Colored People” put it, “a little less pride, and a little more industry on [the white employer’s] part, may enable him to dispense with our services entirely.” “Address to the Colored People,” *North Star*, 22 September

1848. On the abolitionist front, black activists censured the Tappans during an 1854 NFASS convention for refusing to hire black clerks while agents within the NASS continually complained that the organization refused to hire an African American for more than lecturing or other lower-level tasks. See Harris *In the Shadow of Slavery* 226-227; and Litwack, 156.

²¹ Litwack, 158, and Luskey, "Jumping," 185-189.

²² Such was the case when New York City refused to grant black citizens carting licenses in the 1840s. As Harris has explained in the context of carting in New York, the city often policed racial boundaries and prevented black workers from more lucrative occupations by not granting them permits to do certain kinds of work and by strictly enforcing punishments for those operating without permits. Litwack notes that at least since the late eighteenth century, the refusal of financial institutions to extend credit to black entrepreneurs limited their economic options. Litwack also suggests that these structural adjustments occurred in response to white violence against black cartmen, using the protection of black workers to justify discrimination. See Harris, *Shadow*, 217-218; and Litwack, *North of Slavery*, 154-159.

As Marable explains in *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America: Problems in Race, Political Economy and Society*, 1st ed. (Boston: South End Press, 1983), "Capitalist development has occurred not in spite of the exclusion of Blacks, but because of the brutal exploitation of Blacks as workers and consumers. Blacks have never been equal partners in the American Social Contract, because the system exists not to develop, *but to underdevelop Black people*" (2). Underdevelopment does not imply a lack of development, but rather, it signifies structures of inequality and exploitation, particularly between minority groups and capitalist orders. The antebellum market revolution netted black "underdevelopment" as black labor provided the surplus value, the "various necessary menial duties," that allowed whites to pursue more productive avenues. See Marable, 2-8; Litwack, 158.

²³ Harris offers an account of key conflict along these lines around whether or not black waiters should unionize with white waiters for higher wages or if they should remain in black organizations like Tunis G. Campbell's First United Association of Colored Waiters. See *Shadow*, 242-245.

²⁴ As Douglass explains in "Learn Trades or Starve," "The old avocations, by which colored men obtained a livelihood, are rapidly, unceasingly and inevitably passing into other hands; every hour sees the black man elbowed out of employment by some newly arrived emigrant, whose hunger and whose color are thought to give him a better title to the place" (*Frederick Douglass's Paper*, 4 March 1853). See, Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor*, xviii; and Litwack, *North*, 162-166. Litwack reports that while black citizens held the majority of servant jobs in New York City in 1830, "twenty years later, Irish servants outnumbered the entire Negro population by ten to one" (166).

²⁵ Litwack, *North of Slavery*, 155.

²⁶ African Americans also joined the move west with some success, particularly in California. An 1852 Meeting of the Colored People of New York passed resolutions condemning, then Governor Washington Hunt's recommendation "to the Legislature the appropriation of State funds for the purpose of transporting a portion of the citizens of the State to a barbarous country, thousands of miles beyond the limits of its territory." "Meeting of the Colored People of New York," *Frederick Douglass's Paper*, 5 February 1852.

²⁷ *New York Daily Tribune*, August 25, 1843

²⁸ *New York Daily Tribune*, August 25, 1843. For a discussion of how Greeley, like many other relative supporters of black rights, traded in the "common language" of black condition, see Melish, "The 'Condition' Debate and Racial Discourse in the Antebellum North," *Journal of the Early Republic*. Special Issue on Racial Consciousness and Nation-Building in the Early Republic 19, no. 4 (Winter 1999): 657-659. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3125137>.

²⁹ See my discussion of black disenfranchisement in Chapter 3. As Litwack succinctly puts it, "Such racial stereotypes as these reinforced the determination to keep Negro labor in its proper place; they both explained and justified the economic plight of northern Negroes" (*North*, 156). Historian James Brewer Stewart offers a slightly different configuration of this confluence of racialization and class in the concept of racial modernity: "color lines that had hitherto been so sharply contested around conflicting claims of 'respectability,'" before the 1830s "become indelibly drawn. Nearly impossible to revise, they were buttressed by a system of democratic white politics premised on the modern assumption that 'nature' had always divided "black" and "white" as inferior and superior, and always must" (693). See Stewart, "Modernizing 'Difference': The Political Meanings of Color in the Free States, 1776-1840," *Journal of the Early Republic* 19, no. 4 (Winter, 1999): 691-712.

³⁰ See Carla Peterson, "Capitalism, Black (Under)Development, and the Production of the African-American Novel in the 1850s," *American Literary History* 4, no. 4 (Winter 1992), 560. Peterson builds on Marable's argument to suggest that in the "free" North, industrialization excluded blacks not only from

entrepreneurship and capitalist profit but from the ranks of manufacturing labor as well. Policymakers of the period legitimated this exclusion through a recasting of romantic racialism: the moral underdevelopment of blacks, which imprisoned them in a permanent childlike state, necessarily deprived them of the competitive drive that would enable them to become partners in the capitalist enterprise and overcome economic underdevelopment” (560).

³¹ Historians have documented a range of ways black that communities tried to take advantage of a market that seemed to reward merit and industry indiscriminately, with sporadic success. These attempts, however, were by turns caricatured, threatened with mob violence, and thwarted by official policy, making black workers, a base upon which to further clarify the whiteness of economic citizenship. See Litwack 184-185; Harris, *Shadow*, especially Chapters 3 and 7 for a particularly salient account of New York; Pease and Pease, *They Who Would Be Free*, especially Chapter 7; and Rael, “The Market Revolution.” On the cultural demeaning of these attempts, see, for instance, Edward Clay’s “Life in Philadelphia” and the “Bobolition” broadsides of the 1820s or Foster’s depiction of the Five Points in *New York by Gaslight* from the 1850s. See Eric Lott’s *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) for a discussion of the connection between the rise of blackface minstrelsy and the increased racial hostility of the white working class towards free blacks in the north. Patrick Rael provides a useful reading of minstrel broadsides in the mid-nineteenth century (161-172). For a thorough treatment of these images, see Chapter Four, “The Deepest Dark,” of Sarah Burns’s *Painting the Dark Side: Art and the Gothic Imagination in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

³² This point becomes important in my later discussion of Smith’s “The Bootblack,” because the sketch attempts such a recovery through the linked narratives of domesticity and capitalist upward mobility. Scholars have debated about both the origins of black respectability in white middle class values and about whether this politics signals assimilation, accommodation, or varying degrees of appropriation. For an excellent summary of this debate and the stakes involved for each position, see Patrick Rael’s introduction to *African American Activism before the Civil War: The Freedom Struggle in the Antebellum North* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 1-38. Rael ultimately dismisses the assimilation argument, or at least the pejorative tone it takes in contradistinction to a more radical conception of black protest. My own sense is that the meaning of respectability and its relation to the American mainstream varies not only from context to context, but also from writer to writer with aims ranging from political and social inclusion to complete independence. Jones and Allen, for instance, call for black citizens to live sober lives in their “Address” appended to *Narrative*. As the First Annual Convention of the People of Colour put it in 1831, “Education, Temperance and Economy, are best calculated to promote the elevation of mankind to a proper rank and standing among men, as they enable him to discharge all those duties enjoined on him by his Creator” (5). *Freedom’s Journal* and the *Colored American* admonished black citizens to pursue education, moral and economic uplift, and to live sober, decorous lives (or to at least present such lives publicly). This emphasis on the salvific of productive labor also led black activist, as other reformists, to advocate for farming and country life as healthier, more affordable, and more in keeping with notions of republican virtue.

Parades also fostered communal identity and self-respect while demonstrating black respectability to the public, and publications recounted the success stories of well-known figures like James Forten and the overall progress of black communities after emancipation as proof of black potential. See Caleb McDaniel, “The Fourth and the First: Abolitionist Holidays, Respectability, and Radical Interracial Reform,” *American Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (March 2005): 129-151; Tavia Nyong’o, *Uncommon Memory: The Performance of Amalgamation in Early Black Political Culture*. Ph.D. diss., Yale University (2004), 36-72; Shane White, “‘It Was a Proud Day’: African Americans, Festivals, and Parades in the North, 1741-1834” *Journal of American History* 81, no. 1 (June 1994): 13-50; and, Harris, “From Abolitionist Amalgamators” in Rael, *African American Activism before the Civil War*, ed. Patrick Rael, 266-267.

³³ *Report of the Proceedings of the Colored National Convention, held at Cleveland, Ohio, On Wednesday, September, 6, 1848* (Rochester: John Dick, 1848), 5, in *Minutes of the Proceedings of the National Negro Conventions, 1830-1864*, ed. Howard Holman Bell (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969). As Leslie Harris has suggested, this changing market landscape and the emergence of a new generation of black activists led to conflict about “the value of upholding the manual labor blacks performed and the working-class lives they lived as dignified and honorable and the undeniable economic and political power inherent to middle-class education and occupations.” Harris, *Shadow*, 229. See also Pease and Pease, *They Who Would Be Free*, 124-143.

³⁴ *Proceedings of the Colored National Convention, Held in Rochester, July 6th, 7th and 8th, 1853* (Rochester: Office of Frederick Douglass’s Paper) in Bell, *Minutes*, 21.

³⁵ *Report* (1848), 5. See Harris, 218-219.

³⁶ *Report* (1848), 5.

³⁷ Harris's work suggests that Watson's words probably represented the views of more urban black laborers than Delany's, particularly in lieu of the dearth of work of any kind after the depression of the 1840s and the increased competition from European immigrants. Patterson reported that he heard Delany claim that he would "rather receive a telegraphic dispatch that his wife and two children had fallen victims to a loathsome disease, than to hear that they had become the servants of any man" and that "white mechanics" would respect black citizens only "if we became mechanics, etc." In the *Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People in the United States* (1852), Delany returns to the subject in greater detail with a caveat at the beginning of Chapter 23, "A Glance at Ourselves," no doubt tailored to assuage the objections of readers sympathetic to Patterson's point of view: "As an evidence of the degradation to which we have been reduced, we dare premise, that this chapter will give offence to many, very many, and why? Because they may say, 'He dared to say that the occupation of a servant is a degradation'" (200).

³⁸ *Report* (1848), 6.

³⁹ To mediate, Convention President, Frederick Douglass rose to "suggest a Resolution so as to suit both parties":

He thought that as far as speakers intimated that any useful labor was degrading, they were wrong.... He had been a chimney-sweep.... He had been a wood-sawyer. He wished not that it should stand thus:— White Lawyer—Black Chimney-sweep; but White Lawyer, Black Lawyer, as in Massachusetts; White Domestic, Black Domestic. He said: Let us say what is necessary to be done, is honorable to do; and leave situations in which we are considered degraded, as soon as necessity ceases. (6)

Douglass's testimony apparently breaks new ground: he admits to having been a chimney sweep. As the recording secretary observes, Douglass "was probably the first that had ever made the announcement from the public stand." This break in protocol mirrors Douglass's previous break with tradition earlier in the decade, when, as an anti-slavery lecturer for the American Anti-Slavery Society, he began recounting his life in slavery (eventually published in 1845 as *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*). This event was a milestone in black anti-slavery activism, because before Douglass, the minutes suggest, most lecturers were hesitant to tell their stories. What I want to suggest here is that this moment of telling also presents a shift in the discourse that enables Communipaw's "Heads" and Wilson's *Our Nig*. The moment also presages Truth's "Aren't I a Woman."

Even as Douglass stands in momentarily as a Representative Man, however, some of his amendments were rejected, suggesting the limits of his representivity, the limits of creating a single narrative, particularly in the standard uplift form, for such a diverse population. The minutes report: Douglass "was followed by several gentlemen, when Messrs. Patterson, Copeland and Douglass, severally proposed amendments, which were on motion rejected. [...] The 4th Resolution was adopted with but one dissenting vote." Douglass's image was vexing in this and other moments, because even as he (or his image) offered ways to rethink black identity in relation to labor, his meteoric rise to success and cultivation also reinforced middle-class narratives like Francis and Jenkins's. Still, his efforts did result in an addendum to the original resolution: "except where necessity compels the person to resort thereto as a means of livelihood"—in part, because he weaves a representative narrative in which the republican rhetoric of independent labor could coexist with the reality of black working classes restricted to traditionally degraded positions by increased wage labor and prejudice. Douglass, then, meets the dual requirements that the resolution encourage black citizens, for whom prejudice had resolved into caste lines, and that it also compel them to seize any opportunity for upward movement. *Report* (1848), 6, 13. See also Harris, *Shadow*, 229.

⁴⁰ "An Address to the Colored People," *Report* (1848), 19.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 20. As Patrick Rael puts it, "attain a position of power within the market that would let them command the equality they were owed." Rael, "Thrift," 9. See Litwack, 170-171. Douglass repeats these themes in "Learn Trades or Starve!" (1853), suggesting his strong role in crafting the 1848 "Address": "Men are not valued in this country, or in any country, for what they *are*, they are valued for what they can *do*."⁴¹ He also uses the same parallelism: "Learn Trades or Starve!" *Frederick Douglass's Paper*, 4 March 1853. "We must show that we can *do* as well as *be*; and to this end we must learn trades. When we can build as well as live in houses; when we can *make* as well as *wear* shoes; when we can produce as well as consume wheat...then we shall become valuable to society." By 1853, Douglass focused more on correcting what he saw as a misplaced emphasis on luxury and the appearance of respectability without attending to its material foundations. As I suggest in this chapter, I believe that Smith, Wilson, and others' debate within *Frederick Douglass's Paper* helped Douglass refine his own approach, which he outlines most concisely and comprehensively in "Learn Trades or Starve!" and "Make Your Sons Mechanics and Farmers – Not Waiters, Porters, or Barbers."

⁴² *Report* (1848), 6.

⁴³ The convention updates republican distrust of luxury and those occupations that cater to luxury. As the convention argues in this “Address” and as Douglass echoes it in “Learn Trades or Starve!” (1853), such work has its “foundation chiefly, if not entirely, in the pride and indolence of the white people,” making them highly unstable such that “a little less pride, and a little more industry on his part, may enable him to dispense with our services entirely” (“Address” 20). By 1853, Douglass was coming down much harder on the side of Delany and others who sternly called for black citizens to avoid menial jobs, suggesting that training children for such occupations amounted to sin: “HE WHO OMITTS TO GIVE HIS SON A TRADE WHEN HE CAN DO SO, IS GUILTY OF DEGRADING HIS OWN BLOOD, AND OF PERPETRATING THE DEGRADATION OF HIS RACE.”

⁴⁴ “An Address to the Colored People,” *Report* (1848), 19. Again, the “Address” echoes the arguments of neighborliness and mutuality I outlined in Chapter 2.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 20. As Patrick Rael puts it, black activists were proposing that communities “attain a position of power within the market that would let them command the equality they were owed.” See Rael, “Thrift,” 9. This rhetoric still reflected a republican distinction between dependence and independence, but, as the convention suggests, updated to reflect the realities of the antebellum economy. See Vogel, “New Face,” 38-40.

⁴⁶ “An Address to the Colored People,” *Report* (1848), 20.

⁴⁷ “An Address to the Colored People,” *Report* (1848), 19.

⁴⁸ Harris frames the distinction I’m making here in terms of a shift from moral reform to “more pragmatic methods of improving the condition of black citizens,” which was not a new development, “but rather a shift in emphasis” (218). What I am suggesting here is that this shift in emphasis still traded in terms of respectability, but with much less emphasis on the moral and public-performative aspects of the discourse and more on its material underpinnings, the referent for the more overt signs. Black activists focused on labor because that area of life was central not only to black identity, to U.S. civic identity more generally. Citing the degrading condition of the labor traditionally done by black citizens (and therefore the degradation of black citizens themselves) was a central point of attack for state convention arguments against black franchise. Moreover, as political avenues closed and as various moral reform strategies proved ineffective, black activists found labor to be one area of life in which ordinary black citizens could exercise a kind of agency, if in a limited way. See also Rael, “Market Revolution,” 28-33. As Rael argues, “In a competitive market economy ruled by the tenets of classical liberalism, respectability could accrue only to those who participated fully and equally in the race of life” (33). While I agree with Rael and Harris, my distinction between respectability and respect attempts to get at how this strategy shifted in emphasis towards independence not only in terms of labor, but also independence from tactics of persuasion. I want to separate the cultural cues of respectability from the material power suggested in respect. They are mutually constitutive, but separate issues as my discussion of Communipaw and Ethiop will make clearer.

⁴⁹ I use representivity to refer to this slippage between political representation and artistic representation, specifically as they relate to developing U.S. labor narratives. My use of representivity combines scholarship on two terms: representivity and representativity. I have developed this particular reading of representativity/representivity from Dana Nelson’s sense of representivity as “the subjective internalization of particular norms of representation,” or how citizens come to desire a particular kind of representation. To Nelson’s productive critique of representivity as an “aestheticized relation” in which citizens submit and conform themselves to the figure of the symbolic representative, I add Nadia Urbinati’s sense of representativity as a relationship of “control (on the part of the represented) and responsibility (on the part of the representatives)” in ways that are “eminently political and moral but not juridical and legal.” This last part is important for my discussion of Smith and Wilson, because they are looking for models of representation that can confront and circumvent the consolidation of racist state authority. That is, even as Ethiop and Communipaw suggest a structure of representivity that seems to conform to Nelson’s caution about its installation of hierarchy, Communipaw’s work offers a more interactive practice than Emerson’s or the options available. I also chose the term representivity/tativity, following Nicholas Harrison’s work in *Postcolonial Criticism*, because of its “slipperiness.” Both Ethiop and Communipaw give the sense that the representative should speak for the community in some important way, but they differ on how the representative speaks, to whom, and towards what ends. Importantly, neither sufficiently theorizes the degree to which the represented speak back. See Nelson, “Representative/Democracy: The Political Work of Countersymbolic Representation,” 218; and “Representative/Democracy: Presidents, Democratic Management, and the Unfinished Business of Male Sentimentalism,” in *No More Separate Spheres*. Edited by Cathy N. Davidson and Jessamyn Hatcher, 325-328; Nadia Urbinati, *Representative Democracy: Principles and Genealogy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 48-50; and Harrison, Nicholas. *Postcolonial Criticism: History, Theory, and the Work of Fiction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2003), 92-103.

⁵⁰ New York State is a particularly useful for this analysis, because the state's \$250 property qualification for black male suffrage directly linked political representation to economic and racial representation.

⁵¹ See Vogel, introduction to *The Black Press*, 1; and Otter, "Philadelphia Experiments," *American Literary History* 16, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 111.

⁵² Like their Philadelphia predecessor, Joseph Willson, whose *Sketches of the Higher Classes of Colored Society in Philadelphia* (1841) rendered images of the economic elite of black Philadelphia, Smith and Wilson offer accounts of "contours, rather than details; patterns of behavior, rather than individual acts." As Samuel Otter has suggested of Willson's *Sketches*, his concern was not simply to offer a "counter-representation" of Philadelphia's black community, but rather to present a different "quality of representation" (111). They could avoid the temptation to make every image or illustration fit one consistent moral, economic, or political frame or to neatly tie up loose ends. They could enter into a situation in medias res, so to speak, and leave just as quickly for another, not always related, topic. Taking up this project ten years later, Smith and Wilson set out to "paint" with "brush" and "crayon," respectively, the lives of New Yorkers—Smith focusing on types, Wilson searching for representative individuals, both bending their work to the contingencies of debate. See for instance E., 8 January 1852: "If my picture has its shades, it also has its lights: indeed there are some bright spots, brighter than I can paint them." Communipaw paints "Heads" with a "Whitewash Brush": "a short brush and dry paint," with which he "cannot do these clumsy portraits without spattering some people, as I learn by their squealing" ("The Whitewasher"). That does not mean that there was not a sort of governing order to this seeming chaos; rather, meaning in the sketch comes from the collision and the spaces between narrative and descriptive elements. See Otter, "Philadelphia Experiments," 111.

⁵³ See "William J. Wilson to Frederick Douglass," *BAP*, vol IV, 144-145n11.

⁵⁴ William Wells Brown, 1863, *The Black Man, His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements* (New York, Thomas Hamilton), Documenting the American South. Chapel Hill: University Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1999), 230-235, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/brownww/brown.html>.

⁵⁵ E., 11 December 1851.

⁵⁶ E., 20 December 1851.

⁵⁷ E., 26 February 1852. Child likewise describes the city's population as "like mute actors, who tramp across the stage in pantomime or pageant, and are seen no more" ("Letters from New-York.—No. 10," *NASS*, 21 October 1841, 79). This categorizing move is yet another convention of the urban sketch. See Dana Brand's *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991) for a description of how this convention works in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Man of the Crowd" (1840) (10). Foster likewise takes his readers to "Fashionable, aristocratic Broadway," to "see and hear" the various types that circulate around Broadway (70).

It might be useful here to think of Jared Gardner's "master plot" of American literature and culture through which white Americans construct a "third race," separate from their British forebears, yet made racially pure through the abjection of black and American Indian racial others. See *Master Plots: Race and the Founding of an American Literature, 1787-1845* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 1-24.

⁵⁸ E., 26 February 1852. The mark of Cain in this context also suggests Ethiop's potential engagement with Hobbes (in Latin), who uses Cain as one of his paradigmatic examples of "the natural condition of mankind" as a war of all against all. In this invocation of *Leviathan*, Ethiop is suggesting that the state and civic structures that should have maintained a more republican sense of commonwealth have failed or have become subsumed under the "monied idea." See Kinch Hoekstra, "Hobbes on the Natural Condition of Mankind," in *The Cambridge companion to Hobbes's Leviathan*, ed. Patricia Springborg (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 111.

⁵⁹ Here, Ethiop echoes Emerson's characterization of the "Saxon race" in *Representative Men*: "Nobody is glad in the gladness of another, and our system is one of war, of an injurious superiority. Every child of the Saxon race is educated to wish to be first. It is our system..." (625). According to Biblical tradition, Cain's descendants founded the first cities, the ancient precursors to New York City. Both Emerson and Ethiop use Hobbesian readings of human nature to ground their understandings of economic citizenship.

⁶⁰ See Nelson, *National Manhood*, 46; and E., 25 December 1851.

⁶¹ E., 25 December 1851.

⁶² E., 25 December 1851.

⁶³ E., 22 January 1852. Tocqueville famously describes Ethiop's mechanism of interest in Book 2, Chapter 8 of *Democracy in America* (New York: Library of America, 2004) as "interest rightly understood," through which Americans explain "almost all the actions of their lives by the principle of self-interest." "It must therefore be

expected,” concludes Tocqueville, “that personal interest will become more than ever the principal if not the sole spring of men’s actions.” (611-13).

⁶⁴ *Federalist Papers*, 184. Ethiop was not the only reformer who configured citizenship and laborer in this way. As Todd Vogel explains, William Ellery Channing “encouraged the accumulation of money as a worthy end,” but, in confirmation of Ethiop’s reading of U.S. economic citizenship, “power and money in this new formulation became the end. If workers,” Vogel concludes, “continued as manual laborers, then their hope for a better life shrank.” See Vogel, “The New Face of Black Labor,” 42, 37-54.

⁶⁵ E., 22 January 1852

⁶⁶ E., 22 January 1852.

⁶⁷ E., 22 January 1852.

⁶⁸ E., 1 July 1852.

⁶⁹ E., 26 February 1852.

⁷⁰ E., 26 February 1852.

⁷¹ E., 26 February 1852; and E., 30 July 1852.

⁷² Negative blackness, as Saidiya Hartman suggests, “cultivated a common sense of whiteness only as it reinforced the subjugated status of blacks.” See *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 29. As I argue in the next chapter, even non-Anglo-Saxon Europeans could benefit from this racial commonsense so long as they subscribed to or simply did not contradict its overall premise of white supremacy.

⁷³ It might be useful here to think of Jared Gardner’s “master plot” of American literature and culture through which white Americans construct a “third race,” separate from their British forebears, yet made racially pure through the abjection of black and American Indian racial others. See *Master Plots: Race and the Founding of an American Literature, 1787-1845* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 1-24.

⁷⁴ E., 5 February 1852

⁷⁵ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 4; and E., 11 March 1853. This regime creates a negative blackness (or American Africanism as Morrison describes it) that is as much a currency in this economy as a positive whiteness. As Morrison explains in *Playing in the Dark*, “[w]hat became transparent were the self-evident ways that Americans choose to talk about themselves through and within a sometimes allegorical, sometimes metaphorical, but always choked representation of an Africanist presence” (17). Franz Fanon’s *Black Skin/White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth* and Edward Said’s *Orientalism* remain the key texts to our understanding of this system.

⁷⁶ E., 5 February 1852

⁷⁷ E., 25 January 1852.

⁷⁸ And, as Douglass later argues, the very occupations the market offers (as waiters, porters, and barbers) “beget...improvidence, wastefulness, a fondness for dress and display.” “Catering to the pride and vanity of others,” Douglass concludes, black youths “become themselves proud, vain, and foppish.” See “Make Your Sons Mechanics and Farmers – Not Waiters, Porters, and Barbers,” *Frederick Douglass’s Paper*, 18 March 1853.

⁷⁹ Ward’s “Letters from Canada No. 1” (December 11, 1851) describes a similar scene in Philadelphia among lighter-skinned black Philadelphians who “were they born in the British Empire, and had they never been identified with the cursed negro race of the United States, this snobism would seem natural and plausible. But they are like you and me, natives of the South, and some of them, like you and me, *ex-slaves*. The ridiculousness of this very, very small aping of *aristocracy*, is sufficiently disgusting be sure, but its sanction and encouragement of negro-hate, makes it especially condemnable. Such folks ought to be reckoned among our enemies.”

