

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: SUTTON E. GRIGGS AND THE AFRICAN AMERICAN
LITERARY TRADITION OF PAMPHLETEERING

Eric M. Curry, Doctor of Philosophy, 2015

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English

This dissertation argues that pamphlets have been neglected as a literary antecedent to the novel by scholars of African American literature. The dissertation focuses in particular on a narrative tradition of black uplift philosophy in early African American pamphlets published between the Revolutionary and antebellum eras, and argues that this tradition established a form of quasi-novelistic discourse that had a significant influence on Sutton E. Griggs, turn-of-the-century African American novelist and pamphleteer. I contend that the pamphlet was one of, if not the, most important genres of political and literary representation for early African American writers. By pointing to different ways of reading Griggs and positioning his works in African American literary history, the dissertation works to correct what I see as a misapprehension of the author's legacy by the editors of the recent critical volume, *Jim Crow, Literature, and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs*. I tell a new story about this legacy that begins by looking back to late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century black pamphleteering and the rise of the African American novel in order to get a better understanding of Griggs's literary activism from 1899 to 1923.

SUTTON E. GRIGGS AND THE AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERARY TRADITION OF
PAMPHLETEERING

by

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Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2015

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Introduction: Sutton E. Griggs and the African American Literary Tradition of Pamphleteering

This dissertation studies African American novelist Sutton E. Griggs (1872-1933) in relation to the African American tradition of pamphleteering—a tradition that scholars have not yet considered as a crucial, early forebear of the African American novel. Griggs's critical reputation is mostly that of a turn-of-the-century novelist, but what if we think of him as a capstone figure to a long nineteenth-century of African American pamphleteering? Reading Griggs from the perspective of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century African American literary tradition of pamphleteering helps illuminate the connections in his novels between literature, politics, and racial representation in new ways. At the same time, looking back to early African American pamphleteering from the perspective of turn-of-the-century popular fiction and African American literary nationalism can help to elucidate the fundamental role pamphlets and pamphleteering played in the rise of the African American novel. This dual focus reveals the importance of pamphlets and pamphleteering to the emergence and development of a narrative voice that would mark much of African American literary production in the long nineteenth century.

Modern readers might conceive of a pamphlet as a single sheet of paper, folded three times, and relaying specific information about some particular topic, like a pamphlet detailing the benefits and side effects of a medication available at a doctor's office. However, for readers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, pamphlets were small, unbound publications of about ten to one hundred pages in length. A modern

reader might call this kind of publication a “booklet,” and, really, pamphlets were inexpensive, easily produced, more widely circulated, small and unbound books. Pamphleteering is the practice of writing, publishing, and circulating these small, unbound booklets. Part literary production and often part political action, pamphleteering was one of the most common ways of publishing and circulating texts from around 1600 to 1900. Pamphleteering was a way of getting one’s writing into circulation, to be sure, but it was just as important as a means of interceding in and potentially re-shaping public discourse and debate.

Pamphlets were part of a printer’s regular, daily commerce in printed sheets. Sheet publication, of which pamphleteering is a variation, was a timely means of engaging public discourse and debate, and pamphlets, like broadsides—single sheets of paper printed on one side—were a genre of such discourse. But where broadsides were quick blasts of print circulating the public sphere, pamphlets—multiple sheets of paper stitched together—were a type of extended public discourse. Pamphlets were defined by length and stitching. Samuel Johnson gave the following definition in his *Dictionary* (date) for the word pamphlet: “a small book, properly a book sold unbound, and only stitched.”¹ The status of the pamphlet as a kind of book elevated it above the broadside in terms of rhetorical production and even aesthetic consumption. But the size of the pamphlet as a “small book” was an important distinction from bound books as a style of publication. A pamphlet did not exceed 100 pages. Printed texts longer than 100 pages but not bound, such as unbound books, which were sold as a set of pages a reader could bind later if at all, were a separate form of publication. A more prestigious, and lengthy, style of writing, works 100 pages and more were not seen as a type of publication suited

to timely engagement in public debates and discourses.² Pamphlets had an exigence similar to broadsides, but more immediate than books. Readers and writers associated pamphlets, political and cultural representation in the public sphere, and extended (though not *too* extended) discourse. These associations became expectations, which helped pamphleteering emerge as a specific category of public discourse. Beyond stitched pages and the number of pages, pamphlets were a genre of public discourse that often used narratives to draw attention to socio-political problems and the conversations surrounding them as well as contributed perspectives to such conversations. In sum, pamphlets were dialogic in ways that broadsides and books were not nor expected to be.

I argue that we must look back to the earliest decades of African American pamphleteering, the 1770s to 1850s, to get a fuller appreciation of Griggs's work in fictional and nonfictional prose. Thus, this examination of the African American literary tradition of pamphleteering shifts the focus of Griggs studies away from the author's twentieth-century legacy and toward his nineteenth-century and earlier literary lineage. Once we come to appreciate the author's contributions as a late figure in the history of African American pamphleteering, we will be better able to understand the crucial role of pamphleteering in African American literary history. By making connections between the early African American literary tradition of pamphleteering, literary voice, the rise of the novel, and the turn-of-the-century writer Sutton E. Griggs, this dissertation challenges one interpretive perspective on African American literature and on Griggs's literary legacy in particular that has generated some controversy: that Griggs, as Kenneth Warren has suggested, can be understood as an author who helps to inaugurate African American literature in the 1890s.³ As my study of African American pamphleteering will

underscore, that tradition can be traced back to the eighteenth century, and not simply through the slave narrative tradition or through published novels and volumes of poetry that Warren chooses not to consider as “African American.” Furthermore, while some recent scholarship on nineteenth-century black print culture has highlighted the importance of pamphlets and pamphleteering to black public life, few have considered the influence of pamphlet culture on the development of an African American novelistic imagination.⁴ Hence, the type of conversation between Griggs studies and nineteenth-century African American literary studies that this dissertation initiates can contribute to the dialogue between historians of African American literature and book historians that recent scholarship has called for.⁵

Over the first eighty years of African American literary history, black writers, intellectuals, and community leaders saw the pamphlet as a preeminent form of publishing and circulating discourse; it was integral to the formation of black public and print spheres in the first century of African American literary history; it was a genre for demonstrating literary genius; and it was an indispensable tool for confronting and contesting racist culture. A more affordable and easier to circulate variant of book publication in early America, pamphlets were aesthetically and rhetorically valuable forms of print media for the first generations of black American writers. They offered these writers significant editorial control over their works, in many cases allowing for the kinds of experimental repetitions and revisions at the core of any literary tradition. By the time Griggs began to write his novels, advances in technology meant that it was possible to print hard-bound books more quickly, easily, and cheaply. This was especially true for writers, like Griggs, who also owned publishing companies. As this dissertation will

argue, Griggs approached the genre of popular, novelistic fiction and the material form of book publication in ways that were remarkably similar to nineteenth-century African American pamphleteers.

Studying key novels by Sutton E. Griggs as turn-of-the-century literary works that try to do some of the same things—aesthetically, materially, and politically—as early African American pamphlets can help scholars working in Griggs studies learn new ways of reading the author and his role in African American literary history. When we consider him as a modern pamphleteer, his turn-of-the-century role—and its legacy—become much clearer. We can now see him as a *transitional* figure in African American literary history, bringing nineteenth-century traditions into the twentieth century and carrying the aesthetic and rhetorical characteristics of early African American pamphleteers into an era marked by the proliferation of novels and popular fiction by African American authors. Moving back in literary history in order to explain the importance of Griggs to the twentieth century and the Harlem Renaissance allows this dissertation to present a timeline characterized by processes of repetition, re-vision, and re-circulation. Thus, even as it charts a literary lineage for Griggs and a literary legacy for early African American pamphleteers, this project argues that the story of African American pamphleteering, like the story of nineteenth-century African American literature writ large, is best understood as a cyclical narrative.⁶ Rather than dwell exclusively on the legacy of Sutton E. Griggs, the chapters that follow will consider his fiction and prose as crucial evidence in support of the indispensable contributions of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century black pamphleteers to the tradition that can be called African American literature.

The dissertation begins its examination of what I am arguing are Griggs's literary forbears by looking at black pamphlet culture in the Revolutionary era; specifically, I look at how racialized, "African" rhetorical stances were used to position black writers and speakers in American public and political discourses. These writers and speakers became Africans in America, and, in turn, used what has been described as an "African" rhetorical stance to claim a place in American national life.⁷ After showing how the African/American voice imagined by Revolutionary-era authors was a crucial part of black nationalization in the early republic and antebellum period, the dissertation makes a case for the pamphlet as a proto-novelistic genre in African American literary history by reading the first novel published by an African American writer as a major literary achievement emerging from early nineteenth-century black pamphlet culture. By taking fuller account of black pamphleteering as a literary tradition, I offer new ways of thinking about the longer literary tradition of the African American novel. My study of early African American pamphlet culture and Sutton E. Griggs offers a new way of responding to the major question facing Griggs scholars: How do we read Griggs? It also offers a new way of responding to the major question facing African American literary scholars in general: How should we read African American literary history? After a short introduction that gives some background on Griggs and pamphleteering, and addresses theoretical issues connected to the tradition, the chapters that follow explore these two questions with an emphasis on the centrality of pamphlets and pamphleteering to both Griggs and the African American literary tradition.

Who Was Sutton E. Griggs?

Sutton E. Griggs, whose given name was actually Elbert Sutton Griggs, was born in Chatfield, Texas, on June 19, 1872. His birth came on Juneteenth, a day when, in 1869, federal troops arrived in Galveston, Texas, to enforce the Emancipation Proclamation. African Americans would commemorate the end of slavery in the United States each year on that day. His parents, Allen and Emma Griggs, celebrated the birth of their second child thirteen years to the day after they were both freed. They named their first son Elbert after Allen's father and gave him the middle name Sutton after Allen's brother and father figure, with whom Allen had a very close relationship (he saw his father few times in his life). They began calling their son Sutton soon after Allen's brother died. But before we begin discussing the life of Elbert "Sutton" Griggs, we must first look backward to the life of his father. Doing so will help clarify why it is important to see Sutton E. Griggs in the context of African American literary and philosophical traditions over a long nineteenth century.

Allen Griggs was born in the 1850s, raised a slave, and was freed by the force of the United States Army. In contrast to the practically non-existent relationship Allen had with his own father, Allen was a major influence on his son's education, politics, and idealization of cooperation as a strategy for racial greatness. After emancipation in 1869, Allen Griggs stayed in Chatfield, Texas, worked for Green Griggs, his former master, went to school, and, each day, reported back to Green, who made sure that Allen's lessons were recited on his return home.⁸ He and Emma married in 1870; her family, like Allen, stayed in Chatfield, working as sharecroppers after emancipation. Once his primary education was complete, Allen Griggs attended seminary, began working as a Baptist preacher, and founded at least 500 churches in and around Texas. As a result, he

became known for his organizational acumen and commitment to black community organs and institutions, an example his son surely strived to follow. Sutton Griggs also inherited Allen's enthusiasm for printed discourse, which was part of his organizational strategy in post Reconstruction Texas. The elder Griggs founded the first black newspaper in Texas, the *Baptist Journal*, in 1877, worked as an editor for the *Missionary Dollar Reporter*, and had connections to other black newspapers like the *Dallas Leaflet*, the *Preacher and Teacher*, and the *Dallas Appeal*.⁹ In another example of Allen's lifelong commitment to organizing black communities, he was present for the formation of the National Baptist Convention in 1897, and later served as president of the group for three years. Under his leadership, the Convention was able to claim itself as the largest formal organization of black people outside of Africa based on its membership rolls.¹⁰

Elbert "Sutton" Griggs attended one of the Baptist high schools his father established, went on to graduate from Bishop College, a black college that was also part of his father's Texas state Baptist education system, in 1890. Sutton received his doctor of divinity from the Richmond Theological Seminary in 1893. His professional life began when he took a position as deacon of the First Baptist Church, Berkley, Virginia, in 1897. Later that same year, he met, courted, and married Emma J. Williams of Portsmouth, Virginia, at the First Baptist Church. Soon after, he was made pastor of the church. The culture of theological, philosophical, and political debate that marked African American Richmond at the time was a crucible that helped form the author's eventual emergence as a novelist and pamphleteer. From 1894 to 1898 he served as the editor of the *Virginia Baptist*, a position he probably earned as a result of his reputation in Richmond and the surrounding area as a knowledgeable public lecturer and an adept debater. His editorship

and the writings he contributed to the *Virginia Baptist* resulted in a very contentious public argument with John Mitchell, Jr., editor of the *Richmond Planet*. The two conflicted over the prestige and value of the African Methodist Episcopalian (AME) Church supported by Mitchell and the National Baptist Convention (NBC) supported by Griggs, as well as the NBC's work with white Baptists and the value of such interracial collaborations.¹¹ At the end of this debate, which filled the pages of their respective newspapers through most of 1898, Griggs was arrested on charges of extortion. The charges centered on funds secured from church members in order to back a loan for the Virginia Baptist Publishing Company. After being cleared of the charges, he moved to Nashville, Tennessee, when a church in the city asked him to become its pastor.

Griggs seems to have begun his career intending to work as a preacher and to be involved in Baptist print culture, but the embarrassing public dispute with Mitchell, who was often critical of his political prose, may have pushed him away from religious print culture and toward popular melodramatic fiction. His geographical move to Tennessee was concurrent with his move away from the competitive polemics of his contemporary black elites and toward a strategy that targeted the black masses of the South. Sutton Griggs believed these masses were to be the source of and agents for broad social and political changes in African America and America at large. After all, his first novel was published in 1899, and so we can easily imagine that he had begun work on the book as the controversy in Richmond unfolded. Some work in Griggs studies speculates that the novel, *Imperium in Imperio*, offered him a way to present his ideas that was less confrontational than newspaper editorials or political prose, and that because his conflict with Mitchell led Griggs to believe elites were less likely to be convinced of the validity

of his ideas, he took his message to the people.¹² While the latter argument is true—he did want to take his message to the people—the former—that he sought a less confrontational forum—is not. He embraced the novel as a genre for confronting readers with the truth of America’s race problem and what African Americans must do in order to contest racist culture. Contrary to the idea that the novel was a *less* confrontational print genre, Griggs used it to broaden the scope and readership of his message, and it is thus *more* confrontational in this way than a short editorial or a brief essay. In fact, Griggs actually discusses *Imperium in Imperio* in his autobiographical pamphlet, *The Story of My Struggles* (1914), as an angry expression of how African Americans have been denied “a right to a voice in the government that exercises authority over them.” The novel, Griggs writes, is thus as much a “statement of [the American Negro’s] case in book form” as it is a work of popular fiction.¹³ With his first novel, he set himself on a literary and philosophical path that is clearly not easy to describe using conventional approaches to turn-of-the-century African American literary history.

Eventually, Griggs brought his ideas and theories about black uplift and racial greatness together as a programmatic philosophy: the science of collective efficiency. In the spirit of this driving principle, his work often turns to examine the condition and character of black leadership as it interacts with, and is sometimes co-opted by, both black and white American cultures at the turn of the century. Sutton E. Griggs seems to occupy the middle ground between W. E. B. Du Bois, commonly known as a progressive black leader, and Booker T. Washington, commonly known as a conservative black leader. Griggs articulates a political perspective mediating the Du Bois-Washington binary often posited by scholars, and could be radical or conservative as the situation

dictated, unlike the two main characters in *Imperium in Imperio* (which I will discuss at length in chapter 3 of the dissertation).¹⁴ For example, Griggs was deemed an acceptable race leader by Southern whites, and thus must not have appeared to them as too radical, but he was also part of the Niagara Movement, a black civil rights organization that opposed conciliatory, accommodating policies supported by conservatives like Washington and Allen Griggs.¹⁵ To place the theory of black nationalism figured in his first book or any of his other works on either side of the industrial versus academic education debate, or to pigeonhole his vision for racial uplift along any either/or binary, would limit the breadth and character of the positions Griggs would take over the span of his career, not to mention the complex political goals of *Imperium in Imperio*. However, there is one consistent element to his political and social uplift philosophies: it is the importance of a collectively driven leadership engendered by strong, independently managed combinations of the black individuals as well as local communities in a national political collective. Print publication was at the center of these combinations, but, perhaps more importantly, so too was an independent African American publishing industry.

Griggs wanted to give himself, and offer other African American writers and intellectuals, the same imaginative and rhetorical freedom that early African American pamphleteers enjoyed, and that ultimately proved critical to the development of African American literary traditions. *Imperium in Imperio* is the only novel among the five Griggs wrote from 1899 to 1908 that was not printed and circulated through one of his own publishing companies. All of his other novels as well as his pre-1914 novels and non-fiction books were printed and circulated by the Orion Publishing Company, the first of two such companies founded by the author. Located in Nashville, it opened for

business soon after Griggs was called to serve as the pastor at the First Baptist Church of East Nashville, where he remained in the city until 1913. Orion's mission was to insure that black writers could publish and circulate work outside of both black religious presses and white-controlled popular presses. In fact, had it not been for self-publication through Orion, we would not likely have many, if any, Griggs novels apart from *Imperium in Imperio*. All of his novels were commercial failures; none received popular support from African American readers, nor did any gain much institutional support from the author's contemporary colleagues among the black elite. It is difficult to imagine a commercial publisher who would support an author through so much financial failure. Regarding the financial failure of *Imperium in Imperio*, Griggs claimed that the lack of support the novel received was a "rude awakening with reference to my expectations of support for my efforts," and that his "conceptions of [his] race, as a race, had been purely ideal."¹⁶

Pamphleteering is the work that sustained Sutton Griggs after the radical, visionary, fictional narratives with which he began his career failed to reach audiences. Between 1907 and 1911 he wrote, published, and self-circulated five long pamphlets that articulated a political philosophy and uplift program for African America. However, 1907 does not mark the beginning of Griggs's work as a pamphleteer. Before working as a pamphleteer outright, he had been attaching pamphlets to novels like *Unfettered; or, Dorlan's Plan* (1902) or embedding them in books like *The Hindered Hand; or, Reign of the Repressionist* (1905). Moreover, if we consider his first novel as a work of fiction that, politically and organizationally, strives to function like an early African American pamphlet, then it is possible to argue that he actually began his career as a pamphleteer (of sorts). Eventually, Griggs became as well known for his pamphlets as he had once

been for his skills as a public lecturer and debater, and it during the pamphleteering phase of his career that he gained some of the recognition he had craved for his novels.

Describing the the beginning of his work as a pamphleteer, Griggs writes, “Unable longer to issue books I began to publish small pamphlets which I took and peddled here and there. I went from door to door, visited, at dinner hours, places where plain workmen toiled. I went to schools where poor Negro boys and girls were struggling for an education. These humble people of the race came to me with their dimes, and I was thus able to at least hold my head above the threatening financial flood.”¹⁷

While scholars in African American literary studies have worked to connect his novels to the science of collective efficiency, little work has been done to position his pamphlets and pamphlet-like novels in relation to his signature philosophy. In fact, Griggs first presented (in prose) the ideas and concepts essential to understanding his oeuvre in the pamphlets and book-length theoretical works he published through Orion. If, as Griggs scholar Finnie Coleman has consistently argued, his novels are an important creative laboratory used to formulate the science of collective efficiency, then his pamphlets are where he refines and polishes that science. In fact, the author’s consistent return to his uplift philosophy in novels as well as pamphlets helped him develop his theories to the point where he was able to articulate them in a programmatic form. Griggs first offered readers his clearest visions of collective efficiency in a pamphlet, *The Science of Collective Efficiency* (1921), and then its book-length revision and expansion, the *Guide to Racial Greatness; or, The Science of Collective Efficiency* (1923), both of which were published by the author’s second publishing company, the National Public Welfare League. He founded this company in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1913, after being

called to serve as pastor at the Tabernacle Baptist Church, where he worked until 1926, when he left Tennessee and returned to his home state of Texas.

Sutton E. Griggs died on January 2, 1933, before his final vision, the erection of a National Civil and Religious Institute in Houston, Texas, where he had relocated in 1932, could be achieved. Finnie Coleman, one of the few scholars who has done extended biographical research on the author, writes, “Throughout his career, Griggs dreamed of establishing just such an organization that would lift blacks above the mire of racial politics...[it was the] culmination of a lifetime of theory and rhetoric...[and] a vehicle for the spread of his science of collective efficiency on the national level...[its] mission was first laid out in theory in his *Imperium in Imperio*.”¹⁸ Even if he was unable to institutionalize his signature philosophy in the form of a National Civil and Religious Institute, he left behind a large amount of published work that speaks to his vision for African American racial greatness, beginning with *Imperium in Imperio*, but especially in the pamphlets that mark the most successful, and, arguably, most productive, years of his life in print. Furthermore, even without an institutional legacy, he left us with a large body of writing in fiction and nonfiction—and that has proved crucial to establishing what, exactly, the legacy of Sutton E. Griggs is and what that legacy means to African American literary history.