⁸⁰ E., 1 January 1852. This imagery brings to mind both Foster’s description of “painted [demons],” “magnificently attired, with their large arms and voluptuous bosoms half naked.... Their complexions are pure white and red, and their dresses are of the most expensive material, and an ultra fashionable make.... India shawls, of that gorgeous scarlet.... But for their large feet and vulgar hands, they would be taken for queens or princesses....” [figure 2]. See Foster, 71,72.

⁸¹ I am grateful to Janice Simon for this insight in her commentary on a version of this chapter given at the American Studies Association Conference in 2008.

⁸² E., 30 July 1852. Where Emerson posits, “Every child of the Saxon race is educated to *wish* to be first,” Ethiop suggests that white (or Saxon) children are taught that they *are* first, no matter the quality of their striving or lack thereof. See *Representative Men*, 625 (emphasis mine). Plays like “New York as It Is” act as one such “magnifying glass,” augmented by commentaries like Foster’s and Emerson’s that celebrate “Saxon” enterprise. Emerson summarizes the value of such imagery in *Representative Men* in terms similar to Ethiop’s: “Other men are lenses through which we read our own minds” (615).

⁸³ E., 30 July 1852.

⁸⁴ Barthe, *Mythologies*, 130.

⁸⁵ E., 30 July 1852

⁸⁶ E., 30 July 1852.

⁸⁷ E., 15 January 1852

⁸⁸ E., 25 December 1851.

⁸⁹ E., 22 January 1852.

⁹⁰ E., 22 January 1852.

⁹¹ E. 22 January 1852.

⁹² E., 22 January 1852.

⁹³ Perhaps Ethiop is referencing to The Society of Odd Fellows or Freemasons or he may have something like New York's Committee of Thirteen in mind. In Masonic history, the office of Grand Conservator dates back to the Biblical figure of Adam, the first Guardian and Superior Grand Conservator of the order. John Stauffer has suggested that the collection of pseudonymous writers for *Douglass's Paper*, including Ethiop and Communipaw, represent "the literary counterpart to the black masonic 'Odd Fellows.'" A black lodge of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows was organized in the 1849 and was composed of men and women who were highly active in New York City's black activist circles. See Stauffer, Introduction to *The Works of James McCune Smith*, xxxi-xxxii; and Steven, Craig, "The Rise and Influence of the New York African Society for Mutual Relief, 1808-1865,"

Afro-Americans in New York Life and History 22.2 (July 1998), 7.

⁹⁴ E., 15 January 1852.

⁹⁵ Perhaps Ethiop has in mind the sort of Enlightenment coffeehouse culture that, as Gordon Wood describes in an eighteenth-century context, fosters "mingling in drawing rooms, clubs, and coffeehouses—partaking in the innumerable interchanges of the daily comings and goings of madder life—created affection and fellow feeling." Wood, 217-218. As Nelson has argued in her reading of Federalist logic, "self-interested manhood will be the governing principle for capitalist citizenship" (46). Ethiop suggests that the bonds of capitalist citizenship could not only supersede "particular ones of family, class, and region," but also of race, at least between the capitalists.

⁹⁶ E. 22 January 1852.

⁹⁷ E., 8 January 1852. John N. Still and others similarly argue that black-owned banks or investment firms would at least allow "our cooks, stewards, whalemens, and others" to make their earnings productive in "corporate bodies" dedicated to the benefit of the community (109). Still suggests that so-called unproductive labor, like domestic or service work, could still become productive through the investment of wages.

⁹⁸ E., 1 July 1852. Harris's reading of Campbell's First United Association of colored Waiters reveals a similar strain of thought: "The association's expressed goal was to produce 'an identity of interest between the employer and the employed,'" as Campbell asked waiters to remain in the city to work during the summers to "establish a mutual feeling of confidence and good will between the employer and the employed." *Shadow*, 244. On "harmony of interests" rhetoric, see Wilentz, "Society, Politics, and the Market Revolution" in *The New American History*, and Lang's reading of Francis Bowen in *The Syntax of Class: Writing Inequality in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 1-2.

⁹⁹ E., 22 January 1852. See also, Emerson "The Young American" in *Essays and Lectures*, especially 224-230. Emerson makes a similar distinction between his version of nobility and the English aristocracy: "The [English] aristocracy, incorporated by law and education, degrades life for the unprivileged class" (229). Indeed, Ethiop's conception of the black aristocracy seems to build on a model of Community in which, as Emerson posits, government falls into "gradual contempt...and the increasing disposition of private adventurers...assume its fallen functions" (225). In Ethiop's model, the state has failed to create structures of equality for all citizens, and has actually worked to create inequality; so "private" citizens must take over as, in Ethiop's terms, "grand conservators of the social whole social machinery." E., 22 January 1852. Emerson, "The Young American" in *Essays and Lectures*, 224, 225.

¹⁰⁰ Ethiop follows a logic similar to the economics of marginality Carla Peterson describes in the *The Garies and Their Friends*, a model that, even as it endorses capitalism, "celebrates not so much individual achievement as the way the characters attend to the collectivity, returning surplus value to the community rather than serving their own special interests" (578). See Peterson, "Capitalism, Black (Under)Development, and the Production of the African-American Novel in the 1850s," *American Literary History*, 4.4 (Winter, 1992), 559-58. For a discussion of Delany's *Blake* as a similar figure, set against the Romantic individual, see Andrews, "The 1850s: The First Afro-American Literary Renaissance," 48. Peterson, however, argues that *Blake* becomes so

entangled in Blake's difference from the masses, that the serial leaves the question of who will govern in Cuba after the resolution largely unresolved.

¹⁰¹ Wilson's black aristocracy resembles the culture of respectability fostered by an earlier generation of activists, including Jones, Allen, Forten, and Prince Hall. These activists acted as representatives and advocates for their communities to white elites and the state. More than their economic stability, these activists' high moral standing served as a passport, attesting to their capacity to lead. The authority and representivity of Ethiop's aristocracy, however, arises primarily out of their economic positions. Where Jones and Allen came to prominence as religious leaders, the black aristocracy will rise out of their own skill and entrepreneurial acumen and through the community's collective effort to cultivate their enterprise.

¹⁰² Sklansky, *Soul's Economy*, 3.

¹⁰³ E., 8 January 1852. In this context, Ethiop's proposal for an aristocracy follows Aristotle's binary in which an aristocracy is the constitutionally correct variant of rule by the few, and oligarchy is the deviation from that model.

¹⁰⁴ Urbinati, *Representative Democracy: Principles and Genealogy*, 48-50.

¹⁰⁵ E., 27 May 1852. In this particular sketch, Ethiop explicitly identifies this group as a class of capitalists: "Such is the rise of property on business thoroughfares, that I am fully persuaded that what few capitalists we have, have greatly erred" in not taking up the opportunities the real estate market presents. He goes on to offer examples of prosperous black entrepreneurs and potential aristocrats in the Fulton Street district: a "cartman with license, the first I think obtained by any colored man in this city"; further down the street "what is perhaps one of the most extensive sale stables" in New York, one that just happens to be "owned and conducted by a colored man"; and around another corner another "colored" horse dealer and a "colored lady" who just opened a drink stand."

Unlike other reformers who look upon the city with sentiments Lydia Maria Child describes on Moving Day as "a suppressed anathema on the nineteenth century, with its perpetual changes," or "J.T.," another correspondent for *Douglass's Paper*, who argues vehemently against land monopolies and capitalism more broadly, Ethiop's critique embraces the potential this indeterminacy and constant change offers. See "Letters from New York," *NASS*, 1 May 1843; and J.T., *DP*, 3 June 1852; 30 July 1852.

¹⁰⁶ See Carla Peterson on *Garies* in "Capitalism," 57; and Nicholas Buccola's discussion of Douglass's liberalism in "Each for All and All for Each": The Liberal Statesmanship of Frederick Douglass *The Review of Politics* 70 (2008), 400-419. As Buccola argues, Douglass "offered a variety of reasons for a deeper sense of connection and responsibility to others," including an emphasis on how mutualism served self-interest and on bonds of sympathy.

¹⁰⁷ E., 22 January 1852 and 11 December 1851.

¹⁰⁸ E., 22 January 1852.

¹⁰⁹ E., 1 January 1852. Like Dickens's "Spy Police," Ethiop is "invisible and never out of hearing...in the market or the street—the drawing room—the café—or the church," providing a panorama of "NEW YORK AS NOW," that is, "MEN and THINGS in NEW YORK." ("Spy Police," *Household Words*, 21 September 1850, no. 26, 612-613; 11 December 1851). Ethiop's style also invokes a host of popular theatrical, literary, and historical references playing on the theme, including: "New York as It Is," "New York at a Glance," *New-York as It is: Containing a General Description of the City of New-York* (1837), and Dickens's *American Notes for General Circulation* [check title]. Since Jean Fagan Yellin's groundbreaking work on Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents* and Jennifer Rae Greeson and Teresa Goddu's work on the gothic, scholars have become more attentive to the connections between the urban sensation genre and developing literary sensibilities in the slave narrative and black anti-slavery more generally. Carl Ostrowski, for instance, writes "the genres of the slave narrative and the city-mysteries novel shared numerous points of contact in the 1840s and 1850s as a result of their position within the overlapping print cultures of abolition and labor reform.... rich field of intertextuality in which literary devices and rhetorical postures passed readily back and forth across racial and generic boundaries, in a process that was mediated by the structures and agencies of the antebellum publishing trade" (493). This chapter in some ways continues this line of criticism by insisting on the overlapping and interplay of generic conventions, yet it also suggests that the slave narrative may not be the only, or even the *primary*, site of interplay.

Invoking these generic conventions with phrases like "New York as now" and formal cues like his strolling through the city gives Ethiop's "Brooklyn Correspondent" column an air of documentary journalism as he renders a view of the city with "shades" and "lights...bright spots, brighter than [he] can paint them." E. 8 January, 1852. As Dana Brand and others have shown, by the time Ethiop began appearing in *Douglass's Paper* in the 1850s, readers were well acquainted with this genre as a way of understanding and depicting cities from Irving's Knickerbocker sketches to Poe's gothic fiction (Brand 73).

¹¹⁰ As Dana Brand suggests, the flâneur sets out to “impose order upon the potentially disorienting diversity of the city, by reducing it to accessible images that could be collected and consumed.” See Brand, *The Spectator and the City*, 7. Originally identified by Baudelaire as “the painter of Modern Life,” the flâneur became a popular journalistic narrator through which to view the diverse bustle that was the modern, industrializing city. In “The Flâneur,” Walter Benjamin describes the flâneur’s vision as “diorama” and “panorama literature... which, as it were, reproduce the plastic foreground of those panoramas with their anecdotal form and the extensive background of the panorama with their store of information” (35). The flâneur’s vision works particularly well in the marketplace where it can take in the mixture of types and discourses that Bakhtin has aptly described as carnivalesque.

¹¹¹ E., 26 February 1852.

¹¹² My observations here are guided in part by Grossman’s reading of the literary infusing Publius’s concern with political point of view in the *Federalist*. See *Reconstituting the American Renaissance*, 17-18; Urbinati, 50, emphasis original. Urbinati explains that this kind of “reflective adhesion” between representatives and the people they represent offers the kind of dialogic model of representivity essential to democratic politics.

¹¹³ E., 15 January 1852.

¹¹⁴ E., 15 January 1852

¹¹⁵ See Vogel, “The New Face of Black Labor,” 37-54, for a discussion of how black periodical writers discourse of republicanism “in an attempt to redefine their role in the nation.”

¹¹⁶ The series in general, and *Heart* in particular, was one of the most successful of its time in Europe.

¹¹⁷ Communipaw also associates Ethiop with Cassius Clay, Horace Mann, and others attending the 1852 National Colored Convention in Ohio who followed the 1848 convention’s logic if black citizens could demonstrate and cultivate economic independence, which citizens would “respect” them and racial prejudices, no longer justified by material conditions, would fall by the wayside. On the 1852 convention and this strategy, see Litwack, 172-174.

¹¹⁸ Sir Walter Scott, *The Waverley Novels, by Sir Walter Scott, Complete in 12 Vol., Printed from the Latest English Ed., Embracing the Author’s Last Corrections, Prefaces & Notes*, (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, and Co., 1852), 377, Making of America. <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moa/>.

¹¹⁹ C., 26 February 1852. Here, the republican fear of commercial corruption is recast as antebellum anxieties about capitalism.

¹²⁰ C., 26 February 1852.

¹²¹ C., 26 February 1852. For similar contemporary arguments, see Horace Bushnell’s “The True Wealth or Weal of Nations,” an 1837 address at Yale. For a more detailed discussion of Bushnell and the Romantic tradition through which both Bushnell and Smith shape their thought, see Sklansky, *Souls*, 33-38.

¹²² Communipaw follows Tocqueville’s warning, “If, on the achievement of equality, citizens were to remain ignorant and course, it would be difficult to predict what ridiculous excesses their selfishness might commit and one would not be able to foretell to what shameful depths of wretchedness they would plummet for fear of sacrificing something of their own wellbeing to the prosperity of their fellow men” (613). Communipaw’s sketches attempt to prevent this dire prediction by mapping out a path through which citizens develop a sense of commonwealth even as the nation becomes more prosperous.

¹²³ Leslie Harris’s work on black class development in New York confirms Communipaw’s fears. Even as middle class black leaders turned their eyes towards labor and labor discourse as a medium for uplift, the political gulf between them and the black workers they would lead widened. See Harris, *Shadow* chapter 7.

¹²⁴ C., 12 February 1852.

¹²⁵ C., 12 February 1852.

¹²⁶ C., 12 February 1852.

¹²⁷ See Harris 255-257. As Harris notes, this district and its black entrepreneurs were made famous in accounts of the city like Dickens’s *American Notes for General Circulation* (1842) and George Foster’s *New York by Gaslight* (1850). Both collections feature scenes of brothels and bars ostensibly owned by blacks, but actually rented and leased from white owners. Still, men like dance-hall owner Peter Williams represented some of New York City’s wealthiest black citizens, and, as Harris suggests, they “presented a challenge to black reformers’ efforts to establish morally perfect, middle-class definitions of black workers and entrepreneurs” (257). Segregation, ironically, provided opportunities for the development of a black professional and middle class, but it came with a price. Black restaurateurs and barbers, for instance, were compelled to segregate against black patrons for the sake of cultivating white clientele. It seems that Ethiop’s plan might work, with working class blacks seeking education and training for upward mobility; however, as Litwack observes, “the segregated Negro community provided a limited number of opportunities for a Negro bourgeoisie and sharply curtailed the amount of social mobility.” See Litwack, *North*, 178-180.

¹²⁸ Smith's focus on the classification of social types and groups rather than individuals corresponds with a post-1848 drive towards social taxonomy and the birth of sociology. See Sklansky, *Souls Economy*, particularly chapter three, "The Birth of American Sociology."

¹²⁹ "Civilization," *AAM*, 8; *Collected Works*, 251. Some evidence suggests that the essay was originally drafted in 1844. A version of Smith's argument appeared in "The Influence of Climate on Longevity: With Special Reference to Life Insurance," printed in the May 1846 issue of *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*.

Smith follows the social statistics of Quetelet and Prichard. Adolphe Quetelet published the landmark social statistical work, *A Treatise on Man, and the Development of His Faculties* in 1835. In *Treatise*, Quetelet claims that through careful observation, one can find the average data for any given nation. This normative cure can then be used to predict any physical or mental aspect of that nation's population. From this statistical work, Quetelet developed the body mass index, a measure still in use today.

¹³⁰ "Civilization," *Anglo-African Magazine*, 15-16; *Collected Works*, 261, 251.

¹³¹ "Civilization," 251. Note Smith and Wilson on the nation's real art.

¹³² Just as the Genesis narrative begins with the Spirit of God passing over the waters, so will the new era begin: "by and by the spirit of God will pass over the great deep and the mountains and the dry land and the atmosphere...and higher laws and higher organizations will come into existence." C., 26 February 1852. On Plesiosaurus, see "Plesiosaurus," in *Zoological Recreations* (1849), 346; and "The Bridgewater Treatise," in *Southern Literary Messenger* 5, no. 71, 553.

¹³³ C., 26 February 1852. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt 6:33). The alluded to verse in Matthew comes almost at the end of a chapter in which Jesus admonishes his audience to be wary of outward displays of piety for show and to not worry about attaining worldly possessions. This same scripture contains other well-known cautions concerning wealth and the dignity of humble service that many of his readers would have known, just as they would have been familiar with Ethiop's references to urban sensation.

¹³⁴ C., 12 February 1852; C., 26 February 1852.

¹³⁵ See Singh, *Black Is a Country*, 44.

¹³⁶ C., 26 February 1852. Communipaw anticipates Du Bois in his vision of the U.S. as the first, and perhaps the last, nation through which this ideal can be realized, but prioritizing material gain over liberty, or, worse, equating the two will disrupt this development.

¹³⁷ Cited hereafter as "Bootblack."

¹³⁸ This formulation of bootblacking revises the ideal of the land-owning, self-sustaining agrarian as the ideal republican citizen for the modern urban subject. The image of Jefferson's "chosen people of God" (*Notes* 290), whose work shelters them from the corrupting forces of the market and keeps them independent, was a powerful alternative for black activists seeking methods of political and economic empowerment that did not place their communities at the mercy of white employers. See Query XIX on "Manufactures."

Artisan republicanism, particularly as Wilentz configures it in *Chants Democratic*, suggests that the middling merchants and artisans of the late-eighteenth, early-nineteenth century "added equality" to discourses of republicanism, "the liberal idea that all citizens should be entitled to their natural civil and political rights under a representative, democratic system of laws." This notion of equality was based not only on their economic worth, but also on a reconfiguration on how their labor, skilled, but traditionally viewed as not sufficiently dependent or refined, fostered the civic virtue required for self-government. Until the mid-1830s, this group included "the 'producing classes,' an amalgam of 'honorable' anticapitalist small masters and wage earners," but became increasingly disaggregated as economic crises and the rise of trade unionism created tension between the widely disparate groups. See *Chants Democratic*, 14-17; Carl Ostrowski, "Slavery, Labor Reform, and Intertextuality in Antebellum Print Culture: The Slave Narrative and the City-Mysteries Novel," *African American Review*, 40, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 493-506; and Michael Denning, *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working Class Culture*.

¹³⁹ See Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, 44. As Roediger suggests, the language of labor and class in the U.S. developed with the workers' full consciousness not only of the "dream of a republic of small producers but also against the nightmare of chattel slavery" (44).

¹⁴⁰ "Bootblack." Philip Livingston (1716-1778) signed the Declaration of Independence; Federalist, Robert R. Livingston (1747-1813) served as Chancellor of the council of Revision in the New York state legislature as the state assembly debated the terms of slave emancipation. Livingston vetoed a version of gradual emancipation that limited black citizenship rights (particularly voting), arguing that they could not be abridged based on race (Malone 28). Livingston also negotiated the Louisiana Purchase in 1803; and Edward Livingston (1764-1836) served in the House of Representatives, in the Senate, and as secretary of state (Stauffer 236-237n22).

¹⁴¹ Of the narrative Stauffer writes, “It is a classic tale of self-making, which McCune Smith sees as a powerful antidote to racism and caste” (*Collected Works* 195). See also Melish, 653.

¹⁴² See Harris, *Shadow*, 97-98.

¹⁴³ See also my discussion of Jones and Allen’s orientation to the market in Chapter 2.

¹⁴⁴ “Bootblack”

¹⁴⁵ “Bootblack”

¹⁴⁶ Jefferson, *Notes*, 291.

¹⁴⁷ See Reid-Pharr’s introduction to *The Garies and Their Friends* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), which describes such domestic spaces as “the center of black political life, the place at which community is formed and resistance is mounted” (xi-xii). See also Peterson’s discussion of the economics of marginality and Lang’s discussion of *Garies* in *Syntax of Class*, 42-58. In Communipaw’s reading, maintaining the home or the family as the central economic unit does not necessarily reinforce patriarchy as such—Smith’s own history and his work in institutions like the Orphan’s asylum gave him an appreciation for a variety of “family” structures (my later discussion of the Washerwoman likewise disrupts this narrative). See Harris, *Shadow*, 157-168.

¹⁴⁸ “Bootblack”

¹⁴⁹ See Harris 170-172, Litwack 214-246, and Pease and Pease 68-93. With “The Washerwoman,” Communipaw explores a more sensitive subject, the single black mother—sensitive because single working women were often viewed as promiscuous, add to that blackness and a light-skinned child—a ready-made fallen-woman narrative. Communipaw, however, offers her narrative as a work in progress. Having a child is not the end, and neither is marriage as in the Romance tradition. Rather, the end for the washerwoman is earning enough money to purchase her sisters’ freedom, and this departure, like the news-vender’s post-slavery narrative speaks to a continuum between slavery and freedom that white antislavery tended to neglect.

¹⁵⁰ Smith’s “Heads,” particularly “The Washerwoman” sketch, contributes to what Xiomara Santamarina has analyzed as “working womanhood,” nineteenth-century narratives that foregrounded the significance of “self-supporting labor to [black women’s] gendered and raced subjectivity” and “invoked republican rights rhetoric that emphasized the independence-producing, or character-building, potential of their wage labor” such that the characteristics originally signaling the black women’s heterodoxy, translate into heroism. See Santamarina, *Belabored Professions: Narratives of African American Working Womanhood* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), x, 10.

¹⁵¹ Delany’s particularly harsh criticism that the preponderance of black women making a living as washerwomen indicates that “we are all a degraded, miserable people, inferior to any other people as a whole, on the face of the globe” may have inspired Communipaw’s sketch even more than Ethiop’s articles. Delany, *Condition* (1852), 199.

¹⁵² “Bootblack”

¹⁵³ “Bootblack.”

¹⁵⁴ “Bootblack.”

¹⁵⁵ “The Bootblack.” Here, Smith is no doubt referencing one of the New Yorker’s who took advantage of the land offered by Gerrit Smith. Unfortunately, as Harris reports, the reality was not quite as optimistic as Smith’s tone. One “shoemaker,” named James Henderson, and his family Harris notes, “attempted to make a living on Essex County land they had received from Gerrit Smith,” but “when James froze to death in the forest in 1851,” his family was forced to return to the city, his six children placed in the Colored Orphan Asylum for six years until his widow could “retrieve them.” See Harris, *Shadow*, 278.

¹⁵⁶ *Report* (1848), 13, 6.

¹⁵⁷ Italics original C., 15 April 1852.

¹⁵⁸ As if echoing and revising Emerson’s thoughts on labor in “The American Scholar,” in which he argues that in discovering the “true dignity of his ministry,” a man connects himself with the One Man, and thus finds independence and self-actualization (53-54), Communipaw’s bootblack creates his own status. As Mullins suggests: “For such persons, the pursuit of ‘uplift’ and ‘respectability’ was usually not possible to any meaningful extent, leaving them with two options: either make the best of a marginal social position and menial labor, or take some extreme form of action” (78).

¹⁵⁹ Like Wilentz’s artisans, the bootblack in some ways stands against the mechanization of work. He *is* a craftsman, whose art provides a critique of more “industrial” developments like patent leather that fail to hold up. (“Bootblack”). Yet, bootblacking was still viewed as unskilled, casual labor. So while Communipaw’s narrative works through and perhaps builds on the developments Wilentz’s describes, it also represents a shifting labor dynamic in the sense that Communipaw’s independent laborer, his artisan brings the craft to the labor. Rather than

aspire to jobs associated with the middle class—a developing white middle class—Communiapaw finds the a black middle class traveling down a different, divergent path. A path that may not enjoy the current growth of wealth, but that will survive the current stage of economic development “at a less expense of moral excellence...to prove the human to be *one brotherhood*” (C., 26 February 1852).

¹⁶⁰ Even as Ethiop, Delany, and others offer representative men as examples of black potential, these texts also risk individualizing them so much that their political purpose as symbols for the group gets undercut. Communiapaw might suggest that the link between the “hero” and the community that Andrews notes in *Blake* is disrupted as soon as the focus shifts from the hero’s position as representative of a type to his difference and separation from the group.

This strategy contrasts to the well-documented narrative of what Tavia Nyong’o has productively theorized as the “black first” in texts like William Wells Brown’s encyclopedic *The Black Man, His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements* (1863), Delany’s biographies of successful black men in *Condition*, or the iconography of Crispus Attucks. As Nyong’o explains following David Theo Goldberg and Paul Gilroy, the black first functioned “potentially but not automatically...as an antinomian counter-culture to modernity,” carrying the tension of potentially “tending towards a reaffirmation of American culture, and” simultaneously “acting as a radical critique of the idea of culture itself” (50). The danger in the black first is a kind of “representational exceptionalism” haunts “the black first, ensuring that the only alternatives seem to be for black achievement to go unnoticed or to be condescended to” (48). It is this danger that I believe Communiapaw’s “Heads” attempts to circumvent. See Tavia Amolo Ochieng’ Nyong’o, *Uncommon Memory: The Performance of Amalgamation in Early Black Political Culture*. Ph.D. diss., Yale University (2004), 36-72.

¹⁶¹ “Bootblack”

¹⁶² “The Bootblack.” This image completely upends Child’s description of the beggar seated in front of the slave-trader’s home and likewise tempers Ethiop’s criticism of the lack of seriousness among the black population in the decades following emancipation.

¹⁶³ “The Black News-Vender.”

¹⁶⁴ “The Black News-Vender.”

¹⁶⁵ Goodman, 1; Paine, *Common Sense, Rights of Man, and other Essential Writings*, 283-284.

As the subtle allusion to Psalm 84:10 suggests, the post of door-keeper to the Republic of Letters is preferable to a leading position, perhaps as an aristocrat, in “the tents of wickedness,” or, in this case, a corrupt state built on economics of enslavement. Psalm 84:10 reads: “For a day in Your courts *is* better than a thousand./I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God/Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.”

¹⁶⁶ Smith, “Dr. Smith’s Journal,” *CA* 2 December 1837; *Works* 12. This “transformative impulse,” writes Goodman, “is the constructive result of this critical position” of betweenness (2). The Republic of Letters “is an image of the nation in which blacks are neither heroes nor villains but humans—complicated men and women struggling to survive in a retrograde society that has rejected them. McCune Smith’s characters define themselves not so much in terms of race, class, and gender, but in terms of their work, which is the key to their character... work brings autonomy, and there is no essential difference between man and woman, black and white, rich and poor” (Stauffer 188). This space, however, was not completely egalitarian. Rather, historically it was strongly gendered male and assumed a level of literacy and philosophical sophistication that only a small percentage of the population could obtain.

¹⁶⁷ “The Whitewasher.”

¹⁶⁸ “The Whitewasher.” This vision of the whitewasher further confirms Smith’s claims in “Civilization” that “the people...are the source of intellectual as well as political power; they are not only bones and sinew, but also the heart and brain of a nation” (*AAM*, 8; *Collected Works*, 251).

¹⁶⁹ Introduction to *My Bondage and My Freedom* in Douglass Autobiographies, 132.

¹⁷⁰ This adaptability is in part a function of the periodical medium through which Ethiop and Communiapaw Wrote. As Todd Vogel has argued, the ephemeral quality of the press “made the writers nimble. They could plunge into the public conversation and get their views out immediately” (“Introduction” 2). See also Ernest, *Liberation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 279.

¹⁷¹ E., 13 May 1852.

¹⁷² Here, I’m working from Lukács differentiation between description, which “contemporizes everything” and narration, “recounts the past” (5). Communiapaw, in contrast, narrates a past, that, as I will discuss in a moment, reveals a kind of deception in Ethiop’s present. Benedict Anderson describes this contemporaneous nature of the newspaper as a bedrock of imagined community. Indeed, Ethiop’s descriptions connect all of Douglass’s readers (imagined for him as black) as a part of a collective community sharing a concern for its development. New York

operates as the center of this community, or more like its epicenter, the space from whence all of its major trends and tendencies radiate and can be observed. See Georg Lukacs, "Narrate or Describe," in *Writer and Critic*, trans. Arthur D. Kahn (New York: Grosset, 1970), 130; and Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006), 63.

¹⁷³ E., 13 May 1852. Ethiop was probably referring to William Morris, "rector of Trinity School" who acted St. Philip's "officiating minister" from 1849 to 1860, but was never officially named "rector." As Craig D. Townsend's history of black Episcopalians in New York city explains, all of the men filling the position after Peter Williams through 1860 "were white," and while, Townsend explains, Morris was "dedicated to St. Philip's and enormously helpful to the parish both as pastors and as allies in the effort to gain admission to the convention," they were only part-time and the parish, contra Ethiop's caricature, "wanted a black priest" (152). See Townsend, *Faith in Their Own Color: Black Episcopalians in Antebellum New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 151-152.

¹⁷⁴ E., 13 May 1852.

¹⁷⁵ E., 13 May 1852.

¹⁷⁶ Downing, "St. Philip's Church and the Fugitive Slave Law," *Frederick Douglass's Paper*, 29 April 1852.

¹⁷⁷ "St. Philip's" Note about Preston Case

¹⁷⁸ "St. Philip's" and E., 13 May 1852.

¹⁷⁹ References to Cromwell recur in *Douglass's Paper* and abolitionist rhetoric, usually mentioned next to revolutionary leaders like George Washington for his "just severity." See *Frederick Douglass's Paper*, 9 October 1851.

¹⁸⁰ E., 8 April 1852.

¹⁸¹ E., 8 April 1852.

¹⁸² As Burns has revealed, Frankenstein became a common image for the destructive, frightening, or otherwise abject other. See Burns, *Painting in the Dark*, 114.

¹⁸³ E., 8 April 1852.

¹⁸⁴ C., 12 February 1852.

¹⁸⁵ Harris, *Shadow* 266.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 266.

¹⁸⁷ Add bit about rich black folk like smith not employing or patronizing or catering to other black folk?

¹⁸⁸ See Sklansky, 4.

¹⁸⁹ Cite/Explain

¹⁹⁰ See, for instance, Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class*; Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*; Glickstein, *American Exceptionalism*; Bromell, *By the Sweat of the Brow*; and Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*. As the 1848 convention predicted, Irish immigrants pushed many black New Yorkers out of those occupations forming the backbone of Communipaw's "Heads," eliminating a once stable niche in the labor market. See Harris, 264-265.

¹⁹¹ See for instance, Paul D. Moreno's discussion of black activists' relation to white unions and the founding of the Colored National Labor Union in 1869 in *Black Americans and Organized Labor: A New History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 8-81, especially, his discussion of the competing labor theories of value informing white union and abolitionist/Republican notions of free labor. Where the former emphasized economic independence and the artisan republicanism from earlier in the century, the latter emphasized individual ownership of the self and labor (11-12, 23-26).

¹⁹² See Litwack, 164-168.

¹⁹³ Many black activists as well as other reformers were advocating migration out of urban centers in favor of subsistence (and later market-driven) farming as a path towards elevation. Mary Ann Shadd Cary, for instance, writes to *North Star* "that [the black population] should direct [their] attention more to the farming interest than hitherto..." because, she argues, "the estimation in which we would be held in power, would be quite different, were we producers, and not merely, as now, consumers" (32). But the rural life was also attractive for its perceived moral advantages. Smith himself suggested the country as preferable to the city as a part of a Committee of Three in a report to the 1851 Convention of Colored Citizens in Rochester, NY, titled "Report on the Social Condition of the People of Color Around New York City, and on The Best Means of Ameliorating the Same." The report was published in Douglass's *North Star* and Greeley's *New York Daily Tribune*. All quotes here come from the *North Star* version. Smith reports, "all city life is, after all, a kind of hot-house forcing of human beings" that forces black men to work "as servants, porters, &c." with the result that their "manhood is, in a measure, demeaned, lowered, kept down" ("Meeting of the Colored People of New York"). The committee's solution: "leave the city, its

seductions, its oppressions and baleful atmosphere, and seek to expand our elbows, our lungs and our energies in the free air of the rural districts” (“Meeting”).

The drop in New York City’s black population began in the 1840s. Harris notes that the city’s population dropped by “over 2,500” between 1840 and 1850 and by fifteen percent in the five years following passage of the Fugitive Slave Law. This decline, however, did not include Ethiop’s Brooklyn, which saw a rise in population over the same time, in part because some migrating from New York went only that far. This demographic shift account, in part, for Ethiop’s optimism. Recall that he is *Frederick Douglass’s Paper’s* “Brooklyn Correspondent” and claims Brooklyn as his home. See Harris, *Shadow*, 275-278.

¹⁹⁴ See Singh, 46-47; and William J. Moses, *Creative Conflict in African American Thought: Frederick Douglass, Alexander Crummell, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Marcus Garvey* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 48.

CHAPTER V

CRITICAL CITIZENSHIP IN THE *ANGLO-AFRICAN MAGAZINE*, 1859-1860

1. Introduction

In a February 1860 article for the *Anglo-African Magazine*, William J. Wilson, writing as Ethiop, asks, “*what for the best good of all shall we do with the White people?*”¹ Laced with sarcasm, Ethiop’s essay invites readers to rethink U.S. history as a narrative of white duplicity and avarice that ultimately threatens projects of republican citizenship:

Twice have they quarreled with, stripped off, and fought the mother who gave them origin and nursed them till they were grown; and once have they most unmercifully beaten their weaker and more pacific neighbor; and then despoiled him of a large portion of his lands, and are now tormented with longing after the balance.

If we go back to an earlier page in their history, we find them stealing and appropriating what? Why, men, women and children from abroad and consigning them to a perpetual bondage...²

Viewing the sordid history of familial violence (the American Revolution and War of 1812), un-neighborliness (the U.S.-Mexican War), and theft in property (American Indian land) and persons, Ethiop concludes that white Americans are “no nearer the solution of the problem” of self-government “than they were at the commencement of their career.”³ Where the Declaration of Independence and Constitution promised a republican form of government, Ethiop finds “*a long continued, extensive, and almost complete system of wrong-doing.*”⁴ Following *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, even the Judicial Branch seems to have “reverse[d] the very principle of law,” giving “wrong, injustice and inhumanity the benefit of the doubt” over “right...justice...[and] humanity.”⁵ Something has gone equally awry with civic judgment. The “recent death struggle” in Kansas suggests that “those honest and frank differences of opinion that beget and strengthen

sound opinion,” the critical debate essential to participatory politics, have been replaced by “low petty captiousness and cowardly vindictiveness.”⁶ As a result, the land of “*E Pluribus Unim*,” a land intended to cultivate equality amongst diversity, has become instead a land of “prejudices, bitter hates, fierce strifes, dissensions, oppressions, and frauds.”⁷ Events in the 1850s had given Ethiop little faith that white Americans could acquire the critical sensibilities needed to achieve the republican ideals articulated in the nation’s founding documents. They must either physically withdraw from the U.S.—an idea that strikes him as equally “wrong in conception” as black removal—or stop being “white” altogether.⁸

Ethiop’s question—“What then shall we Anglo-Africans do with” white people?—, at once facetious and at the same time deadly serious, opens space for a more pressing intellectual project: what to do about a particular avaricious attitude and set of framing narratives that close off U.S. citizenship to whites only.⁹ Using Ethiop’s questioning as a guide, this chapter examines models of critical citizenship—practices that press against and through the boundaries of citizenship—in the *Anglo-African Magazine (AAM)*. As Anna Secor notes, “The discourses and practices of citizenship can be seen as founding a . . . proprietary, circumscribed space of rationalization” that separates the citizen from the stranger.¹⁰ Against and in tension with this separation, the *AAM* mobilizes an intellectual project that produces a version of the permeable civic space theorized in Jones and Allen’s *Narrative*. By assuming the imperative and the ability of “Anglo-Africans” to “do” something with white Americans, contributors to the *AAM* take critical stance that not only interrogates the content of U.S. citizenship and its histories, but more importantly challenges the closure of citizenship and critique itself through national fantasies of white superiority.¹¹

Wilson, in particular, uses his “Afric-American Picture Gallery” series, appearing in the *AAM* from February to October 1859, to map out the possibilities and problems of critical citizenship as a challenge to modes of civic memory and institutional framing. Wilson moves readers through spaces of alternate ordering, from a picture gallery to a maroon society, that actuate a critical stance against utopian projections of national wholeness, white or otherwise, and the closures of citizenship such projections enable. The critical citizen becomes an agent of consciousness raising, in constant circulation, expanding the realm of possibility of the civic imaginary in a way that shifts the focus of citizenship from creating an acceptable or respectable blackness to contesting frameworks of citizenship and the kinds of civic judgment that authorize such distinctions.¹²

2. Matters of Taste and Law: A Critique of National Judgment

Events during the 1850s, from the Compromise of 1850 to the 1858 Lincoln-Douglas debates, provide flashpoints indexing the decline in civic judgment Ethiop notes in 1859. Each moment—the Kansas Nebraska Act, Anthony Burns’s rendition, *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, and the Lincoln-Douglas debates—represents a closure of the sensible, what could be thought, seen or heard, about citizenship. Frederick Douglass registers this closure in 1854 while speaking on the Kansas-Nebraska Act in Chicago, IL, linking the political climate to an increased deployment of the term “white” as the political center of gravity. “The word white,” Douglass contends, “is a modern term in the legislation of this country,” a symptom of “our national degeneracy” that installs a “limitation of humanity and human rights” not present at the drafting of the 1787 Constitution.¹³ As a result, “every inch of ground occupied by the colored man in this country,” Douglass tells his audience, was “sternly disputed” from the “ballot box” to the “altar.”¹⁴

Politics before and during the 1840s, in Douglass's view, removed political rights from all but a small percentage of black citizens through constitutional debate and popular vote; politics in many new territories and states after the 1840s used "white" or the concept of popular sovereignty to remove the question of black political equality altogether.

While Douglass overlooks earlier federal legislation like the 1790 Naturalization Law that explicitly restricted naturalization to white men and the history of state-level disenfranchisement I cover in Chapter 3, his claim points to a larger trend within U.S. politics during the 1850s. Douglass's sense of intrusiveness was not just because of Illinois's and other states' Black Codes, which penalized black citizens who attempted to move into the state as well as those who aided them.¹⁵ Rather, the version of popular sovereignty the Kansas-Nebraska Act authorized allowed citizens within a state to decide whether to allow or disallow slavery, essentially authorizing them to legislate black humanity.¹⁶ As historian Nicole Etcheson suggests, black settlers were "caught between two hostile forces": one side sought to secure the territories for white free labor, the other for slaveholding, but few envisioned black citizens sharing in that process.¹⁷ Instead, they were a problem the nation had to "do something" about. Even among those opposed to the Kansas-Nebraska act because they saw slavery as a moral question beyond the purview of legislation, attitudes towards black people, free and enslaved, ranged from apathy to outright hostility, but proved in practice, if not always in law, that the U.S. "Government was established on the white basis," as Stephen A. Douglas later declared. People of color might share in that government, but only through white consent.¹⁸ The "crisis" in Kansas was increasingly a crisis in the maintenance of a putatively white union and the rights of white people, whether as laborers or as property holders, within that union.

The problem, however, was not confined to the new states and territories at the center of the conflict over slavery. Days after Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Anthony Burns, a fugitive slave living in Boston, was returned to slavery.¹⁹ As per the Fugitive Slave Act, a federal commissioner tried Burns without a jury. Despite fiery vigilance committee meetings, an attempted rescue, and attempts to raise the \$1200 needed to purchase Burns's freedom, Burns was escorted to Boston Harbor on June 2, 1854, by what was then, according to history Gordon S. Baker, "America's largest show of military force in peacetime" with official approval from President Pierce.²⁰ "Thousand upon thousands of people," one observer noted, crowded buildings lining Burns's route to "gaze upon [the] *strange spectacle*."²¹ Boston Mayor, Jerome V. C. Smith, and others hailed the event as a triumph of law and order and a necessary measure for the preservation of the Union, while most white abolitionists seemed long on fiery rhetoric, but short on action. All in all, Burns's return to slavery offered a microcosm of Northern sentiment. The nation was not heading inexorably towards civil war. Instead, many Northerners were attempting to maintain a delicate balance: they bemoaned the spread of slavery suggested in the Kansas-Nebraska Act, repudiated enslavement and the Fugitive Slave Act on principle, but shied away from direct action on behalf of actual fugitives and black citizens, especially when such actions could be seen as a disturbance of the peace.

Contemporary critics like Henry David Thoreau read events in 1854 as indicative of the degeneration of national judgment or the nation's critical sense. The failed attempt at violent rescue during Burns's trial and the apparent festive atmosphere around his rendition led Thoreau to comment on the public's shallow "taste" and the constraints that the public's concern with the preservation of past revolutions and the wholeness of the union placed on justice. Popular opinion or "Fame," Thoreau laments in "Slavery in Massachusetts":

does not finely discriminate, but coarsely hurrahs. She considers not the simple heroism of an action, but only as it is connected with its apparent consequences. She praises till she is hoarse the easy exploit of the Boston tea party, but will be comparatively silent about the braver and more disinterestedly heroic attack on the Boston Court-House, simply because it was unsuccessful!²²

The tea party receives praise because it fit easily within a story of liberty achieved without a direct call to action in the present. Bostonians could claim proclaim the revolution complete, the union perfected, and their own role as its conservators. Yet, preserving the Union by way of appeasing Southern slaveholders had evacuated republican institutions of the critical element that made them republican: a majority with the taste for the “sweet” music of justice and the willingness to act on that recognition. Thoreau reflects, “the judge still sits grinding at his organ, but it yields no music, and we hear only the sound of the handle. He believes that all the music resides in the handle, and the crowd toss him their coppers the same as before.”²³ Rather than listen for the sound of justice or injustice, citizens listen for and applaud the hollow sounds of the instrument itself. In their preoccupation with a revolutionary past and maintaining the sanctity of the union—a vision that framed self-government as a recognition of property rights over human rights or Massachusetts law—judges, legislators, and the public had mistaken the institutions that facilitate self-government for actual self-government. Keeping the instrument intact, keeping the vision of national wholeness alive, was sufficient.

If Thoreau took the state of public discourse as an opportunity to muse on the shallowness of civic taste, Douglass read Burns’s rendition and the spectacle surrounding it as proof that the nation’s critical sense had been inverted: “How sweet to the ear and heart of every true American are the shrieks of Anthony Burns, as the American eagle sends his remorseless beak and bloody talons into him!! How grateful to the taste and pleasant to the eye, is the warm blood of the sable fugitive.”²⁴ The image of a Promethean Burns, suggestive of both gothic

horror and revolutionary potential, becomes a symbol of national beauty, but not as a call to resistance in defense of human rights. Instead, white Americans celebrate the punishment of one who would steal (himself) from them. Douglass's "true American" hears the "discord" of injustice, not as discord at all, but rather as sweet music. That is, where Thoreau assumes a transcendent link between beauty and justice, Douglass here sees beauty as contingent on popular response, and a system, an instrument, working all too well to cater to and perhaps invite such responses. Douglass's play on "taste" makes the image all the more macabre, slipping between the flavor of Burns's blood in the eagle's beak and the pleasure the image invokes in viewers. Here, Douglass shows more similarities to the emigration movement he otherwise opposed, foreshadowing his own consideration of Haiti in the early 1860s.²⁵ As delegates to the 1854 National Emigration Convention posit:

all the Conventions heretofore held by the whites in this country, of whatever political pretensions... have thrown themselves upon the declaration: 'To sustain the Constitution as our forefathers *understood* it, and the *Union as they formed it*; all of which plainly and boldly imply, unrestricted liberty to whites, and the right to hold blacks in slavery and degradation.

In both readings, it's not that the public failed to discern the deeper beauty of attempts to free Burns, as Thoreau suggests, but rather that they found beauty in the system that saw him returned to slavery. Maintaining the wholeness of this system took precedence over human rights and, in the 1854 Convention's reading, not only authorized, but also required enslavement and oppression.

The rise of an explicitly anti-slavery Republican party in the mid-to-late 1850s and denunciations of *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857) would seem to belie Douglass's critique of national judgment and the convention's interpretation of white politics, at least in the North. Justices Benjamin R. Curtis's and John McLean's dissenting opinions, as well as newspaper

editorials, were quick to point out the license Justice Roger B. Taney's opinion took with the history of black citizenship, and the dangerous diversion the lower and higher court rulings took from prior precedence.²⁶ Taney famously ignored the history of black political and military involvement to argue that, when the Constitution was framed, people of African descent "had for more than a century before been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations; and so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect."²⁷ In dissent, McLean noted that several states had granted "persons of color" voting rights and, by logical extension and tradition, had "recognized them as citizens.... in the slave as well as the free States."²⁸ Further, the making of "citizens of all grades, combinations, and colors" through the "late treaty with Mexico" at the conclusion of the U.S.-Mexican War suggested that even subsequent color-based restrictions passed by the states did not negate the *potential* for any "freemen" to be Federal citizens.²⁹

McLean's dissent, however, also revealed how remonstrances against Taney's opinion cut both ways, defending black citizenship while denigrating black citizens as potentially distasteful, confirming Douglass and others' analyses.³⁰ Even as he affirms black citizenship and the immorality of slavery, McLean also admits that the government was "not made especially for the colored race" (an echo of Stephen A. Douglas's "this Government was established on the white basis").³¹ For McLean, the history of black political participation and traditions of birthright citizenship guaranteed the recognition of black citizenship in law. Whether a "colored citizen" would necessarily be an "agreeable member of society," however, "is more a matter of taste than of law."³² Rather than challenge the notion that portions of the citizenry could be disagreeable—that is, rather than challenge the public taste—and its potential effects, McLean

concludes that given the history of U.S. citizenship, “it must be admitted that we have not been very fastidious.”³³

By distinguishing between taste and law, McLean was attempting to forestall how the Court’s decision, especially Taney’s notion of “dual citizenship,” negated both the restrictions on slavery outlined in the Missouri Compromise and Federal power over citizenship more broadly.³⁴ Yet, how McLean deployed the separation also elided how public taste or consent, especially given new instantiations of popular sovereignty and the response to Burns’s rendition, created law and affected citizenship in practice. By suggesting the potential distastefulness of “colored citizens,” McLean tells a story that allows for a distinction between them and white citizens, a difference that, if it didn’t touch citizenship in terms of Federal law (which it did), nevertheless tacitly situated black citizens as somehow outside the consent-giving or sovereign “we” who judged such matters. In so doing, McLean affirms Douglass’s sense that, in the public imaginary and in political practice, black citizens had been “deemed...intruder[s]” despite constitutional rights suggesting the contrary.³⁵

The campaign discourse of the late 1850s, especially in Abraham Lincoln’s negotiation between Constitutional rights and “political and social equality” during his 1858 debates with Stephen A. Douglas, demonstrates the political consequences of McLean’s framing.³⁶ Lincoln opens the crucial fourth debate with Douglas playing the question of racial equality for humor: “While I was at the hotel today,” he begins, “an elderly gentleman called upon me to know whether I was really in favor of producing a perfect equality between negroes and white people.”³⁷ Perfect equality here invokes three pillars of white fear: “making voters or jurors of negroes... qualifying them to hold office,” and allowing them to “intermarry with white people.”³⁸ After audience laughter at the absurdity of the question, Lincoln articulates the

position he holds throughout the debates, “I have no purpose to introduce political and social equality between the white and black races,” to continued applause. Drawing on popular racial-science, Lincoln concludes:

there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race.³⁹

Whether or not Lincoln’s comments reflected his personal philosophy is less important here than how he deploys the rhetoric of racial difference to elicit the audience’s response. While he consistently critiqued Douglas’s notion of popular sovereignty and Justice Taney’s *Dred Scott* opinion as they relate to the potential spread of slavery, Lincoln, similar to McLean, does so in a way that reaffirms the civic tastes that underwrite them. He asserts the right of black citizens to equal protection under the law—in Lincoln’s terms, “the right to life, liberty and, the pursuit of happiness” and “the right to eat the bread, without the leave of anybody else, which his own hand earns”—, but only after establishing his support for white supremacy. “Not want[ing] a negro woman for a slave,” Lincoln quips to “cheers and laughter,” does not mean “want[ing] her for a wife.”⁴⁰ The question of racial equality is literally laughable.

Lincoln’s use of free labor rhetoric in support of black natural rights receives white applause, but only within this framework: 1) physical differences exist and necessitate hierarchy; 2) white superiority within this hierarchy must be asserted and defended; and 3) advocacy for black rights so long as such advocacy does not disturb the first two assumptions.⁴¹ While black citizens had basic rights under the law, then, those laws were not, to return to McLean, “made especially for them.”⁴² More, the social and political landscape needed to be structured so as to maintain inequalities between white and black citizens for the protection of

white interests. The notion of racial competition for “position” masks how the operations of state and social power created and enforced these very inequalities. Rather than the agents of racial oppression through positive law and social and economic practice, white citizens become potential victims. Political, social, and economic differences among white citizens become subordinate under not only the sense of racial accomplishment, as I have suggested in my analyses of voting and economic citizenship, but also the sense of collective fear.

Orators like Lincoln and Douglas circulated and cultivated (whether intentionally or not) a taste for white supremacist themes as shorthand for national unity.⁴³ Through his debates speeches, Lincoln mobilized what S.S.N., writing for the *AAM* in 1859, identifies as “a fantasia on some national melody,” a “romance” created with “poetic license used with the facts of history” for audience appeal. “Almost every American writer or speaker, who would gain applause for himself, or a good hearing from his audience,” S.S.N. explains,

is sure, Paganini-like, to play upon this one string... Now the Thema [sic] is “Anglo-Saxon Energy,”—(invading Mexico, perhaps), now, “Anglo-Saxon Enterprize,”—(re-opening the Slave trade!), then “Anglo-Saxon Piety,” (with holding bibles from Slaves, and hating negroes generally!)... variations on the martial, religious, mechanical and general superiority of the great Yankee nation.⁴⁴

Orators and artists travel across the country (physically and in print) to provide virtuoso performances before on themes following romantic theories of racial destiny: the notion that each “race” or people had a unique character and historical trajectory and that “Anglo-Saxon” destiny was superior to all others. The “romance,” with “fulsome laudations of what they call ‘THE GREAT AGLO-SAXON RACE,’” sutures “the wounds they themselves inflict on the ‘Apostate American People,’” wounds Ethiop notes as a history of violence and theft in “What Shall We Do?”⁴⁵ The audience, in turn, enables and authorizes artists to operate within a fixed thematic range, lending themselves as “stops to an organ, to be played upon, as the performers conclude

with a grand Fugue movement, on ‘Anglo-Saxon blood.’”⁴⁶ The formal structure of the fugue—a contrapuntal repetition on a single theme—ensures that each voice, no matter how “tonally” different, and each subject, no matter how ostensibly divisive, repeats the central theme: superiority of “Anglo-Saxon blood.”⁴⁷ While, as S.S.N. notes, this structure occurs in multiple forms—speeches, treatises, visual arts, etc.—the fugue metaphor gets to the heart of the managed polyphony that creates a consensus of white nationalism and through which peoples of European descent, whether Angle, Saxon, French, or German, could be “washed and become regenerated” as white Americans, so long as they, like Lincoln, stuck to the theme.