What is the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs? (The State of Griggs Studies)

Sutton E. Griggs has been known to literary scholars as a black nationalist writer since the late 1970s.¹⁹ He gained a reputation as such for his vocal support of and contributions to a distinctly African American literature that could speak for and to black

people in America. For example, one of the first scholars in African American literary studies to work on Griggs, Wilson Jeremiah Moses, writes that he was “the only black novelist of his period who deliberately undertook the writing of novels as part of a definite plan to create a national Negro literature.”²⁰ More recently, scholars have considered how his work may be read through the lens of collective efficiency, and a few have begun exploring how the author’s fiction and his uplift theories might be understood in the context of turn-of-the-century black nationalism.²¹ These are promising areas of Griggs studies for looking at the intersections between collective efficiency and African American literary nationalism at the turn of the century. These areas can help clarify Griggs’s transitional role in literary histories of this period. By situating the science of collective efficiency as a link between the kinds of uplift thought that emanated from black public spheres from the 1890s to the 1930s and early black nationalist uplift theory from the 1770s to the 1850s, this dissertation offers another useful direction for contemporary Griggs studies: looking back to the early decades of a long nineteenth century in order to get a better understanding of the author as an African American literary nationalist and political philosopher.

Earlier scholarship, like Wilson Jeremiah Moses’s *Golden Age of Black Nationalism*, which puts Griggs at the latter end of a period ranging from 1850 to 1925, saw Griggs as a later black nationalist writer, and scholars of African American literature more or less followed this example until recently. However, Griggs criticism will take a rather different approach to the author’s place in African American political and literary historiography if scholars in the field follow the example set in the introduction to *Jim Crow, Literature, and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs* (2013), a recently published

collection of critical essays on the author. The volume has put questions about how we should read Griggs's novels in the middle of debates over how we should read African American literary traditions.²² The book's editors argue that black authors like Griggs wrote many novels between 1890 and 1912, that these novels constituted a "collective response to the 'Negro Problem' and to the system of Jim Crow segregation and political exclusion that was being devised by Southern legislatures as its solution," that these turn-of-the-century writers' efforts were "new and unprecedented" in the history of writing by black Americans, and that this effort constituted an early, if not initial, effort to create an African American national literature.²³ The argument advanced by the volume's introduction, co-written by Kenneth W. Warren, reflects a controversial position on African American history taken by Warren in his monograph, *What Was African American Literature?* (2011).²⁴ In that book, Warren contends that African American literature depends on the historical and cultural circumstances of Jim Crow laws and de jure segregation in the United States; his argument implies that literature by black Americans from the nation's beginnings to 1876 and the end of Reconstruction are not, in fact, "African American" literature but rather black American literature. Warren suggests that black writers in this period did not intend to create a body of works that could speak for and to black people, and thus they were not actively working to constitute an African American national literature. This is where the connections between Griggs and early African American pamphlet culture become important, and not just to the future of Griggs studies but to the future of African American literary studies in general. By responding to the erroneous claims in *What Was African American Literature?* and *Jim Crow, Literature, and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs* that Griggs should be regarded as

an “early” African American author, this dissertation seeks to offer a more coherent and historically correct approach to what, exactly, constitutes African American literature.

Sutton E. Griggs did not help to create African American literature. When we highlight black pamphlet culture’s contributions to and enthusiasm for a distinctly African and American literature in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century, we will see that African American literary nationalists did not need to wait for Jim Crow laws to begin contesting and confronting white supremacy in print; nor did they need to wait to do so in concerted, organized, and often nationalist ways. Contra the introduction to *Jim Crow, Literature, and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs*, this dissertation posits a long nineteenth century from the 1770s to the early decades of the twentieth century as a frame for understanding the works, philosophy, and legacy of Sutton E. Griggs. Furthermore, contra the central premise of *What Was African American Literature?*, this dissertation tells a story of the significant connections between an early twentieth-century writer and early nineteenth-century African American writers such as David Walker and William Wells Brown.

By approaching Griggs’s literary legacy from the perspective of early African American pamphlet culture and developing a transitional narrative of his life in print, we are able to uncover the importance of the neglected African American literary tradition of pamphleteering to the African American literary tradition as a whole. Thus, by developing a narrative of early African American pamphlet culture linked to a story of Sutton E. Griggs as a modern black pamphleteer, this dissertation takes an approach mindful of “the challenge of locating, understanding the dynamics of, and working with nineteenth-century African American literary history...[and] the complex process

that...was...a principal dynamic of the tradition” in this period.”²⁵ Attention to African American pamphleteering helps us gain greater insight into the processes of repetition and revision that constitute the African American literary tradition. In fact, attention to African American pamphleteering helps us see that repetition and revision *are* the principal dynamics of the tradition. The novels and pamphlets of Sutton E. Griggs in particular show us how this tradition often returns to existing material and aesthetic forms as it moves forward, and, in the process of returning, is able to fashion something new. Griggs—a turn-of-the-century black writer increasingly associated more with the twentieth century than the nineteenth—becomes an indispensable part of African American literary history over a much broader period, for he shares just as much with early African American literary nationalism as he does African American literary nationalism in the Jim Crow era.

Scholars interested in the efforts by turn-of-the-century black writers to constitute an African American national literature can learn much by looking at similar efforts by early black pamphleteers. We can read one such effort in a pamphlet by William Hamilton, a leader in New York City’s black community in the early 1800s. Hamilton’s pamphlet, *Mutual Interest, Mutual Benefit, and Mutual Relief* (1809), a printed version of a speech he gave commemorating the end of official U.S. participation in the transatlantic slave trade eight years earlier, connects the first book published by an African American writer, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773), by Phillis Wheatley, with a pamphlet titled *A Thanksgiving Sermon* (1808), by Peter Williams, Jr. Hamilton connects these two texts in a brief history of African American literature. Both (and, by implication, all three—including Hamilton’s own pamphlet) are characterized as texts

representing African American literary genius. Displaying a copy of *A Thanksgiving Sermon*, Hamilton tells his audience, “Without naming others who have appeared in the interim of her and the present time, I hold in my hand a specimen of African genius...[this] book contains an introductory address *and* an oration on the abolition of the [transatlantic] slave trade...If we continue to produce specimens like these, we shall soon put our enemies to the blush; abashed and confounded they will quit the field, and no longer urge their superiority of souls.”²⁶ *Mutual Interest* is thus evidence that early African American writers, intellectuals, and community organizers saw the pamphlet as a print genre for representing racial genius in political and public spheres, and as an aesthetic genre instrumental to sustaining a young African American literary tradition.

There is not much difference at the core of Hamilton’s and Griggs’s calls for black print culture and a black national literature in America. For writers of Griggs’s era, demonstrating African American skill and imagination in literature remained a crucial way of confronting and contesting white supremacy. As was the case for early African American writers, and as it was for men like Allen Griggs who were dedicated to black uplift in the South after emancipation, Sutton E. Griggs was convinced that an active African American readership, a supportive African American print culture, and an engaged black national public sphere were instrumental to racial greatness and indexes of racial genius. For example, he gives voice to this conviction that literature and print culture reflect on the race in his novels and treatises in *Life’s Demands; or, According to Law* (1916). In a section of this book, titled “The Laws of Individual Success,” he writes, “a race of people composed of individuals that are not capable of being influenced to action by printed or written matter is woefully handicapped...races moved by written or

printed appeals are a thousand times more efficient.”²⁷ This call has echoes of William Hamilton’s celebration of black pamphleteering as crucial to establishing and sustaining African American literary genius in U.S. print and public spheres.

Moreover, Griggs also recognized that the turn-of-the-century struggle against white supremacy was an extension of the same struggle undertaken by black writers and intellectuals in the era of slavery. For example, he told a Baptist youth group in 1912, “The battle that was before the country in the Civil War times is before the people of this country now in a new guise. The Negroes were held in bondage then by masters, but the great mass of the American people white and black, are now under the bondage of political masters and seekers after special privilege.” The editors of *Jim Crow, Literature, and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs* interpret this statement as an effort to distinguish “between how African Americans had been oppressed in the past and how they were oppressed in his present.”²⁸ But while Griggs may differentiate the slavery’s mode of racial oppression from that of Jim Crow, his language suggests something else. It suggests that the “battle,” as it were, is not a new form of struggle, for the term “guise” suggests not that the fight has taken on an entirely new form but rather a new outward appearance, or “semblance.”

The prominence of separately published pamphlets and pamphlet-like texts in the novels and the overall career of Sutton Griggs is evidence that the pamphlet continued to be a crucial genre as black writers attempted to incorporate a late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century African American national community. Similar visions had been circulating since the early eighteenth century, as the first chapter of this dissertation will show. The ideas that drove late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century black Americans

as they imagined an African American national community and national literature look forward to the ideas that drove Sutton Griggs in his writings. Just like his late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century pamphleteering predecessors, Griggs saw the genre as a key form of print for organizing communities, for attempting to influence collective actions, and for timely interventions in public debates and discourses. He wrote and circulated novels with the same relative ease, editorial control, and rapidity that early African American writers wrote pamphlets. He intended his novels to function as pamphlets did in black print and literary cultures of the pre-Civil War period, and he eventually began incorporating pamphlets into the pages of his novels as part of a radical strategy for circulating his early efforts at political theory in prose. Finally, when his novels failed to cause readers to form the kinds of political collectives he suggestively called for in his fictional narratives, he turned more explicitly to the print medium that had proved integral to developing emergent Anglophone print economies since the late 1600s—the pamphlet.

What is a Pamphlet?

The word “pamphlet” emerged in English sometime during the fifteenth century to describe a small, unbound, quickly produced booklet. Specifically, the term referred to a printed work of multiple pages, smaller in size than a folio (the largest form of print publication), and usually eight to ninety-six pages in quarto form.²⁹ The term was drawn from the title of, *Pamphilus, seu de Amore*, a popular twelfth-century Latin poem on the arts of love by an unknown author. In England, the poem remained in circulation until the 1500s.³⁰ During the first century of its

existence, the pamphlet was primarily known as a cheap, little book, a temporary item, a brief read, a collection of items too short to be published alone. One usage of the term (a temporary use from the sixteenth century) referring to a prostitute was perhaps influenced by the term's root in the tale of Pamphilus, the main character in *Pamphilus, seu de Amore*, a work available to all and enjoyed by those who could pay for it.³¹ As print technology spread through Britain in the sixteenth century, and print economies became local fixtures, the word began to specify a particular class of printed discourse: "a 'separate', a small item issued on its own, usually unbound, not substantial enough to constitute a volume by itself...[and there was one] minor usage [that] described a collection of literary items, in poetry or prose, which were produced to be disposable rather than enduring."³² By the 1580s, pamphlets were fixtures at booksellers' stalls.³³ The increasingly prominent medium in early modern culture soon became a major form of print publication at a time when many people could not afford to buy or publish bound books, which despite having greater aesthetic value than pamphlets, had slower production times, and did not circulate as widely or as quickly.

Initially thought of as just a small, easily purchased, and widely consumed book, the pamphlet became something more than a material form in the late sixteenth century; it developed a generic dimension that had significant impact on British print and public spheres as the 1500s gave way to the 1600s.³⁴ This happened in part because pamphlets in prose superseded ballads as the most popular way of circulating and consuming information on current events; as a result, the pamphlet became a primary source for news and opinion in an expanding British reading

public in the seventeenth century.³⁵ In fact, an entire archive devoted to the discussion and debate of political issues emerged from early modern British pamphlet culture.³⁶ While a material notion of pamphlets as “little things” remained in the second century of the genre’s existence, the pamphlet began to transform British print culture in ways that established its unique aesthetic characteristics as it became known as a form for contesting others’ discourses in public, and confronting critics and rivals in print. In this way, pamphlets and pamphleteering helped establish public opinion as something that could be influenced by critical discourse in print, and thus as something that social and political powers in the modern world would have to reckon with.

The dynamics of political power in early modern Britain changed when a new, broadly participative means of influencing “the people”—popular print—and a new form of political support engendered by a democratized print culture—public opinion—emerged from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. Public opinion became something that leaders (even kings) had to reckon with, and any person with a pen and enough money to pay a licensed printer could excite and (hopefully) direct it. Pamphlets became synonymous with “the *Liberty* of the Press” that at least one contemporary print historian, Richard Atkyns, blamed for giving “every Male-content [a chance to vent] his Passion in Print [against the King]...[and] the Common People that before this Liberty believed even a *Ballad*, because it was in Print...[split from the King, becoming] not onely *Statists*, but *Parties* in the *Parliaments Cause*” during the English Civil War (1642-1651).³⁷ In *The Original and Growth of Printing* (1664), a history of the mid-seventeenth-century British

press, Atkyns blames a free press for the proliferation of “Paper-pellets as dangerous as bullets.”³⁸ His figure of the pamphlet as a combative little book, or “paper bullet,” captures the essence of how the pamphlet came to be seen as a form of political action. People were concerned with what they saw as a diminutive form of print publication capable of affecting public opinion in ways that far exceeded its size; they feared the changes a free press and access to inexpensive and quickly produced media made to traditional power dynamics. In fact, Atkyns and some other late seventeenth-century historians of the English Civil War contended that “*Words* begat blows”—paper bullets preceded lead shot in the conflict—and that pamphleteering was the cause of much social and political destabilization.³⁹ The pamphlet’s detractors also seemed to find the genre troubling: pamphlets were part refined and part vulgar, required literacy and some degree of rhetorical skill, but were available to any and all whether common people or cultural elites.

The popularization of the pamphlet as the preeminent genre for public conversation and debate coincided with expansions in literacy and print readership in early modern Britain.⁴⁰ Literacy became a prerequisite for participation in public and political life in seventeenth-century Britain. In addition to expanding readership, pamphlets were also important to broadening authorship, and not just because they gave a forum to Atkyns’s “Male-contents.” Women writers often used the pamphlet to claim the right to publish and circulate discourse, engage in political activity in the public sphere, and imagine new roles for women in British print culture.⁴¹ The pamphlet had become an insurgent political technology allowing people whose voices had been silenced or left unheard chances to speak and participate in public

and political life. Paper bullets proliferated in early modern Britain because on the one hand, they were cheap, accessible, and gave readers a sense of participation in public and political life; anyone who could read but did not have or wish to spend the money for a bound book could choose from a wide variety of pamphlets. On the other hand, anyone who could write and had enough money to pay a printer could publish, and no matter who wrote them, pamphlets offered authors the greatest return on material investment because the impact of a pamphlet often exceeded its production costs (and exponentially so). Firmly established as a timely means of public participation and ideological confrontation as well as a space for aesthetic experimentation and rhetorical play, the pamphlet continued to broaden authorship and readership as Anglophone print publics emerged in colonial North American cities.

Pamphlets and pamphleteering were crucial to the formation of a North American political nationalism in the late eighteenth century. In particular, pamphleteering was a way for late-eighteenth-century Americans to enter the fields of ideological and rhetorical struggle that had been staked out well in advance of the shots at Lexington and Concord (in America, it seems, words beget blows, too). Indispensable to American politics and culture during the Revolutionary era, the many pamphlets published and circulated in this period “reveal, more clearly than any other single group of documents, the contemporary meaning of that transformative event”—the American Revolution.⁴² American writers used pamphlets because they had distinct virtues as a medium of communication that allowed writers to do things that were not possible in any other form of print.⁴³

While Atkyns expressed concerns about the availability of paper bullets to any and all malcontents, Americans embraced the form as well as its material and aesthetic advantages for ideological and rhetorical combat, and they actually saw such struggles as integral to the health and vigor of the body politic. Revolutionary-era Americans reimagined pamphleteering as a way for citizens to fulfill their civic duties and engage political debates and ideological disputes. Americans transformed reading and authorship into more explicit political exercises and civic virtues than did their British predecessors. In fact, the “amateur” status of most American pamphleteers was crucial to the connection of literacy and rhetorical skill with emerging notions of republican citizenship in American culture. The authors of Revolutionary-era pamphlets made money from slave plantations, as merchants, businessmen, or lawyers, and, at times, as public servants (and combinations of any of these occupations); when they spoke, it was as civic-minded public citizens and not as professional writers.⁴⁴ These public citizens treated “print discourse not as an official channel of customary authority but as a second dimension of the political—an arena of debate distinct from the constituted authority of office.”⁴⁵

What this meant is that publishing and circulating printed discourse was a more institutionalized mode of political action for Americans than it was for their British predecessors. Writing and disseminating printed discourse in pamphlet form was a way of staking out space in American political processes, and could often influence politics and policy in very real ways. As participants in Revolutionary era pamphlet culture, African Americans learned that literature could serve as a front in the struggle against slavery and white supremacy, and they crafted rhetorical voices

that reflected the conflictual nature of the American public sphere. Just as they had in British print culture, pamphlets contributed to the growth of an American public sphere marked by multiple voices adopting and deploying a variety of discourses, engaging each other in contest and in confrontations. African American writers developed rhetorical and literary voices that both navigated the public sphere as well as helped to show all readers—black and white—how they, too, might navigate it.

Persuading public opinion through printed discourse, an integral strategy for generating revolutionary, patriotic sentiments among colonial Americans in the years leading up to the Revolutionary War—1765 to 1776—became an informal dimension of American political culture, such that political strategies often hinged on influencing public opinion. Revolutionary-era pamphleteering fostered a political culture of contestation and contradiction in which the propagation of ideas and information was aided by the mobility of the pamphlet; pamphleteers often sought to influence the emotions of readers. In fact, greater attention to African American pamphlets helps show how reasoned deliberation better reflects an idealized public sphere than it does the actual conditions of the American public sphere in the late eighteenth century and beyond: wild, chaotic, and conflictual.⁴⁶ In this public sphere, multiple discourses swirled, interacted, clashed, and competed for preeminence. African American pamphleteers intervened in these discourses to try and secure support for black freedom and equality. But to get public support, they first had to show how race had infiltrated the many languages of American national and public life, framing the truth of human equality as a fiction and the fiction of racial inferiority as a truth. Thus, increased attention to the African American literary

tradition of pamphleteering can give us new insights into the early American public sphere.

The Neglected Tradition of African American Pamphleteering

African American pamphleteers recognized the value of pamphlets as a genre that allowed for opportune, targeted intercessions in public discourse and debate.⁴⁷ Because of this reputation, the genre of pamphleteering was instrumental to early African American conceptions of literature as a tool for political and social changes and actions.⁴⁸ Pamphlets became one of the most prestigious forms of print available to early African American intellectuals, leaders, and activists from the 1770s to the 1850s. Most black community leaders in the early republic and antebellum period published at least one pamphlet. Pamphlets were valued for pragmatic reasons, too, as they were fast, cheap, and easy to produce as well as circulate. The genre also allowed for significant degrees of editorial control, unlike the emerging genre of the slave narratives, which was often published under the editorial authority of white abolitionists. Not surprisingly, the pamphlet was recently featured in the “African American Cultures of Print” section in *A History of the Book in America, Volume 3*.⁴⁹ Unfortunately, however, studies of pamphleteering have not ventured beyond histories of black print culture or rhetorical analyses of early African American protest writing.

Historians have done some good work recovering African American pamphlets and giving attention to the practice of pamphleteering in early African American culture. There are only two collections of nineteenth-century African American pamphlets—Dorothy Porter’s *Negro Protest Pamphlets* (1969) and Richard Newman, Patrick Rael,

and Phillip Lapsansky's *Pamphlets of Protest* (2001)—and both were compiled by historians. The editors of both collections anticipated the arguments of more recent critics of African American print culture that one of the pamphlet's primary goals was to record for posterity the words, deeds, and thoughts of black people.⁵⁰ Porter's *Negro Protest Pamphlets* in particular emphasizes the role of pamphlets in preserving the acts and organizational missions of early black community institutions like the independent black church, mutual aid societies, and Masonic lodges. Her anthology also connects the pamphlet to shifts from an oral culture to a print culture; both the published version of William Hamilton's slave trade oration, *Mutual Interest, Mutual Benefit, Mutual Relief*, and the published version of another slave trade oration, Peter Williams's *A Thanksgiving Sermon* (1808), which Hamilton refers to in *Mutual Interest*, are good examples of this shift. The editors of *Pamphlets of Protest* identify the pamphlet as a genre instrumental to the development of African American historiography, a tradition that recent scholarship has traced through nineteenth-century African American writing.⁵¹ In some ways, *Pamphlets of Protest* characterizes the African American pamphlet as a meta-genre important to the emergence of a number of early African American discourses and generic styles, like historiography, autobiography, dialogue, political protest, and public epistles. The idea of the pamphlet as a meta-genre is further suggested by Porter's contention that the pamphlet had a privileged status among black intellectuals and elites as a prestigious and even fashionable form of print publication.⁵²

Scholars of African American literature must turn their attention to this neglected literary tradition by moving beyond rhetorical analyses of black pamphleteering to consider the narrative aesthetics adopted by such writers. Once we do, pamphlets and

pamphleteering will be seen as crucial to African American literary history. Greater attention to early African American pamphlets will immediately expand the scope of texts available to scholars focused on late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century African American literature as well as give us new contexts for reading canonical works of this period. Moreover, an emphasis on a long nineteenth-century of pamphleteering can change how we read early African American literature, a change recent books on African American literary history have argued is necessary.⁵³ For instance, as I will be arguing primarily in the second half of this dissertation, the pamphlet can help us better understand the rise of the African American novel. Highlighting the place of pamphleteering in the African American literary tradition can help to clarify why writers like Sutton E. Griggs viewed literary publication as a form of political action, and why Griggs and his predecessors imagined narrative as an instrument of racial uplift and a crucial weapon in the fight against white supremacy.