The collective performance ultimately frames citizenship in a utopian promise of white wholeness: individual citizens are not only distilled from historical subjects, but, as Thoreau’s reading of Massachusetts citizens reveals, look back to create a historical frame suitable to their new collective “Anglo-Saxon” identity.⁴⁸ The performance offers a sense of empowerment to those whose identities the framing manages (e.g. those who applauded Lincoln or Douglass’s Promethean Burns), but expels as dangerous and unpalatable those whose identities it cannot manage, refuses to acknowledge, or exorcises in the framing process. The resulting frame does not necessarily negate critique as such (Ethiop describes a public contentious to the point of dissolution, and the Lincoln Douglas debates were quire heated); rather, it permits only “honesty and truth...of a certain character,” policing “truth” in a way that inhibits the critical sense: the capacity to resist, poke holes in, or see beyond what the utopian promise, the circular fugue structure, makes sensible.⁴⁹

3. Reading Anglo-African Wise: The Anglo-African Magazine's Critical Project

And yet, those people excised from the national imaginary do not go away. As Judith Butler points out, the excluded always return to haunt the space of politics that excluded them. Such haunting, she continues, “become[s] politically effective precisely in so far as the return of the excluded forces an expansion and rearticulation of the basic premises of democracy itself.”⁵⁰ Ethiop’s insistence on doing something with white people is a reassertion of agency over the framing of citizenship, wresting control of the narrative from white hands. Douglass, too, reasserts himself, claiming his intrusiveness as a right and practice of citizenship rather than a violation of it. The editors and contributors to the *AAM* were dedicated to forcing such an expansion and rearticulating of the premises of citizenship, to reopening its structure through cultivating a different kind of critical sensibility with a “taste” for unmanaged, participatory plurality. The *AAM*, in form and content, suggests a model of citizenship as a self-reflexive, dialectical process of becoming. While from the position Douglass’s “true Americans” this project haunts the promise of national wholeness, from the perspective the critical citizen, the promise of wholeness itself becomes the object of exorcism.

Longtime newspaperman Thomas Hamilton founded the *Anglo-African Magazine* in 1859 as an outlet for “the twelve millions of blacks in the United States...to assert and maintain their rank as men among men...[to] speak for themselves.”⁵¹ “No outside tongue,” proclaims Hamilton’s “Apology,” “however gifted with eloquence, can tell their story; no outside eye, however penetrating, can see their wants.”⁵² Hamilton’s mission statement echoes similar proclamations in black periodicals from the first edition of *Freedom’s Journal* (1827), which opened with “We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us.”⁵³ And Hamilton would have been well versed in this tradition and the art of publishing from his work

on anti-slavery papers like *Colored American*, the *Mirror of Liberty* and the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*.⁵⁴ Where his predecessors gave the most space to abolitionist articles and immediate events, however, Hamilton devoted most of the *AAM* to scholarship and to “uphold[ing] and encourag[ing] the now depressed hopes of the thinking black men, in the United States.”⁵⁵ The magazine ran for sixteen issues from January 1859 to April 1860 with a subscription base of about 500.⁵⁶ The *AAM* opens with an image and biography of Alexander Dumas, reproduces sheet music and lyrics from A. J. R. Connor’s “My Cherished Hope, my Fondest Dream”; offers scholarly essays like the four-part “Statistical View of the Colored Population of the United States” and William C. Nell’s “Colored American Patriots”; and publishes serialized fiction like Martin R. Delany’s *Blake*.⁵⁷

The *AAM*’s most striking feature is its diversity: the monthly bursts at the seams with contending discourses, philosophies, and political sensibilities. Hamilton, for instance explicitly opposes black emigration: it cannot “aid our cause to found an empire in Yoruba,” he argues, “they might as well have built a batter at Gibraltar to destroy Sevastopol.”⁵⁸ Yet, the *AAM* also prints articles offering a range of views, from J. Holland Townsend’s “Our Duty in the Conflict,” which promotes fighting for “political equality of the races in this country,” to James T. Holly’s six-part “Thoughts on Hayti,” which calls on the “colored people of the” U.S. to help develop Haiti as “the most advanced negro nationality,” capable of defending the rights of African descended peoples around the world.⁵⁹ When Hamilton argues in his “Apology,” “The negro is something more than mere endurance; he is a force,” he *is* relying on a construction of racial destiny similar to the “Anglo-Saxon” romance S.S.N. critiques. His larger project, however, invokes “the negro” as the “force” of ideas or the critical method demonstrated in subsequent articles.⁶⁰ The articles are unified, not by their conformity to a single construction of blackness

or black destiny, but rather in their attitude towards historical memory, and commitment to political self-determination.

The neologistic “Anglo-African” invokes less a racial-political group and more a critical method centering on the confluence of ideas and tensions the term “Anglo-African” invokes. In contrast to the “romance” S.S.N. outlines, with its fugue-like management of national identity and critical discourse, the *AAM*’s critical project offers a more democratic mode of reading—a participatory model of performance—that invites readers to take part in constructing the “meaning” of the “text.” Even as S.S.N. wonders at how “we have become by some mysterious process—’Anglo-Africans,’” he must admit with some chagrin that “the fact must be patent for are we not writing for an Anglo-African magazine?”⁶¹ Just as State Conventions’ “Proceedings” collected the differentiated voices and interests of delegates under its corporate authorship, the institutionally heteroglossic space of the *AAM* creates an imagined community of Anglo-Africans, fleshed-out, so to speak, through the collective efforts of its contributors.⁶² The unfixed nature of the neologism, James Clifton suggests, “forces [readers] to *construct* readings from a debris of historical and future possibilities.”⁶³ In the *AAM*, this “radical indeterminacy” initiated a collective and participatory project of building different, if not entirely new, idioms of citizenship and peoplehood as a direct assault on an “Anglo-Saxon” romance that attempted to codify a single white national subject. The “fact” of “Anglo-African-ness” is “patent,” not because “Anglo-African” is any more accurate identity than any other—writers use different terms (colored, black, Afric-American, African, etc.) and S.S.N. himself prefers to be simply “American”⁶⁴—; rather, the magazine and those contributing to and reading it create a community of “Anglo-Africans,” an imagined maroon community allied through an intellectual project that itself disturbs the narrative of a white or Anglo-American ascendancy.⁶⁵

As John Ernest and Heather Russell have argued, black writers were crafting ongoing projects of “liberation historiography” that countered the content of histories that limited their humanity and agency and called into question “the entire matrix of Historiography” and Literature.⁶⁶ Texts like the *AAM*, Ernest continues, were venues in which writers could “speak Anglo-African wise,” that is, they could “address the eternal by speaking historically—to give voice to principles sounded throughout history by people of various backgrounds” with an “understanding of race as a systemic construction” based on “successive and layered violations.”⁶⁷ It is this critical stance towards race that makes the text “Anglo-African.” Yet, the contributors to the *AAM* were also invested in cultivating a readership of citizens who could read “Anglo-African wise,” that is readers with the critical judgment by which to see around the corners of systems that maintained white supremacy. Reading Anglo-African wise, cultivating a taste for projects like the *AAM*, citizens would not only see Anthony Burns as a Promethean hero, but they would also be compelled to act on his behalf and in the spirit of his resistance.

4. The Critic and His Discontents: Washington’s Bones and the Corpus of U.S. Citizenship

William J. Wilson’s “Afric-American Picture Gallery” (AAPG) provides a useful case study of how the *AAM* postulates critical citizenship. Through the AAPG Wilson disrupts the national romance of whiteness, offering a perspective that could correct the faulty judgment variously cited by Thoreau, Douglass, and S.S.N. I am concerned here not so much with the content as with the critical attunement that Wilson models in his sketches and how Wilson uses Ethiop’s intellectual development to outline the problems of critical citizenship and to cultivate a critical stance that would allow Ethiop and his readers to get outside the consensus of myth, to see things differently.⁶⁸

The AAPG series ran in the *AAM* in seven installments, from February 1859 through October 1859, in which Ethiop writes sketched descriptions of at least 27 “pictures.”⁶⁹ In contrast to Wilson’s city-sketches for *Frederick Douglass’s Paper*, however, Ethiop functions less as Wilson’s print alter-ego and more as a dynamic character, the art critic at work, through whom Wilson develops the aesthetic sensibility, necessary not only for liberation of black citizens, but also for the maintenance of democratic citizenship more generally. By anchoring Ethiop’s sketches in a seemingly disordered array of images—imaginary or otherwise—Wilson develops Ethiop’s (and his readers’) taste for a conception of collective memory as a web of associations—some contradictory, some incriminated, some inspiring—suggesting that the proper attitude of citizen to national symbolic is the attitude of the critic to the work of art.

The AAPG is not so much about physical space, though Wilson remains committed to creating actual picture galleries and reading rooms, but rather the AAPG is a metaphorical articulation of a historical, cultural, and intellectual project of critical citizenship.⁷⁰ Like the articles and images that make up the *AAM*, the images populating the AAPG range from Phillis Wheatley and Toussaint L’Ouverture to the Underground Railroad and “Sunset in Abbeokuta” to George Washington and “The First and Last Colored Editor.” Picture galleries are ideal spaces for developing this critical positioning, because they allow patrons to encounter multiple seemingly discordant sites in “a single real place.”⁷¹ Visitors enter the gallery “on the south side” and almost immediately encounter “The Slave Ship,” a picture hanging “near the entrance” offering a “faithful” image, “even to every shrub, crag and nook,” of seventeenth-century Jamestown harbor. Featured prominently in the image are “the *slave ship*,” “Dutch-modeled and ugly, even hideous to look upon, as a slave-ship ought to be,” and “a group of emaciated *Africans*, heavily manacled, the first slaves that ever trod the American continent.”⁷² Visitors’

entrance into the Gallery, the Gallery's founding moment, contrasts sharply with images of the Puritans entering an untamed, dangerous wilderness or John Smith's struggle to conquer an unyielding landscape. The Europeans themselves bring with them the wild savagery of gothic America, symbolized not by the racialized, dark wilderness, but by the slave ship, "his Satanic Majesty...the devil" its "firm friend and companion."⁷³ The entire image, recalling J. M. W. Turner's "Slave Ship" (1840) and John Ruskin's description of it in *Modern Painter*, maintains the view of the ship "girded with condemnation," but without the suggestion of imminent punishment [figure 3].⁷⁴ The gallery calls upon patrons to see slavery as central, rather than peripheral, to the nation's history and Europeans as its gothic villains, not its victims.



Figure 3: Turner's "The Slave Ship," 1840.

Ethiop's sketches mix Wilson's previous project of guiding readers through cultural geographies with the conventions of catalogues from galleries like New York's Düsseldorf Gallery, Ruskin's *Modern Painter*, and articles about the state of "American Art" and art audiences in *The Illustrated Magazine of Art*. Surrounding Ethiop with history paintings in particular taps into the role exhibition halls, art unions, and galleries served in antebellum culture as popular entertainment and as pedagogical conduits for shaping civi identity and ethics.⁷⁵ Ethiop reflects on how these images form public judgment: "Pictures are teachings by example. From them we often derive our best lessons."⁷⁶ "A picture of a great man," Ethiop continues in an echo of contemporary thought, acts as a storehouse of collective memory that "calls up the whole history of his times," recalling past events, but also leading the spectator to "the philosophy of them."⁷⁷ These memories become "reimpressed" on the spectator's mind. They overlay the particularities of individual experience and difference with older impressions in a palimpsest that creates a common sense of origins, shared values, and the universal experience of the national subject and civilized humanity. In this way, the public space of the picture gallery offers a model of collective and participatory remembrance.⁷⁸

Yet, as S.S.N's reading of public oratory suggests, this collective memory can result in alienation and closure (for some), when a priori limitations are placed on the range of participants or the scope of what gets remembers, continually reproducing prefabricated "theme," instead of the dialectical movement between collective and particular Ethiop describes. In Wilson's framing of the sketch series, however, working through the gallery becomes a project of *critical* memory that installs critique as a normative function of reading history and acting in the present.⁷⁹ The art itself instills a self-reflexive ethos into the Gallery. In the same space as "The Slave Ship," the Gallery shifts readers' attention to "The First and the Last

Colored Editor,” a “small, but neat picture” hanging “on the north side of the gallery.”⁸⁰ In the painting “quite a young man” sits at a desk piled with copies of previous colored newspapers from *Freedom’s Journal* to *Frederick Douglass’s Paper*, reading the first editorial of the First Editor, who, “unperceived by the Last Editor, is looking intently over his shoulder.”⁸¹ Ethiop provides critical purchase for reading this folding of past and future in the visual image: “The scene is the linking together of our once scarcely hopeful past with the now brightest present.”⁸² The image places before visitors the past, present, and future of the “Afric-American” in a way that suggests a conversation between them, juxtaposing ostensibly incompatible sites of enslavement with sites of freedom, scenes from the distant past with scenes of a distant future. If Atlantic slavery erased intergenerational continuity, the image also suggests that future generations can find roots in the texts previous generations created and the “cultural grounding” those texts have to offer.⁸³

The Gallery lacks any discernable arrangement, the paintings “put up out of the way, many of them, than hung for any effect,” with large paintings next to small, oil next to watercolors, and sculptures interspersed.⁸⁴ Through images like “The Slave Ship” and their juxtaposition to other scenes like “Sunset in Abbeokuta,” “The Underground Railroad,” or a bust of Ira Aldridge, the Gallery’s structure compels Ethiop’s ostensibly moody eye to connect the dots between what Houston Baker calls the “embarrassing, macabre, and always bizarre” history of the Atlantic world and the resilient expressive political culture that this chaos and contingency cultivated.⁸⁵ While a picture of George Washington “recalls to mind the American Revolution,” a portrait of Thomas Jefferson “brings before the mind in all its scope and strength... the Declaration of Independence.” This ostensibly “unstudied arrangement” leads Ethiop to comment on the connections between images, and, more importantly, the mental processes they

invoke. Despite the poignancy of portraits of Washington and Jefferson, it is the portrait of Toussaint L'Ouverture that "carries us forward to the times, when its [the Declaration of Independence] broad and eternal principles, will be fully recognized by, and applied to the entire American people."⁸⁶ This ostensibly "unstudied arrangement" leads Ethiop to comment on the connections between images, and, more importantly, the mental processes they invoke. The portrait "force[s] upon" Ethiop's mind the whole history of the Haitian people, a history that invokes for him a future in which the Declaration of Independence might be fully realized, not as a product of a specifically white U.S. revolution, but rather as a constitutive element of an ongoing hemispheric revolutionary process in which the successful slave revolution offers the key to "the sublime idea of freedom."⁸⁷ The positioning of the three revolutionaries creates a triptych, inviting visitors to provide the narrative between paintings—to fill in the empty spaces on the wall.

At the same time, Ethiop numbers his written entries, suggesting his negotiation between the disorder in the Gallery's layout and his own tendencies as a critic to make sense of and draw lessons from it and to report these lessons to his readers.⁸⁸ Whether or not "The First and the Last Colored Editor" or "The Slave Ship" has a physical referent, Ethiop's translation of the images Wilson sets before him constructs an almost novelistic double-voiced discourse between Ethiop-the-critic-observer and the painting-object-of-critique, both characters in Wilson's sketch.⁸⁹ Combined with Ethiop's meditation on the pedagogical uses of art, we can read his sketching as a primer on how to read events in time—past, present, and future. As I have suggested of the sketch as a literary form in the previous chapter, this seeming "whimsicality" allowed the writer to refuse neat conclusions in favor of tentative associations in a way that resists dominant systems of narration and ordering.⁹⁰ The gallery's disorderliness and the

provisional quality of Ethiop's sketching cultivate reading practices that resist the closure and timelessness of citizenship's utopian promise and its attendant amnesias and expulsions.

Wilson demonstrates the payoff of this reading practice in Ethiop's sketch of "Mount Vernon" where the past and present of slavery haunt grounds sacred to the national mythology. George Washington and Mount Vernon's image were hotly contested precisely because of his status as both the "Father of the Nation" and slaveholder. Mount Vernon, Ethiop muses, "has something to do with every spring of the machinery of American society; social, political, and religious."⁹¹ Like the ubiquitous Mount Vernon canes "manufactured from some of its decaying relics" that "men walk by," the nation walks by a national mythology propped up by Washington's remains. Junius Brutus Stearns's "Washington as a Farmer at Mount Vernon" (1851), for instance, features George Washington presiding over a prosperous plantation with slaves at work, children at play, and the first President benevolently conversing with what might be his overseer [figure 5]. The whole image communicates the continuity between the ideal (and ideally dead) Washington and the vision of a nation of virtuous overseers. Presented just a year after the Compromise of 1850, the painting shows the proslavery ideal of the benevolent master, but through George Washington, this ideal and the economic system it represent, become inextricably linked with the foundations of the nation.⁹²



Figure 4: Junius Brutus Stearns, “Washington as a Farmer at Mount Vernon,” 1851, oil on canvas, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

Reframed in Ethiop’s sketch, however, Stearns’s contented slave returns to haunt the grounds, as his descendants remain family property. Ethiop’s “Mount Vernon” features “Decay...written by the Artist’s pencil more legibly than in letters.”⁹³ Paralleling the decaying Washington canes, a national crutch, Ethiop shows Washington’s bones weakened by time and in the care of slaves—perhaps descendants of those he set free at his death. As he scans the painting, Ethiop comes across Washington’s tomb:

The first thing that here arrests the eye is the recently dug up coffin of Washington; just behind which stands the ghost of his faithful old slave and body servant; while in front, a living slave of to-day stands, with the *bones* of Washington gathered up in his arms, and labeled “For Sale” “Price \$200,000; this negro included.” “Money wanted.”⁹⁴

The scene uses the same techniques as “The First and Last Colored Editor,” ancestors from the past presiding over the events of the present. Ethiop’s image literally frames the “corpus” of Washington, the abstracted ideal citizen, in the arms of the disincorporated black slave, the sale of the two amounting to a bargain for a national icon.⁹⁵ The image recalls Frederick Douglass’s sarcastic excoriation of white Americans for relying on the virtues of their ancestors to “excuse some folly or wickedness of their own.”⁹⁶ The image Wilson sets before Ethiop, however, suggests that the past had its own “wickedness” in need of covering.

If the Mount Vernon and Washington of the past could still be invoked for utopic purposes, the Mount Vernon of the 1850s confirms Ethiop’s reframing. Throughout the 1850s, Mount Vernon was in dire disrepair. The Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association set to raising the estimated \$200,000 (not coincidentally the price of Washington’s bones + slave in Ethiop’s sketch) needed to purchase the property from John Augustine Washington, who himself owned or employed slaves.⁹⁷⁹⁸ But Congress and other would-be supporters, even members of the MVLA, were hesitant, if not hostile to the idea of monumentalizing that Mount Vernon, precisely because of its *present* condition. Discussions about Washington’s home inevitably circled back to debates over slavery as either a national institution or a national sin. As Horace Greeley writes, “Here we have Mount Vernon transmogrified into a regular slave shamle, where human beings are sold out to the highest bidder—the proprietor living on their wages—until they are returned on his hands.”⁹⁹ In Greeley’s analysis, Washington’s heirs have defiled the idyllic Mount Vernon of the old, “transmogrifying” the utopian ideal into a dystopic nightmare (reality), the one a beautiful inspiration, the other a gothic horror.



Figure 5: Eastman Johnson, *The Old Mount Vernon*, 1857. Later in the decade, artists like Eastman Johnson offered realist paintings Mount Vernon from the perspective of its current slaves with the white proprietors conspicuously absent.

The AAPG makes visible the aporia that exhibitions at the National Academy of Design or the American Art Union and even anti-slavery rhetoric generally covered. Rather than the narrative of decline from utopia to dystopia, Ethiop's "Mount Vernon" presents narrative that negates the binary. The panorama of past, present, and future images like "Mount Vernon" present allows for a sense of time as, to borrow from Achille Mbembe, "an *interlocking* of presents, pasts, and futures, that retain their depths of other presents, pasts, and futures, each age bearing, altering, and maintaining the previous ones."¹⁰⁰ If Washington's image has been excised from the present scenes of Mount Vernon slavery, either in attempts to re-appropriate the space as national monument or in efforts to maintain Washington's iconic status, his bones remain wrapped in the bargain—or his slaves remain wrapped in the bargain with his bones—and both Washington and his former slaves, like the First Colored Editor, continue to hover.

Even if readers were aware of the inspiration for at least some of these sketches—portraits of Wheatley, Washington, and Jefferson were in circulation enough—Ethiop’s movement through the Gallery and his method of analysis provide models for how they could approach objects, those monuments, songs, orations, that worked to consolidate citizenship as utopian promise of wholeness. Images like “Mount Vernon” and spaces like the AAPG redistribute the sensible of citizenship, that is, they allow (or force) viewers to see what had been covered or deemed unseeable and unhearable (e.g. Washington’s former slave) or to see common images (e.g. “The Slave Ship”) from a different angle. Yet, as the next sections suggest, even as Wilson uses Ethiop to outline a liberatory aesthetics and to train his readers how to read critically, the AAPG series also suggests that even the critic must be wary, lest he or she begins to “speak too metaphorically” and loses touch with an ethical responsibility to engage actively in the moral world.

5. “Wild Sublimity”: The Black Forest’s Critical Stance and the Slave Sublime

The style of Wilson’s sketches changes midway through the series as description gives way to dialogue and character development as Ethiop’s role shifts from authoritative chronicler to limited narrator and inexperienced sojourner.¹⁰¹ Three characters—Ethiop, Bernice, and Tom—form a triptych that parallels the diachronic reflection of “The First and Last Colored Editor,” but this triptych also synchronically suggests a range of potential subjectivities or modes of critical citizenship. Wilson moves Ethiop from quietly reflecting on a “beautiful picture,” titled “The Black Forest,” in the gallery to “the grandeur and wild sublimity [of the Black Forest’s] native landscape” outside of the AAPG, where he encounters Bernice, who holds his former master captive. Ethiop then returns to the AAPG, where Tom, the gallery attendant

refuses to allow Ethiop to turn the space into his personal domicile.¹⁰² If the utopics of whiteness are predicated on “matters of taste” or beauty that close off and police citizenship, the Black Forest’s sublimity and each character’s response to it not only model the subjectivity of a critical citizen who resists arrest, but also suggest that such resistance carries with it a danger of reinforcing the closed structure it was supposed to open.¹⁰³

The Black Forest sequence, a narrative arc nested within the AAPG series (no. 3-4) that combines gothic science fiction, maroonage, and slave’s narrative, begins with the “gallery Boy,” “Thomas Onward,” presenting Ethiop with a portrait of himself (Tom) to hang in the Gallery. A couple of days after viewing Tom’s portrait, Ethiop attempts to sketch “Picture No. XI,” “marked ‘The Black Forest’”: a “landscape painting” of “grand and beautiful scenery, dark back ground shadows and the air of profound mystery...pervade[ing] it.”¹⁰⁴ While Ethiop is “attracted” to the painting, the “beauty...[and the] superior excellence as a *Work of Art*” of the portrait of Tom and the identity of its unknown artist continue to demand his attention.¹⁰⁵ Tom then presents Ethiop with an invitation: “Come over to the Black Forest and examine some of the pictures and other curiosities there. Two days journey by stage and by foot for a man, and none others are asked!”¹⁰⁶

Refusing to reveal the Black Forest’s exact location—“it is no part of my purpose to disclose the precise locality of the Black Forest, nor fully the manner of people dwelling there”—Ethiop codes the Forest in terms of maroonage: the collectives that escaped slaves created that constantly threatened the stability of slave societies.¹⁰⁷ As Carla Peterson has argued, maroonage offered antebellum black writers a powerful metaphor for self-determining black spaces.¹⁰⁸ Though we only meet one resident, we know the Forest’s residents are, if nothing else, actively opposing white power.¹⁰⁹ Set in the midst of a post-*Dred Scott* landscape rather

than safely framed in the AAPG, the Black Forest symbolically interrupts or intrudes upon the surrounding spatial and narrative order:

a huge mountain forest, whose crest loomed up blacker and blacker as the clouds of coming evening rolled up from bellow the horizon. Here in all its grandeur and wild sublimity was the native landscape spread out before me, the same that I saw in beautiful miniature but a day before hanging on the walls of our Afric-American Gallery.¹¹⁰

Importantly, Wilson has Ethiop describe the *actual* Black Forest, but not its image, in terms of the sublime, signaling the Black Forest's opposition to the national symbolic that the AAPG critiques.¹¹¹ If citizenship is determined by its frontiers, that is those it admits and excludes, those that are sensible and those that are insensible, then the sublime here functions as a call to press against and see beyond those frontiers, those boundaries.¹¹²

Inside the Forest, Wilson pairs Ethiop with Bernice, whom Ethiop describes as “a glory to look upon.” The older man becomes Ethiop's mentor, a “*Gamaliel*” to Ethiop's Paul.¹¹³ While in his “hut” (perhaps an intratextual reference to *Blake*, which was appearing concurrently), Bernice shows Ethiop his workroom, filled with “busts, statues, statuettes; landscapes, portraits, fancy pieces; paints, pallets, mallets, chisels; half finished sketches, studies in plaster,” and duplicates of Tom's portrait and the *Black Forest*.¹¹⁴ The “profusion” of work leads Ethiop to realize that Bernice is “the executor” of the paintings he spent so much time admiring. The recognition of Bernice's artistic genius allays any qualms Ethiop feels about his situation, and further links the art in the AAPG to Atlantic world struggles for freedom.¹¹⁵ By bringing Ethiop from the contemplation of a beautiful image to an encounter with its sublime referent and the artist who produced it, Wilson takes Ethiop through a process of “agitation” that attunes him to possibilities made unthinkable, or insensible, in utopian discourses or even within the framed images presented in the Gallery.

Ethiop spends the day watching Bernice work, until he comes across a tablet, purportedly from A.D. 4,000, engraved in “words...curiously spelt by the aid of 41 singular, new and beautiful characters.”¹¹⁶ Unable to determine the tablet’s origins, aside from Bernice’s claims that it “was dug out of the mountain peak of the *Black Forest*,” Ethiop wonders if the tablet is “fiction...history...[or] prophecy.”¹¹⁷ This text from the future enters the present as an artifact of the past, placing Ethiop in a position not unlike the Last Colored Editor, reading a text that projects into his future even as it connects him to the past.¹¹⁸ Whether from past, present, future, or all three, the tablet jars linear temporalities in a way that opens up narrative space allowing Wilson to explore the consequences of Douglass’s link between modern whiteness and national degeneracy.¹¹⁹ Ethiop fills the rest of the day translating the text “by dint of hard study,” eventually producing a twenty-five-verse narrative detailing the history and demise of “The Amecans, or Milk White Race,” who, following the Angry-Saxon trope, destroy themselves “and their works” through their own “evil deeds.”¹²⁰ If antebellum racial science proposed a historical and biological telos in which African-descended peoples were inherently inferior and suited for enslavement, this tablet, authored by a future people of African decent and found in a space of maroonage, read the historical arc of the nineteenth century as indicative of white degeneration. Moreover, translating the tablet prepares Ethiop for precisely the kind of question he himself asks his readers in February 1860: “What shall we do with the white people?”

Wilson takes Ethiop through a series of gothic inversions calibrated to jar him out of the sensible of U.S. citizenship, forcing him to think about not only the contradictions within U.S. legal code and practice, but also the fact that he is implicated within that system. Ethiop’s peaceful reverie, however, devolves into horror as he confronts in real life the kind of narrative viewed only at a remove in the AAPG. As Ethiop finishes his translation, Bernice invites him

deeper into his lair, where he shows Ethiop a scene that makes him fear for “[his] own safety.”¹²¹ Bernice has his former master chained to the wall of a small cell. Ethiop encodes the transition in gothic terms: “From the artistic, the beautiful and the curious, we had just quitted, an object of the most appalling my eyes ever beheld stood before us. Was it a man, was it even human?”¹²² Felix “lunge[s] for” Ethiop; “he raved, he shirked, he tor his hair,” yelling “imprecations,” but only the word “*Bernice*” was intelligible. “A stout heart only saved” Ethiop “from petrification on the spot,” and he begins to lose confidence in his host.¹²³

Seeing Bernice’s captive produces a moment of horror that lasts only until we hear Bernice’s narrative. Then Ethiop sees his logic. As Bernice explains, the man had held Bernice’s wife and children “as property” until he sold them. Sometime later, Bernice continues, “the wretch blew” his remaining son’s “brains out without provocation and without warning.”¹²⁴ Bernice eventually escaped, coming to the Black Forest where he “acquired” the man through secret means and where the man will remain as until his death. Through the exchange between Ethiop, Bernice, and Bernice’s captive, Wilson takes readers through a sublime response: initial horror triggers a reflective reason that bridges the fissure between the sensible and the supersensible, that is between the “sensible” limits of white citizenship, as illustrated in McLean’s appeal to taste, and the order of judgment invoked in Bernice’s actions.¹²⁵

The scene works initially through conventions of gothic doubling: the slaveholder has become the captive and the slave has become the dispenser of justice, reversing the narrative of law and order and national wholeness presented in Burns’s rendition. “Felix” and Bernice

conversed much and freely. [Felix] spoke of the wrong done him; I spoke of mine. He spoke of his wife and children left behind. I reminded him of the sale and separation of mine.... He plead [sic] earnestly for his rights. I told him he had no rights that I was bound to respect.... I was now the master and he the slave.¹²⁶

Bernice's invocation of justice, in the language of Justice Taney's majority opinion, silences Felix's pleas and Ethiop's qualms alike. Much like the fugitive slave, whose testimony counted little in court, Bernice's master can only beg "for liberty" or death's release. This engenders contempt, not pity—contempt for the former master, contempt for the system of laws that supported him, and, most of all, contempt for Northern complicity in maintaining these laws. Bernice offers no chance for redemption, sympathy, or repentance. With such an image, the tablet's account of the "Amecans" becomes all the more plausible.

If the gothic of slavery "bound and violently silenced" black bodies, this moment of the unbound black subject conversing "much and freely" inflicts an equal amount of violence against Felix's whiteness (and Ethiop's moral judgment) in a way that transforms the master into a condemned criminal. The "common sense" of Bernice, the black speaker challenges the constraints of what the putative wholeness of white citizenship codifies as visible, audible, and thinkable.¹²⁷ Faced with the injustice of Bernice's former master's actions and the horror of what Bernice has done to him in retribution, Ethiop appeals to "law, redress, justice &c." Bernice, however, forestalls Ethiop's recourse to law for consolation. "'Laws!'" Bernice "exclaim[s] almost frantic" in response, "'Law!!' What laws, what justice is there for the oppressed of our *class*? What laws except to oppress them harder? What laws except to pursue and rob them from cradle to the grave, yea even beyond both."¹²⁸ The "law," Bernice reminds Ethiop, is on Felix's side: it allowed him to dispose of Bernice's family and that same law would free Felix and authorize him to re-enslave Bernice and to enslave Ethiop if possible.

Wilson's gothic doubling and Ethiop's response to it offer critical purchase on the "very real, pressing historical forces and the contradictions inherent in them," allowing Wilson to expose the fissures within the surrounding political and moral order.¹²⁹ As Teresa Goddu argues

about a similar scene of slavery and punishment in *Letters from an American Farmer*, “the gothic discourse of decay and degeneracy ruptures...[an] Enlightenment vision of balance and order” so that the “idealized fable” of law and order and beautiful union “cracks under the weight of history.”¹³⁰ Rather than mend this crack in the narrative of law and order with a utopian narrative—effectively leaving the crack intact, but disguised—Wilson’s reversal (now a former slave binding his white former master as a black spectator looks on) constructs a narrative that keeps the crack open and in view, despite even Ethiop’s attempts to reconcile it. The moment in the cave is a litmus test: Ethiop could remain in the gothic mode, afraid of Bernice and the implications of his actions because Ethiop’s judgment, his sense of possibility, cannot expand beyond the closures of the state and its laws. Or, realizing he has nothing to fear in Bernice, Ethiop could “discover within” himself “a capacity for resistance of quite another kind,” as Kant usefully frames it, and leave with an expanded consciousness.¹³¹

Bernice’s entire hut—his paintings, sculpture, the technologically advanced door system, the tablet, even Felix as a captive—seems geared towards validating Bernice’s judgment and bearing witness to the supersensible of the slave sublime, a space in which the unthinkable and unrepresentable of enslavement and its aftermath can be staged.¹³² The sublimity of the sequence, coded in gothic terms, stems not from the sight of Felix, but rather from Ethiop’s reaction to the deeper political, economic, and social implications of Bernice and the moral world that necessitates a space like the Black Forest. That is, the moral force of the fugitive slave and the spaces of maroonage, not the white master, trigger the initial fascination and horror that initiates Ethiop’s judgment of the sublime. At scene’s end, his confidence in his host restored, Ethiop reflects that he “too now regarded” Felix as a “wretched fiend.”¹³³ The Black Forest, as maroon colony, disrupts chains of communication that would condemn Bernice (or

Nat Turner and Denmark Vesey) as a threat to national stability and calls on critics like Ethiop not only to point to such breaks, but also to recognize his embeddedness within those chains.¹³⁴

Despite Ethiop's new understanding, the sequence and Ethiop's gothic-coded response present several problems for developing critical citizenship. First, caught between the horror of what Felix has done to Bernice and the horror of Bernice's retribution (despite his understanding), Ethiop's narration stops. "The pressure of other engagements" pull Ethiop away from the hut and "events of the passing hour require" him to halt his descriptions and to write "something else for [his] readers."¹³⁵ Ethiop, like Crevecoeur's Farmer James or Douglass's Listwell, leaves the Black Forest for more comfortable surroundings, offering an abrupt return to the relative safety of the Gallery. The Fourth Paper, the last installment of the Black Forest arc, ends with "To be continued"; the Fifth Paper begins with Ethiop back in the gallery. While his last sketch was numbered 14, his next sketch is numbered 19, suggesting that either something should be there, but Ethiop has not or cannot write it down, or that the scenes in Bernice's hut were supposed to be numbered, but they exceeded Ethiop's ability to organize them. Ethiop reaches an impasse that Wilson does not force him to navigate, leaving readers to fill in the space between installments, just as visitors to the AAPG fill in the interpretive space between paintings. The gothic, even as it provides a discourse through which Ethiop can articulate the slave sublime, facilitates Ethiop's retreat. By telling the story through the gothic mode Ethiop contains it.¹³⁶ He can see the justice in Bernice's actions even as he is horrified by their results and implications. He can present its radical take on law, while keeping it contained in Bernice's "hut" with all the other wonders found in that "place of mysteries"¹³⁷

Second, it's not that Bernice's actions are too fantastic for Ethiop to grasp, but rather that Ethiop can too easily distance himself from their implications by framing them as pictures.

Hence, the Black Forest is a “*Picture Outside of the Gallery*,” and Ethiop jokes about an encounter with slave catchers in the stage on the way to the Black Forest, aestheticizes them “two portraits that ought to be hung up.”¹³⁸ Ethiop glibly notes the prospect of capture: “I prepared myself...and should have summary work with them, had a hand to hand encounter taken place, just such as fugitives should make in a like case.”¹³⁹ While showing his approval for violent resistance to recapture, Ethiop also separates himself from the imminent danger an actual fugitive would have faced—he is a metaphorical stand-in for the fugitive, and his “case” is a simulation. Ethiop’s adventure on the stage allows him to observe and describe in detail two specimens of “genuine American stock,” and his intellectual “route” of them disabuses the men of “the assumed or imagined mental superiority of white men.”¹⁴⁰ Despite moments of danger when “fingers began to twitch and pistols move from their places,” the scene demonstrates the potential power of Ethiop’s critical perspective, the voice of “a common sense black [man]” causing the white men to shrink in chagrin, their superior arms notwithstanding. The three part ways at the depot, the slaveholder and the slave catcher continuing their hunt without Ethiop’s taking actions to actually “hang” them or impede their progress.

Yet, as Bernice notes in his discourse on the law, Ethiop was never that safe. He may have routed the men intellectually, but Bernice’s story about his son’s murder and texts such as Solomon Northup’s *12 Years a Slave*, narratives of free black men taken as slaves, tell of the physical threat Ethiop faced, the legal and political power that was against him. Ethiop’s encounter with Bernice and Felix—his encounter with a man who *actually* took justice in his own hands and punished the criminal outside and against the confines of constitution or law—places Ethiop’s previous conversation with the slaveholder and slave catcher and musings about who *ought* to be hung up in sharp relief.

Ethiop's state of mind upon returning to the Gallery suggests that even as the space and images in the AAPG give him critical purchase for deconstructing narratives of white citizenship, it also allows Ethiop to become too comfortable in an aestheticized world of memory. The space itself and its art can only foster a critical sense; it cannot, in itself, do the work of critical citizenship. After the Black Forest, readers find Ethiop sitting in his "big armchair" to "take in the beauties and excellences of Pictures No. XIX and XX, "Preaching and After Preaching," and No. XXI, "A Head of Phillis Wheatley." The paintings lead Ethiop to think about other instances of the slave sublime, including praise for "the Margaret Garners who rather than their babes even shall clank a chain, prefer to send them up to their God who gave them."¹⁴¹ As Ivy Wilson and John Ernest have differently argued, these images crystalize the connection between art and radical resistance outlined in Bernice's narrative.¹⁴² When not sketching, however, Ethiop's mind returns to Bernice and he experiences "such a storm of choleric [sic] feeling as will serve for all of life to come."¹⁴³ For consolation, Ethiop reminisces about "the days when Banneker lived and told of the stars and of the rising suns, and Wheatley sung their praise to listening worlds."¹⁴⁴ Ethiop's reflections provide a useful instance of liberation historiography—informing his readers, readers of the *AAM*, about a history of resistance, artistic and violent, and reminding them of their own revolutionary potential—but it also stops his returning Bernice's imprecations against present-day law, a critique also embedded in the allusion to Margaret Garner.¹⁴⁵

Third, the Fifth Paper reveals that perhaps Ethiop learned the wrong lessons from the Black Forest: he attempts to turn the AAPG into his personal enclave, mirroring the Black Forest's exclusivity.¹⁴⁶ A central problem with the "Black Forest" sequence is that it risks, and in some ways does, reproduce the systems of power it could potentially upend. Only those invited

can enter the Black Forest, and Bernice, or maybe the Forest itself, only grants men entry.

Ethiop displays a similar attitude towards the AAPG, despite his advertising its contents through his sketches. Even before the Black Forest sequence, Ethiop, despite his regular column describing its art, was thinking about the AAPG as *his* space, speaking in a conspiratorial “we” of “our *secret*.—Our pleasant hiding-place, where we have so often and so long shut ourselves from the blast and chill of the world,” and mourning the loss of “the luxury of solitude.”¹⁴⁷ He continually refers to the Gallery’s visitors as “intruders”—after Gallery patrons interrupt his reflections, Ethiop asks Tom “to bar it against all further intruders”—perversely reproducing Douglass’s 1854 sense that law and custom had made him and black citizens seem intruders.¹⁴⁸

More ominously, as work on maroon societies and in geographical studies reveals, spaces like Bernice’s Black Forrest and Ethiop’s Afric-American Picture Gallery offer tactics that can fit within the spatial strategy of citizenship without disrupting its overall structure—sometimes strengthening that structure instead. Spaces like the state conventions constantly risk serving the very strategies they mean to disrupt, as they become static locations of officiousness and the *accepted* location for black agency. Black citizenship can thrive as long as it remains within this space without appreciably affecting the surrounding civil society; indeed, that society, as in the case of minstrelsy can actually turn acts of resistance into comedic performance. These narrative moments and spaces allow readers to elide their counter-hegemonic implications in their representation of figures not embraced in the national imaginary (American Indians, African Americans, women, Catholics, etc.), because the overall narrative gives them an “authorized placement.”¹⁴⁹

6. Young Tom: The Critical Citizen as Doorkeeper and Trickster

The preceding sections unpacked the internal logics of Wilson's "Afric-American Picture Gallery" as an exploration of spaces and practices that cultivate critical citizenship. Ethiop's sketching within the Gallery allows him to propose an alternative framework for mapping a critical civic imaginary with a taste for understandings of citizenship outside of what whiteness makes sensible, while his trip to the Black Forest exposes the dangers of critical projects becoming disconnected from political reality and the operations of power. Yet, in both instances, Ethiop neglects two principles of citizenship I've outlined in previous chapters, neighborly contact—the meetings between strangers that foster horizontal civic exchanges outlined in Jones and Allen's *Narrative*—and circulation—the free movement of civic power among a diverse citizenry. By neglecting these principles, Ethiop short circuits the power his critical sensibility could offer, reproducing the proprietary closures his work was meant to prevent.

Young Tom, the third image in Wilson's Ethiop-Bernice-Tom triptych, embodies the critical citizen-subject, the "Anglo-African" in circulation, who refuses to be pinned down and refuses Ethiop's (and perhaps Bernice's) debilitating isolation. Ethiop introduces him in mythological terms as a "brown-faced boy," a "shrewd little rogue," not an "*Old Tom*...nor an *Uncle Tom*, nor a *Saintly Tom*," but rather "a real live *Young Tom*, up to all conceivable mischief and equal to all emergencies."¹⁵⁰ Of Tom's origins, Ethiop writes:

though he has seen all of life...one would scarcely conclude that this boy has come down to us through nearly three hundred years of hard trial.... He was almost whipped into existence, whipped into childhood, whipped up to boyhood. He has been whipped up to manhood, whipped down to old age, whipped out of existence.¹⁵¹

In contrast to the stability of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom*, Wilson's Tom calls to mind trickster-like narrators such as Henry Bibb, "who was whipped up," and Harriet Jacobs, who

creatively uses space and language to gain freedom. Yet, Tom is not “able to remember a tithe of the hard things done to” him. He instead represents constant renewal: a youth who has come “out of...mountains of dust and ashes without one bit of sackcloth upon [him]...fresh, smiling and free.”¹⁵² This is not to suggest that the “nearly three hundred years” have disappeared. Though his body does not show the marks of his past, the lifetimes of experience have made Tom “a shrewd little rogue.”¹⁵³ In short, Tom’s life encompasses the history of the African American as palimpsest, generation overlaying generation as in the image of “The First and the Last Colored Editor” and the Black Forest tablet. Tom’s youth signals that this history offers regenerative possibility. He has avoided Ethiop’s preoccupation with that history and Bernice’s gothic revenge plot, distilling the lessons of the past without becoming trapped by their traumas.

Tom completely disregards Ethiop’s requests to bar the door to the Gallery, refusing Ethiop’s distinction between himself and “intruders.” In the process, Tom reintroduces neighborly contact into the narrative, keeping the Gallery accessible and its critic in public circulation. After “three weeks’ barricading the doors of the” Gallery following his trip to the Black Forest, Ethiop finds solace in the “justness” of his sketches and memories of the past. But,

a loud rap at the door [brings him] to a sense of the present moment and to [his] feet. Wondering who the intruder might be that dared to thus disturb [him], [Ethiop] bade him enter. It was *Tom*—yes, Tom, with a package of letters in his hand.... Somehow or other, there was a wicked twinkle playing about the corners of his usually wicked little eyes...¹⁵⁴

Tom’s intrusion, suggestive of Douglass’s stance in Chicago, agitates Ethiop, bringing him out of the kind of celebration of the past that Thoreau critiques in “Slavery” back into the present and to a standing position. Indeed, often intrudes at crucial junctures throughout the series, bringing Ethiop “to a sense of the present moment,” forcing him to move. Earlier in the series, “our little brown-faced boy in attendance,” brought in two patrons, who leave Ethiop “bothered

and puzzled.”¹⁵⁵ The encounters compel Ethiop to articulate the *AAM*’s and the Gallery’s overall mission, thus anchoring his historical sketches to present concerns and the continued building of political communities. “These pictures, as a whole,” he tells a “colored lady,” who visits the Gallery on a faultfinding mission, “serve as simple reminders of what the people of color were, now are, and will yet be. What they have gone through, are going through, and have yet to go through.”¹⁵⁶ By bringing Ethiop in contact with contentious visitors “without paying heed to” Ethiop’s “embarrassment,” by agitating him into outlining the Gallery’s critical mission, Tom forces Ethiop to confront competing interpretations, to think about his work in the Gallery as a public process, and to engage with that public as a critic even when he would rather brood.

As the Gallery attendant, the doorkeeper with the power to bar or allow entry to the Gallery, Tom represents the free play at the heart of the Gallery that makes Ethiop’s sketches possible and the principles of contact and debate that activates its critical project. Tom’s eyes twinkle, we discover, because “the little rogue had been operating on his own hook” in Ethiop’s absence, “pointing out the Gallery to the various magnates around for his own special amusement,” including a “doctor... and the Professor..., and the Philosopher with him; and a little lady in black, and a tall lady, and a fat lady, and a strange nice lady from abroad,” the litany continuing with others “some queer ones...a crusty old gentleman, (white)...and two colored gentlemen.”¹⁵⁷ Tom has mischievously orchestrated a site of contact where strangers moving about the Gallery engage in “free, characteristic, and remarkable” conversation, covering a range of issues from the condition debate and economic citizenship to “The First Colored Convention.”

Members of the “strange” assemblage, a microcosm of activist and professional circles, challenge each other and Ethiop to think beyond disciplinary confines or social backgrounds. Picture No. 26, “Condition,” a painting of a “*colored youth*,” “face marked with ignorance and

the indifference of stolid content” and “surrounded by abject wretchedness,” sparks a debate among them about if or how “such a subject” could “be improved.”¹⁵⁸ The Doctor describes the problem in terms of “nature,” an abstraction that “meant nothing,” Ethiop notes, but carried weight because it was delivered from “so high an authority, and so deliberately.” The Philosopher, in turn, “entered upon a learned dissertation, upon the nature of the world in general, and our *poor little ‘Condition’ in particular,*” but ends even further away from concrete answers than the learned doctor.¹⁵⁹ Ethiop interjects, hoping to bring the debate to a more material grounding: “the youth’s condition, not his nature...demands change.” Ethiop’s “impetuosity” in responding results in further debate, however, now about solutions for changing “condition.” The “lady from abroad,” chimes in suggesting reform programs: “let the light of culture beam upon him” to change his “moral and religious state” followed by “*wealth*” to change his material condition, and, she posits, “you place beneath him a power, and put in his hands a force, that will be felt throughout the entire ramifications of human society.”¹⁶⁰ The lady “had such a neat way of putting her propositions, that it was not an easy task to disturb them without risk.” That is, between protocols of politeness and the rhetorical force of her articulation, the lady would seem to have settled the debate, but again, without articulating exactly *how* such a change could occur.

Despite the silence of the Doctor, the Philosopher, and even Ethiop, “an old lady, who had hitherto been a quiet spectator,” warns against the group’s falling victim to “metaphorical veils.” “You are not understood,” she exclaims, pointing out that they have abstracted the image and its problematic to the point of incomprehensibility and immobility.¹⁶¹ Here, the arrangement of the Gallery works in tandem with the chaos of contact as the woman calls the group’s attention, somewhat inadvertently, from “Condition” to “Farm Life in Western America,” a

landscape painting covering the wall and showing an active community living out, not coincidentally, the project of economic citizenship Ethiop outlined in *Douglass's Paper* earlier in the decade. Through discussing the image, the old lady dismantles the doctor's argument about biology and giving material purchase to the lady's similarly abstract appeal to reform: "Colored folks farming!!" the old woman exclaims,

Now here are colored folks farming for themselves; and don't their grain grow as well as if they were white; and don't it sell as well.... Here is a colored man tending his own mill; and is not the flour as white as any other? and are not all the town, white and colored, running to procure it?

"Away with your metaphorical, metaphysical nonsense," she admonishes the group, "and give them plenty of wherewith to do with, and they may wear their color without let or hindrance."¹⁶²

While Wilson plays at least part of the old lady's discourse for humor—she speaks in dialect, and her critique comes from her mistakenly thinking the group was talking about "Farm Life," not "Condition"—her ostensibly plain language, perhaps a performative echo of Sojourner Truth's "Aren't I/Ain't I a Woman Speech," disturbs the group's disciplinary siloes and ideological commitments in a way similar to Tom's disturbance of Ethiop's solitude.

Regardless of intent, the woman, now sitting in Ethiop's "good old Gallery arm-chair," changes the nature of the conversation, and gets the group moving in a direction that eventually ends at Picture No. 27, "The First Convention," an image of the 1830 Convention of People of Color held in Philadelphia. Their movement through the Gallery tracks one path for black political agency from the "abject wretchedness" of "Condition" to the economic citizenship in "Farm Life," to the politics of the state and national convention movements, suffused throughout with critique: interruptions, intrusions, and agitation. The way Wilson produces these intrusions and Ethiop's inability to fully manage them suggests the importance of a degree of intrusiveness, of mischievous contact, to the project of critical citizenship and public discourse. The woman's

interjection in the conversation, and the conversation more broadly, the Doctor's leveraging of his authority notwithstanding, demonstrates the kind of horizontal, democratic exchange, that is the critical sense, Ethiop finds lacking in U.S. civic discourse.

By introducing elements of neighborly contact and circulation into the Gallery, Tom changes the way Ethiop and his readers encounter the images it contains, now as a public conversation rather than solitary writing or reading exercise, and how knowledge is produced from them. We might think of this Tom as the Picture Gallery's version of Esu, the "god of the crossing" or "gateway god."¹⁶³ As Heather Russell explains, Esu is a tricky shape shifter not necessarily because his form changes, but rather, because "he shifts the *shape* of received knowledge" in a way that represents the epistemological challenge of the "African Atlantic subject."¹⁶⁴ Rather than utopian consolation, Tom suggests instability, restlessness, and a willfulness that keeps the spatial and temporal location of citizenship fluid, un-circumscribed. Tom doesn't necessarily oppose boundaries as such; he is, after all, the doorkeeper. Rather, the young trickster, like Communipaw's Whitewasher, works to keep those boundaries permeable and dynamic, to insure passage between space and subject positions. In contrast to Bernice's narrative of maroonage, Tom offers a delinquent story, one that, following Rancière, lives "in the interstices" rather than the margins "of the codes that it undoes and displaces."¹⁶⁵ Instead of a counter site, Tom's movements and critical sensibilities—his willful disobedience and insistence on creating *contact* and on his own free circulation—calls into question the management or attempted framing of all the sites he touches. Tom activates the methodology of critical citizenship, living in a constant state of revolutionary becoming and connecting histories, institutions, and peoples from a stance that takes such disruptive connections as a normative political practice necessary for democratic citizenship. We can see Tom's ethic at work in the

Free African Society's negotiation between official and unofficial civic spaces, the black state conventions' leveraging of print circulation to change the constitution of the sovereign people, and Smith and Wilson's sketched debates in *Douglass's Paper*.

Tom provides the link between Ethiop, Bernice, and the world their work seeks to engage; however, like Wilson's triptych of Jefferson, Washington, and L'Ouverture, or the *AAM* itself, no single character gives the whole image of critical citizenship. The three—Bernice, Tom, and Ethiop—form a collective subject, a collective sense of who the critical citizen is and what the critical citizen does. Like the articles in the *AAM*, they are at odds with each other—Ethiop's unease with Bernice's revenge set against Tom's intrusions in the Gallery, and Bernice's challenge to Ethiop's critical judgment—even as they work together, the one keeping the impulses of the other in check. They, outside of Bernice's holding his former master captive, do not *do* anything with the white *people*, as such. Instead, they challenge the tendency to freeze structures of citizenship, to suture its cracks with consensus myths, such that critique becomes relegated to its content rather than its framing. In so doing, the magazine and the AAPG model the tensions within both the single critical citizen and, as importantly, within a state that cultivates critical citizenship, not in order to resolve such tensions, but rather to maintain them as what the people can now see as a beautiful, if still arduous process of citizenship.