The early African American pamphleteers studied in this dissertation engaged the many discourses of American national life and crafted texts that are, arguably, crucial to the development of an early African American narrative imagination. Double voice is integral to the kind of narrative imagination we can read in works published by early African American pamphleteers. Literary theorist M. M. Bakhtin defines double voice as “another’s speech in another’s language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way.”⁵⁴ Bakhtin’s theory of double-voiced discourse has appealed to theorists of African American literature because of its similarity to the concept of racial double consciousness that W. E. B. Du Bois presents in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1901). Du Bois defines double consciousness as an unreconciled conflict between being an American and

a Negro.⁵⁵ However, as Dorothy J. Hale has argued, by reading Du Bois through Bakhtin, theorists of African American literature have developed a model that allows subaltern identity to distinguish itself from hegemonic identity; however, such theorists have tended to make all subaltern difference the same in the process.⁵⁶

Looking at approaches to narrative voice in African American pamphlets can illuminate new directions in thinking simultaneously about Bakhtinian double voice and Du Boisian double consciousness together. Moreover, exploring the use of narrative forms in African American pamphleteering can help address the dilemma Hale describes. What distinguishes African American double voice from other such voices is race, but not necessarily the race (or, more precisely, the complexion) of the author. Rather, the race that distinguishes African American double voice is the race such voice exposes as having permeated American cultural, political, and social discourses. I contend that pamphlets constitute an early archive of African American double-voiced discourse in which writers often use a racialized voice to expose the race in racialized and racist discourse, which critical race theorist David Theo Goldberg defines as “a field of discourse made...up of all racialized expressions...includ[ing] beliefs and verbal outbursts...acts and their consequences, and the principles on which racialized institutions are based.”⁵⁷ I assert that the specific kind of double voice that black writers use to develop critiques of racialized and racist discourse, or stories about the story of race, is one thing that is “African American” about the African American literary tradition of pamphleteering. This tradition fostered a practice of critical, socio-political narrative that was integral to the rise of the African American novel, which is a genre Bernard W. Bell argued “has been concerned with illuminating the meaning of the black

American experience and the complex double-consciousness, socialized ambivalence, and double vision which is the special blessing of African American identity.”⁵⁸

To begin recovering the African American literary tradition of pamphleteering, we must get a sense for how early African American writers imagined pamphleteering and how they approached the public sphere of critical discourse. Thus, I will be devoting the first half of the dissertation to key African American pamphlets published well before Griggs published his first novel.⁵⁹ William Hamilton’s 1809 pamphlet, *Mutual Interest, Mutual Benefit, and Mutual Relief*, and its brief articulation of African American literary history will serve as a point of initial entry into this dissertation’s study of Sutton E. Griggs and the African American literary tradition of pamphleteering. Working with Hamilton’s vision of the pamphlet as a genre of racial representation, I complicate the history he tells in *Mutual Interest* by beginning with a group of Revolutionary-era black pamphleteers who publish works prior to, though in the same year, as Wheatley’s *Poems on Various Subjects*. The first chapter of this dissertation tells an origin story of the African American literary tradition of pamphleteering, beginning with a petition and an essay authored by a group calling itself the Sons of Africa. These texts were published and circulated in a pamphlet titled *The Appendix; Or, Some Observations on the Expediency of Petition of the Africans, Living in Boston* (1773). But before I read the Sons of Africa, I first look back to an Anglo-Atlantic discourse of racial representation, in which pamphlets were an important form of publication. I argue that the early African American representative voice in print developed by the Sons of Africa has late-seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Anglo-Atlantic roots. Using the rhetorical stance of the “African,” the Sons of Africa develop a new narrative that puts enslaved Africans at

the center of American narratives of Patriotic political identity. Continuing the chapter's focus on the narrative aesthetics of early African American pamphleteers, I conclude by reading a series of pamphlets published by John Marrant and Prince Hall in the early republic. I argue that the three pamphlets written by these two writers constitute one of the first theoretical narratives of black uplift in America. Marrant and Hall's work builds on that of the Sons of Africa, and anticipates the work of David Walker, who is perhaps the best known black pamphleteer in the nineteenth century, and a focus of the second chapter.

The second chapter of this dissertation examines how an early African American literary tradition of pamphleteering helped cultivate a narrative imagination that was quasi-novelistic in character. The chapter begins by looking at the civic voices imagined in David Walker's pamphlet, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (1829), arguably the most important African American pamphlet of the early nineteenth century. *Appeal* cites or borrows and then gives commentary on a diverse array of texts—a book by Thomas Jefferson, newspaper articles, speeches by U.S. legislators, letters from black leaders, the Bible, and the Declaration of Independence—to demonstrate an African American theory of reading that, for Walker, is at the core of his theory of what it means to be black in America. I argue that Walker's narrative approach to pamphleteering influenced William Wells Brown's *Clotel; Or, The President's Daughter* (1853), the first novel published by an African American writer. However, I push this argument further to contend that Brown does not just adopt an aesthetic approach common to early African American pamphleteering—he imagined the novel as a genre for interceding in public debate and discourse. By printing four different versions of *Clotel* for four different

readerships, Brown deploys his novel as the kind of interventionist, flexible, and mobile print technology more commonly associated with pamphlets.

The dissertation then turns to Griggs. In the third chapter, I contend that Griggs writes his first novel, *Imperium in Imperio*, as a generic hybrid of the pamphlet and the novel, much as Brown did with *Clotel*. Griggs does this to present and, in some ways, try to enact, his uplift philosophy: the science of collective efficiency. Reading of *Imperium in Imperio* along with *The Guide to Racial Greatness, or, The Science of Collective Efficiency*, one of his last books, I argue that the novel is an ambitious first vision of Griggs's signature philosophy. The chapter opens with a look at the similarities between Griggs and black uplift philosophers of the early nineteenth century, especially David Walker. The chapter also examines the theoretical aesthetics of Griggs's novel, positioning him as a participant in the tradition of black uplift narrative. Then, I look at how advances in print technology allowed Griggs to produce bound books with the ease, efficiency, and low cost that had formerly been the benefits of pamphleteering. I then move to consider the aesthetics of *Imperium in Imperio*: a book containing a fictional narrative that the author tells the reader is not actually fiction but rather a collection of primary documents. These documents outline a case against one of the novel's main characters, and readers are challenged to render a verdict. I argue that the lack of authorial control over the resolution of the narrative plot is Griggs's effort to have his reader embrace the idea of collective efficiency and the bottom-up leadership he saw as necessary to effective black national organization.

The fourth and final chapter examines Griggs as a modern pamphleteer. I begin with a look at the role pamphlets serve as narrative actors in his third and fourth novels,

Unfettered; or, Dorlan's Plan and *The Hindered Hand*. These novels convey a clearer organizational challenge and political message than *Imperium in Imperio* precisely because they incorporate pamphlets in prose as part of the textual matter and as central clues to resolving each novel's narrative plot. Thus, the chapter shows how the political quandary left unresolved in *Imperium in Imperio* is solved, Griggs hoped, by the inclusion of pamphlets in his third and fourth novels. The chapter shows how the pamphlets in these novels represent collective efficiency, signifying a political strategy that combines diplomatic, rhetorical confrontation with firm and assertive contestation in print and public spheres. The chapter ends with readings of some of the pamphlets Griggs wrote after he abandoned fiction but before he had fully developed his theory of collective efficiency and African American racial greatness. At the conclusion to the chapter, I briefly consider how Griggs returned to pamphlets and pamphleteering at crucial moments later in his career. In doing so, I show how the African American literary tradition of pamphleteering lasted into the 1920s and to the eve of the Harlem Renaissance. The dissertation ends with a short epilogue that suggests how we might read Griggs's final novel, *Pointing the Way* (1908), in the context of the African American literary tradition of pamphleteering. I also consider how later twentieth-century African American literature might be re-approached in light of a long nineteenth-century of black pamphleteering.

Placing the novels of Sutton E. Griggs in the context of African American pamphleteering during the long nineteenth century can help scholars of African American literature begin to answer one of the central questions facing those of us who study the tradition: What is African American about African American literature? This dissertation

approaches the question by focusing on pamphleteering and the kind of rhetorical and literary voice the genre helped to cultivate. Taking such an approach will help us craft a new narrative to account for the rise of the novel and shed new light on the fiction of Brown and Sutton E. Griggs.

¹ Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 82.

² Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 82.

³ See Kenneth W. Warren's *What Was African American Literature?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), and Tess Chakkalakal and Warren's "Introduction," *Jim Crow, Literature, and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2013), 1-20. Both Warren's monograph and Chakkalakal and Warren's introduction posit Griggs as an early African American writer in order to advance a perspective that the African American literary tradition emerges in response to Jim Crow law in the United States. This perspective is an implicit dismissal of all the literature that comes before the Jim Crow era as African American literature. Warren's argument largely hinges on the notion that black writers did not create a national literature that could speak for and to African Americans until the turn of the century. Looking at the neglected African American literary tradition of pamphleteering shows how misguided Warren's perspective is. African American writers began to argue for a literary tradition of pamphleteering as a way for speaking for and to an African American nation within the U.S. nation, and saw pamphleteering as both an index and an instrument of black literary culture and black uplift as early as 1809.

⁴ See Frances Smith Foster, “A Narrative of the Interesting and (Somewhat) Surprising Developments of African American Print Culture,” *American Literary History* 17.4 (Winter 2005): 714-770; Joanna Brooks, “The Early American Public Sphere and the Emergence of a Black Print Counterpublic,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 62.1 (January 2005): 67-92; Jeannine Marie DeLombard, “African American Cultures of Print” in *The History of the Book in America, Vol. 3: The Industrial Book, 1840-1880* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007): 360-373. Other notable references to the pamphlet’s importance include Dickson D. Bruce’s *Origins of African American Literature, 1680-1865* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), especially the chapter, “Literary Identity in the New Nation, 1800-1816,” in which each example he uses is a work published in pamphlet form, and Gene Jarrett, *Representing the Race: A New Political History of African American Literature* (New York: New York University Press: 2011), in which he references the pamphlet as a flexible literary genre important to the development of black intellectual culture and its use of racial representation as a genre of political action in African American history. Kimberly Blockett’s “Writing freedom: race, religion, and revolution” in *The Cambridge History of African American Literature*, ed. Maryemma Graham and Jerry W. Ward, Jr. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011) highlights pamphlets as an early form of black protest literature, and focuses on David Walker’s *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* in particular. She emphasizes the immediacy of pamphlet publication in her account of the genre’s appeal as a literary venue. Meredith McGill’s “Frances Ellen Watkins Harper and the Circuits of Abolitionist Poetry” in *Early African American Print Culture*, ed. Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Alexander Stein (Philadelphia: University of

Pennsylvania Press, 2012) considers the circulation formats of Frances Ellen Watkins Harper's poetry published before 1880, writing, "these early volumes aren't books at all, but rather small pamphlets or chapbooks" (57). Another contribution to the 2012 volume, *Early African American Print Culture*, from Derrick R. Spires, titled "Imagining a State of Fellow Citizens: Early African American Politics of Publicity in the Black State Conventions," emphasizes the importance of pamphleteering as a way of circulating convention proceedings to those who did not or were unable to attend, noting that convention organizers often delayed publishing proceedings in newspapers until after they were printed and circulated in pamphlet form. Pamphlets, Spires writes, "extended, circulated, and concretized [the] civic presence" imagined and established by the state convention movement.

⁵ See Leon Jackson, "The Talking Book and the Talking Book Historian: African American Cultures of Print—The State of the Discipline," *Book History* 13 (2010): 251-308.

⁶ See John Ernest, *Chaotic Justice: Rethinking African American Literary History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

⁷ See James Sidbury, *Becoming African in America: Race and Nation in the Early Black Atlantic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁸ Finnie Coleman, *Sutton E. Griggs and the Struggle Against White Supremacy* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007), 10-11.

⁹ Coleman, *Sutton E. Griggs*, 13.

¹⁰ Coleman, *Sutton E. Griggs*, 12.

¹¹ Chakkalakal and Warren, "Introduction," 4-5.

¹² Chakkalakal and Warren, "Introduction," 6.

¹³ Griggs, *The Story of My Struggles* (Memphis: National Public Welfare League, 1914), 7.

¹⁴ While I work here within the common binary axis of black leadership used in relation to the period, I more than acknowledge that there are problems with a two-sided configuration of turn-of-the-century black politics as such. An attempt to move outside of this binary is one intention of this section of the introduction. No one or two leaders can accurately represent the complexity and variance of the African American political scene at the turn of the century, or, for that matter, in the antebellum period or twentieth century either.

¹⁵ Susan Gillman, *Blood Talk: American Race Melodrama and the Culture of the Occult* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 74.

¹⁶ *The Story of My Struggles*, 8.

¹⁷ *The Story of My Struggles*, 14.

¹⁸ Coleman, *Sutton E. Griggs*, 27.

¹⁹ Most criticism coming from the early institutional era of African American literary studies characterizes Griggs as a black nationalist author. The Modern Library's 2003 edition of *Imperium in Imperio* perpetuates this critical paradigm by framing the novel as an example of black literary nationalism and the author as a black nationalist intellectual. For examples, see Robert E. Fleming, "Sutton E. Griggs: Militant Black Novelist," *Phylon* 34 (March 1973): 73-77; Roger Whitlow, "The Revolutionary Novels of Martin R. Delany and Sutton Griggs," *MELUS* 5.3 (Autumn 1978): 26-36; Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925* (New York: Oxford University

Press, 1978), and “Literary Garveyism: The Novels of Revered Sutton E. Griggs,” *Phylon* 40 (1979): 203-16; and Arlene Elder, *The “Hindered Hand”: Cultural Implications of Early African American Fiction* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1979). More recent scholarship includes Gillman’s *Blood Talk: American Race Melodrama and the Culture of the Occult* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Maria Karafalis, “Oratory, Embodiment, and US Citizenship in Sutton E. Griggs’s *Imperium in Imperio*,” *African American Review* 40.1 (Spring 2006): 125-143; Stephen Knadler, “Sensationalizing Patriotism: Sutton Griggs and the Sentimental Nationalism of Citizen Tom,” *American Literature* 79.4 (December 2007): 673-699.

²⁰ Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925*, 171.

²¹ See Gillman, *Blood Talk*; Coleman, *Sutton E. Griggs and the Struggle Against White Supremacy* and “Social Darwinism, American Imperialism, and the Origins of the Science of Collective Efficiency in Sutton E. Griggs’s *Unfettered*” in *Jim Crow, Literature, and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs*; Eric Curry, “‘The Power of Combinations’: Sutton Griggs’s *Imperium in Imperio* and Collective Efficiency,” *American Literary Realism* 43.1 (Fall 2010): 23-40.

²² See Chakkalakal and Warren, “Introduction.”

²³ Chakkalakal and Warren, “Introduction,” 9-11.

²⁴ Warren’s book, *What Was African American Literature?*, is an expansion of the argument he makes in a short essay published in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, “Does African American Literature Exist?.” See *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 57.26 (March 4, 2011): B10-B11.

²⁵ John Ernest, *Chaotic Justice*, 25.

²⁶ Cited from *Lift Every Voice: African American Oratory, 1787-1900*, eds. Philip S. Foner and Robert James Branham (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 82-83

²⁷ Griggs, *Life's Demands; or, According to Law* (Memphis: National Public Welfare League, 1916), 50-51.

²⁸ Chakkalakal and Warren, "Introduction," 12.

²⁹ Early printed books were classified according to size, with folio being the largest, quarto a middling size, and octavio the smallest. These formats do not just indicate size, but also the number of times a single sheet of paper is folded to form pages. See Joad Raymond's *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* for a good description of the pamphlet as a material form in relation to other book and print forms in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

³⁰ Thomas Jay Garbaty, "'Pamphilus, de Amore'": an Introduction and Translation," *The Chaucer Review* 2.2 (Fall 1967):108-134.

³¹ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 9.

³² Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 7.

³³ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 12.

³⁴ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 5.

³⁵ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 17.

³⁶ Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 92.

³⁷ *Original and Growth of Printing* (London: John Streater, 1664), B2. Web.

http://gateway.proquest.com.libproxy.temple.edu/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:54586:3

³⁸ *Original and Growth of Printing*, C7. Web.

http://gateway.proquest.com.libproxy.temple.edu/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:54586:9

³⁹ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 324; *Original and Growth of Printing*, B2.

Web. http://gateway.proquest.com.libproxy.temple.edu/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:54586:3

⁴⁰ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 25.

⁴¹ See Rachel Trubowitz, “Female Preachers and Male Wives: Gender and Authority in Civil War England,” in *Pamphlet Wars: Prose in the English Revolution*, ed. James Holstun (New York: Routledge, 1992), 112-133.

⁴² Bernard Bailyn, *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA.: The Belknap Press, 1967), 8.

⁴³ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 2.

⁴⁴ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 13-17.

⁴⁵ Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 44.

⁴⁶ On print, public opinion, and propaganda in the Revolutionary era, see Russ Castronovo, *Propaganda 1776: Secrets, Leaks, and Revolutionary Communications in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). On the public sphere, see

After Habermas and Kari Karppinen, *Rethinking Media Pluralism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

⁴⁷ *Original and Growth of Printing*, C7. Web.

http://gateway.proquest.com.libproxy.temple.edu/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:54586:9

⁴⁸ Jarrett, *Representing the Race*, 6.

⁴⁹ Jeanine Marie DeLombard, “African American Cultures of Print” in *A History of the Book in America, Volume 3: The Industrial Book in America, 1840-1880*, eds. Scott E. Casper, Jeffrey D. Groves, Stephen W Nissenbaum, and Michael Winship (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 360-373.

⁵⁰ Also see Foster’s “A Narrative of the Interesting and (Somewhat) Surprising Developments of African American Print Culture.”

⁵¹ For more on nineteenth century African American historiography, see John Ernest’s *Liberation Historiography: African American Writers and the Challenge of History, 1794-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

⁵² Porter, *Negro Protest Pamphlets* (New York: Arno Press/The New York Times, 1969), iii-vii.

⁵³ See John Ernest, *Chaotic Justice* and Gene Andrew Jarrett, *Representing the Race*.

⁵⁴ M. M. Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* by M. M. Bakhtin ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 324.

⁵⁵ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Bantam Classic edition (New York: Bantam, 1989), 3.

⁵⁶ Dorothy J.Hale, “Bakhtin in African American Literary Theory” in *ELH* 61.2 (Summer 1994), 464.

⁵⁷ David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Malden,MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 41.

⁵⁸ Bernard W. Bell, *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 35.

⁵⁹ I should note that specific questions about gender are an area of inquiry this dissertation does not explore. However, the African American literary tradition of pamphleteering offers scholars one historical guide to black women’s public speech and literary publication in the nineteenth century. There are a couple of African American woman pamphleteers mentioned in this dissertation, Maria Stewart and Mary Ann Shadd. Maria Stewart is the first African American woman political philosopher. She started her career with the publication of a pamphlet, *Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality, The Sure Foundation On Which We Must Build* (1831), that announced her intent to continue the work of her friend and neighbor, David Walker, a pamphleteer and black uplift philosopher, who died a year earlier. Stewart’s efforts came to an end in Boston shortly after she gave a speech that criticized the city’s black Freemasons, a traditional center of male power in Boston’s black community, during a speech in front of the African Lodge in 1833. Stewart’s example shows us how pamphlets and public speech by black women challenged the dynamics of intra-racial, gendered power. Thus, Rachel Trubowitz’s work with pamphlets, gender roles, print publication, and the power of public speech in “Female Preachers and Male Wives: Gender and Authority in Civil War England” hints at one direction that an emphasis on women’s pamphleteering in African

American literary history could take. Mary Ann Shadd was an antebellum-era writer, a newspaper editor, and the daughter of an important member of the 1830s black convention movement, Abraham Shadd. Mary Ann used the pamphlet to join political and social conversations circulating in the black public sphere, and her work as a writer began when she published an uplift pamphlet, *Hints to the Colored People of the North* (1849). A proponent of Canadian emigration, an idea that called for free blacks to leave the U.S. for colonies in Canada as a way to secure civil rights, she published another pamphlet, *A Plea for Emigration, or Notes of Canada West* (1852), in support of the idea. There are numerous black woman pamphleteers of the nineteenth century who are not mentioned in the dissertation, such as Jarena Lee, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Elizabeth Wicks, and Mary Still, but who can show us the importance of pamphleteering in nineteenth-century African American literary and cultural history. Reading Jarena Lee's spiritual autobiography, *Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee* (1836), as a pamphlet might change how we understand this text in conversation with other African American autobiographical pamphlets, such as Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), which contains a spiritual autobiography of sorts in the form of a post-narrative "Appendix." The early career Frances Ellen Watkins Harper may be seen in a different way with an emphasis on her involvement in an African American literary tradition of pamphleteering. Harper began her career with the publication of a pamphlet, *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects* (1854), and, as Meredith McGill informs us in "Frances Ellen Watkins Harper and the Circuits of Abolitionist Poetry," the majority of Harper's work up to 1880 was published in pamphlet form. Texts such as Elizabeth Wicks's *Address Delivered Before the African Female Benevolent Society of Troy* (1834)

and Mary Still's *An Appeal to the Females of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (1857) show us how pamphlets were an important form of historical record keeping for women's mutual aid societies, church groups, and literary societies. These texts also show us how pamphleteering allowed such organizations to broaden the reach of their discourse and to formalize organizational ethics and traditions. Finally, print historians might look at the work of women in the production and circulation of pamphlets, which, as Frances Smith Foster shows us in her narrative of early African American print culture, were often produced in black community spaces such as churches, mutual aid offices, and spaces where literary societies would meet. Women were no doubt participants in the types of community work that insured pamphlets moved from printers to readers and then by hand to additional readers in early nineteenth-century black public life.