¹ "What Shall We Do with the White People," *Anglo-African Magazine* (February 1860), 2.2, 45. Emphasis original. Cited hereafter as *AAM*.

² *Ibid.*, 41. For a discussion of Ethiop's essay in the context of a tradition of black critiques of whiteness, see Mia Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind: African-American Ideas About White People, 1830-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 75-77.

³ "What Shall We Do," 41.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 44. Emphasis original.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 43. Ethiop's description the nation's print publics highlights how the proliferation of print technologies and other "material institution" paradoxically "exposed" rather than bridged "the geographical incoherence over which the fiction of union had originally been written" (304). See Trish Loughran, *The Republic*

in *Print: Print culture in the Age of U.S. Nation Building, 1770-1870* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

⁷ Ibid., 43.

⁸ Ibid., 45.

⁹ Ibid., 44.

¹⁰ See Anna Secor. “‘There Is an Istanbul That Belongs to Me’’: Citizenship, Space, and Identity in the City.” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. 94, no. 2 (2004): 353. My analysis builds on Secor’s construction by investigating how national stories, or “spatial stories” in Certeau’s terms, frame and reframe these spatial practices. See Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 29-42, 115-130. This strategy makes citizenship possible and empowering for some—those whose identities it fixes—but disempowering and dangerous for those whose identities it cannot admit, refuses to acknowledge, or expurgates as a part of the fixing process.

¹¹ Ethiop’s question works in some ways, as Tavia Nyong’o suggests of sarcasm more broadly, “as a metamessage or way of inflecting ideas” that calls into question the mythological underpinnings of white citizenship. See Nyong’o, *The Amalgamation Waltz: Race, Performance, and the Ruse of Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 155. In many ways, Ethiop’s essay uses rhetorical tactics of inversion that had become standard to African American writing by the 1850s. As Bay has demonstrated, this trope of the Angry Saxon permeates the writing of black and white writers alike. Theodore Parker, for instance writes of the Anglo-Saxon as having “restless disposition to invaded and conquer other lands; his haughty contempt of humbler tribes which leads him to subvert enslave, kill, and exterminate; his fondness of material things, preferred those to beauty” (qtd. in Bay 108). But, as Bay suggests, Parker and others easily “reconciled themselves” to these traits in their praise of Anglo-Saxon achievement and inherent love of liberty. Moreover, such recriminations come at the expense of an equally romantic vision of the “humbler tribes” who excel in the beautiful, but remain politically dependent if not irrelevant. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., cites Ethiop’s essay as an example of Signifyin(g) parody in *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 94. In *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005) Krista Ratcliffe suggests that Ethiop’s essay offers an ethnographic observation that links whiteness with consumption (115).

¹² My reading of critical citizenship in the *Anglo-African Magazine* builds on strains from John Ernest’s *Liberation Historiography: African American Writers and the Challenge of History, 1794-1861*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004) and Houston A. Baker’s *Critical Memory: Public Spheres, African American Writing, and Black Fathers and Sons in America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001) to attend not only to the content of historiography or memory, but, more importantly to how that history/memory is framed, written, and read. That is, critical citizenship is about the kinds of citizens that liberation historiography and critical memory might produce and about the kinds of spaces, texts, and critical practices that might produce them.

¹³ Douglass, “The Kansas Nebraska Bill,” *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Philip S. Foner (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), 299.

¹⁴ Ibid., 298.

¹⁵ As Gordon Baker notes, “most of Illinois became ‘enemy territory’ for blacks, free or fugitive.” See Gordon S. Barker, *The Imperfect Revolution: Anthony Burns and the Landscape of race in Antebellum America* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2010), 27. On how the Kansas-Nebraska Act may have contributed to the “radicalization” of Frederick Douglass, see Johnson, Tekla Ali. “Frederick Douglass and the Kansas-Nebraska Act: From reformer to Revolutionary” in *The Nebraska-Kansas Act of 1854*, eds. John R. Wunder. and Joann M Ross (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 113-128. My own sense is that the Act probably confirmed and gave an occasion, along with the rendition of Anthony Burns that same year, for Douglass to frame and voice decisions he had already been developing. Illinois was one among several states and territories that had instituted such codes between 1848 and 1854, including Indiana, Michigan, Iowa, and Oregon.

¹⁶ The Kansas-Nebraska Act, ushered through Congress by Stephen A. Douglas, effectively repealed parts of the Missouri Compromise by leaving the question of slavery in the territories to be decided by popular vote. As historian Nicole Etcheson suggests, “Settlers in Kansas accepted the premise that white voters should decide the status of black men and women. Conflict arose when the rights of white settlers to take that decision was threatened.” See Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence: UP of Kansas, 2004), 4-6.

¹⁷ Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas*, 4-6. As Etcheson and others reveal, the free-state/free-labor settlers had a range of attitudes towards black rights and were increasingly supportive of black equality. However, these shifts in

position were always balanced against and framed by “white settlers’ fears of what black rights meant for whites” (6). Walter C. Rucker explains that free-soilers “indeed wanted ‘free soil’—land free from slavery and, in many cases, land free of African Americans altogether.” See Walter C. Rucker, “Unpopular Sovereignty: African American Resistance and Reactions to the Kansas-Nebraska Act” in Wunder and Ross, *The Nebraska-Kansas Act of 1854*, 135-141.

¹⁸ “The Fourth Joint Debate at Charleston, 18 September 1858, 224-225.

¹⁹ Baker, *Imperfect*, 22

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 224-225. Despite Boston’s affluent anti-slavery community, Rev. Leonard Grimes could not raise the funds to purchase Burns’s freedom from his willing masters. Theodore Parker led the rally at Faneuil Hall; Lewis Hayden, Thomas W. Higginson, and others actually broke into the jail house, but were unsuccessful in their attempt to rescue Burns, in part, because the crowd that had gathered seemed more interested in the drama of the moment than taking action.

²¹ *qtd.* in Baker, *Imperfect*, 20. For analysis of the range of responses, see Baker, *Imperfect*, 41-62. As Baker puts it, “the Burns drama represented a spectacle that exposed and even confirmed the racism of many white Bostonians; the ambivalence, indifference, and even cowardice of many antislavery whites; and the embrace of law-and-order sentiments by Bostonians of different political stripes” (60). The events and the public’s response to them reveal that fugitive slaves and free persons of color alike were “caught in a ‘labyrinth’ of federal fugitive slave legislation and may white Northerners’ embrace of law and order, proslavery economic interests, and racism” (61).

²² “Slavery in Massachusetts,” 344.

²³ “Slavery in Massachusetts,” 344.

²⁴ Douglass, “Anthony Burns Returned to Slavery” in *Selected Speeches and Writings*, 281; *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, 9 June 1854.

²⁵ See Douglass, Frederick. “A Trip to Hayti.” *Pine and Palm*. 11 May 1861. 2.43 (95) reprinted from *Douglass’ Monthly*.

²⁶ Before the Fugitive Slave Act, escaped slaves like Dred Scott and his family, who had taken residence or who had been taken to free states, including Ohio, had successfully sued for their freedom with the state recognizing them as citizens or at least as protected by the state’s laws. See Finkelman. *Dred Scott v. Sandford: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), v-vii; and Wayne D. Moore, *Constitutional Rights and Powers of the People* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 19-30.

²⁷ *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, 60 U.S. 393 (1856), 407. Ironically, Taney connects citizenship to rights in a way that inverts the logic of the 1840s black state conventions. See Chapter 3.

²⁸ *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, 60 U.S. 393 (1856), 529; 538. While Justice Curtis’s dissent went further than McLean’s in its support of black citizenship, the Missouri Compromise, and its overall denunciation of the Court’s ruling, McLean’s dissent is more useful here for its comparatively moderate tone. It, moreover, seems more in line with the discourse that follows, as the Lincoln-Douglas debates demonstrate. McLean was still hoping to run for office as a Republican. See Finkelman, 100.

²⁹ *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, 60 U.S. 393 (1856), 529.

³⁰ “Most northerners found the decision shocking and immoral,” writes Finkelman. Finkelman, *Dred*, vii. For the range of Northern press responses to the case, see the documents in Finkelman’s *Dred*, particularly the newspaper reactions. I do not want to understate the significance of Taney’s opinion or the mass protest against it in the North; however, as McLean’s opinion suggests, protest against the *Dred Scott* decision did not necessarily equate ringing support for black citizens.

³¹ *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, 60 U.S. 393 (1856), 537; “The Fourth Joint Debate at Charleston, 18 September 1858, 224-225.

³² *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, 60 U.S. 393 (1856), 529.

³³ *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, 60 U.S. 393 (1856), 529.

³⁴ Taney argued that state citizenship did not necessarily confer federal citizenship, because forcing one state to recognize the rights of another state’s citizen violated state sovereignty. One could be a citizen of a state, having all the rights and privileges of a citizen of that state, without being a U.S. citizen with rights protected by the Privileges and Immunities Clause. Citizens could have dual citizenship: they were citizens of a state and citizens of the United States through either birthright or naturalizations. And since Taney did not recognize black birthright citizenship and the federal government restricted naturalization to “white” immigrants, black people had no path to federal citizenship.

³⁵ Douglass, “Kansas-Nebraska,” 298.

³⁶ Lincoln published debates in 1860 in preparation for the presidential election. As Foner suggests, “Lincoln... articulated a shaky consensus within the party.” See Eric Foner, *Free Soil*, 292-295. My point here is not to ask rather or not Lincoln was a racist or even if Lincoln truly believed what he claimed to believe in his speeches. Rather, the speeches suggest that this is what Lincoln and his fellow Republicans believed audiences wanted to hear, and the recorded audience responses confirm that point. Nicole Etcheson offers a more charitable view of Lincoln’s strategy in *Bleeding Kansas*: “Lincoln’s solution [to Douglas’s race-baiting and popular sovereignty argument] was to acknowledge slavery as an evil and oppose its expansion; but he framed this position as preserving the territories for white men” (188). See also David Zarefsky, *Lincoln, Douglas, and Slavery: In the Crucible Of Public Debate* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 183 and Davis and Wilson’s introduction to *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates* (Urbana and Chicago: The Knox College Lincoln Studies Center and the U of Illinois P, 2008).

³⁷ The Fourth Joint Debate at Charleston, 18 September 1858, 131.

³⁸ The Fourth Joint Debate at Charleston, 18 September 1858, 131. Lincoln is only “certain” that the “negro” is not “[his] equal...in color,” but this “physical difference” is enough to necessitate other institutional differences. The applause patterns varied depending on the source of the speech report; however, Davis and Wilson as well as Paul M. Angle’s edition of the Lincoln-Douglas debates suggest that most accounts concurred in this instance. Harold Holzer observes of the The Fourth Joint Debate at Charleston: “The fact that his [Lincoln’s] listeners greeted these opening remarks with laughter—and then went on to applaud his subsequent call for a ‘superior position’ in society for white people—shows vividly that those few favoring equal rights still remained very much isolated on the banks of the political mainstream in pre-Civil War Illinois” (*Lincoln-Douglass Debates*, 187).

³⁹ The Fourth Joint Debate at Charleston, 18 September 1858, 131. The “American” or “Negro School” of ethnology had gained increasing traction in mainstream public consciousness over the 1840s and 1850s thanks to the efforts of Samuel Morton (*Crania Americana*, 1839, and *Crania Aegyptiaca*, 1844), George R. Gliddon, Josiah Nott, and their collaborative efforts on *Types of Mankind* (1854). See George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row 1971), 74-80; William Stanton, *The Leopard’s Spots: Scientific Attitudes Toward Race in America, 1815-59* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 137-173; Dain, *Hideous Monster*, 197-226; and Nelson, *National Manhood*, 115-132, for an account of the role of the American School in shaping the professional discourse of science, and how this discourse (vs. naturalism or religious arguments), helped give it public legitimacy.

While the rhetoric Lincoln uses to articulate this position becomes increasingly anti-black over the course of the debates, the basic premise remains the same. In the First debate, he takes the same position in very similar terms, “there is a physical difference between the two, which in my judgment will probably forever forbid their living together upon the footing of perfect equality, and inasmuch as it becomes a necessity that there must be a difference, I, as well as Judge Douglas, am in favor of the race to which I belong having the superior position. Lincoln’s preference for writing new speeches for each debate over revising older ones suggests that the recurrence of this theme was successfully enough to become a standard trope that he used both to parry and to anticipate Douglas attempts to corner him as pro-black. See also *The Lincoln Douglass Debates*, First Joint Debate at Ottawa, 21 August 1858, 20.

⁴⁰ Fourth Debate, 131.

⁴¹ “First Joint Debate in Ottawa, 21 August 1858,” 20.

⁴² *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, 60 U.S. 393 (1856), 537.

⁴³ See David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991), 119; and Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 32.

⁴⁴ “Anglo-Saxons, and Anglo-Africans,” 247.

⁴⁵ “Anglo-Saxons, and Anglo-Africans,” 247.

⁴⁶ “Anglo-Saxons, and Anglo-Africans,” 247. “Stops” control air circulation to organ pipes, ultimately controlling what sound the organ as a whole issues.

⁴⁷ As Todd Vogel posits in *Rewriting White: Race, Class, and Cultural Capital in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), “This language served as a window into the minds and souls of the middling class and as a force to unite them,” and was used as the lingua franca of any would-be reform or populist movement (34-39). Vogel reads S.S.N.’s article as symptomatic of African American frustration with the force that this narrative exerted in foreclosing avenues to citizenship. Despite their tapping into the class-consciousness and sense of national virtue the rhetoric evoked, it served only to reinforce perceptions of their

incompatible and immutable difference. On fugue as a form based on managed polyphony see Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University Minnesota Press, 1997), 200.

⁴⁸ Berlant explains, "National identity provides... a translation of the historical subject into an 'Imaginary' realm of ideality and wholeness, where the subject becomes whole by being reconstituted as a *collective* subject, or citizen." The collective citizen-subject inhabits this newly-created utopian realm, a community of fellow citizens made abstractly equal through rituals of national identification. Berlant, *Anatomy of National Fantasy: Hawthorne, Utopia, and Everyday Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 23-24.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁵⁰ Judith Butler, "Restaging the Universal: Hegemony and the Limits of Formalism" in *Contingency Hegemony Universality Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (New York: Verso, 2000), 11.

⁵¹ Thomas Hamilton, "Apology," *AAM*, 1.1 (January 1859), 1-4.

⁵² Hamilton, "Apology," 1. Hamilton's mission statement offers standard fare for black newspapers from the first edition of *Freedom's Journal* in 1827, which opened with "We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us." Nor was the *Anglo-African* the first to build its mission around a racial identity; the *Colored American* preceded it by over twenty years.

⁵³ Nor was the *AAM* the first to build its mission around a collective identity; the *Colored American* preceded it by over twenty years.

⁵⁴ See Peterson, "Literary Transnationalism and Diasporic History: Frances Watkins Harper's 'Fancy Sketches,' 1859-60" in *Women's Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery in the Era of Emancipation*, ed. Kathryn Kish Sklar and James Brewer Stewart (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 191-192.

⁵⁵ "Apology," 3. On the relation of the *Anglo-African Magazine* to its predecessors, see Ronald Davis and B. J. Krekorian who describe the magazine as "known as the black man's *Atlantic Monthly* ('The Black Press')." Publishing articles in literature, sociology, religion, and the sciences "it sought to uplift its black readers and serve as a model of black culture in Manhattan" ("The Black Press"). As John Ernest has suggested, part of the *AAM*'s strength was its diversity of voices and discursive modes: "Through the multivocal forum of the *Anglo-African Magazine*, writers could respond to the ideological incoherence of the dominant culture more fully than if they were to rely solely on the discourse of scholarship and reason" (*Liberation Historiography* 313).

⁵⁶ See Donald F. Joyce, *Black Book Publishers in the United States: A Historical Dictionary of the Presses, 1817-1990* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 119.

⁵⁷ Song ("written, composed and arranged for the piano-forte, and most respectfully dedicated to miss Sarah Matilda Cornish")

⁵⁸ Hamilton, "Apology," 3-4. Here, Hamilton cites the infamous 1854-1855 siege in which Russia lost the city.

⁵⁹ Townsend, 292; Holly, "Thoughts on Hayti, Number II," *AAM* (August 1859), 242-243; and "Thoughts on Hayti, Number VI," 367.

⁶⁰ "Apology," 2.

⁶¹ "Anglo-Saxons, and Anglo-Africans," 249.

⁶² As Kathy Chiles, following Patricia Okker has insightfully argued through her reading of *Blake's* serialization, the relation between periodical and single article parallel that between the nation-state and the individual states or the individual in a community. Each individual "simultaneously constitutes its own entity and contributes to a larger whole," not "seamlessly," but rather "the friction, overlay, and conversations among these 'texts within a text' can be best explored as the production of intratextuality." Chiles, "Within and without Raced Nations: Intratextuality, Martin Delany, and *Blake; or the Huts of America*," *American Literature* 80, no.2 (June 2008), 324-325. Similarly John Ernest observes that the *AAM* is "an assembly in which the seams show...views work with and against one another" so that the subsequent friction provides the community with its generative force. Ernest, *Liberation*, 306.

⁶³ Clifton, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 175. Once spoken, Clifton continues, "[n]o dictionary or etymology can nail down the significance, nor can an inventor's (remembered) intention.... [Césaire's "Negritude"] does not restore the 'meanings' of language, culture, and identity; [it] gives them a turn" (177).

⁶⁴ "Anglo-Saxons, and Anglo-Africans," 249. Elsewhere, Wilson's Ethiop pokes fun at the proliferation of "Angloes" as he attempts to describe a visitor to his Gallery, "a very respectable appearing gentleman...and not Anglo-African, but Anglo-Saxon, or Anglo-American or something of that sort; botheration, I never could get the hang of these Angloes!" (AAPG No. 2, 89).

⁶⁵ Maroonage invokes the collectives that escaped slaves created, “the last independent polities from European colonial rule,” that served as a refuge for African descendants in slave societies and as a constant threat to the stability of slave economies. As Carla Peterson has insightfully observed in her reading of Frances Ellen Watkins’s Jane Rustic series, the core functions of maroonage—constituting places of refuge “by limiting contact with the dominant society, negotiating with it on favorable terms, establishing their own core values, and creating their own forms of government and cadre of leaders”—“applies as much to populations of escaped slaves in the seventeenth-century Brazilian wilderness as it does to northern free black sin the nineteenth-century United States; it is the foundation of black nationalist thought” (196-197). Baker on the *New Negro*: “represents a unified community of national interests set in direct opposition to the general economic, political, and theological tenets of a racist land. The work is, in itself, a *communal* project, drawing on resources, talents, sounds, images, rhythms of a marooned society or nation existing on the frontiers or margins of *all* American promise, profit, and modes of production” (77). See Baker, *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 77. Alvin O. Thompson, *Flight to Freedom: African Runaways and Maroons in the Americas* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2006), 13. See also Peterson, “Literary Transnationalism and Diasporic History: Frances Watkins harper’s ‘Fancy Sketches,’ 1859-60” in *Women’s Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery in the Era of Emancipation*, ed. Kathryn Kish Sklar and James Brewer Stewart (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 196-197; and Ernest 312.

⁶⁶ See Ernest, *Liberation*, 2-4 and 306-313; and Heather Russell, *Legba’s Crossing: Narratology in the African Atlantic* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 3.

⁶⁷ Ernest, 301.

⁶⁸ As Toni Morrison posits of American literary traditions, “the fabrication of an Africanist persona is reflexive; an extraordinary meditation on the self; a powerful exploration of the fears and desires that reside in the writerly conscious” (17). While Morrison was referring specifically to how white writers used Africanist presences, I think it also applies to Wilson and Watkins’s relation to their pseudonymous characters, Ethiop and Jane Rustic. The characters allow the two to work through the problems and possibilities of their own lived experiences. See Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

⁶⁹ The AAPG numbers 27 of the pictures, but several distinct images are not numbered.

⁷⁰ *Liberation Historiography*, 325. It is no coincidence that Ernest concludes the final chapter of *Liberation Historiography* with an extended analysis of Wilson’s “Afric-American Picture Gallery,” which, according to Ernest, makes the *AAM* a “masterful example of collective history” (321). John Ernest has already identified within this series an “aesthetics of liberation” capable of “accounting for the dynamic relations among artistry, history, and community.” My discussion of the series builds on Ernest’s concerns with the relation between aesthetics and historiography. See *Liberation Historiography* 321-328.

⁷¹ “Of Other Spaces,” 25.

⁷² “Afric-American Picture Gallery Number 1,” *AAM*, 1.2 (February 1859), 53.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Rushkin, *Modern Painter*, 383.

⁷⁵ See the essays in William H. Gerds and Mark Thistlewaite’s (eds.) *Grand Illusions: History Painting in America* (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1988) and Patricia M. Burnham and Lucretia Hoover Giese’s Introduction to *Redefining American History Painting* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁷⁶ “Afric-American Picture Gallery.—Second Paper,” *AAM* 1.3 (March 1859), 87.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 87. On the traditional status of history painting as educative, see Thistlethwaite, “The Most important Themes: History Painting and Its Place in American Art” in *Grand Illusions*, 8-21.

⁷⁸ As Ernest observes, the gallery offers “not a singular story but a gallery of many stories, connected by a complex narrative of experience and by significant silences that push against and through that collective experience” (328).

⁷⁹ As Houston Baker has argued, “critical memory compels the black intellectual...to keep before his eyes (and the eyes of the United States) a history that is embarrassing, macabre, and always bizarre with respect to race. The clarity bestowed by black critical memory is painful. It is terrible lucidity, casting dark light on a deeply troubling racial idea” (*Critical Memory* 10).

⁸⁰ “Afric-American Picture Gallery,” 53.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 53-54.

⁸² Ibid., 54. As Ernest aptly puts it in *Liberation Historiography*, “if one wants a quick overview of the conventional features of African American history from the early slave trade to the brink of the Civil War, one could get more from these fictional sketches than from most of the textbooks used in K-12 schools” (322).

⁸³ See Ernest 324-325.

⁸⁴ “Afric-American Picture Gallery,” 53.

⁸⁵ Baker, *Critical Memory* 10. See also Ernest, *Chaotic Justice*. In *The Reaper’s Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2008) Vincent Brown argues against a literal reading of Orlando Patterson’s “social death” to suggest that the enslaved and racially oppressed continually resisted death, and that this resistance compelled them to “to cultivate important features of social life” (5). Brown continues, “Just as the Grim Reaper arrived to gather the harvest at the end of the life cycle, he also sowed the seeds of social renewal. Death was as generative as it was destructive” (5). The juxtaposition of images in the picture gallery, particularly the first shift from the slave ship to the editorial chair offers a vivid example of this movement.

⁸⁶ “Afric-American Picture Gallery—Second Paper,” *AAM*, 1.3 (March 1859), 87.

⁸⁷ William Wells Brown, *The Black Man*, 229.

⁸⁸ He also observes on several occasions that the Gallery should be better organized, suggesting that pictures 5 and 6, “The Underground Railroad,” should be split. The depiction of the South (before) in picture 5 placed on the South side and number 6, a depiction of the North (after), placed on the North. In his appeal to artists to contribute to the Gallery, Ethiop also promises, “we will be sure to assign it to its appropriate place,” asserting his own authority over the space. See AAPG, 53 and 54-55. Later in the series, Ethiop sketches pictures that are already numbered, suggesting the Gallery’s organization is more in keeping with other New York galleries and catalogues, but these numbers don’t seem to correspond with where the pictures are in the Gallery. “The Slave Ship,” picture number 1, is on the South side of the Gallery, while “The First and the Last Colored Editor,” picture number 2, is on the North side. For a slightly different account of the gallery’s numbering scheme, see Ivy Wilson, *Specters of Democracy: Blackness and the Aesthetics of Politics in the Antebellum U.S.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 156-157.

⁸⁹ Wilson endows Ethiop with the authority and distance of a critic who offers, following Oscar Wilde, to “translate into another manner or a new material his impression of beautiful things” for his readers. Oscar Wilde, “Preface,” *Portrait of Dorian Gray*. As Kevin Lamb suggests of Oscar Wilde’s work, criticism “transforms the practice of translation... into an ongoing aspiration, which assumes its own activity as the basis for self-innovation.” Kevin Lamb, “Foucault’s Aestheticism,” *Diacritics* 35, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 52. See also Ivy Wilson, *Specters*, 158.

⁹⁰ See Squibbs, “Civic Humorism and the Eighteenth-Century Periodical Essay,” *ELH* 75, no. 2 (Summer 2008), 389.

⁹¹ AAPG, 88

⁹² Maurie D. McInnis has argued that the “painting emphatically reminds viewers of the enforced agricultural labor of Washington’s slaves, but it does so in a way that suggests slavery was a benevolent and natural institution” (89).

⁹³ “Afric-American Picture Gallery—Second Paper,” *AAM*, 1.3 (March 1859), 88.

⁹⁴ “Afric-American Picture Gallery—Second Paper,” *AAM*, 1.3 (March 1859), 88. For a discussion of the implication of Mount Vernon in larger debates over slavery see Maurice McInnis’s “The Most Famous Plantation of All: The Politics of Painting Mount Vernon” in *Landscape of Slavery: The Plantation in American Art*, eds. Angela D. Mack and Stephen G. Hoffius, (Columbia: University South Carolina Press, 2008), 101.

⁹⁵ See Russ Castronovo, *Necro-Citizenship: Death, Eroticism, and the Public Sphere in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 3; Nelson, *National Manhood*, 204-205.

⁹⁶ “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro,” *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Philip S. Foner (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999) 193.