Chapter One: Pamphleteering and the Origins of African American Literature

William Hamilton's history of African American literature in the early republic begins with Phillis Wheatley, author of the first book of poetry published by a black writer in the Anglo-Atlantic world, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773), and ends with two pamphlet versions of slave trade orations: Peter Williams's *A Thanksgiving Sermon* (1808) and Hamilton's own *Mutual Interest, Mutual Aid, Mutual Relief* (1809). Wheatley is a common point of origin for most histories of African American literature. However, Hamilton could have begun his history with another text from the Revolutionary era: an anti-slavery pamphlet titled *The Appendix; Or, Some Observations on the Expediency of Petition of the Africans, Living in Boston, &c, lately presented to the General Assembly of the Province* (1773). This pamphlet, published the same year as Wheatley's volume, includes a petition for freedom from slavery and an anti-slavery essay by a group calling itself the Sons of Africa. The two pieces by the Sons of Africa included in *The Appendix* mark the first known African American entry into early American pamphlet culture. Their work marks the beginning of an African American literary tradition of pamphleteering that had become a central feature of African American print culture by Hamilton's time. If Hamilton had linked his pamphlet with the work done by the Sons of Africa rather than with that of Wheatley, then the first origin story of African American literature might have emphasized the importance of pamphlets and pamphleteering to that tradition. But he did not, so this chapter will do so instead.

In *Mutual Interest*, Hamilton argues that African Americans are represented in and by their literature; in the early republic this literature was characterized by pamphlets. What he means to show his readers is that the genre of pamphleteering is situated between an arena of cultural production—literature—and an arena of political representation in early nineteenth-century America: the public sphere of print culture. He writes that further pamphleteering by black authors will cause those who fight for white supremacy and black subordination to “quit the field, and no longer urge their superiority of souls.”¹ Hamilton was right to connect African American pamphleteering in the early republic with literary traditions that began in the Revolutionary era, for the Sons of Africa’s writings are crucial to establishing the deep connections between African American cultural production and political action. Because pamphleteering was both a literary and political print genre, an emphasis on pamphleteering while recounting the origins of African American literature can help us further explore the connections between literary production and political action that writers and critics have identified in the tradition. Early African American writers and intellectuals such as Hamilton saw literary production in the form of pamphlets as a strategy for regenerating a national black community degraded by the influences of slavery and white supremacy. Using pamphlets to circulate critical narratives was crucial to this strategy.

This chapter tells an origin story of the neglected African American literary tradition of pamphleteering. I begin by showing how particular conventions for the representation of “African” and “Negro slave” voices in print and political cultures developed over the course of a long eighteenth century. Pamphlets were crucial to this development. I focus on what James Sidbury has called the rhetorical stance of the

“African.”² Claiming “African” rhetorical positions was a way for authors to formulate critical narratives of Anglo-Atlantic culture from the ostensibly disinterested perspective of the alien observer. With a turn toward the Sons of Africa, I show how these writers deployed a similar rhetorical stance to speak as representatives for the “Negro slaves” to craft a critical narrative of political and social incorporation in American life. The Sons of Africa engage a discourse of racial representation in political and cultural matters that would have been familiar to eighteenth-century readers of Anglo-Atlantic popular print media. The voices they imagine in their texts relied on such readers’ acknowledgements that black speakers could make critical interventions in discourses about America and the larger Anglo-Atlantic world. Significantly, the petitions and essays published by the Sons of Africa in 1773 mark one of the first moments when black writers identified as both African *and* American in print. To do so, these early African American writers fashioned an early black nationalism by revising and re-circulating Revolutionary-era ideologies for the purposes of anti-slavery activity and black cultural autonomy.³

The petition and political essay, “Thoughts on Slavery,” set in place frameworks for African American cultural production and political action that would last from the Revolutionary era into the twentieth century. These texts build a narrative in which the collective voice of “Negro Slaves” has a crucial place in early American public and political life as a source of particular insight into national ideologies and as a moral guide. The Sons of Africa use a representative voice to articulate a dramatic narrative of American discourse such that America itself becomes the text under scrutiny.⁴ In their efforts to change how Revolutionary-era readers interpreted early American political discourse, its silence on the matter of hereditary chattel slavery, and early African

American identity, the Sons of Africa speak on behalf of “Negro Slaves” by appropriating the language of Boston’s political public sphere and Patriot propaganda.

I propose that looking at the Sons of Africa’s intercession in the public sphere through a radical pluralist lens can help us understand how the January 1773 petition and “Thoughts on Slavery” positioned black communities and speakers in late eighteenth-century Boston’s discursive terrain.⁵ Such models theorize the public sphere “as a ‘mixed-game,’ i.e., partially collaborative and partially conflictual,” and are “much more receptive...to the multiplicity of voices that a pluralist society encompasses and to the complexity of the power structure that this network of differences implies.”⁶ This radical pluralist view has an advantage over public-counterpublic models by positioning diversity and contestation as constitutive of, as opposed to responsive to, elements of modern democratic political life while still recognizing the unequal power relations between dominant and subordinate publics.⁷ The January 1773 petition and “Thoughts on Slavery” hint at the potential the Sons of Africa saw in the chaos that marked late eighteenth-century Boston’s public sphere, an arena of dramatic, discursive, and occasionally physical, confrontations between established and insurgent forms of power. These texts highlight how early African American writers and intellectuals identified the degree to which processes of confrontation and contestation were integral to late eighteenth-century American politics.

After a reading of the Sons of Africa’s works, I consider how the frameworks for linked literary and political actions influenced two black pamphleteers in the early republic: Prince Hall and John Marrant, emphasizing Hall in particular. These writers collaborated to publish three pamphlets between 1789 and 1797. I argue that these

pamphlets constitute a three-fold narrative that constitutes one of the first black uplift philosophies conceived of by African American writers. Crucially, narrative techniques are fundamental to the presentation of this philosophy. The uplift story Hall and Marrant tell begins with a lost history of great, African contributions to Western, and ultimately American, culture, present a formula for regenerating African American culture in the present, and suggest how this formula will result in a return to racial greatness in the future. I assert that the revisions to the frameworks for representing African America in literature and politics developed by the Sons of Africa that Hall and Marrant make in their pamphlets contribute an additional dimension—African American Freemasonry—to late eighteenth-century black uplift discourse. This dimension would influence antebellum-era black writers such as David Walker, whose *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (1829) is studied in the next chapter. The narrative approach to black uplift philosophy that we encounter in Hall and Marrant's pamphlets also looks forward to strategies adopted by Sutton E. Griggs in his turn-of-the-century novels and pamphlets.

One goal of this chapter is to contribute a new perspective to recent scholarly conversations centered on the intersections between literature and politics in the African American literary tradition. By reading a traditionally popular and often political genre—the pamphlet—as a medium crucial to the development of narrative techniques in this tradition, I work toward formulating a position on the debate initiated by John Ernest in *Chaotic Justice: Rethinking African American Literary History* (2009), when he asked: “what is African American about African American literature, and why should we identify it as a distinct tradition?”⁸ Ernest contends that African American literature

represents race as a complex cultural system, and that what is significant about this literature is the sophistication with which it analyzes and represents that system—not the fact that this literature was written by nonwhites.⁹ While the paradigm for understanding the political history of African American literature Kenneth W. Warren posits by no means dominates the field, his book, *What Was African American Literature* (2011), has influenced recent critical debates on this history. Gene Andrew Jarrett also re-thinks scholarly approaches to African American literature in his recent book, *Representing the Race: A New Political History of African American Literature* (2011). In his book, Jarrett argues that African American literature has always been political because the basic fact of literary publication by black authors inevitably make them representatives of their race whether their works were overtly political or not.

This chapter builds on a view articulated by Jarrett: that African American literature has always been political in some sense of the word. Literary culture and political representation were closely related since the late eighteenth century in America, to the point that one could not be defined without reference to the other. Publication alone by a black author was an act fraught with political implications.¹⁰ Pamphlets were one of the most common forms of publication by black writers in late eighteenth-century America. I also work in this chapter with a theory of African American literature advanced by Ernest in *Chaotic Justice*, viewing a process of repetition and revision as one of the principal dynamics marking the African American literary tradition. I locate one beginning of this dynamic in the early writings of the Sons of Africa. But before we get to the Sons of Africa and the texts they wrote, we ought to look back at political representations of “African” and “Negro slave” speakers in late seventeenth- and

eighteenth-century Anglo-Atlantic print culture. The writings of the Sons of Africa emerge from and at times challenge late eighteenth-century Anglo-Atlantic representations of “African” and “Negro slave” political speech.

“African” and “Negro Slave” Speakers, the Anglo-Atlantic Print Sphere, Pamphlets

Writers like the Sons of Africa spoke and contributed to public debate as representatives for local slaves. They knew that their work would be read as a representation of the rhetorical skill of Boston’s black community. Black political writers like the Sons of Africa often adopted a public role—the “African” or “Negro Slave” as a cultural critic—that readers recognized as a rhetorical position. Developed over the course of the eighteenth century, “the rhetorical stance of the ‘African’ was that of an outsider with judgment unsullied by self-interest or prejudice.”¹¹ “African” rhetorical stances were often used to identify social and political problems, analyze them, and propose solutions. Other terms readers might have associated with such critical intervention were “Negro Slave” or simply “a black.”

Pamphlets were an important form of publication for late eighteenth-century Anglo-Atlantic political and social discourses. In such discourses, “African” and “Negro slave” speakers were used to represent a particular perspective on Anglo-Atlantic spheres of public as well as private. This perspective was positioned as a source of critical analyses of public and private life in the Anglo-Atlantic world. When late eighteenth-century black writers like the Sons of Africa adopted voices as “Africans” or “Negro Slaves,” they participated in a tradition of representing “racialized” voice in print that began near the end of the 1600s, when writers began to use “black” or “African” speakers

to articulate critical analyses of Anglo-American culture.¹² Even at an early point of white virtualization, to borrow historian Richard S. Newman's description from his essay "Liberation Technology: Black Printed Protest in the Age of Franklin," black rhetorical voice was a useful aesthetic strategy for articulating political and social criticism from the disinterested, or at least less invested, observer.

"Negro slave" speakers were used to represent enslaved communities at large and the common sense, as it were, that emanated from them. One of the first examples of this is Thomas Tryon's *Friendly Advice to the Gentleman-Planters of the East and West Indies* (1684). While *Friendly Advice* is primarily a travel narrative, Tryon represents a point of view ascribed to slaves in a section of the text, titled "A Discourse In way of a Dialogue, Between an Ethiopean or Negro-Slave And a Christian, That was his Master in America," that veers into social criticism. In this section, the Negro-Slave, having learned of Christian religious doctrines from his master, discusses these doctrines with him. Between the two, Christian discourse and the discourses supporting slavery are circulated back and forth. As a result of the slave's illumination of racist, Christian hypocrisies, the master concludes, "I am convinced that our former Conduct towards you, has not been agreeable to our Religion, or common equity."¹³ In Tryon's text, we can see how racialized voice serves a crucial dialogic function by speaking "white" discourse and "black" interpretations of such discourse simultaneously. We see the beginnings of a tradition that involved the circulation of discourse between two interpretive perspectives, the white slave-holder and the black slave.

Aphra Behn's novella, *Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave: a True History* (1688), is an early example of how an "African" rhetorical stance was used as a source of cultural and

political critique in the context of dramatic narrative. *Oroonoko* tells the story of an honorable African prince who is enslaved, transported to South America, and eventually executed. The novella works to criticize the severity of British slavery and colonialism in the Americas by using an enslaved African prince who “in all points address’d himself as if his education had been in some *European Court*.”¹⁴ Behn wants readers to recognize the royal character of her African slave, and question whether a single people ought to be uniformly enslaved. However, there are other questions she uses her royal slave to explore, such as the changes in monarchical and parliamentary powers after years of civil war—1642–1651—during which King Charles I was beheaded, and around the time of the Glorious Revolution—1688—when King James II was overthrown by an alliance of English Parliamentarians and William III of Orange.¹⁵ Oroonoko’s voice thus also functions to develop Behn’s more subtle critique of English politics and political culture at the same time that she critiques British colonialism.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, as white writers began to publish what they claimed to be the direct words of enslaved, black speakers, these writers used pamphlets. *A Speech Made by a Black of Guardaloupe* (1709), an anonymously published pamphlet, is an example of this. *A Speech* presents readers with anti-slave trade testimony spoken by a representative black slave, not an imagined speaker like Behn’s Royal Slave or Tryon’s Negro-Slave.¹⁶ Another published text, “The Speech of Moses Bon Saam” (1735), which was printed in a few British periodicals, gives readers ostensibly direct testimony from a black speaker in print. Both *A Speech Made by a Black of Guardaloupe* and “The Speech of Moses Bon Saam” are crafted as criticisms of slavery originating from enslaved black communities. However, the voices writers

imagined were not always used to deploy discourses of black opposition to the New World system of slavery. The critical stance and affective power of such voices was used to present defenses of slavery as well. *The Speech of Mr. John Talbot Campo-Bell* (1736), by Robert Robertson, is one example. Campo-Bell's voice is used to deliver one of the most well developed eighteenth-century defenses of the slave system and the American plantocracy by placing the blame for the slave trade and hereditary chattel slavery on the economic conditions of transatlantic early capitalism.¹⁷ Given the length of the text, the pro-slavery *Speech of Mr. John Talbot Campo-Bell* was most likely published in pamphlet form. Pamphleteering would have allowed Robertson to intervene quickly in the public debate prompted by "The Speech of Moses Bon Saam," which Robertson appended to his text.

Pamphlets were indispensable to the first efforts at publication by black writers and speakers themselves. Pamphlets were integral to a period during which an Afro-Atlantic literary tradition emerged. In the 1760s and 1770s, black writers began using the "African" rhetorical voice developed over the preceding century to articulate their own perspectives on Anglo-Atlantic culture and, even if quietly at first, to question systemic white supremacy and black subordination. Late eighteenth-century black writers like the Sons of Africa were "African" because Anglo-Atlantic culture considered them as such, but they did not reject their African heritage; they embraced it on terms that allowed them to revise that identity as a means for asserting black social and political equality, and sometimes moral superiority, to whites.¹⁸ The role of the black speaker in print as a moral teacher began to emerge as black writers appropriated the role of cultural critic for their own purposes, moving beyond critiques of slavery to the cultures that sanction it. The

first example of published text by an author of African descent is Briton Hammon's *A Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings and Surprising Deliverance of Briton Hammon, A Negro Man* (1760). Hammon's *Narrative* is a short, spiritual autobiography that highlights the author's Christian faith and, near the conclusion, uses the rhetorical stance of the "African" to quietly question the fidelity of white Britons to their professed religious doctrines. At only fourteen pages long, the *Narrative* was more than likely published as a pamphlet by its amanuensis editor. The superior moral stance taken in this pamphlet would become integral to works by Afro-Atlantic authors, such as James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw's *A Narrative of the Most remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, an African Prince, As related by himself* (1772). Gronniosaw's *Narrative* was also recorded by amanuensis, and was another short work probably published in pamphlet form.

Pamphlets were important to the emergence and development of modes of socio-political critique in late eighteenth-century Afro-Atlantic literature because pamphlets were one of, if not the, most important genres for engaging, framing, and re-framing public debate. As Richard Atkyns wrote in *The Original and Growth of Printing* (1664), pamphlets gave "every Male-content [a chance to vent] his Passion in Print."¹⁹ Pamphleteering was crucial to the emergence of a public sphere of critical debate in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century, and the public sphere has roots in the cultural sphere of aesthetic debate where the "critical debate ignited by works of literature and art was soon extended to include economic and political disputes."²⁰ As Habermas explains, "Even before the control over the public sphere by public authority was contested and finally wrested away by the critical reasoning of private persons on political issues, there

evolved under its cover a public sphere in apolitical form—the literary precursor of the public sphere operative in the political domain.”²¹ Thus, the emergence of agreed upon, common criteria for what counted as rational-critical discourse in political and social arenas was fundamentally aided by an already existing sphere of critical discourse in the world of letters. The conventions of aesthetic criticism in the cultural sphere soon migrated to political and social spheres. Private individuals learned and cultivated the conventions of critical discourse in practices of cultural consumption, and a familiarity with literary culture and the habits of aesthetic debate licensed these individuals to operate as citizens in the public, political realm. The absence of a literary culture and a lack of familiarity with accepted modes of critical discourse meant that a person or community could not reasonably expect access to arenas where matters of social and political importance were decided. Before a group could enter the public sphere of political life, it had to prove a capacity for cultural production, consumption, and critical analysis. Here, in the intersections between literary spheres, critical discourses, and political spheres, we may see a glimpse of the historical and cultural conditions that established African American literature as an aesthetic *and* political tradition.

Pamphlets and pamphleteering were integral to the efforts of late eighteenth-century black writers, who appropriated the critical discourse of racial representation in literature and in politics from Anglo-Atlantic print culture. As a print technology capable of quickly reaching a broad readership, pamphlets were especially crucial to the efforts of black writers to take simultaneous actions in both print and political spheres. Print publication by writers of African descent was read as a political statement regarding the fitness of black people for incorporation into the Anglo-Atlantic political sphere

regardless of an author's intentions.²² Literary publication by black writers was political because the capacity for aesthetic imagination and literary genius in such writers was a subject of political debate in the Anglo-Atlantic world. But black authorship was also seen as a political matter because demonstrating literary excellence was a crucial prerequisite for admittance into the official space of political and social debate in the late eighteenth-century Anglo-American public sphere. As I will show, the Sons of Africa take a rhetorical stance as "Negro slaves" to craft an anti-slavery and anti-racist strategy that embraces the larger identities of Revolutionary patriotism, civic engagement, religious and moral uplift, and interracial solidarity. In doing so, the Sons of Africa help to establish a form of critically oriented African American voice in late eighteenth-century American print culture.

The Sons of Africa and African American Pamphleteering in the Revolutionary Era

The Sons of Africa published two petitions for the abolition of slavery and one political essay in 1773 Boston. The first of these petitions was submitted to the General Court (a colonial legislative body) in January of that year, and was printed in a pamphlet, accompanied by the essay, as *The Appendix; Or, Some Observations on the Expediency of Petition of the Africans, Living in Boston, &c, lately presented to the General Assembly of the Province*. The petition is followed in *The Appendix* by "Thoughts on Slavery," an anti-slavery essay by the Sons of Africa. A second petition was submitted to the General Court in April of 1773. This time the Sons of Africa accompanied their appeal to the Court with a revised version of an anti-slavery pamphlet by Thomas Swan,

A Dissuasion to Great Britain and the Colonies From the Slave Trade to Africa (1772).

The April petition was published as a broadside.

The Sons of Africa hoped to influence Boston's public political agenda. Popular print genres—the pamphlet, broadsides, and other print media—were the most efficient and effective means of doing so. Legal genres like the petition became popular after John Adams's defense of British soldiers who were on trial for murder in connection with the 1770 incident on King Street, also known as the Boston Massacre. Enslaved blacks submitted a series of similar petitions to legislatures around New England throughout the decade, making sure to circulate these petitions in popular print media as well. But the publication of the January 1773 petition and “Thoughts on Slavery” in a pamphlet enabled the Sons of Africa to intercede in the Revolutionary-era political public sphere. The petition would not have circulated outside the Court, and the Sons of Africa would not have secured representation in the court of public opinion, without the pamphlet. Additionally, the political essay the Sons of Africa contributed to *The Appendix* enhanced their position in their public world by demonstrating a familiarity with as well as the capacity to reproduce culturally sanctioned modes of socio-political criticism, which, as shown above, were often narrative in character. The petition was a formal political action when it was submitted to the General Court, but once it was published in *The Appendix* and paired with “Thought on Slavery,” these texts together functioned as informal political action in the cultural sphere of literary production. Together, these works constitute what I contend is the first instance of African American political propaganda.

The January 1773 petition and “Thoughts on Slavery” are propaganda in the Du Boisian sense of the word. W. E. B. Du Bois offers his definition of propaganda in

“Criteria of Negro Art”: “all Art is propaganda and ever must be, despite the wailing of the purists,” because the African American artist, as “the apostle of Beauty thus becomes the apostle of Truth and Right.”²³ According to Du Bois, African American art works to propagate truths suppressed by a white supremacist society and advocate for what is right in the face of social and political wrongs. Revolutionary-era Americans saw the circulation of propaganda—“publicly disseminated knowledge that serves to influence others in belief or action”—as a core element of the political process, and so skilled interpretation and critique were of the utmost importance to civic life in this period.²⁴ The Sons of Africa were no exception. They wrote, published, and circulated propaganda as a way of reframing Revolutionary-era Boston’s political narrative about itself; and in order to reframe this narrative, the Sons of Africa’s propaganda had to employ techniques as common in eighteenth-century Anglo-African literary works as they did techniques that were common to contemporary rhetorical works. Propaganda was a means for groups like the Sons of Africa to stake out territory in Boston’s political arena, but it was also a way for these writers to unveil false narratives of white supremacy.

If one goal of African American art was to illuminate new truths for a culture beholden to the fictions of white supremacy and black subordination, then the Sons of Africa joined in the pursuit of this goal by writing and circulating new narratives of political, social, and racial meaning that would rend the veil of white supremacy, showing readers the truth of racial equality. In this respect, I contend the Sons of Africa initiated one of the major traditions of African American popular print: a reformative narrative of contemporary racial thought and socio-political philosophies.²⁵ These writers did so by drawing from the late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century tradition of “African” or

“Negro slave” discourse in print and in narrative discussed above. Adapting this tradition for use in American political and social debate, the Sons of Africa show us how a literary strategy—double-voiced narratives—also functioned as a political strategy in their contributions to *The Appendix*. Ultimately, the Sons of Africa strove to create new ways of reading public discourse and interpreting political philosophy in Revolutionary-era Boston.

There is not much available biographical information on the Sons of Africa, but some information can be gleaned from their published texts. The January petition is signed by a man named Felix. He speaks as a representative of the “many SLAVES, living in the Town of Boston, and other Towns in the Province.”²⁶ This Felix is probably the same Felix Holbrooke listed among the April 1773 petition’s signatories; the others are Peter Bestes, Sambo Freeman, and Chester Joie. The Sons of Africa are named as the author of “Thoughts on Slavery.” Because of the placement of “Thoughts on Slavery” directly after the January petition in *The Appendix*, and the re-appearance of Felix in the April petition, I refer to the collective body represented by Felix in January and by the multiple signatories in April as the Sons of Africa. What we do know is that the Sons of Africa were able to use legal mechanisms like the petition to appeal for freedom because slaves had a few political and social rights in Boston: a society with slaves, not a slave society.²⁷ In slave societies, slaves and slavery were central to the economy and the master-slave relationship served as the model for all other social relations.²⁸ Societies with slaves, such as Boston, granted rights to slaves that positioned them as something more than outright chattel. Massachusetts slaves had the right to petition, and possessions cannot conceivably exercise such a right, nor expect to be legally protected in any

capacity under civil law.²⁹ Boston's pamphlet culture, in which demonstrations of literary and rhetorical skill translated into civic virtue and evidence of a capacity to join rational-critical public debate, is thus a cultural and historical context in which the Sons of Africa's texts functioned.

The Sons of Africa are one of the first formal, African American political groups in America. The collective politics the Sons of Africa adopted and the leadership function they filled was forged in previous decades, during which the New England colonies teetered toward becoming slave societies. As Northern cities became more fully integrated into the Atlantic economy, larger numbers of slaves were transported to Boston directly from Africa, and this "influx of Africans awakened black northerners to their African origins," a heritage they would "[draw] on...as they remade their lives in the years preceding the Revolution."³⁰ Claiming representative "African" identity was a crucial component of the Sons of Africa's strategy for ideologically positioning black people as members of American society.³¹ The Sons of Africa spoke the languages of Revolutionary republicanism and early American patriotic nationalism as Africans, and they "Africanized" Revolutionary-era political ideologies by placing enslaved blacks at the center of any possible political and social changes in the Anglo-Atlantic world.³² To borrow C. L. R. James's characterization of Haitian slave uprisings during the French Revolution, the Sons of Africa "had heard of the revolution and construed it in their own image...they had caught the spirit of the thing."³³ The organizational name they chose was most likely a rhetorical play on the popular Patriot group, the Sons of Liberty, with chapters in a few North American colonial cities. Like the January petition, another petition written in April by the Sons of Africa states an intent to represent all "fellow

slaves in this province by order of their Committee,” which is in all likelihood another play on political and public organization in the Revolutionary era. The Sons of Africa probably borrowed from the style of the Committees of Correspondence founded by Adams and Joseph Warren in 1772.³⁴ By re-approaching Revolutionary-era political discourse on the laws of nature and the liberty granted all human beings, the Sons of Africa participated in the democratization of voice that historians of the American Revolution have recognized as one of its more radical legacies.³⁵

The January 1773 petition was designed to re-start a debate, held in the Massachusetts General Court, over the legality of hereditary chattel slavery. The Court likely took up the issue of slavery in response to Lord Mansfield’s decision in the case of *Somerset v Stewart* to disallow a colonial claim to property in another human being on British soil. Mansfield’s decision is perhaps the single most important legal precedent for late eighteenth-century anti-slavery movements in both metropolitan England and colonial North America.³⁶ In 1769, Charles Stewart traveled to England with his slave, James Somerset, a native-born African he purchased in Virginia. Two years later, Somerset escaped from his master, only to be recaptured and imprisoned on a ship bound for Jamaica. Hoping to stall Somerset’s removal, a group of British abolitionists submitted a writ of habeas corpus on Somerset’s behalf. Granville Sharp, a British abolitionist, was the organizing and motivating leader behind the case. In response to the writ, Mansfield decided that British civil law did not allow for the forced removal of a person from the country, effectively nullifying colonial property rights to human chattel—but only in England. Unsurprisingly, the Mansfield decision inspired debate in the colonial political press. Hyperbolic coverage of the Mansfield decision in Patriot

propaganda tended to overstate its breadth, with claims that the colonial right to hold human beings as property was being threatened and might soon be abolished. Patriot propaganda only mentioned slavery in reference to the metaphoric enslavement of North American colonists to the British: a figure for the domination of political and economic affairs by a distant, coercive power, with the exception of advertisements for the sale of slaves or announcements about escaped slaves.³⁷ However, this is not to say that the trope of slavery in popular print culture remained unconnected to hereditary chattel slavery, for the latter gave the former its affective power. Pamphleteering thus allowed the Sons of Africa to articulate a critical, anti-slavery discourse that was often left out or omitted from the Patriot press.

Publishing the petition and “Thoughts on Slavery” helped position the Sons of Africa in the court of public opinion, which was just as important to Boston’s political culture as the General Court. The Sons of Africa published their petitions and also wrote a political essay to establish a voice representing enslaved Africans in Boston’s public sphere. Much of this discourse was circulated in pamphlet form. Incorporation in *The Appendix*—an anthology-like pamphlet offering various critical takes on antislavery and Patriotic conversations—placed enslaved Africans in a local pamphlet culture that helped determine the meaning and shape of early American political life.³⁸ The January petition and “Thoughts On Slavery” are central to *The Appendix*. These texts as well as the re-circulation of *A Dissuasion* in the General Court along with the April 1773 petition are evidence suggesting that these early African American writers and political leaders recognized the importance of pamphleteering as a component of early American political life.

The Appendix, a collection of multiple texts from different writers and sources, as well as multiple texts and conversations referred to in the pages of the pamphlet, was no different: it sought to set an anti-slavery agenda for early American politics, and the petition—a formal, legal action—and the essay—a cultural intervention in political thought by enslaved writers—was integral to the pamphlet’s strategy for doing so. *The Appendix* as a whole represents a public debate over slavery and the meaning of Patriotic American political ideologies. Placing a number of voices together in conversation, some of which were in agreement and others of which were not, *The Appendix* does not just represent a public debate: it works to render an entire sphere of popular discourse in print. In this way, *The Appendix* is somewhat novelistic because, as Kenneth Hirschkop has suggested in an analysis of Bakhtin’s theory of the novel, “popular discourse produces novelistic style *automatically*...[and] novelistic style is obviously a model for the public sphere.”³⁹ Thus, we might read the pamphlet as a dramatic, quasi-novelistic narrative that tells a story of an antislavery debate that occurred in 1772-1773 Boston. The Sons of Africa are integral actors in this drama played out in *The Appendix*.

The Appendix presents a view of the late eighteenth-century discursive landscape of Boston, highlighting contrasts between the features of Patriot propaganda regarding slavery and the rights of colonists, with the conversation over slavery and freedom occurring in the General Court, in pamphlets like *A Dissuasion* (and *The Appendix* itself), and among enslaved Africans. *The Appendix* begins by commenting on the public debate sparked by Swan’s *A Dissuasion to Great Britain and the Colonies from the Slave Trade to Africa*. The author-editor, “A True Lover of Liberty,” of *The Appendix* tells readers that “The close reasoning and disinterested Attachment shown by [Swan], throughout the

whole of [his] useful Tract, for the Cause of Freedom, ought not to be passed over in Silence...[by] so many of [Revolutionary-era Boston's] Patrons for Liberty."⁴⁰ "A Lover of True Liberty" points out the omission of chattel slavery from Patriotic discourse. Drawing attention to Swan's logic and "disinterest," a civic virtue where one advocated a general interest as opposed to narrow personal interests, "A Love of True Liberty" begins a re-orientation of American political ideology toward the question of chattel slavery rather than the metaphoric slavery of the colonies to the crown commonly represented in Patriotic propaganda. The silence of Patriot propaganda toward slavery is even further underscored by the petition when "A Lover of True Liberty" introduces the topic of slavery after a reference to the General Court's abolition debate. The pamphlet's narrative of political life in Boston emphasizes chattel slavery over the metaphoric slavery of Patriot propaganda, and highlights the Revolutionary republican character of enslaved Africans against the hollow support for true liberty offered by those who "[talk] of Liberty, and, at the same Time to continue importing and making Slaves of whole Cargoes of their Fellow Creatures."⁴¹ These "sticklers for slavery," *The Appendix* contends, are "repugnant to the Character of this Province, which must be deemed the great Bulwark and Support of our Liberty."⁴² The pamphlet shows readers a better example of Massachusetts's character in its final selection, an anonymous letter published in the January 28, 1773 edition of the *Massachusetts Spy* asking the General Court to give the African American petition its due consideration.

The Sons of Africa are thus one voice among others in the narrative of liberty, law, and republican community articulated throughout *The Appendix*. The collection of conflictual discourses introduced in the pamphlet thus gives us a sense of the

complicated, pluralistic early American public sphere. As much as they might have idealized print publication as a form of rational-critical discourse, there is not much evidence that Americans saw the public sphere as a place for reasonable debate: in colonial North American cities, “the politically oriented riot was a more familiar form of political activity than the learned discussion of political principles.”⁴³ In this context, it “was not the topics [public discourse] covered or the places in which it circulated, but [its] *style*...[a] “dramatization of discourse [that] makes it ‘dialogical’ or ‘double-voiced.’” that made language public.⁴⁴ In fact, as Jürgen Habermas, the first theorist of the public sphere, eventually conceded in response to critics of his rational-critical model of this sphere, the narrative dramatization of socio-political problems was an important convention that made discourse public.⁴⁵ When we consider how the political riot was more common in Revolutionary-era Boston than rational-critical debate, and that dramatic narrative was more important, not to mention effective, than serious parliamentary-style deliberations, the early American public sphere appears as a rather chaotic space. Borrowing from sociologist Michael Gardiner’s work, I would suggest this sphere could be described as a “wild”—unrestrained, not submitting to control—public.⁴⁶ This was the scene—a wild and dramatic public sphere—that the Sons of Africa entered through *The Appendix*.

While publishing texts helped to position the Sons of Africa as participants in the city’s public and political spheres, publication also was a way of providing evidence that black people had the rhetorical as well as literary skill required of such participants. Reading, writing, and public speech were important civic virtues that framed early notions of what it meant to be an American in the late eighteenth century.⁴⁷ The Sons of

Africa positioned themselves in the Boston public sphere by appropriating a Revolutionary-era discourse of sentimental republicanism and then refracting it through the corporate voice of Boston's "Negro Slaves." Doing so allowed them to place enslaved Africans in the flow of civic life in Boston. However, in order to make the fullest appeal for their freedom, the Sons of Africa had to speak multiple languages at once. In order to constitute an anti-slavery and anti-racist discourse, they first had to account for racial or racist objections to black emancipation. At times, the Sons of Africa incorporated allusions to multiple public discourses in single sentences or passages.

For example, after hailing the Court and introducing the petitioners, the January 1773 petition begins to refute racist claims that blacks were naturally lawless as well as inherently lazy, and that emancipating such a people would soak resources from a more industrious white community. The Sons of Africa write, "Although some of the Negroes are vicious, (who doubtless may be punished and restrained by the same Laws which are in Force against other of the King's Subjects) there are many others of a different character."⁴⁸ A sentence that begins with an allusion to racist discourse splits at the parenthetical to refute such discourse by redirecting readers to an acknowledgement that a criminal element exists in any community. If the King's law was enough to restrain "vicious" whites, then it should be sufficient to regulate the conduct of all of the King's Subjects, white and black. Finally, there is another possible referent here for the King's law that further shows how the petitioners speak in multiple directions as they carve out a space for an African American public sphere in Boston. The King's Law might also be a reference to the precedent in British civil law set by Mansfield's decision in *Somerset v Stewart* on May 14, 1772.

The petition continues, “if made free, [the Negroes] would soon be able as well as willing to bear a Part in the Public Charges”—a communal fund for administering city programs and aiding the indigent—“many of them of good natural Parts, are discreet, sober, honest, and industrious.”⁴⁹ In these lines, the petitioners link the industriousness of the slave population to the economic health of the city at large. White Bostonians would not need to wait for emancipated blacks to contribute to the city coffers, and whites could not possibly ignore the fact that many slaves in societies with slaves (as well as in slave societies) were put in positions of trust and responsibility that reflected their “good natural Parts,” or honesty and integrity. While the lines quoted above situate the Sons of Africa as subject to the same laws as whites, the lines quoted here help the petitioners appropriate space in the community constituted by positive, civil law. The traits they list comprise a selection of characteristics marking an ideal constituent of a Revolutionary-era New England community. This list of “good natural Parts” exhibited by black Bostonians further reinforces the Sons of Africa’s claims to a place in America as Americans.

Beginning with a refraction (and refutation) of racist discourse that suggested all blacks were “vicious,” the Sons of Africa end the passage cited above by pointing to the fact that many of Boston’s blacks “are virtuous and religious, although their Condition is in itself so unfriendly to Religion, and every moral Virtue except Patience.”⁵⁰ After beginning by acknowledging an element of truth to claims about black criminality (as well as the truth of white criminality), the petition locates the cause not in the nature of blacks, who are described as having “good natural Parts,” but rather in the dehumanizing system of slavery and white supremacy. The Sons of Africa seem to suggest in this

sentence that if Africans are aliens in America, then it is not because of their nature but rather the persistent efforts of racist culture to alienate blacks as thoroughly foreign others. Readers of the petition are thus brought to a position at the end where the abolition of slavery strengthens the Boston-area community. The source of this strength is the incorporation of the African American civic body represented by the petitioners. This position stands in stark contrast to where the quotation began: introducing the contention that emancipation would weaken or otherwise threaten the health of Boston's civic body.

Of course, as the January 1773 petition points out, if blacks are alien others in Boston, then that is because they have been systematically marginalized. The Sons of Africa exclaim, "We have no Property! We have no Wives! No Children! We have no City! No Country," listing the private and public connections thought essential to proper civic engagement.⁵¹ These lines point out the disconnectedness from family that city and state slavery has forced on slaves in the province of Massachusetts. The Sons of Africa convey a narrative of racist marginalization that discourages the very sorts of social and political investments Patriotic discourse suggested were required of all Americans. The connections the Sons of Africa claim to lack are those that encourage a sense of involvement in community and shared duties with regard to the health of the body politic. By illuminating the rights (and, consequently, the implied responsibilities) that slavery denies, the petition ties an emotional appeal together with republican political ideology, presenting familial sentiment in an ideological frame of ownership, investment, and a burgeoning national identity.⁵² The "American" thing to do, the petition seems to argue,

would be to free the slaves and then incorporate them into republican civic and economic life.

“Thoughts on Slavery” complements the petition’s formal political request to the General Court, an arbiter of positive law, by making an African claim to American liberty on the grounds of natural law. The essay further articulates the Sons of Africa’s dramatic narrative in which they unveil anti-slavery as a component of true patriotism. We should augment our exploration of this narrative by noting a slight edit the Sons of Africa made to some lines of poetry quoted in the epigraph to “Thoughts on Slavery.” These lines come from the conclusion to Alexander Pope’s “An Essay on Man” (1733-34).⁵³ The edit helps the Sons of Africa set up a story in which anti-slavery is a feature of Patriotic identity. The two lines from Pope’s original version are: “Friend, parent, neighbour, first *it* will embrace, *His* country next, and next all the human race.”⁵⁴ In the epigraph, “it” is changed to “I” and “His” to “My.”⁵⁵ I should note that by citing Pope, a major figure in eighteenth-century Anglophone print culture, the Sons of Africa signal a cultural awareness and their familiarity with literature. But my interest in these lines is how the change in pronouns is an autobiographical shift that allows a patriotic embrace of one’s country to serve as a basis for a more comprehensive embrace of all races.

The first lines in “Thoughts on Slavery” continue to connect patriotism with broadened community boundaries by stating “wise and good men in all Ages have celebrated Patriotism as a Virtue of the first Magnitude [and as a mark of] Humanity.”⁵⁶ The movement suggested by the epigraph is confirmed in the first sentence of the essay. Patriotism is connected to Humanity, which the Sons of Africa define as “a benevolent regard to all...Fellow Men, [and]...one of the brightest Jewels in [the] Crown of Glory”

placed on “all Men who shine in the List of Fame.”⁵⁷ Patriotism, the Sons of Africa suggest, is really an anti-racist sentiment that, if felt and acted on properly, ought to lead one to an anti-slavery position. The lines cited above establish a new narrative of American Patriotism that puts anti-slavery and anti-racism at the forefront to suggest that one cannot truly love one’s country without loving all residents of that county. Yet American Patriotism in 1773 sanctioned chattel slavery, which the Sons of Africa critique by invoking religious discourse. Slavery violates “the Laws of Heaven...[as well as] the sacred Ties of Nature, Reason, and Conscience...to rob [the African] People of the Gifts of God,” they write.⁵⁸ This assertion would have been a contrast to some contemporary pro-slavery discourse that contended that the laws of nature sanctioned and encouraged black enslavement to whites.⁵⁹ Thus, there is another narrative being re-written in “Thoughts on Slavery”: the religious narrative justifying African slavery. The essay works to convert readers to an anti-slavery, anti-racist Patriotism as well as anti-slavery, anti-racist Christianity. In this way, the Sons of Africa adopt the role of moral teacher we might read in other works by contemporary African American writers, such as Phillis Wheatley’s “On Being Brought From Africa to America,” which was re-printed in *Poems on Various Subjects*, published the same year as “Thoughts on Slavery.”

“Thoughts on Slavery” is intended to make anti-slavery and anti-racism part of Patriotic American common sense. The Sons of Africa work toward this end by launching a criticism of the “feeble Efforts...made to justify the black and enourmous Crimes above mentioned.”⁶⁰ To initiate their critique, the Sons of Africa rely on the conventions of rhetorical analysis, which is akin to literary criticism, to show how pro-slavery thought and discourse defies reason and morality. They articulate a critical

examination of pro-slavery thought that points out “Reason and Conscience mock vain [pro-slavery] attempts” to justify holding human beings as property, robbing them of the “Gifts of God” and setting positive law against the “Laws of Nature.” We can see how the Sons of Africa show their intellectual rigor and continue to demonstrate their familiarity with the conventions of public socio-political discourse. However, exposing the “feeble Efforts” and “vain attempts” of those who would justify hereditary chattel slavery by referring to the “Laws of Nature” as support for the laws of men is not just part of the Sons of Africa’s strategy for showing their fitness for American public and political life. Revealing the false bases for such justifications is also part of a strategy for creating new ways of reading discourse, and thus reading the public world.