⁹⁷ Linda Ayers, ““Their unfailing friend” Edward Everett and the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association,” A Paper Presented at the Annual George Washington Symposium,” Mount Vernon, Virginia, November 8, 2003; McInnis, 105.

⁹⁸ Ayers, 4.

⁹⁹ Qtd. in McInnis, 101. McInnis’s reading of Johnson’s work, particularly his 1857 “The Old Mount Vernon” suggests that Johnson’s paintings are ambivalent towards the anti-slavery cause, but also presents a radical shift in how artists treated Mount Vernon: “Mount Vernon had for decades served as the symbolic embodiment of Washington and the virtues he represented. Now the dilapidated buildings referred instead to the unhealthiness of

the institution” (107-109). Later in the decade, artists like Eastman Johnson offered realist paintings Mount Vernon from the perspective of its current slaves with the white proprietors conspicuously absent.

¹⁰⁰ See Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 16. In referencing Mbembe, I do not mean to suggest that Ethiop borrows directly from West African traditions, but rather, I join scholars like Russell, Mbembe, and Edward Glissant in thinking about how black Atlantic writers used formal aesthetics to break, in Russell’s words, “traditional or canonical social contracts” (2). In many ways Ethiop’s imagery looks forward towards the postmodern instances of haunting, pastiche, and bricolage in the works of Toni Morrison, John Edgar Wideman, and Octavia Butler.

¹⁰¹ Schiller, “Concerning the Sublime” in *Essays By Friedrich Schiller*, 79.

¹⁰² “Afric-American—Third Paper,” April 1859, 103; Schiller, “Concerning the Sublime,” *Essays By Friedrich Schiller*, 79.

¹⁰³ My understanding of utopias as policing citizenship builds on Jacques Rancière’s notion of policing as dividing communities into groups with the rules that govern the presupposition of who is visible within such a community, that is who can form the political community that creates citizenship. See *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. by Gabriel Rockhill (New York: Continuum, 2006).

¹⁰⁴ “Afric-American—Third Paper,” April 1859, 101.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ “Afric-American—Third Paper,” April 1859, 101. These “last independent polities from European colonial rule,” served as a refuge for African descendants in slave societies and as a constant threat to the stability of slave economies. Thompson 13. See also Peterson, “Literary Transnationalism,” 196-197; and Baker, *Modernism*, 77.

¹⁰⁸ See Peterson, 190, 196. As Peterson argues, maroonage in this sense also paradoxically highlights the “fundamental homelessness of blacks in the new world,” providing temporary respite from the ravages of the dominant society (196-197). This sensibility also animates Singh’s analysis in *Black is a Country*.

¹⁰⁹ Like the “Anglo-African” Magazine, the Black Forest’s blackness comes not necessarily from the color of its looming landscape, but rather from the political project it represents. Where the art in the gallery recalls a past purposefully forgotten as a project in, to borrow from Ernest, “liberation historiography,” the sublimity of the Black Forest not only invokes a critical stance vis. the present—against the national structures that, despite their critique, Ethiop’s images work within—, but also *actively* disrupts the wholeness of the putatively white land from that stance.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 103.

¹¹¹ The sublime, following Kevin Hetherington, “make[s] use of the limits of our imagination, our desires, our fears and our sense of power/powerlessness.” It taps into that part of us that allows us to think about that which we cannot know/understand through established channels of understanding, ultimately opening new imaginative vistas. Hetherington, *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering*. (London: Routledge, 1997), 40.

¹¹² On spaces and ways of seeing the world within the African Atlantic traditions that disrupt linear notions of time and memory in a way that, following Russell, offers “a radically empowering space in which to define,” see Russell 14-15, 68; Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 196-197; and Mbembe, 14-17.

¹¹³ Ibid., 103.

¹¹⁴ “Afric-American—Third Paper,” June 1859, 173-174.

¹¹⁵ Wilson and Delany seem to be developing the same type: the revolutionary artist/former slave.

¹¹⁶ “Afric-American—Third Paper,” June 1859, 174. This tablet might be a reworking of the Poe’s *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, which comes from a long dead African civilization or possibly Joseph Smith’s golden tablet.

¹¹⁷ “Afric-American—Third Paper,” June 1859, 174.

¹¹⁸ The tablet’s generic indeterminacy would seem to discredit the tablet’s contents or, at the very least, any reader’s ability to properly frame and interpret its text. However, this generic question, posed just after referring to it as a challenge to the professional discourses of History, Ethnology, and literary history (or the history of the book) highlights the interconnectedness of the three (fiction, history, prophesy) three discourses, suggesting their mutual indeterminacy as equal parts fiction, history, and prophesy. The text creates an “absolute break with traditional time” and a reader’s ability to judge a text’s value as history, contemporary report, or oracle. See Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” 26.

¹¹⁹ On the “Angry-Saxon” trope, see Bay, *White Image*, 109. As Bay observes, “Brutal, arrogant, and selfish,” the Angry-Saxon was the “violent, domineering, and overly materialistic” foil to the Anglo-Saxon myth.

¹²⁰ “Afric-American—Third Paper,” June 1859, 174. For a more detailed reading of this tablet see Ernest, *Liberation Historiography*, 322-323. Again, Ethiop offers an alternative to the specter of race-war Jefferson raises in *Notes on the State of Virginia*.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹²² “Afric-American—Third Paper,” June 1859, 176.

¹²³ “Afric-American Picture Gallery,” June 1859, 176.

¹²⁴ “Afric-American Picture Gallery,” June 1859, 176.

¹²⁵ As Matthew Cordova Frankel argues using Jefferson’s *Notes*, the sublime in a Kantian sense can function a dialectical movement from awe and rapture to harmony that mirrors the interplay between national and local interests, between actual and virtual representation, in the republican citizen. Frankel explains: “It is only through the sublime...that each new American subject may experience nature’s moral and institutional prescriptions as a single interior command, which, once complete, translates the psychic demands of citizenship into an aestheticized moment of surrender” to the state (709-710). Yet the moral imperative embedded in the sublime is not fully aligned with the ethical implications of virtual representation. Matthew Cordova Frankel. “‘Nature’s Nation’ Revisited: Citizenship and the Sublime in Thomas Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia*,” *American Literature* 73, no. 4 (December 2001), 695-725. In contrast to Jefferson’s sublime, I offer Ethiop’s sublime as a perspective or “attunement” in Kant’s words that maintains the disharmony. I focus on the sublime here as producing a sense of agitation that leads to and is symptomatic of critique: not an end, but a method and a means of not only judging other means, but (as reason) determining which ends are worth while.

¹²⁶ “Afric-American Picture Gallery,” 177.

¹²⁷ Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, 39; Goddu, *Gothic America*, 132. This wholeness is predicated on its ability to bind individuals to police the uses of space and language through self-reinforcing narratives of law and order, as in the Anthony Burns case, or through recursive myths of continuity, as in the fugue S.S.N. outlines. Wilson’s gothic doubling offers critical purchase on what Toni Morrison has called the “very real, pressing historical forces and the contradictions inherent in them,” allowing Wilson to expose the fissures within the surrounding political and moral order. See Reid-Phar who argues that heterotopias reveal “that myths are not hermetically sealed ‘truths’ or even self-consciously fashioned ideologies, but, on the contrary, nodes of communication, or formulae, that work to support ‘common’ sense notions of right and wrong, native and foreign, self and other” (347).

¹²⁸ “Afric-American Picture Gallery—Fifth Paper,” July 1859, 177.

¹²⁹ Morrison, *Playing*, 24.

¹³⁰ Goddu, *Gothic*, 13.

¹³¹ For Kant, sublimity in nature is contingent on whether or not the subject can face the unimaginable, threatening scene (the waterfall, for instance) without feeling threatened, without fleeing, physically or emotionally, in fear. In judging something sublime, the subject recognizes his or her physical powerlessness, but more importantly, the subject finds within his or her mind an expanded critical consciousness that “calls forth our power...to regard those things about which we are concerned (goods, health and life) as trivial and hence to regard its power...as not the sort of dominion over ourselves and our authority to which we would have to bow if it came down to our highest principles and their affirmation or abandonment.” Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 145-145.

¹³² By “supersensible,” I follow Kant’s division between the sensible—those phenomena that experience can account for and that fit under the jurisdiction of understanding, the beautiful, objectivity, and consensus—and the supersensible—those phenomena, like the sublime, for which experience has not yet or may never provide a frame. In literary studies, this binary generally appears in discussions of sensibility and legibility. See *Critique*, 524. For Gilroy, music serves the purpose of communicating the unspeakable of the slave sublime. Wilson, however, foregrounds the ability of the visual arts to represent what writing cannot. I think Wilson and Gilroy come at the same problem from different directions, and both use the position of critique to “translate” if not the exact meaning, then the ethos and philosophy, of these utterances.

¹³³ “Afric-American Picture Gallery—Fifth Paper,” July 1859, 176.

¹³⁴ Versions of this type of narrative abound throughout the corpus of African American writing, from Richard Allen and Absalom Jones’s yellow fever account, to David Walker’s *Appeal*, to Harriet Jacobs’s use of sentimental conventions. In each instance, the narrator normalizes the perspective of the oppressed in a way that highlights the “peculiar” nature of her surroundings.

¹³⁵ AAPG, Fifth Paper, July 1859, 216.

¹³⁶ As Goddu's reading of Wright's selling newspapers suggests, the gothic becomes a part of the national imaginary in a way that supports rather than subverts its boundaries. See *Gothic*, 1-2.

¹³⁷ AAPG, Fifth Paper, July 1859, 216.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 102. The exchange fits within a tradition following texts like Daniel Coker's "A Dialogue Between a Virginian and an African Minister" (1810), which features an intelligent black man catching a supporter of slaveholding or a slaveholder (typically Virginian) unawares.

¹⁴¹ AAPG, Fifth Paper, July, 217.

¹⁴² Ernest, *Liberation*, Chapter 5; Wilson *Specters*, 158-160.

¹⁴³ AAPG, Fifth Paper, July, 217.

¹⁴⁴ AAPG, Fifth Paper, July, 217.

¹⁴⁵ Note: Ohio judge decided federal fugitive slave law had supervening authority over Ohio state law, which would have protected the Garners, as state citizens, from re-enslavement.

¹⁴⁶ Ironically, Thoreau summarized Ethiop's choleric mood in his 1854 assessment of reactions to the Anthony Burns trial: "Suppose you have a small library, with pictures to adorn the walls- a garden laid out around- and contemplate scientific and literary pursuits and discover all at once that your villa, with all its contents is located in hell, and that the justice of the peace has a cloven foot and a forked tail- do not these things suddenly lose their value in your eyes?" See Thoreau, "Slavery in Massachusetts."

¹⁴⁷ AAPG, Second Paper, 89-90.

¹⁴⁸ See, for instance, AAPG, Second Paper, 89-90; and AAPG, Fifth Paper, July, 217.

¹⁴⁹ Indeed, as Berlant notes, scenes like the Black Forest can become negative images upon which the National Symbolic could be made stronger. See Berlant, *Anatomy of a Nation*, 54-56; Andrew F. Wood, "Managing the Lady Managers: The Shaping of Heterotopian Spaces in the 1893 Chicago Exposition's Woman's Building," *Southern Communication Journal* 69, no. 4 (Summer 2004), 291.

¹⁵⁰ "Afric-American—Third Paper," April 1859, 100.

¹⁵¹ "Afric-American Picture Gallery—Third Paper," 100. Ethiop's description of Tom echoes those of slave narrators like Henry Bibb and William Anderson, both of whom claim to have been "whipped up."

¹⁵² "Afric-American Picture Gallery.—Third Paper," 100.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁵⁴ AAPG, Fifth Paper, July, 217.

¹⁵⁵ AAPG, Second Paper, 89-90.

¹⁵⁶ AAPG, Second Paper, 90.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 215, 219.

¹⁵⁸ AAPG, Sixth Paper, August, 244.

¹⁵⁹ AAPG, Sixth Paper, August, 244.

¹⁶⁰ AAPG, Sixth Paper, August, 244.

¹⁶¹ AAPG, Sixth Paper, August, 244.

¹⁶² AAPG, Sixth Paper, August, 245. She echoes "Sidney's" remonstrances during the 1840 debate over the first NY state convention: he accuses the collective of "metaphysicising upon *things*, when they should be using the resistless energy of principle, to vindicate their wronged and deeply injured brethren." "William Whipper's Letters," *The Colored American*, March 13, 1841.

¹⁶³ *Legba's Crossing*, 9-10.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 9-11. See also Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, xx-xxi and 19-22.

¹⁶⁵ Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 139. Subjects like Tom "form...uncertain communities that contribute to the formation of enunciative collectives that call into question the distribution of roles, territories, and languages. In short, they contribute to the formation of political subjects that challenge the given distribution of the sensible. A political collective is not, in actual fact, an organism or a communal body. The channels for political subjectivation are not those of imaginary identification but those of 'literary' disincorporation" (40).

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: CONSTITUTIVE STORIES OF CITIZENSHIP

Throughout *Black Theories*, I have analyzed how black writers theorized citizenship as a matrix of practices—neighborliness, political participation, economic participation, and critique—with distinct ethical imperatives, critical sensibilities, and stylistic concerns. These practices cultivate and are cultivated through permeable civic spaces, free contact amongst a diverse citizenry, and the even circulation of civic power. I began with James McCune Smith’s account of how a young African named John’s resistance to white supremacy aboard a ship catalyzed a wider defense of equality. The young man’s refusal to succumb to another man’s violent attempt to enforce racial hierarchy resulted in a change in the ship’s composition, the people themselves refusing the “cankerous” prejudice that, for Smith, had become the concomitant of U.S republicanism. When the passengers “dub” John the “belt of the ship,” they were recognizing not only how their actions created a new space, but also a change in the very spirit of the ship, one that is less a fulfillment of U.S. republicanism and more a rebuke of its practices. If Smith originally calls our attention to the ship (an object) as symbol of the genius of U.S. *institutions*, the end of his narrative foregrounds the generative power of the people themselves and John’s active fight as republican citizenship’s central dynamo.

By way of conclusion, I turn to Frances Ellen Watkins Harper’s fiction in the *Anglo-African Magazine* between 1859 and 1860, as an exploration of the constitutive stories that could ground all other citizenship practices and sustain a prolonged battle for emancipation, even if, or perhaps especially when, violent conflict seemed not only imminent, but also necessary.¹

Watkins's "Fancy Sketches" and "Triumph of Freedom—A Dream" in particular offer an overview of black political rhetoric and citizenship practices from the past decades, analyze their grounding ethos, and argue that they should be focused through the fight against enslavement and the greater dissemination of freedom. This focus emphasizes the connection between black civic life and emancipation highlighted in Jones and Allen's call for an emancipatory "experiments," and it animates northern vigilance committees, Watkins's own calls to cultivate an ethics of "common defense," and Charles Henry Langston's 1851 proclamation: "I would vote under the United States Constitution on the same principle...that I would call on every slave, from Maryland to Texas, to arise and assert their *liberties*, and cut their masters' throats if they attempt again to reduce them to slavery."² Where *Narrative* offers an ethics of neighborliness that creates fellow citizenship through real sensibility and contact, and the black state conventions and the *Anglo-African Magazine* model the kinds of critical-intrusive and circulatory practices that work to distribute power evenly and to keep civic spaces permeable, Watkins's short fiction connects the citizenship practices I've outlined throughout *Black Theories* to John's initial self-defense, suggesting a reciprocal relation between anti-racism, histories of slave revolutions, and the everydayness of parlor conversation.

1. Fancy Sketches of Black Activism

Frances Ellen Watkins, born in Baltimore, MD, in 1825, had become a fixture on the anti-slavery and reform lecture circuit by the 1850s. Over the decade she'd also published two editions of *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects* (1854, 1857). Perhaps best known for her poetry and post-Civil War work, including the novel, *Iola Leroy or, Shadows Uplifted* (1892), Watkins regularly contributed poetry ("Truth"), essays ("Our Greatest Want") and fiction ("The Two

Offers,” “Fancy Sketches,” and “The Triumph of Freedom—A Dream”) to the *Anglo-African Magazine* during its run from January 1859 to March 1860.³ Before her marriage to Fenton Harper in 1860, Watkins also made regular contributions to the *National Anti-Slavery Standard, Liberator*, and *Weekly Anglo-African*.

The “Fancy Sketches” series began appearing in the November 1859 issue of the *Anglo-African Magazine*, and the series appeared regularly until the *Magazine*’s final issue in March 1860. There were five “Fancy Sketches” in all, the first two set just before a wedding reception in “the city,” the final three set in the country home of Jane’s aunt. While the *Anglo-African* never attributes “Fancy Sketches” to Watkins directly—it appears under “Anonymous” in the table of contents and by “Jane Rustic” in each issue—Watkins is almost certainly the author. As Carla Peterson notes, the series takes up themes and character types from “The Two Offers” (September and October 1859) and Watkins later published “Fancy Etchings,” another sketch series appearing in the *Christian Recorder* from 1871 to 1874, that uses similar thematic and structural elements, particularly the “device of parlor conversation among an aunt, her niece, and their visitors.”⁴ The characters also take up the theme of education from “Our Greatest Want,” one character describing it in precisely those words: “I think our great want... is a proper education.”⁵ Moreover, because Watkins did publish work in the *AAM* under her own name, her use of a pseudonym for “Fancy Sketches” does not necessarily indicate a need to mask her gender or some other aspect of her identity; rather, on the level of character “Jane Rustic” communicates the “plain-speaking” critical sensibilities of a “country girl who,” not unlike Ethiop’s “old woman” and Thomas Onward, “relies on her wit and political acumen to spark debate among the supposedly more sophisticated city folk.”⁶ By writing pseudonymously Watkins was also connecting her work to a community of black pseudonymous writers dating

back several decades that included Sarah Forten, who wrote as “Magawisca” in the *Liberator*, Smith’s *Communitipaw*, Wilson’s *Ethiop*, and others writing for *Frederick Douglass’s Paper* and the *AAM*. Put somewhat differently, by explicitly writing in the sketch form and using a pseudonym in the *AAM*, Watkins was inviting readers to read “Fancy Sketches” as a part of the same thought-world and literary tradition as *Ethiop*’s “Afric-American Picture Gallery” and the sketches I analyzed in Chapter 4.

Despite these generic and thematic similarities, however, “Fancy Sketches” differs from Wilson’s “Afric-American Picture Gallery” in several important ways: 1) Watkins situates Jane Rustic among a black middle class rather than an interracial collection of strangers, and most of the action happens in parlor spaces rather than a public gallery or on urban streets. 2) Jane is much more aligned with Tom than *Ethiop* in the sense that she is literally an orphan (her parents are dead), who seems slightly outside of whatever group she happens to become a part of, often interrupting conversations already in progress with questions, prodding as a kind of gadfly.⁷ 3) If the “Afric-American Picture Gallery” critiques a utopian promise of white wholeness, “Fancy Sketches” deconstructs the “metaphorical veils” of those black citizens whose class, gender, and geographical privilege allow them to discuss anti-slavery and reform activism as idle “chit-chat,” those who have convinced themselves that the immediate threat of racial violence (both physical and structural) is too remote to require anything more than abstract speculation. Instead, the series argues for the cultivation of a “home culture” that could help prepare black citizens for what Watkins sees as a siege on “Freedom” in the present and a greater conflict in the future.⁸

In the first installment, “Chit Chat, or Fancy Sketches,” Jane attends a wedding where attendees rehearse the kind of tactical debates I discuss in previous chapters. All angles are

represented—black aristocracy, violent revolution, emigration, education and reform, etc.—but sapped of an impulse towards action or sense of urgency. The first speaker echoes accords in black state conventions and periodicals: “‘Give us wealth,’ said he, ‘and that will give us position; white men will court our society, and gold, though yellow will be the most potent whitewash we can find.’”⁹ Other speakers include “emigration friend,” “a dark-browed and enthusiastic speaker” who argues that he “would have our race live out their own individuality, and build up their own character”; a man “whose fair complexion scarcely showed his identity with the negro race” arguing for “staying and fighting it out”; and “an impetuous youth who was a good soldier when there was no battle to fight.” The whole exchange reads like a well-rehearsed play or, in Jane’s words, “so much buncombe,” not because of the augments themselves, but because the group has manufactured a stance of helplessness and detachment.¹⁰ The youth pledges to support the slave “if he will only throw down his sugar knife, cast away his cotton hook, and strike for liberty.”¹¹ This last comment elicits a “mischievous” response from Jane; she “did not feel any fear of soon seeing” the man’s “wife widowed by his sleeping in a martial grave, a martyr to the cause of negro freedom.” Jane’s intrusion in the conversation exposes both the patriarchal attitudes of a man who does “not think it worth while to combat” her critique and how such men use talk of rebellion as a scapegoat for their lack of activity, shifting attention from their own complacency to slaves who, they argue, have not yet made efforts on their own behalf.¹² The argument, however, is undercut by the man’s incompetence and hypocrisy: he calls for slaves to throw down the very objects—“knife” and “cotton hook”—that would help them in their “strike for liberty,” and, as Jane observes, “several fugitives had been taken from [their] State,” without his lifting a finger.

While the characters are apparent caricatures, the whole scene nevertheless offers a potent warning that contemporary activists risk replicating this vacuity if their focus becomes too insular and disconnected to actual events. Watkins's point here is not which strategy—wealth, education, rebellion, emigration, etc.—is more viable; Jane never quite takes a side, though she seems least satisfied with the emigration option. Rather, “Fancy Sketches” is concerned with exploring a tradition of black political thought and activism and those practices that could maintain the connection between rhetoric and practice even when a sheen of comfort had been achieved. This conversation could have been lifted out of convention proceedings, newspapers, or country parlors; and these were precisely the arguments filling the pages of Thomas Hamilton's *Weekly Anglo-African*, the *Anglo-African Magazine*'s weekly counterpart. Many prominent black activists—Mary Ann Shadd Cary, Martin R. Delany, Frederick Douglass, Henry Highland Garnet, James McCune Smith, and Watkins herself among others—were taking part in feverish debates about the future of black citizenship and activism. Was emigration (selective or en masse) the answer to full citizenship and emancipation, and if so, to where? Did the crisis over the election of Abraham Lincoln signal an impending resolution, whether political or violent, and what role should black citizens have in bringing about this resolution? How could black citizens best support the efforts of escaped and escaping slaves?

“Fancy Sketches” mirrors this debate, but frames it as the chatter used to fill the time and show off rather than the kind of discussion characteristic of critical citizenship.¹³ These were people who, Jane observes, preferred lamplight to sunlight “as if gas-light were an improvement on sunshine.”¹⁴ They take concern for “the race” as a fashionable badge of philanthropy, observing the forms of past civic practices, but stopping short of their disruptive possibilities. And yet, the ease with which they produce this debate and its very ubiquity offers a warning that

current activists, if they are not careful, risk becoming, in one observer's words, a "disgrace," too focused on their own "wrangling and bitterness" to attend to the needs of the communities they purport to represent.¹⁵ They risk observing the form of critical citizenship—just as a lamp gives the form of light—without realizing of its substance. Jane's critique of the company's empty rhetoric recalls neighborly citizenship's challenge to those trading in the rhetoric of respectability and reform to "do all the good" they can, in *Narrative's* terms, for their "fellow suffering mortals."¹⁶ The people making up Watkins's wedding party neither recognize slaves or "the colored people" more generally as moral equals nor do they think about their concerns as proximately related to their own. Talking about the impediments to improving the "condition of our people" is sufficient to prove their credentials.¹⁷

2. Catalyzing Action: Parlor Room Agitation

Despite the potential for stagnation, Watkins finds value in the parlor and "chit chat" as a space where theories and practices of citizenship could be discussed and disseminated as an active and evolving intellectual tradition.¹⁸ "Fancy Sketches" and "Triumph" feature sequences and valorize resistance (violent, if required) through references to the aesthetics of the sublime and its production of "agitation." Similar to Wilson's "Black Forrest" sequence, "Zombi, or Fancy Sketches" (February 1860), points to the "thrillingly sublime" courage of those who fought against enslavement as models not only for "negro courage," but also for civic practice.¹⁹ These examples of "negro courage," including "that Tennessee hero" who "received 750 lashes, and died" because he would not betray an escape plan and "stories of Margaret Garner, of Aunt Sally, of Toussaint L'Ouverture, of Denmark Veazy [sic], of Nathaniel Turner...and others," provide the ethical center of Watkins's narrative landscape, constitutive stories that could give

purpose to the “intellectual acquirements” and wealth Jane finds among her friends and family and the apathy Watkins senses among her readers, but without the debilitating isolation found in Wilson’s sketches. Jane makes an argument for “Zombi” as a constitutive narrative for the whole of African America and those fighting for greater freedom—a community that is sieged by an ostensibly overwhelming force and from which, in Jane and Ballard’s view, sacrifices on multiple fronts will be required.