In works such as those published by the Sons of Africa, we find an aesthetic strategy of unveiling, uncovering, or un-concealing racialized and racist discourses, displaying such discourses as false and even heinous epistemologies. Racialized discourse results from the “chameleonic and parasitic character” of racism, which “insinuates itself into and appropriates as its own more legitimate forms of social and scientific expression,” such as the Patriotic political discourse.⁶¹ The concept of racialized discourse is meant to show how socioeconomic materiality—the very real subject position of the black race as white chattel—and ideological conception are mutually constitutive; discourse makes meaning, and meaning is applied in the world of social, political, and economic relations.⁶² By creating new narratives of American political ideology, the Sons of Africa sought to develop new narratives as well as new ways of reading America. For example, as shown above, “Thoughts on Slavery” challenges contemporary, “common sense” notions of what constitutes the “Laws of

Nature.” By showing readers how race determined common-sense, epistemological truths in a racist culture, early African American writers like the Sons of Africa joined in the circulation and exchange of truth-claims in the fields of racialized discourse by calling the traditions, conventions, and the unstated—but still understood—formulae constituting the “common sense,” as it were, of race into question.⁶³

Unveiling the racist fictions as just that—fictions—requires a particular sort of mimesis that circulates between imitation and projection. This kind of mimesis is a form of double-voiced discourse scholars have often identified in African American literature and that literary theorist M. M. Bakhtin contends is crucial to the novelistic imagination (it is thus not surprising that my study will soon turn to two major African American novelists who were indebted to African American pamphlet culture).⁶⁴ Holding a mirror to late eighteenth-century American culture, writers like the Sons of Africa show readers how race is a dynamic system for interpreting human life, organizing society, and determining the fundamental truths guiding social, economic, educational, and political discourses in America.⁶⁵ Once a mirror image of American culture is established for readers, it is then analyzed and criticized. Finally, a new vision for American political and cultural organization is projected in the text. In “Thoughts on Slavery,” this new American image is represented in the form of white anti-slavery Patriots “who relieve the oppressed, and give Liberty to them who are in Bondage,” such as “Mr. Robert Pierpont of Boston, and Major Fuller of Newton.”⁶⁶ Pointing to these examples of the new Americanisms they hope to inspire, the Sons of Africa ask readers to “give Honor to whom Honor is due, and surely it is not due to any more than to those who relieve the oppressed, and give Liberty to them who are in Bondage.”⁶⁷ Ultimately, men like

Pierpont and Fuller are representative of the narrative of American freedom and national identity the Sons of Africa work to (re)construct in their works.

I should note that by pointing to the presence of an almost novelistic form of narrative voice in the January 1773 petition and “Thoughts on Slavery” I am not suggesting that the texts are novelistic in character. Rather, I am suggesting that we may locate the quiet beginnings of a narrative approach to political action in the public sphere in this early pamphlet. The Sons of Africa offer an extended interpretation of social problems—slavery and racialized republicanism—that, in turn, becomes a basis for the formation of a collective political identity in their works. In the process of filling in the gaps, omissions, and blind spots identified in Revolutionary-era Patriotic propaganda, they crafted a political strategy for representing African Americans in the sphere of public discourse and formal legislative arenas. The political approach the Sons of Africa develop would become an important facet of African American pamphleteering in the long nineteenth century, and of other African American writings as well. For now, it is worth underscoring that the narrative approach to early African American politics adopted by the Sons of Africa influenced contemporaries such as Prince Hall and John Marrant, who collaborated to publish a series of pamphlets between 1789 and 1797.

Prince Hall, John Marrant, and African American Pamphleteering in the Early Republic

Pamphlets such as Prince Hall’s *A Charge Delivered to the Brethren of the African Lodge* (1792) and *A Charge Delivered to the African Lodge* (1797) continue the process of adopting and adapting a late eighteenth-century transatlantic tradition of pamphleteering begun by the Sons of Africa. These pamphlets were designed to follow

John Marrant's previously published pamphlet, *Sermon to the African Lodge of the Honourable Society of Free and Accepted Masons* (1789). Together, these three works arguably constitute the first black uplift philosophy published by African American writers. Presenting this philosophy in a narrative form was crucial to achieving Hall and Marrant's political goals and bringing their vision for a regenerated African American nation into being. The opening lines of *A Charge Delivered to the Brethren* can help us get a sense for how these three pamphlets worked in conjunction with one another. Hall's 1792 pamphlet begins by invoking the Masonic Festival of St. John the Baptist, a yearly celebration Hall describes as a "public [day]...when we appear in form, [and] give some reason as a foundation for our doing."⁶⁸ However, more importantly, Hall points out that John Marrant, an itinerant black preacher from England who had visited Boston in 1789, had already set such as foundation "in a discourse delivered in substance...and now in print."⁶⁹ Here, Hall refers to Marrant's *A Sermon*, and his reference to a foundation for the African Lodge set in print can give us a sense for how early African American pamphlet culture and the late eighteenth-century black public sphere were mutually constitutive.

The approach to Hall and Marrant's pamphlets I offer builds on the work of Joanna Brooks. Looking at these pamphlets as a narrative triptych complicates her account of the early black public sphere. Inasmuch as the *Sermon*, *A Charge to the Brethren*, and *A Charge to the African Lodge* emerge from an institutional black public sphere, they also are fundamental to raising its structure: Marrant and Hall saw the pamphlet as crucial to building an early African American public life. Brooks reads the *Sermon* and the 1792 and 1797 *Charges* as complementary texts that raise two pillars of

early African American Masonic, and thus public, life: the *Sermon* “provided a foundation of ‘anciency,’” or an African American connection to the ancient knowledge and history reflected in Masonic traditions; Hall’s *Charge to the Brethren* “introduced the pillar of civic duty”; and his *Charge to the African Lodge* “established a second pillar of sympathy, or racial solidarity.”⁷⁰ While Brooks is correct to point out that these three texts work together, there is another way of looking at this set of complementary works. Hall and Marrant’s three pamphlets tell a story of early African American religious, civic, and public character. In short, the three pamphlets establish a late eighteenth-century black uplift discourse that unfolds in three distinct “chapters,” so to speak.

Even though Marrant published his pamphlet first, I want to begin by looking at Prince Hall because he is one of the most important figures in late eighteenth-century African American literary and cultural history. He was a leader of the 1770s African American petition movement, and his biographer, Charles H. Wesley, points to Hall’s involvement in petitions from 1773, 1774, 1777, and 1778. Wesley suggests that Hall authored “nearly all the petitions that the negroes of the [Massachusetts] colony sent to the General Court” (there is no evidence Hall wrote the Sons of Africa’s petition).⁷¹ The exact year of Hall’s birth had been subject to some debate, and early twentieth-century biographies placed his birth in 1748, but, as Wesley points out, Hall’s death certificate in 1807 stated his age as seventy-two, which means that Hall would have been born in 1735 and not 1748.⁷² His birthplace is unknown. His birth status—free or enslaved—is unclear, but Wesley does point to manumission papers filed for a Prince Hall in 1770 by a William Hall, whom Wesley suggests was Prince’s owner and may also have been his father.⁷³ According to Wesley’s version of Hall’s early life, he would have been a free

man in 1773, and thus not eligible to petition the General Court for emancipation. But this fact does not preclude his possible involvement in the Sons of Africa's efforts to secure freedom for slaves in Massachusetts. Hall was a tireless opponent of slavery until his death in 1807.

Prince Hall is best known as the founder of African American Freemasonry, one of the first, if not the first, black public institutions in America. Like early African American pamphleteering, the roots of black Freemasonry are transatlantic. As Wesley writes, Hall formed African Lodge No.1 "not by copying and imitating white American Masonry but by the application to and approval of British Masonry in the period of the American Revolution when the rights of men were being tested."⁷⁴ African American Freemasonry also provides a clear connection between Hall and the Sons of Africa. Peter Bestes, a member of this early African American political organization and a signatory to the April 1773 petition, was an original member of African Lodge No.1, established by Hall, Bestes, and thirteen other black men in 1775. The African Lodge was granted a "Permet" to meet as a Masonic organization by a British chaplain of Irish descent, Sergeant John Batt, on March 17, 1775, when Batt's regiment left the city. Hall and the others had been initiated by Batt into a mobile military lodge connected to Batt's regiment eleven days prior. Members of the African Lodge were initiated at different levels of authority, and the rite established a formal hierarchy for the Lodge that probably reflected an existing African American leadership in Boston.⁷⁵ The Lodge operated under the Permet until July 3, 1784, when their petition for a full charter from the Grand Lodge of England was accepted. African Lodge No.1 was renamed African Lodge No. 459. Bestes eventually became a Master (a degree of seniority in Masonic organizations) in

the African Lodge and co-authored a 1777 petition to end slavery along with Prince Hall and other black Masons.⁷⁶ But Hall receives the most credit from historians and other scholars for bringing the African Lodge into existence, which may have been the result of his interactions with black soldiers who had been recruited to Batt's regiment while it was stationed at places such as Antigua, Guadeloupe, and Martinique.⁷⁷

Freemasonry offered early African American writers and leaders such as Prince Hall and Peter Bestes a space free from white oversight and interference. In this space, they continued to develop the kind of political authority expressed in and represented by the January and April 1773 petitions. They persisted with the Sons of Africa's work to discuss and debate spiritual as well as political or social matters and they sustained the bonds of community reflected in the collective action of these petitions.⁷⁸ As Brooks has shown, black Masons found a template for political, social, and religious consciousness and created critical narratives of white supremacist culture that would be crucial to black life in Boston as well as other northern cities through the antebellum period.⁷⁹ But as I am arguing, the African Lodge developed this template by drawing on the discursive strategies adopted by the Sons of Africa and revising them to form a black Masonic uplift narrative.

Freemasonry gave early African American writers such as Prince Hall another compelling framework for representation in politics and literature. African American Freemasons incorporated Masonic discourse into the civil theology that we first read in the January 1773 petition and "Thoughts of Slavery" in order to further shape the contours of dialogues and debates originating from black communities. As Corey D.B. Walker argues, in doing so, early African American Freemasons such as Prince Hall

created a political “vocabulary and grammar” in disagreement with established forms “that could be readily adapted to the exigencies of their existence in the early United States.”⁸⁰ While Brooks and Walker both make important points about the African Lodge as a base for developing a black public sphere and black public discourse in the late eighteenth century, they neglect to consider the crucial role pamphlets and pamphleteering played in broadening the reach of such discourse. The African Lodge provided an institutional base for a late eighteenth-century black public sphere, to be sure. But early African American pamphleteering set in place a discursive foundation on which the civic identities of black public institutions like the African Lodge were built.

Before looking more closely at Prince Hall’s pamphlets, we should take a brief look at John Marrant and his *Sermon Delivered to the African Lodge*. John Marrant was born free in 1755. His birthplace was New York, but after the death of his father, his mother moved the family to Florida (a Spanish colony at the time), then Georgia, and finally Charlestown, South Carolina. Marrant’s mother began her son’s education once they moved to Florida, and when they were in Charleston, Marrant was evangelized by George Whitefield, an itinerant preacher who was a celebrity in the transatlantic world. Marrant’s experience with Whitefield would prove to be momentous after the Revolutionary War. Marrant tells readers of his autobiographical pamphlet, *A Narrative of the Lord’s Dealings with John Marrant, A Black* (1785), that he was pressed into the British Navy during the War.⁸¹ Whether he traveled on a naval ship or on his own, Marrant arrived in London at the end of the war. Once there, he received his religious education from a minister associated with the Calvinist-Methodist evangelical circle surrounding Selina Hastings, the Countess of Huntingdon, whom Whitefield served as

personal chaplain. Huntingdon was a prominent sponsor of late eighteenth-century black writers such as Marrant, James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, and Phillis Wheatley. After his ordination in 1785, Marrant was sent to preach among Native Americans and blacks in Nova Scotia. But financial troubles caused him to move to Boston in 1787. Soon after arriving in Boston, Marrant met Prince Hall, was initiated as a member of the African Lodge, and given the position of chaplain. When Marrant left Boston 1790, he left a number of manuscripts on the Countess's version of Calvinist evangelicism with the African Lodge. These texts were most likely sources for the religious discourse deployed in the 1792 and 1797 *Charges*, and were thus important to the discursive foundation of the African Lodge. However, as Hall points out in *A Charge to the Brethren*, perhaps the most important text Marrant left in America was *A Sermon to the African Lodge*.

A Sermon, as Hall tells readers of his *Charge to the Brethren*, laid out a basis for the vision of African American community, civic identity, and racial solidarity articulated in the 1792 *Charge* and the 1797 *Charge to the African Lodge*. In *A Sermon*, sets in place an ancient African past as a foundation for modern Freemasonry as well as Christianity. These traditions, he suggests, were begun by Africans. We might read *A Sermon* as a narrative somewhat in the form of what John Ernest has termed "liberation historiography."⁸² I say somewhat because Ernest focuses primarily on narratives of African American and American history by black writers in the early republic and antebellum period. Marrant's historical narrative does less to position blacks in the currents of national history than it does to present an origin story for a diasporic, supranational black community. His intent for the pamphlet is to show readers how Africans "interacted with, helped shape, and w[ere] integrally bound up with the

civilization that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries gave birth to modern Freemasonry.”⁸³ Freemasonry, as Marrant argues, is a legacy of ancient African civilization that promises a path African Americans may follow as they regenerate a diasporic black nation among nations. Setting an Afro-centric foundation for Freemasonry and Christianity, and thus, in a way, late eighteenth-century American culture, *A Sermon* begins a story Marrant and Hall collaborated to tell. Their tale is one that shows how a historically great people might regenerate such racial greatness in the wake of transatlantic slavery.⁸⁴

Marrant wrote the first chapter in this narrative, but the second chapter is told in Hall’s *Charge to the Brethren*. The duties of Freemasons and Masonic discourse are at the center of this pamphlet. Masonic discourse served Prince Hall in two ways. First, such discourse supported black incorporation into the social and civic fabric of early American life, in which Freemasonry was an important part. Second, such discourse supported black criticisms of early American life. Similar to the rhetorical stance of the “African,” an “Afro-Masonic” rhetorical stance enabled narratives of critical incorporation such as those we read in the January 1773 petition and essay by the Sons of Africa. For example, after invoking Marrant and his historical narrative, Hall states directly that his intent is to “show the duty of a Mason.” Embracing the duty of a Mason meant embracing the story of an African past Marrant tells in *A Sermon*. The duty of Mason, Hall tells readers, is “to believe in one Supreme Being...the great Architect of the visible world...govern[ing] all things below...[with a] watchful eye...over all our works.”⁸⁵ He then charges the brethren of the African Lodge with being “good subjects to the laws of the land in which we dwell...and that we have no hand in any plots or

conspiracies or rebellion, or side or assist in them.”⁸⁶ However, his next rhetorical move is to connect “pity...[for] our distressed brethren,” which is most likely a reference to blacks still held as slaves despite a gradual emancipation process that began in the 1780s. As historian Joanne Pope Melish has shown, slaves were still being sold in New England in 1792, and there were still almost 1,500 slaves in New England at the turn of the century.⁸⁷ Although Hall could be referring to Africans Americans who experienced racist violence and discrimination as well as those who were enslaved, his lesson is clear: “However just it may be on the side of the oppressed...it doth not in the least, or rather ought not, abate that love and fellow-feeling we ought to have for our brother fellow men.”⁸⁸ Hall tells his readers the duty of a Mason is to allow the “Architect of this visible world” to carry out “bloodshed...[and] the devastation of towns,” not theirs, even though they might side with the oppressed. Like the expanding circle of Patriotism imagined by the Sons of Africa, racial patriotism discovered through Freemasonry ought to lead one to a broader embrace of all one’s “brother fellow men.”⁸⁹

In a manner similar to the Sons of Africa, Prince Hall works to create readers who would have new perspectives on the nation’s ideological orientations. But where the Sons of Africa are concerned with interracial communication and demonstrating new ways in which whites might read Patriotic political discourse, Hall is concerned with intra-racial communication and showing African Americans how to read racial affiliation. He builds on Marrant’s narrative of a lost African past to craft a narrative of black civic duty and identity that will enable black readers to reclaim this past. However, even as Hall strives to build an African American civic identity using a Masonic frame, he does not abandon the discourse of racial incorporation into American national life deployed by the Sons of

Africa. To the contrary, early black Masonic identity was but another layer of social and political representation added to the already established rhetorical stance of the “African” deployed by the Sons of Africa in their Revolutionary-era texts.

For example, Hall blends the religious language of African American Freemasonry with the prophetic discourse of Ethiopianism, which emerged from black appropriations of the Biblical verse from Psalms 68:31: “Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth her hands unto God.”⁹⁰ African American writers such as Prince Hall invoked this verse in the form of prophecy to suggest God had a special plan for diasporic Africans. He argues that African Americans ought to feel a racial bond with one another, but that this bond should not form a basis for violent action. Instead, the great Architect of the universe will unfold a plan of his own, and, in the meantime, African Americans, especially Masons, are to “lay by [their] recreations, and all superfluities, so that [they may] educate [the] rising generation.”⁹¹ Should black Bostonian Masons do as much, “God may raise up some friend or body of friends...to open a school for the blacks.”⁹² Should black Masons follow God’s plan, Hall suggests, a school for black youth will be raised, and African America will begin to stretch forth its arms in the form of more public institutions and broadened African American participation in black public life.

Prince Hall continues to craft his narrative of black civic life in *A Charge Delivered to the African Lodge*, the third chapter in his and Marrant’s black uplift narrative. The 1797 *Charge* moves from Hall’s prior emphasis on the “duty of a Mason to a Mason, and charity or love to all mankind” to show readers “that it is [their] duty to sympathise with our fellow men under their troubles [and] the families of our brethren who are gone.”⁹³ *A Charge to the African Lodge* continues to build the “superstructure”

of African American cultural regeneration by using fraternal, Masonic bonds as a basis for fraternal, racial bonds that, in turn, will serve as the basis for interracial community. Hall then tells his readers that the bonds of sympathy ought “not be confined to parties or colors; not to towns or states; not to a kingdom, but [rather extended] to the kingdoms of the whole earth.”⁹⁴ Similar to the American Patriotism that the Sons of Africa suggest should lead to a broad embrace of all races and nations, Hall’s racial patriotism is but a step toward a similar understanding of human family. However, he tells his readers that they must begin “with [their black] friends and brethren” who are not (yet) Masons.⁹⁵ If Ethiopia is to stretch forth her arms, as Hall again writes in the 1797 *Charge*, then it will be in large part due to the racial uplift strategies pursued by black Freemasons as well as taught to non-Masonic black folks.⁹⁶

The narrative that unfolds over the course of *A Sermon Delivered to the African Lodge*, *A Charge Delivered to the Brethren*, and *A Charge Delivered to the African Lodge* is a prophetic account of black uplift. This account is the first programmatic treatment of such uplift. Significantly, this programmatic vision articulated over the three pamphlets takes the form of narrative. Of course, this should not be surprising. Philosophical writing often takes the form of narrative in that such writing often tells the story of ideas. Black uplift philosophy and black uplift strategies are ideas scholars of African American literature often consider, but, based on the readings of *A Sermon*, the 1792 *Charge*, and the 1797 *Charge* presented above, I argue that we might also begin to consider the idea of black uplift as a particular form of narrative in African American writing.

By reading John Marrant's *A Sermon Delivered to the African Lodge*, and Prince Hall's *A Charge Delivered to the Brethren* as well as *A Charge Delivered to the African Lodge* in connection with the 1773 texts by the Sons of Africa, we have seen how early African American pamphleteers worked with narrative techniques that had been a prominent part of Anglo-Atlantic and Afro-Atlantic writing for almost a century prior. The Sons of Africa work with these techniques to expand Boston's Revolutionary-era anti-slavery public sphere, and to revise contemporary narratives of American political identity. Prince Hall and John Marrant work to revise how fellow members of the black community understood their racial identities as well as their role as racial representatives in both white and black publics. The strategies these early African American writers adopt and the narrative frameworks they develop intervene in the realm of political representation via both ideology and aesthetics. The narrative approach to pamphleteering these writer took would come to influence another famous African American Freemason in the antebellum period, David Walker, whose pamphlet, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (1829), suggests his awareness of the tradition begun by such writers as the Sons of Africa, Marrant, and Hall. Walker's work also points to the close connections between black pamphleteering and the rise of the African American novel.

¹ William Hamilton, "Mutual Interest, Mutual Benefit, Mutual Relief" in *Lift Every Voice: African American Oratory, 1787-1900*, ed. Philip S. Foner and Robert James Branham (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1998), 82-83.

² James Sidbury, *Becoming African in America: Race and Nation in the Early Black Atlantic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

³ David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 324-325.

⁴ David G. Holmes, *Revisiting Racialized Voice: African American Ethos in Language and Literature* (Carbondale: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 45.

⁵ On radical-pluralist models of the public sphere, see Chantal Mouffe, "Deliberative democracy or antagonistic pluralism?," *Social Research* 66.3 (Fall 1999): 745-758, and Kari Karppinen, *Rethinking Media Pluralism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012): 495-508.

⁶ Mouffe, "Deliberative democracy or agonistic pluralism?," 756-757.

⁷ On counterpublics, see Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere" in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992): 109-142; Michael Warner, *Public and Counterpublics* (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2002). For a brief discussion of radical pluralism and diversity, see Mouffe, "Deliberative democracy or agonistic pluralism?," 752.

⁸ John Ernest, *Chaotic Justice: Rethinking African American Literary History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 2.

⁹ Ernest, *Chaotic Justice*, 251.

¹⁰ Gene Jarrett, *Representing the Race: A New Political History of African American Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 27.

¹¹ Sidbury, *Becoming African in America*, 29-30.

¹² See Richard S. Newman, "Liberation Technology: Black Printed Protest in the Age of Franklin," *Early American Studies* 8.1 (Winter 2010): 173-198.

¹³ Thomas Tryon, "Friendly Advice to the Gentleman-Planters of the East and West Indies" in *Caribbean: An Anthology of English Literature in the West Indies, 1657-1777*, ed. Thomas W. Krise (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 76.

¹⁴ Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko: Or, The Royal Slave. A True History*, Norton Critical Edition, ed. Joanna Lipking (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 13.

¹⁵ Catherine Molineux, "False Gifts/Exotic Fictions: Epistemologies of Sovereignty and Assent in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*," *ELH* 80.2 (2013): 455-88.

¹⁶ The strategy of offering direct testimony from enslaved people as a part of antislavery politics would last well into the nineteenth century, and was central to abolitionist pamphleteering in the 1840s, a decade marked by the publication of landmark African American autobiographical narratives like Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1848). On the slave narrative and abolitionist print culture, see Dwight McBride, *Impossible Witness: Truth, Abolitionism, and Slave Testimony* (New York: New York University Press, 2001); Jeanine Marie DeLombard, *Slavery on Trial: Law, Abolition, and Print Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative*, ed. Audrey Fisch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

¹⁷ Thomas W. Krise, *Caribbean*, 109.

¹⁸ Sidbury, *Becoming African in America*, 27.

¹⁹ *Original and Growth of Printing* (London: John Streater, 1664), B2. Web.

http://gateway.proquest.com.libproxy.temple.edu/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:54586:3.

²⁰ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence, paperback edition (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 33.

²¹ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 29.

²² Jarrett, *Representing the Race*, 28.

²³ W. E. B. Du Bois, “Criteria of Negro Art,” in *The Crisis* 32 (October 1926) 290-297.

²⁴ Russ Castronovo, *Propaganda 1776: Secrets, Leaks, and Revolutionary Communications in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).
Castronovo’s definition of propaganda: 10.

²⁵ See Eric J. Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993); John Ernest, *Resistance and Reformation in Nineteenth-Century African American Literature* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1995); David G. Holmes, *Revisiting Racialized Voice*.

²⁶ Felix, “Province of the Massachusetts Bay: To his Excellency, Thomas Hutchinson, Esq; Governor; To the Honorable His Majesty’s Council, and to the Honorable House of Representatives in the General Court assemble at Boston, the 6th Day of January, 1773” in *The Appendix; Or, Some Observations on the Expediency of Petition of the Africans, Living in Boston, &c, lately presented to the General Assembly of the Province*, ed. A Lover of Constitutional Liberty (Boston: E. Russell, 1773), 9.

²⁷ See Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998) and Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

²⁸ Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 8.

²⁹ Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 193.

³⁰ Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 177.

³¹ One scholar has argued that invocations of African identity were often part of efforts to integrate black people into American society. See Tunde Adeleke, *UnAfrican Americans: Nineteenth-Century Black Nationalism and the Civilizing Mission* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998).

³² Dickson D. Bruce, *The Origins of African American Literature, 1680-1865* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 59.

³³ C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins*, second edition, revised (New York: Vintage Books, 1989) 81.

³⁴ “Boston, April 20th, 1773,” 8.

³⁵ Bruce, *The Origins of African American Literature*, 53-55.

³⁶ Legal scholars and historians differ on what, exactly, the implications of Mansfield’s decision in the Somerset case were. See William M. Wiecek’s “Somerset: Lord Mansfield and the Legitimacy of Slavery in the Anglo-American World,” in *University of Chicago Law Review* 42.1 (Autumn 1974): 86-146; James Oldham’s “New Light on Mansfield and Slavery,” in *Journal of British Studies* 27.1 (January 1988): 45-68; Ruth Paley’s “After *Somerset*: Mansfield, Slavery and the law in England, 1772-1830,” in *Law, Crime, and English Society*, ed. Norma Landau (New York: Cambridge University

Press, 2002); and Vincent Carretta's biographies of Olaudah Equiano—*Equiano, The African* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005)—and Phillis Wheatley—*Phillis Wheatley: Biography of a Genius in Bondage* (Athens: University of Georgia, 20??)—for discussions of the Somerset case and Mansfield's decision. Wiecek, for example, looks at the “two narrow points of English law” established by the decision: “a master could not seize a slave and remove him from the realm against the slave's will, and a slave could secure a writ of habeas corpus to prevent that removal” (87). Within the confines of legal precedent, then, the Mansfield decision is really an expansion of the right of habeas corpus to slaves in England. Not only has there been scholarly debate over what precedent the Somerset case actually set, but there has also been debate over which primary source is most faithful to the actual opinion Mansfield delivered from the bench. Wiecek points to unofficial briefs of the case (British courts did not publish official briefs in the eighteenth century) in combination with accounts printed in periodicals such as the *Gentleman's Magazine* and *Scots Magazine* in June of 1772 that may have misrepresented the actual scope and implications of Mansfield's decision. He lists four primary reports in an appendix to his article that may have influenced contemporary and subsequent understandings of *Somerset*, and locates the beginning of twentieth-century debate over the influence of *Somerset* and the Mansfield decision on slavery and abolition in both England and the United States in Jerome Nadelhoft's article, “The Somersett Case and Slavery: Myth, Reality, and Repercussions” (*Journal of Negro History* 51.3 (June 1966): 193-208. James Oldham contends that Mansfield's “studied avoidance of the larger questions” surrounding the case, such as the legality of slavery, and what it means to the legal status of slaves to grant them the right of habeas corpus

(which translates to “you have the body”), that lead to others filling in those gaps left open in the decision (46). Ruth Paley describes the decision as “a masterpiece of decisive insubstantiality” (172). Thus, while Mansfield’s decision was fairly narrow, how the British and American public imagined its scope and consequences was rather broad and varied, and, in the case of the slave population in Boston, perhaps enhanced perceptions of the already significant (at least in the case of chattel slavery) legal standing they held.

³⁷ See Patricia Bradley, *Slavery, Propaganda, and the American Revolution* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998).

³⁸ Michael Warner, *Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 60-61.

³⁹ Kenneth Hirschkop, *Mikhail Bakhtin: An Aesthetic for Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 107. Italics in original.

⁴⁰ “The Appendix: Or, Observations, &c.” in *The Appendix*, 4.

⁴¹ *The Appendix*, 4.

⁴² *The Appendix*, 4-5.

⁴³ Michael Schudson, “Was There Ever a Public Sphere? If So, When? Reflections on the American Case,” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), 160.

⁴⁴ Ken Hirschkop, “Justice and Drama: On Bakhtin as a Complement to Habermas,” in *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere*, ed. Nick Crossley and John Michael Roberts (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing and Sociological Review, 2004), 53-54.

⁴⁵ See Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans. William Rehg (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998); and Ken

Hirschkop, "Justice and Drama: On Bakhtin as a Complement to Habermas," in *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere*.

⁴⁶ Michael Gardiner, "Wild Publics and Grotesque Symposiums: Habermas and Bakhtin on Dialogue, Everyday Life and the Public Sphere," in *After Habermas*, 31. Gardiner contributes to a special monograph from the *British Sociological Review* on new theoretical models of the public sphere: his essay along with a few others emphasize how social theories of the public sphere and deliberative democracy can be enhanced by a synthesis between the model introduced by Habermas and the conflictual pluralism of M. M. Bakhtin's public sphere.

⁴⁷ See Sandra Gustafson, *Representative Words: Politics, Literature, and the American Language, 1776-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Jay Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence*; Christopher Looby, *Voicing America: Language, Literary Form, and the Origins of the United States* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996); Michael Warner, *Letters of the Republic*.

⁴⁸ Felix, "Province of the Massachusetts Bay: To his Excellency, Thomas Hutchinson, Esq.,"9-10.

⁴⁹ Felix, "Province of the Massachusetts Bay: To his Excellency, Thomas Hutchinson, Esq.,"10.

⁵⁰ Felix, "Province of the Massachusetts Bay: To his Excellency, Thomas Hutchinson, Esq.,"10.

⁵¹ Felix, "Province of the Massachusetts Bay: To his Excellency, Thomas Hutchinson, Esq.,"10.

⁵² Christine Levecq, *Slavery and Sentiment: The Politics of Feeling in Black Antislavery Writing, 1770-1850* (Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2008), 46.

⁵³ See “An Essay on Man” in *The Poems of Alexander Pope: A One-Volume Edition of the Twickenham Text, with Selected Annotations*, ed. John Butt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963): 501-547.

⁵⁴ Pope, “Essay on Man: Epistle IV,” line 367-368. Italics mine.

⁵⁵ Sons of Africa, “Thoughts On Slavery” in *The Appendix*, 11. Whether these changes were made by the Sons of Africa or were present in an American edition they used as a reference, the meaning is the same.

⁵⁶ Sons, “Thoughts on Slavery,” 11.

⁵⁷ Sons, “Thoughts on Slavery,” 11.

⁵⁸ Felix, “Province of the Massachusetts Bay: To his Excellency, Thomas Hutchinson, Esq.,” 11.

⁵⁹ For an excellent example of such discourse, see *A Forensic Debate on the Legality of Enslaving Africans, Held at the public Commencement, in Cambridge, New England, July 21st, 1773* (Boston: by John Boyle for Thomas Leverett, 1773).

⁶⁰ “Thoughts on Slavery,” 12.

⁶¹ David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1993), 107.

⁶² Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 46.

⁶³ David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1993), 46.

⁶⁴ See M.M. Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays By M.M. Bakhtin*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

⁶⁵ Ernest, *Chaotic Justice*, 47.

⁶⁶ "Thoughts on Slavery," 12.

⁶⁷ Felix, "Province of the Massachusetts Bay: To his Excellency, Thomas Hutchinson, Esq.," 12.

⁶⁸ Prince Hall, *A Charge Delivered to the Brethren of the African Lodge On the 25th Of June, 1792. At the Hall of Brother William Smith, in Charlestown* (Boston: Bible and Heart for the African Lodge, 1792), 3.

⁶⁹ Hall, *A Charge Delivered to the Brethren*, 3.

⁷⁰ Joanna Brooks, *American Lazarus: Religion and the Rise of African-American and Native American Literatures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 146-147.

⁷¹ Charles H. Wesley, *Prince Hall: Life and Legacy* (Washington. D.C.: The United Supreme Council Southern Jurisdiction, Prince Hall Affiliation: 1977), 10.

⁷² Wesley, *Prince Hall*, 14. Wesley corrects the errors of earlier biographers such as William H. Grimshaw's in *The Official History of Freemasonry among the Colored People in North America* (1903), a book Wesley points out as a particular source of biographical errors regarding Hall and his life.

⁷³ Wesley, *Prince Hall*, 4.

⁷⁴ Wesley, *Prince Hall*, 4.

⁷⁵ See Peter P. Hinks and Stephen Kantrowitz, "Introduction: The Revolution in Freemasonry" in *All Men Free and Brethren, Essays on the History of African American*

Freemasonry, ed. Peter P. Hinks and Stephen Kantrowitz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013): 1-20.

⁷⁶ See Chernoh M. Sesay, Jr., “Emancipation and the Social Origins of Black Freemasonry, 1775-1800” in *All Men Free and Brethren, Essays on the History of African American Freemasonry*, 25.

⁷⁷ Wesley, *Prince Hall*, 34.

⁷⁸ See Brooks, *American Lazarus*.

⁷⁹ Brooks, *American Lazarus*, 116-117.

⁸⁰ Corey D. B. Walker, “Nation and Oration: The Political Language of African American Freemasonry in the Early Republic” in *All Men Free and Brethren*, 85-86.

⁸¹ Many scholars accept Marrant’s claim, but Vincent Carretta has pointed to the absence of any naval records to support Marrant’s story. See Carretta, *Unchained Voices: An Anthology of Black Authors in the English-Speaking World of the 18th Century*, expanded edition (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 396. The biographical information on Marrant in this paragraph comes from Carretta’s sketch in *Unchained Voices*. For versions of Marrant’s life that does not question the veracity of his autobiographical pamphlet, see Joanna Brooks, *American Lazarus* and Peter P. Hinks, “John Marrant and the Meaning of Early Black Freemasonry” in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 64.1 (Jan., 2007): 105-116.

⁸² See John Ernest, *Liberation Historiography: African American Writers and the Challenge of History, 1794-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

⁸³ Hinks, “John Marrant and the Meaning of Early Black Freemasonry,” 114.

⁸⁴ See Brooks, *American Lazarus* and Hinks, “John Marrant and the Meaning of Early Black Freemasonry.”

⁸⁵ Hall, *A Charge Delivered to the Brethren*, 3.

⁸⁶ Hall, *A Charge Delivered to the Brethren*, 3.

⁸⁷ Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and “Race” in New England, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 7. Melish presents evidence of a slave sale in 1792 Connecticut on page 90.

⁸⁸ Hall, *A Charge Delivered to the Brethren*, 4.

⁸⁹ Hall, *A Charge Delivered to the Brethren*, 3-4.

⁹⁰ Ethiopianism is a narrative theory of black uplift commonly deployed by late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century African American writers and orators. This theory references a conspicuous allusion to the elevation of an African nation to a position of preeminence in worldly affairs. The entire line of Psalms 68:31 is as follows: “Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.” The clause directly proceeding this line is “scatter thou the people that delight in war,” which, if read in the context of Ethiopianist uplift narrative, points to slavers and slave holders as people who make war on Africans and those of African descent. As a whole, Psalms 68 is about God scattering his enemies and elevating the righteous to positions of authority and power. See Brooks, *American Lazarus* for some discussions of Ethiopianist discourse.

⁹¹ Hall, *A Charge Delivered to the Brethren*, 10.

⁹² Hall, *A Charge Delivered to the Brethren*, 10.

⁹³ Prince Hall, *A Charge Delivered to the African Lodge* (Boston: The African Lodge, 1797), 3.

⁹⁴ Hall, *A Charge Delivered to the African Lodge*, 4.

⁹⁵ Hall, *A Charge Delivered to the African Lodge*, 4.

⁹⁶ Hall, *A Charge Delivered to the African Lodge*, 12.

Chapter Two: David Walker, William Wells Brown, Antebellum-Era Pamphleteering

This chapter looks at David Walker's *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America* (1829), a pamphlet characteristic of 1820s and 1830s black nationalist political thought, in relation to William Wells Brown's *Clotel; Or, The President's Daughter* (1853), the first novel published by an African American writer. Specifically, I read these two works through the lens of the narrative tradition in African American pamphleteering discussed in the previous chapter. A close examination of these canonical antebellum-era African American literary works helps to illuminate the connections between the African American literary tradition of pamphleteering and the rise of the African American novel in the 1850s. I argue that the aesthetic and material strategies developed by African American pamphleteers helped to inspire Brown as he wrote, published, revised, and circulated his novel. The first African American novelist, Brown helped set the stage for a tradition of African American popular fiction to emerge in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. The story of the African American novel at the turn of the century, a story in which Sutton E. Griggs is a central figure, cannot be fully told without highlighting the fundamental role of black pamphleteering in the rise of African American popular fiction.

I begin by exploring the life of David Walker and the experience he brought to writing *Appeal*. I then consider *Appeal* in the context of antebellum-era print culture and as a key example of black nationalist thought in the antebellum period. Examining Walker's *Appeal* through the lenses of black print culture and nationalist politics helps set

up a study of the narrative form and voice he constructs in his pamphlet. As Walker wrote his *Appeal*, he incorporated numerous other texts and brought the voices of other writers into his work. The result of this process was the creation of a dramatic narrative representing the pervasive influence of race on American national life at the end of the 1820s. After reading Walker's *Appeal*, I shift to a study of William Wells Brown's *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter*. I argue that Brown's novel was written using an approach similar to Walker's pamphlet: collecting and re-circulating the various texts that constituted the field of racialized discourse in American print culture. I focus on Brown's use of novelistic fiction to unveil the truth of American culture to readers, and contend that, like Walker's *Appeal*, Brown's novel offers readers a new interpretation of American national narratives. Reading the *Appeal* and *Clotel* together helps us see how Walker and Brown take similar approaches to imagining narrative voice, and how much of the first African American novel's narrative form is borrowed from a tradition that may be traced through early African American pamphlet culture. Ultimately, this chapter stakes out the following position: Walker and Brown both compose dramatic narratives of American society that, to borrow from rhetorician David G. Holmes's discussion of racialized voice in African American literature, "[employ] race as a way of reading that society," and, in doing so, render "American society, instead of race, [as]...the text."¹ These two authors show readers how false narratives of white supremacy have assumed positions of nearly incontrovertible authority in the minds of many (white) readers.

The chapter concludes with a consideration of the four versions of Brown's *Clotel*. I argue that the versions that Brown published in varying material forms and with different beginnings and endings reflect Brown's intervention in the particular cultural

and historical moments of their publication. The rapid succession of three versions of *Clotel* after the original, 1853 version suggests that the material advantages of the circulating, interventionist pamphlet began to translate to the novel around the middle of the nineteenth century. My close look at the four versions of the novel will help us to reconcile the differences among them without reading them as a unified project, as suggested by Christopher Mulvey in an essay he includes in *Clotel: An Electronic Scholarly Edition*.² I contend that the differences in plot and form among the four versions of the novel can be best understood in relation to the long tradition of African American pamphleteering.

David Walker and His Appeal

David Walker was born in Wilmington, North Carolina, around 1796.³ His mother was a free person and his father was a slave. Because hereditary chattel slavery was matrilineal, Walker was born free. But while he was never a slave, he did spend his formative years in the Southern slave societies of Wilmington, North Carolina, and Charleston, South Carolina. In these cities, blacks had little social or political power, but were the primary force in moving the local economy. Slavery became an increasingly important part of the American economy over the first two decades of Walker's life, a fact that did not escape his notice. Slaves were essential to the economies of coastal cities like Wilmington and Charleston, but they were also integral to the expansion and development of American territories in the Southwest after the War of 1812. As historian Edward E. Baptist writes, "Allowing slavery's expansion [into the Southwest Louisiana Territory]...made...white America more prosperous and more united, binding states and

factions together.”⁴ Such expansion was largely driven by speculators who bought land for cotton plantations in the 1810s and 1820s. For example, between 1815 and 1820, cotton from the American South became the most widely traded commodity in the world, fueling the growth of a nation that would become an economic superpower by the turn of the century.⁵ As cotton production became central to the U.S. economy, the domestic slave trade became an increasingly larger part of the economy as well. In *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America*, Walker pointed out how racist attitudes and perceptions of black people as perpetual slaves were tied to economic expansion. He understood how slavery was becoming more important to the American prosperity and thus was bringing whites together in opposition to black civil rights and freedom. Walker concluded that blacks must be similarly united if they were to gain their rights and freedom. Thus, he dedicated his life to organizing the power he believed lay dormant in black communities throughout America.

Walker first became involved with racial politics soon after leaving Wilmington sometime in the 1810s. He tells readers of his pamphlet that he has “travelled over a considerable portion of these United States, [and,] in the course of [his] travels, [took] the most accurate observations of things as they [existed],” developing a national perspective on race, slavery, and a view of white supremacy as an economic, political, religious, and even educational system.⁶ First, Walker went south, to Charleston, South Carolina, where he became part of the city’s growing free black population.⁷ Once there, he joined the city’s African Methodist Episcopalian Church (AME), formed in 1817 when whites tried to increase their authority over existing Methodist institutions and thus exert more control

over the city's black community. His experience as a member of the AME church in Charleston manifested itself in *Appeal's* calls for black American religious independence. The AME church in Charleston was an important organizing force in the city's black community; of the 131 people arrested for their connection to the 1822 Denmark Vesey conspiracy, which was a plan for a slave revolt in the city, at least thirty-six were known members of the church; seventy-one conspirators left recorded testimony.⁸ References in *Appeal* indicate that Walker was in Charleston at the time of the Vesey plot. In fact, historian Peter Hinks suspects that Walker was a member of Vesey's circle and involved in organizing the planned rebellion.⁹ However, there has been some debate among historians as to the extent of Vesey's conspiracy and even if there was a conspiracy of any sort.¹⁰

The official narrative from Charleston authorities cast Vesey, a free black man, as the mastermind behind an unrealized plan for a general revolt. The plan called for free and enslaved blacks around Charleston to join forces, kill white enslavers by poison and other means, free all slaves in the city, and then escape by sea to Haiti, a free black republic in the Americas founded after the Haitian Revolution (1791 -1804). White authorities claimed to have been told of a plot for rebellion by some slaves who disagreed with the conspirators and were therefore willing to share details of their scheme. The result of the Vesey trial was the passage of laws that further consolidated white power over the free and enslaved black population in South Carolina, effectively smashing the free black community in Charleston and eliminating the AME church as a site where free and enslaved blacks might mingle. A recent essay in *American Literary History* by Carrie Hyde, "Novelistic Evidence: The Denmark Vesey Conspiracy and Possibilistic History,"

suggests we view the Vesey conspiracy in a way that acknowledges that the official narrative could largely be fiction while also being mindful of the influence of what she calls “possibilistic histories”—stories of what could have been, fictions (or realities) that could change cultural assumptions.¹¹ Whether Charleston’s black community was sanctioned because of an unrealized plot or if it was further subordinated to white power by consequence of a wholly fictitious narrative (another kind of plot, as it were) matters not. Either way, Walker drew lessons from his time in Charleston.