Watkins introduces “Zombi” as a part of a conversation about “negro courage” and education between Jane, her cousin, Miranda, and Mr. Ballard, a student who is presumably courting Miranda. It is an account of an actual fifteenth-century South American maroon society, the Palmares, led by Zumbi.²⁰ After helping the Portuguese defeat the Dutch, explains Ballard, the former slaves refused to “[lay] aside the implements of war for the badges of slavery” and “constituted a nation under the name of the Palmerese [sic].”²¹ The society prospered for over two decades, growing to over twenty thousand. When Portuguese armies finally attacked them, Zombi and his compatriots hold them off until their ammunition and provisions run out and Portuguese reinforcements arrive. While many of Palmares’s citizens were captured and enslaved, the nation’s leaders “resolved not to be taken alive” and instead leapt to their deaths.²²

Ballard links the development of maroon communities in the Atlantic world to free black communities in the U.S., juxtaposing Zombi’s rebellion to cultivating a “well-directed home education” and broader “home culture” to the masses of black people, a project that, Jane observes, “may need more true courage and fortitude than the battle-field calls for.”²³ The connections are stronger than they appear on first reading. This connection, as Peterson has argued, provided a “foundation of black nationalist thought” throughout the century, and it

intensified during the 1850s and early 1860s.²⁴ Ballard’s description of how the Palmares “formed a government” and “placed stockades[,] not knowing how long they would be permitted to live unmolested it was necessary to provide for the common defense,” speaks to a sense of being under siege that Jane registers her contempt for black men who “can put on pretty little aprons with showy rosettes, and march amid the darkness of the Dred Scott Decision, over the very streets where the trembling fugitive is dragged back to bondage.”²⁵ It’s not that Jane condemns the parades as such. For nominally free black citizens to parade in the streets would be laudable as a spatial practice, a display of community solidarity and even an act of intrusiveness in certain contexts given the history of white violence against them. But, like the conversation at the wedding party, they seem a misplaced use of resources for the political exigencies of the post-*Dred Scott* era, especially if an equal measure of support cannot be found for vigilance committees and uplift more generally. Jane’s frustration leads to a call for black citizens to rethink the efficacy of traditions like parades and everyday politics more broadly in the context of a more dangerous political terrain. “Peace has its tests of valor as well as war; and,” Jane concludes;

if I hear a colored man boast of what he would do in the event of an insurrection, and yet not brave enough to identify himself with the colored people, but shrinking from social contact with them on account of their ignorance, poverty and social disadvantages....[if such a person,] is not brave enough to battle with them in freedom...then I am not sure that he will be courageous enough to risk his life for me in slavery.²⁶

Practices in freedom—the kind of civic infrastructure that neighborly, economic, and critical civic practices can foster and the kind of engaged citizenship the wedding party lacks—create the bonds and material support through which the collective could make larger scale changes.

The choice of Palmares over Haiti is also significant in the context of emigration and the history of republican governance in the hemisphere. Peterson observes that focusing on

Palmares signals not only Watkins's opposition to emigration (a sentiment she shared with her cousin, William J. Watkins), but also an uneasiness with Haiti's "tragic history of degeneration," an uneasiness shared by her contemporaries in the U.S., including James T. Holly's conclusion that the nation showed none of the necessary "elements of morality and industrial progress."²⁷ Moreover, as one of the earliest models of republican governance in the hemisphere—older than Brazil, the United States, and Haiti—Palmares represents ground zero for the tradition I have been examining throughout *Black Theories*—one based in "equal laws" and "equal rights" with "no hideous slave-code" to compromise its institutions.²⁸

Yet this tradition is not one filled with triumphal victories; rather, it offers the sobering forecast of uncertainty and hard work registered in Watkins's letters and fiction for the *AAM* over these months register as a preoccupation with the power of sacrifice and making meaning out of losses, especially in the wake of John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry on October 16, 1859. The resultant recapture of many of its citizens also serves as warning for free black citizens, a warning about the precariousness of their position, the ease with which allies can become enemies, and the destructive potential of white supremacy and imperial avarice more generally. *Zombi*'s ending with suicide and enslavement makes Palmares both an inspiration worth celebrating, on the order of the Battle of Thermopylae or siege of Carthage, and a dire warning about the persistence and nearly overwhelming force of "the fell spirit of destruction."²⁹ Indeed, Carthage provides an apt point of comparison for Jane as she wonders if her contemporaries "would be willing, like the women of Carthage, to sacrifice" their jewels "for the good of their race" against, again, a destructive European force.³⁰ Watkins echoes these sentiments in "An Appeal for the Philadelphia Rescuers," a call to support those who attempted to rescue Moses Horner in June 1860: "Let the hands of toil release their hold upon their hard-

won earnings, feeling that there is no poverty like the poverty of meanness, no bankruptcy like that of a heart bankrupt in just, kind, and generous feelings.”³¹

Both Jane and Ballard suggest that the circulation of such narratives in conversations and in print could contribute, not towards and immediate uprising, but rather towards “the gradual uprising and improvement of the masses.” The telling of “Zombi” initiates a sublime response for Miranda, but in contrast to Ethiop’s encounter with Bernice, her response affirms action and retelling, rather than isolation and (generic and physical) containment. The narrative “stir[s]” Miranda’s “soul” so that she vows “to be an active worker, and not an idle spectator” to which Jane responds:

Now, I tell you, Miranda, one thing we can do, we can do it ourselves and try and enlist others in the same work, and that is to try to sustain the “Anglo-African.” It is on of the most welcome papers that reaches me, and I want it to live.... I want the Anglo-African to live at least as one of our monuments. I have the first volume, it was presented to me nicely bound, and it forms one of the valued books of my small library. I would like to see that book bound in the houses of our people, and kept in existence as something to stimulate our young people to an interest in their improvement and progress.³²

Aside from the explicit plug for the struggling magazine (several are sprinkled throughout “Fancy Sketches”), the passage configures the parlor as a space for cultivating a revolutionary consciousness: receiving the *AAM* as a gift book (advertised in multiple weeklies and in the December issue of first volume) adds to her “small library,” which contains or perhaps binds the word to a project of people-building, as a monument to and living agent in the creation of an Anglo-African (America), starting with the education of children.³³ We can read Jane’s “small library,” then, as a generative node of democratic discourse and action that maintains the force of the slave sublime through print and oral traditions.³⁴

The process of monumentalizing the Anglo-African is less about the object itself and more about the set of practices required to create such a monument: the active binding, keeping,

and transmission of the text as a part of larger project involving the demolition of slavery and its infrastructure. Indeed, the second, unquoted, *Anglo-African* suggests a slippage between the preservation of the printed word (“Anglo-African”) and the perpetuation of the *Anglo-African* as critical method and as a productive conceptual framework for people-buiding. Jane’s parlor, then, resonates with the conditions of maroonage that Wilson explores in the “Afric-American Picture Gallery” but is infused with practices of contact and circulation that not only connect maroon space to maroon space, but also focuses them outward, between generations and into the broader body politic.³⁵ The entire scene works to foster the mode of reading and responding characteristic critical citizenship, rather than “idle spectatorship,” as a part of the fabric of everyday life in the parlor conversations among friends and potential lovers, stories passed on as a precious gift, and the foundation that would ground all other pursuits.³⁶

3. Freedom Ascendant

“The Triumph of Freedom—A Dream,” Watkins’s other short story in the 1860 volume of the *Anglo-African*, illustrates in mythological terms the agitational process Jane and Ballard witness in Miranda, connecting their conversation to contemporary events—including attempted fugitive rescues and John Brown’s raid on the federal arsenal at Harper’s Ferry—and, at the same time, providing context for the ethical deployment of violence. “Triumph” appeared in the January issue of the *AAM* (the same issue as “Home Influences, and Negro Courage, or Fancy Sketches”) and is perhaps better known than “Fancy Sketches” because it appears in *A Brighter Coming Day: A Frances Ellen Watkins Harper Reader*. The story draws heavily from Watkins’s correspondences during the months preceding Brown’s execution, and it reflects her encounters with fugitive slave rescue attempts, both successful and unsuccessful. Through the series of

events in “Triumph,” Watkins maps how the sublime encounter catalyzes the movement towards structural change.

In brief, the first-person narrator falls asleep and has a vision in which she is guided to the altar of a goddess in “robe of flowing white” that upon further inspection “was not pure white,” but had “great spots of blood” all over it. As the narrator and her guide watch priests attesting to the goddess’s righteousness and attempting to cover these spots with passages from sacred texts, a young man “his face pale with emotion and horror,” calls out: ““It is false.”” Guided by this young man, we discover that the foundation of the altar is filled with and supported by “piles of hearts laid layer upon layer,” including “the hearts of a hundred thousand new-born babes,” “the hearts of desolate slave mothers, robbed of their little ones,” of crushed manhood, of “young girls, sold from the warm clasp of their mothers’ arms,” and of “hearts in which the manhood has never been developed.”³⁷ Again, Watkins, like Wilson, turns to the sublime, describing the man’s initial word as “sublime in its brevity,” and the subsequent demonstration as so powerful that it unleashes “the spirit of Agitation,” the mental processes associated with critical citizenship. Even as the goddess calls for her priests to hide her “beneath [their] constitutions and laws” and “beneath the shadow of [their] pulpits,” Agitation pierces “into the recesses of her guilty soul,” and she “tremble[s] before its searching glance.”³⁸ The sublime figure and Agitation pursue their audiences, exercising the politics of disruption and circulation that, as with the telling of “Zombi,” provide a direct call to action, this time on the mass scale for which both Jane and Ballard advocate.³⁹ A second, “aged” man then appears with “gray hair float[ing] in the air,” leading a group of men attempting to overthrow the goddess. “[A] blood-stained ruffian, named General Government,” however, arrives to defend her, and the man and his companions are imprisoned and hanged. The goddess’s “minions” then “[drain] the

blood from his veins,” but the blood, “like the terrible teeth sown by Cadmus . . . woke up armed men to smite the terror-stricken power.” The story ends with this army unseating the goddess and enthroning Freedom in her place.⁴⁰ After the conflict, the bodies of the man and his followers become “stepping-stones of Freedom to power,” figured as both monument to their heroism and support for the next phase in the revolution.

In the context of “Fancy Sketches” and Jane and Ballard’s call for a mass movement with enduring monuments, this imagery contributes to the larger narrative of common defense and sacrifice Watkins outlines in “Zombi” and other installments. Importantly, though the old man is perhaps the story’s central figure, “Triumph” develops in several stages—critique to agitation to action to critique, and so on—that recall Miranda’s response to “Zombi,” and the final enthronement of Freedom depends on the “freemen” who go into battle against “hoary forms of gigantic Error and colossal Theory” with “fresh vigor” *even as* enslaved men “burst their chains.”⁴¹ In contrast to *Blake*, which imagines a plan for fomenting slave rebellion in some detail, “Triumph” sketches the kind of collective ethos needed for radical change. Though the actual overthrow happens almost spontaneously from both ends—free and enslaved people rising up simultaneously—it is the result of an accretive process of consciousness raising and contingency. If “Zombi” provides historical grounding for Watkins’s calls for greater vigilance, and “Fancy Sketches” more broadly offers frameworks for applying disseminating this model in everyday practice, “Triumph” looks forward to what might happen as a result of these cumulative efforts in the hopes that the penultimate resolution might be close at hand.⁴²

Indeed, “Triumph” takes on a tone of prophesy that was not lost to readers who could not help but connect the old man to John Brown, as accounts of his failed raid and subsequent trial consumed periodicals, including the *Anglo-African Magazine*.⁴³ Indeed, Watkins’s description

of the aged man reproduces language from her letters to Brown and others that appeared in the *Weekly Anglo-African* and the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*.⁴⁴ Watkins praises Brown and his company for having “rocked the bloody Bastille,” and she suggests that their “bodies may be only her [Freedom’s] first stepping stones to dominion.” Watkins uses similar language in a December 9, 1859, letter published in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*:

Virginia has sacrificed that dear old man who laid his hands upon the bloody citadel of American slavery and shook the guilty fabric to its base; shall not, my dear friend, his blood be a fresh baptism of freedom, his grave a new altar where men may record more earnest vows against slavery?⁴⁵

Brown becomes a Christ-figure whose execution creates a “new altar,” a new civic ethos upon which men and women like Miranda might construct more active or “earnest” citizenship practices. Like Jones and Allen’s “real sensibility,” Watkins’s “more earnest vows” calls on citizens to dedicate themselves to Freedom not simply as an ideal or article of faith, but rather as a “common cause” that compels them to action. For Watkins, the raid on Harper’s Ferry shook the nation’s constitutive documents—the “fabric” (paper) upon which citizens had written its civic narratives, in a way that might create the impetus for a greater moment of revision. It reproduces on a national scale John’s resistance on the *Caledonia*. Where citizens “so fresh, from the baptism of the Revolution” could frame a Constitution that would “permit the African slave trade,” “the dark intent of the fugitive clause,” and the spread of “cankorous prejudice,” to return to Smith’s journal, citizens receiving the “baptism of freedom” would author a new compact.⁴⁶

The metaphor of baptism is apt, not because Brown, Watkins’s old man, or any single person delivers the people, but rather because he is a part of a chain of citizens and texts that inspire the people to deliver themselves, to practice citizenship as an expression of neighborhood without the limitations on human rights Douglass notes in 1854. Even as Watkins invokes

physical violence, a clash between humans and Titans (Error and Theory), former slaves and a colonial power (Palmares and Portugal), John Brown and the government, however, she also uses a Christian typology (the narrator recalls John of Patmos and the old man recalls a Christ figure) that frames the penultimate war as “not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”⁴⁷ Put somewhat differently, by using narrative formulas from classical mythology, historical slave rebellions, and Christian tradition across a series of texts, Watkins produces a pragmatic, a common ethos of resistance and vigilance for and multi-modal response to the complicated, chaotic, and dour outlook at the start of the 1860s. While “Zombi” and “Triumph” evoke a sense of grandeur, “Fancy Sketches” grounds their ideals in everyday practice. “This is a common cause,” Watkins writes to William Still in 1859, “The humblest and feeblest of us can do something,” and, “Fancy Sketches” suggests, this work of everyday, active citizenship requires its own degree of courage.⁴⁸

Through these stories, Watkins organizes the theories and practices of citizenship I’ve outlined in previous chapters—the urgency of critical citizenship, the black state conventions’ emphasis on structural change and participatory politics, and the street-level protocols of responsibility and responsiveness outlined in *Narrative* and the Communipaw-Ethiop debates—around a collective project of wholesale structural change, from “home culture” to the Constitution. Her insistence on maintaining the link between theory and practice, between form and substance, gets to the heart of the story *Black Theories* set out to tell, a story about how black writers in the early United States imagined citizenship as an expansive set of actions calibrated not only to distribute power evenly among a diverse citizenry in freedom but also to use this power to liberate those in slavery.

And yet, the seeming intractability of white supremacy and avaricious self-interest combined with narratives of loss outlined throughout this project points to the difficulty of making citizenship work along these lines and of keeping faith in a political system that, as “Triumph” graphically details, enshrined a goddess founded on and materially supported by the heart and blood of others. With no way of knowing that South Carolina would secede from the Union in December 1860, that the states would be at war the following year, or that birthright citizenship would eventually become the federal standard, Watkins and others nevertheless offer a vision of what citizenship might have been and what it has yet to become. That their challenge was not consistently reflected in U.S. institutions and civic practices does not diminish its power; rather, black theories of citizenship persist in their urgent call for citizens to engage actively within others in a spirit of common humanity and mutual aid, and they reveal the degree to which citizenship on these terms can be a radically imaginative process.

¹ On the role constitutive stories in constituting a political body, see Rogers Smith, “Citizenship and the Politics of People-Building,” *Citizenship Studies* 5, no. 1 (2001): 73-96. Michael Stancliff observes that the “ethical disposition” of slave women in particular guided Watkins’s politics and pedagogy. See Stancliff, *Frances Ellen Watkins Harper: African American Reform and the Rise of a Modern Nation State* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 44.

² “Minutes and Address of the State Convention of the Colored Citizens of Ohio, Convened at Columbus” January 15-18, 1851 in *Proceedings of the Black State Conventions, 1840–1865*, 2 vols. eds. Philip S. Foner and George E. Walker (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979–80), 1:263.

³ Few literary critics have taken up “Fancy Sketches” on its own terms. My reading of the series builds on Carla L. Peterson, “Literary Transnationalism and Diasporic History: Frances Watkins harper’s ‘Fancy Sketches,’ 1859-60” in *Women’s Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery in the Era of Emancipation*, ed. Kathryn Kish Sklar and James Brewer Stewart (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 189-208; Stancliff, *Frances Ellen Watkins Harper: African American Reform Rhetoric and the Rise of a Modern Nation State* (New York: Routledge, 2011); and Melba Joyce Boyd, *Discarded Legacy: Politics and Poetics in the Life of Frances E.W. Harper, 1825-1911* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 86-87;

⁴ See Peterson, 190-191.

⁵ “Chit Chat,” 342.

⁶ Peterson 192.

⁷ Dana Villa notes in *Socratic Citizenship* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), “The dissident or gadfly...reminds us that the truth in morality and human affairs is likely to be many-sided, complex rather than formulaic” (62).

⁸ Writers like Martin R. Delany, Mary Ann Shadd Carey, and William J. Wilson make similar calls for “home culture.” Wilson, writing as Ethiop, argues that “vigorous fireside instruction” provides the most powerful tool for overcoming material inequality, “no matter how humble be that fireside”: “A man among us in respectable circumstances, on the contrary, teaches his sons and daughters to move on a scale equal to that of one worth one hundred thousand dollars.” “From Our Brooklyn Correspondent,” *Frederick Douglass’s Paper*, January 1, 1852.

⁹ Readers familiar with the economic debates in *Douglass's Paper*, and the economic discourse in the *AAM*, including Watkins's own "Our Greatest Want" (*AAM*, May 1859) and the last installment of the "African-American Picture Gallery" would recognize several key terms from that argument: "wealth" and "position" on one side and "whitewash" on the other.

¹⁰ "Chit Chat," 341-342. As my discussion of Bernice and the Black Forrest suggests, one of the risks for any insurgent politics is that it can serve the hegemonic strategies such practices were meant to disrupt, especially as spaces like conventions, parades, and the like become static, codified as *the* accepted site of oppositional agency. Such a counterpublic could thrive—to a degree—as long as it remained within this space without appreciably affecting the surrounding society, like lymph nodes in the overall system. Watkins explores the difference in the next installment. Jane's encounter with what she describes as "apish" mimicking of forms—both of white consumption and black political discourse—prompts a dream about a convention for the "Anti-sunshine Society" (a shadow of the performative politics I discuss through the black state conventions) where delegates pass the following resolutions:

That it shall be the duty of this convention to send out lecturers, and circulate documents and tracts to show the superiority of gaslight over sunshine.... That no woman shall hold any office in our Society, unless it be to collect funds.... That the sun is a bore, because it freckles our faces and tans our complexions.... That we will petition the man in the moon to weave a curtain of clouds or a shroud of mist to bar the rising of the sun. ("Town and Country, or Fancy Sketches. Number II," 384.)

When Jane attempts to object, the men shout her down in the language of parliamentary procedure: "order!" "question!" Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker! The lady is out of order." The chair rules in their favor, forcing Jane to yield the floor. Jane wakes to the morning sun and the "satisfaction of knowing that the anti-sunshine convention was only a dream." The political forum that once provided a venue for reform activism of multiple stripes becomes a space of repressive officiousness and a public whose sense of the common good has gone horribly awry. The second resolution banning women from holding office, moreover, replays the man's contempt for her opinion at the wedding and recalls the schisms in the anti-slavery establishment during the 1840s over women's participation and the absence of women in the proceedings or official records of black state and national conventions across the century. As such, the dream carries the dual warning that current activists, if they are not careful, risk quibbling over issues too remote from the needs of the communities they purport to represent, and that the politics of the past have flaws should not be mimicked.

¹¹ "Chit Chat," 341.

¹² See also Peterson, "Literary Transnationalism," 198; and Stancliff, 44-47.

¹³ As Peterson aptly observes, "Coming from parlor men of privilege" the notion of emigration or slave rebellion "smack of hypocrisy, of a fundamental lack of sympathy." Peterson, "Literary Transnationalism," 198.

¹⁴ "Chit Chat," 341.

¹⁵ See Caleb, "A Note on Leaders," *Weekly Anglo-African*, May 4, 1861, 2 no. 42 (94). Caleb was joining several of the *Weekly Anglo-African's* readers who were frustrated with the several-month's-long debate in public and in print between Henry Highland Garnet, James McCune Smith, Martin R. Delany, and others over various emigration plans. At points the debate devolved into *ad hominem* with Garnet's describing Smith as "Dr. Smith, the autocrat of the West Broadway drug shop," and Smith's purportedly arguing that for Garnet and his supporters, "next to God is the white man." See for instance, James McCune Smith, "Emigration," *Weekly Anglo-African*, January 5, 1861 2 no.25 (77); "A Note from Mr. Garnet, on the proper mode of treating jealous, and unscrupulous slanders and false witness," *Weekly Anglo-African*, January 12, 1861 2 no. 26 (78); "Mr. Garnet's Reply to Dr. James M'Cune Smith," *Weekly Anglo-African* January 19, 1861, 2 no. 27 (79); "The Emigration Question: Letters from the People" January 26, 1861, February 2, 1861, February 16, 1861, and February 23 1861; and "Dr. Delany's Letter to Rev. J. T. Holly," February 2, 1861. 2 no. 29 (81). See also Pease and Pease, *They Who Would Be Free*, 296.

¹⁶ Peterson makes this connection in her own analysis of sympathy in "Fancy Sketches," arguing, "The feeling subject identifies with the suffering object in order to understand his (or her) plight and come to his (or her) aid" in a spirit of "congeniality" that acknowledges "relationships of interdependence and mutuality." See Peterson, "Literary Transnationalism," 198.

¹⁷ "Chit Chat," 340.

¹⁸ "Zombi, or Fancy Sketches," *Anglo-African Magazine* 2 no. 2 (February 1860) 35.

¹⁹ "Home Influences, and Negro Courage, or Fancy Sketches. No. III," 11. As Pease and Pease observe, by 1860 such lists and the call for free black citizens to find inspiration in them was "commonplace." See Pease and Pease, 237.

²⁰ See Peterson, 202. Peterson suggests that Robert Southey's *History of Brazil* (1821) was most likely the source for Watkins's account of the Palmares.

²¹ "Zombi, or Fancy Sketches. Number IV," *AAM*. 2.2 February 1860, 36.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ "Zombi," 35. See Peterson, "Literary Transnationalism," 196-197.

²⁴ Peterson, "Literary Transnationalism, 196-197.

²⁵ "Home Influences," *AAM* (January 1860), 10.

²⁶ "Home Influences," *Anglo-African Magazine* vol. 2 (January 1860): 11.

²⁷ See Peterson, 206; Holly, "Thoughts on Hayti," *Anglo-African Magazine* (September 1859), 299.

²⁸ "Zombi," 36.

²⁹ Watkins's connections to classical mythology and history have become much clearer to me thanks to conversations with Nicole Spigner.

³⁰ "Home Influences, and Negro Courage, or Fancy Sketches," *Anglo-African Magazine* 2 (February 1860): 10.

³¹ "An Appeal for the Philadelphia Rescuers" in *A Brighter Coming Day: A Frances Ellen Watkins Reader*, ed. Frances Smith Foster (New York: Feminist Press, 1990), 52.

³² *Ibid.*, 36-37.

³³ As Peterson has argued, Jane's sketches "blur the lines between public and domestic spheres, and challenge traditional views of men and women's proper spaces" in a way that also allows for a more capacious definition of revolutionary work (197).

³⁴ As Houston Baker has observed in *I Don't Hate the South*, "American identity formation and citizenship entitlements have always been projects situated as resolutely in the library as in the bivouacs of Valley Forge, and often, perhaps, more healthily and democratically situated in the Library of Congress than in the halls of Congress." See Baker, *I Don't Hate the South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 27; and C. Douglas Lummis, *Radical Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

³⁵ For Peterson, "these seemingly trivial sketches are in fact the exact opposite; they raise fundamental questions about social value, political strategy, and literary composition of vital interest to free blacks in the antebellum North." See Peterson, "Literary Transnationalism," 190 and 196-197.

³⁶ On the role of the black press in cultivating its own particular mode of reading, see Ernest, *Liberation Historiography* 297. As Ernest's reading of the black press reveals, even as editors and writers filled the pages of their periodicals with the building blocks of revolution, they also needed to promote within their target communities "an African American mode of reading" receptive to their message and calibrated to read the "text" of history through the same lens.

³⁷ "The Triumph of Freedom—A Dream," 115-116.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 116.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁴² As Jane and William Pease observe, "as the condition of freemen became even more precarious, more of them extended approval to past revolts and encouragement to future ones." See Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, *They Who Would Be Free: Blacks' Search for Freedom, 1830-1861* (New York: Atheneum, 1974), 240.

⁴³ In one of the few essays that treats "Triumph" at any length, Michael Stancliff has described the narrative as "a republican allegory of the abolitionist moment" that "serves as a brief history of abolitionist rhetoric, a figuration of its providential import and its place in the progress of the republic." See Stancliff, 34-35.

⁴⁴ See Melba Joyce Boyd, *Discarded Legacy: Politics and Poetics in the Life of Frances E.W. Harper, 1825-1911* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 86-87.

⁴⁵ "To John Brown" November 25, 1859 in Frances Smith Foster ed. *A Brighter Coming Day*, 49-50.

⁴⁶ "Miss Watkins and the Constitution" in Frances Smith Foster ed., *A Brighter Coming Day*, 47-48.

⁴⁷ Ephesians 6:12, *KJV*.

⁴⁸ "I Have a Right to Do My Share," in Foster ed. *Brighter Day*, 47. Frederick Douglass similarly posits in 1850, "the humblest may stand forth and be excused for opposing even his weakness to the torrent of evil." Douglass, "Lecture on Slavery, No. 1, delivered in Corinthian Hall, Rochester, N.Y., on Sunday evening, December 1, 1850" in *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Philip S. Foner (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), 164. See also Jacqueline Bacon's discussion of how this passage initially positions Douglass as among the "humble" and weak only to invert the hierarchical assumptions of his audience and society more

generally. Bacon usefully connects the passage to a “dual tendencies within Christ’s teachings[,] which refer to both submission and liberation,” and which authorize a more radical approach to politics generated from those who occupy the humblest positions. Bacon, *The Humblest May Stand Forth: Rhetoric, Empowerment, and Abolition* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), 66-68.

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