Walker learned the political value of narrative while in Charleston. The lessons he drew from the Vesey conspiracy had a significant influence on the narrative voice that he uses to tell his story of white supremacy. As Hyde points out, the fact that the plot detailed by Charleston authorities was never actually brought to fruition does not mean that it did not decisively influence the history of slavery in antebellum America, or the history of black writing.¹² Moreover, whether the Vesey conspiracy happened or not, it was widely written about and it remains a relevant point of discussion when it comes to Walker’s life and his *Appeal*. As Robert S. Levine argues in *Dislocating Race and Nation*, “Even if Vesey’s plot had been the fabrication of anxious white South Carolinians, the published version of the trial transcript itself, ironically enough, provided Walker and other African Americans with a model of resistance in which black revolutionism and community were conceptualized within and beyond the U.S. nation.”¹³ At the very least, Walker learned the power of narrative to shape perception and prompt real changes in society from his time in Charleston during the Vesey trial. He also learned the degrees to which whites were willing and even eager to build elaborate fictions to support white supremacy and black subordination. The Vesey trial would have been one

example, but the greater example is the elaborate cultural fiction of racial differences and inherent inequalities that could be traced back to the Revolutionary era of Thomas Jefferson and the founding patriots. As I will discuss below, the impact of Jefferson in particular is thoroughly explored in Walker's pamphlet. This pamphlet brought a new dimension to the narrative tradition begun by black Bostonian pamphleteers in the Revolutionary era and early republic.

After the trial, but before authoring the *Appeal*, Walker traveled north, eventually settling in Boston in 1824.¹⁴ References in *Appeal* suggest that he may have spent some time in Philadelphia before ultimately settling in Boston. In these two cities, he would have been exposed to the ways in which Northern black communities had been organizing since the late eighteenth century. Boston and Philadelphia's black communities had established themselves as centers of free black life and socio-political organization by the 1820s. In Boston, the social and political frameworks erected by the Sons of Africa as well as the Prince Hall Freemasons further contributed to Walker's vision of a unified black nation. He found the Prince Hall Masons especially inspiring. Hinks contends that the connections and friendships he made as a Mason were some of the most important during his time in Boston.¹⁵ I argue that the political and print culture that had been developing in that city since the Revolutionary era was similarly important to Walker and his *Appeal*, and that the text is an innovative blend of Southern and Northern forms of resistance to slavery and white supremacy.

Walker's name first appears in the Boston city directory in 1825; by then, the city's black population had carved out a distinct center of public and private life around Beacon Hill. There, he bought a home and opened a business selling used clothing. He

continued his work in racial politics and community organization while in Boston. For example, Walker was a founding member of and spokesperson for the Massachusetts General Colored Association (MGCA). The MGCA was formed around 1827; its membership roll consisted largely of Walker's fellow Prince Hall Masons; and it intended to speak for local black people in the same representative capacity as the Sons of Africa and the African Lodge. The MGCA pushed the representative models set by these groups further, aspiring to speak for black people throughout the United States as well as those in the local community.¹⁶ In a speech to the representative, black deliberative organization, Walker told members that their goal was "to unite the colored population, so far, through the United States of America...forming societies, opening, extending, and keeping up correspondences, and not withholding any thing which may have the least tendency to meliorate *our* miserable condition—with the restrictions, however, of not infringing on the articles of [the MGCA's] constitution, or that of the United States of America."¹⁷ Walker's reference to the constitution of the nation and the constitution of a black uplift organization in Boston, Massachusetts, is an example of his faith in the printed word to literally constitute nations. His belief in the capacity of print and literacy to organize and hold together black communities was an important lesson he learned while in Boston—the cradle of African American pamphleteering.

Walker discovered pamphleteering as a crucial form of publication while in Boston. This belief led him to write and circulate a pamphlet, *Appeal*, consisting of a preamble and four articles. The form of *Appeal* resembles that of the U.S. Constitution, and combined with the deference Walker shows for constitutions as a form of social, political, and moral contract in his speech to the MGCA, there is evidence that he was

driven to create some kind of black national constitution: a text that could represent an African American nation within the U.S. nation. He does this by appropriating and ironically commenting on the texts that represent the U.S. nation, such as the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, as well as texts from newspapers, speeches, books, the Bible, street conversation and public discourse. There is even poetry at the very end of the pamphlet. Appropriating (by reprinting as a part of his pamphlet) various foundational American texts, Walker asks his readers, “Do you understand your own language?...Compare your own language...extracted from your Declaration of Independence, with your cruelties and murders.”¹⁸ This question and the comparison that follows is an important moment at the end of *Appeal* when Walker calls attention to the process of bringing multiple languages into dialogue with one another in his pamphlet. By bringing together the language of America with the languages of black America he had learned in the South and in the North, he imagines a narrative voice for *Appeal* that is multi-voiced in ways that would later be crucial to the conception of Brown’s *Clotel; or the President’s Daughter*. Both of these texts confront and contest fictitious national narratives as well as substitute a black national narrative in their stead.¹⁹ However, the *Appeal* did more than just combine Southern and Northern rhetorical strategies. By circulating in both regions and throughout the nation, *Appeal* aspired to, in the words of Walker’s speech to the MGCA, “unite the colored population... through[out] the United States of America.”

Circulating his pamphlet in Southern slave societies was crucial to the nationalist goals of Walker’s *Appeal*. The port city of Boston served as a point from which Walker managed to get his pamphlet into circulation among black readers and auditors in the

South. From Southern port cities, *Appeal* was then able to reach inland slave societies throughout the region. The pamphlet was first discovered by Southern, white authorities on December 11, 1829. On that day, sixty copies were found in Savannah, Georgia, in the possession of a black Baptist preacher, Reverend Henry Cunningham, who had accepted them from a white steward working on a brig that had come from Boston and was docked in the city. However, Cunningham was not the only free black person in the South who may have offered to serve or was asked to serve as a circulation agent for *Appeal*. A letter from Walker was found on a free black man who was arrested in Richmond, Virginia, for giving the pamphlet to black people in the city. The letter names Thomas Lewis as the intended recipient of at least thirty copies; other circulation agents were ready to spread copies of the pamphlet in Wilmington, North Carolina, and as far as New Orleans.²⁰ Walker might have begun circulating the *Appeal* into Southern slave states, which often forbade the dissemination of anti-slavery discourse, by convincing sailors who shopped at his second-hand clothing store to accept copies before heading to sea. Some of them, like Edward Smith, a white man, of Boston, who was arrested for circulating copies of *Appeal* in Charleston, South Carolina, on March 27, 1830, were unaware of the exact content of the pamphlet, but were probably at least aware “that it was something in regard to the imposition upon the negroes,” as Smith would later testify in court.

Because of the pamphlet’s rather unique range, which spanned from Boston to New Orleans, *Appeal* is not just one of the most important African American literary works published in the antebellum period—it is one of the most significant publications issued in antebellum era America, period.²¹ The national reach of Walker’s *Appeal* is in

contrast to the localized character of American print cultures in the late 1820s, similar, one could argue, to the evangelical network that was also starting up during the period.²² Pamphlets were uniquely well-suited to circulating in a nation marked more by regional or city-wide print cultures than it was by a truly national print culture, but pamphlets were not nationally circulated in this period inasmuch as they were locally reprinted. For example, Thomas Paine's influential pamphlet, *Common Sense* (1776), circulated throughout the colonies, but not from a single point of origin. Rather, the pamphlet was re-printed from location to location. Thus, as Trish Loughran explains, it was not really a national-scale pamphlet in the sense that it was disseminated from a single publisher or point of origin but rather a national-scale pamphlet by virtue of local re-printings.²³ Conversely, Walker reached a national audience from a single point of publication. The pamphlet was a compact and easily transportable form of print publication, and the ease with which pamphlets circulated insured that the *Appeal* would have a broad readership.

Pamphleteering did not just allow for the rapid and extensive circulation of *Appeal*; it also allowed for quick revision and re-circulation. Walker published three versions of his pamphlet between late 1829 and the spring of 1830.²⁴ In the second and third versions, Walker added commentary on reactions to the first and second editions of his pamphlet, corrected typographical errors, and amplified "indictments of white America hypocrisy...[intensifying] this charge and [subjecting white] pretensions to greater scornful ridicule."²⁵ Most of Walker's revisions consisted of castigating white American Christians as hypocritical followers of a gospel of "blood and whips," and thus as not true Christians. In the second and third editions of the pamphlet, Walker also made much stronger calls for black readers to get a copy of *Appeal* for themselves and to get

copies to other black readers. This call has been described as “unrelenting.”²⁶ In reprinted versions of *Appeal*, Walker also added a detailed footnote on the etymology and meaning of the dehumanizing epithet, “Nigger,” which was becoming more widely used during the 1820s.²⁷ Editorial control was also important to the deliberately evocative typography Walker used in his *Appeal*.

The editorial control that pamphleteering gave writers over their texts allowed for what literary critic Marcy J. Dinus has described as *Appeal*'s “radical typography.”²⁸ For example, he put a number of words in upper case, made use of repeated exclamation marks, and deployed other visual cues in his pamphlet as well. This radical typography “seem[s] to have been dictated by Walker, in his manuscript or in person, to his printers. The type in [the pamphlet] makes the author’s outrage not just visible but also audible”; furthermore, such “typographic features help the reader follow the pamphlet’s instructions to spread its word, showing them how to properly voice the appeal out loud and perform its affect for others.”²⁹ Walker’s typography helps his pamphlet to be read aloud according to his specifications, as it were, because the text is meant to reach not just the literate heights of African America, but also its broad base of less-educated constituents in the North and in the South. As Elizabeth McHenry has shown in *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies*, literacy was seen by many African Americans as a sort of communal skill; readers read not only for themselves as members of literary societies or reading circles, but also for others who could not read as well. Walker’s goal was to strengthen communication and cooperation between literate and illiterate blacks, and oral readings of *Appeal* helped disseminate the text beyond the private sphere of individual readers. Thus, his pamphlet

became a public, national document (like the U.S. Constitution or Declaration of Independence) for African Americans, the “story [of which] points to the tentative beginnings of a cooperative system for the distribution of knowledge and pertinent information in antebellum black communities, through which printed texts were primarily consumed collectively rather than individually.”³⁰

Encountering in his pamphlet printed discourse like the Declaration of Independence and Thomas Jefferson’s musings on race and nation, along with passages from the Bible, newspapers, speeches, nineteenth-century African American readers could develop new insights apart from the white supremacist culture within which a number of these texts would normally be understood. The importance of Walker’s *Appeal* did not go unnoticed by such readers. A few of them noted the fundamental importance of the *Appeal* to African American national life well in advance of modern scholars. For example, the first African American woman political writer, Maria Stewart, calls out to Walker in her first published work, a pamphlet titled *Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality, The Sure Foundation on Which We Must Build* (1831). Invoking his name in the opening paragraphs of her work, she cites his life as an inspiring example for her readers to follow. Stewart’s vision of Walker may have influenced Henry Highland Garnet, who republished the *Appeal*, along with a short biography of Walker, in his 1848 edition of his 1843 *Address to the Slaves of the United States of America*. Garnet’s *Address* is a rather clear riff on the nationalist ambitions of *Appeal*, which called on free and enslaved blacks to combine and cooperate to form a black nation within the U.S. nation. *Appeal* continued to resonate in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, as shown when Frederick Douglass traced the genealogy of American anti-slavery back to

Walker in a speech of April 16, 1883, “The United States Cannot Remain Half-Slave and Half-Free,” which he delivered to commemorate the Emancipation Proclamation. The lasting legacy of David Walker’s pamphlet—his only published work—is an indication that it was one of the most influential works of its era. Representative of a black nationalistic strain in African American political and social thought “evident in many places and...epitomized in the [First National Negro Convention] at Philadelphia” in 1830, *Appeal* is, as Dickson D. Bruce suggests, “the most powerful statement of that trend, and its language and conceptualization had major implications for emerging African American literary culture.”³¹

Modern, critical perspectives on *Appeal* generally agree that the pamphlet is an important, early black nationalist manifesto and a crucial work in African American literary history; these perspectives often position Walker as a founding father of black nationalist thought.³² Many studies of *Appeal* describe the pamphlet and its author as “radical,” citing lines from the pamphlet such as, “I tell you Americans! that unless you speedily alter your course, you and your Country are gone!!!!,” in order to illustrate just how “incendiary,” “combative,” “revolutionary,” “fiery,” and “explosive” the *Appeal* is. However, these kinds of description over-privilege the strident tone of the text almost to a point where they recapitulate the reactions of antebellum period whites who saw the pamphlet as a dangerous document that could inspire black rebellions. Readings of the text that dwell too long on its fiery rhetoric risk neglecting the incredibly generative, theoretical deconstructions and reconstructions of race and nation performed throughout the text as well. Instead of focusing too much on how Walker might have wanted to “blow apart” conceptions of race and nation, scholars of African American literature

ought to think more about the ambitiously creative goals of the text as a projection of Walker's black uplift philosophy and his vision of African America's colored citizen as an agent for social change in both black *and* white communities.³³ His colored citizen is less someone who seeks to become part of an insurrectionary militia-like force than someone who wants to become part of a national community purged of racist cultural discourses. Until that time is at hand, Walker imagines his black readers as part of a contestatory black nation within the nation. Walker believed that such a nation was to be organized around a double-voiced theoretical discourse that interrogated American national narratives at the same time that it conveyed an antebellum-era black uplift narrative. Double-voiced theoretical discourse as such is crucial to the *Appeal's* narrative imagination, as I argue below, is, on the one hand, philosophical, and, on the other hand, quasi-novelistic.

Appeal as Philosophical Narrative

We ought to read the *Appeal* as a narrative critique of existing cultural systems that take as a given white supremacy and black subordination and that takes the form of a philosophical black uplift treatise. Walker uses his work to talk back to a white supremacist cultural system via a novel form of racial knowledge: a black nationalist racial epistemology. The narrative structure of the pamphlet is integral to Walker's re-theorization of race and racial identities, and, as the work of theorist Phillippe Lacoue-Labarthe has argued, philosophy and literature are closely related as forms of mimetic narrative.³⁴ When the critical, theoretical method at the core of *Appeal* is emphasized over the rhetorical fire accompanying it, the "radical" character of the pamphlet's black

nationalism may then be located in its attention to the intellectual, moral, and discursive foundation of the nation-within-the-nation it both imagines and addresses. The intellectual radicalism of *Appeal* can be seen in its strategic re-thinking of white American discourses on race, national identity, and African colonization. One of the pamphlet's main goals is to represent how colonizationist discourse seeks to trick both blacks and whites into thinking African Americans have no place in the U.S. except as slaves. The "colonizing trick," as Walker describes it, is a trick of racial and racist fictions.³⁵ The *Appeal* re-circulates the discourses that constitute such fictions and tasks its readers with establishing contestatory truths as a strategy for black national uplift.

Walker's strategic appropriation of white supremacist discourses in his text is intended to articulate an African American interpretation of the public sphere and its many languages. The narrative voice in *Appeal* performs a type of theoretical revision by rearranging and re-reading the multiple texts and discourses constituting race during the 1820s and 1830s. Walker crafts this voice by "[distancing] himself from [the] common language[s] of white supremacy, white nationalism, and African colonization;] he [then] steps back and objectifies it, forcing his own intentions to refract and diffuse themselves through the medium of [these] common view[s] that [had] become embodied in these language[s]." ³⁶ In a way, the *Appeal* offers readers a theory of what it means to be a person of African descent in America. Thus, *Appeal* does not just articulate a black nationalist racial epistemology; it imagines a black nationalist racial ontology as well.

In the process of presenting readers with a theory of what it means to be a citizen of African America, the *Appeal* also presents readers with a theory of reading. By bringing American cultural texts and discourses into his pamphlet in order to show his

readers how they ought to be interpreted, Walker shows his readers how black speakers and writers ought to engage such texts and discourses. Furthermore, he contends that the kinds of critical engagements he performs in the *Appeal* are an African American civic duty: reading as well as writing constitutes African American political work. Walker challenges African Americans to read, to write, and to promote the circulation of printed texts by black authors, and suggests that black authors occupy an exclusive position in American society as intimate observers of a people who regard them as alien and distinct.³⁷ His colored citizen is not necessarily a racial type in the sense of an essential, biological, racial identity but rather a rhetorical type. The black nationalist racial knowledge conveyed in the *Appeal* is built around this rhetorical type. Furthermore, Walker's African American rhetorical type builds on "traditions of moral superiority going back...to Wheatley"—as well as, I would add, the Sons of Africa, John Marrant, and Prince Hall—"achieving a directness that, looking to tradition, went far beyond his predecessors."³⁸ For example, consider his call for black, civic-minded readers who are literate enough not only to read printed text but also to "find out the meaning" of a text in "its widest sense and all its bearings."³⁹ What he calls for is a colored citizen constituted not simply by race or by reading, but by racialized forms of reading capable of engaging complex and often contradictory discursive terrains. His re-imagining of race as a way of reading suggests that his pamphlet is a work that frames African American literary nationalism as what one scholar has termed black *literacy* nationalism.⁴⁰ However, Walker did not view literacy, as Elizabeth McHenry points out, "exclusively as a sign of an elevated state of reason[; instead he] recognized it as a powerful apparatus that might be deployed in various ways by black Americans to further their pursuit of civil

rights...by gaining what one contemporary black orator described as ‘access to the public mind.’”⁴¹ Walker also imagined literacy as one way to reproduce a ruling ideology in a black nation within the U.S. nation.⁴² This ruling ideology is based on a critical, interpretive method performed in the pages of the *Appeal*.

I am hardly the first to argue that *Appeal* performs the kinds of critical readings of U.S. culture and its animating discourses. Literary scholars David Kazanjian, John Ernest, and Robert S. Levine all emphasize how Walker’s pamphlet works with the discourses crucial to national life in antebellum America. In *The Colonizing Trick*, Kazanjian argues that by the time Walker was writing, race had become a dense discursive formation requiring African American engagement and intervention in more complex and exhaustive ways than black writers had undertaken in the past; reading, Kazanjian suggests, was indispensable to the sorts of discursive intervention Walker calls on his audience to initiate (or continue, as the case may be).⁴³ For Walker, reading and interpretation were powerful tools of psychological and intellectual emancipation, which he believed were precursors to physical and political emancipation, and thus, in Kazanjian’s words, he articulates “a practice of freedom understood as a hermeneutic of seizing and reformulating the Enlightenment.”⁴⁴ Ernest’s *Liberation Historiography* offers a brief reading of *Appeal* that makes a somewhat similar argument, but is more focused on a particular discourse, the history of race and slavery, as opposed to the dense discursive formation of race (which, of course, includes historiography). He argues that Walker’s pamphlet is a work that “[reframes]...the documents of white national identity...against a broad cultural omission” of slavery and white supremacy as countervailing forces to the ideologies supposedly articulated in such documents, like the

Declaration, the Constitution, Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*, newspapers, and speeches, finally contending that "All of the *Appeal* is designed to penetrate such texts and to provide readers with similar interpretive skills."⁴⁵ The main point here is that both Kazanjian and Ernest seem to agree that a critical, interpretive method is central to the *Appeal*.

Like Kazanjian and Ernest, Levine emphasizes the role of critical reading in *Appeal*, but Levine highlights the "figures of circulation, which are integral to the book's performance of race and nation," arguing that "circulation in the *Appeal* is literally about putting bodies and texts in motion."⁴⁶ Circulating texts and discourses in his pamphlet allows Walker to perform the modes of discursive and cultural literacy that marks his colored citizen, but it also allows him to represent a complex sphere of public discourse and debate which includes black speakers and authors. Thus, Walker's *Appeal* presents a dialogical model of public and print spheres in the U.S., where black speakers and writers are a constitutive part of a public sphere that is not monolithically white.⁴⁷ Freedom for Walker was not only about the interpretive license to seize and reformulate Enlightenment thought, as Kazanjian argues, or about the right to reclaim historiographic discourse, as Ernest contends, but also about the editorial "motion," as it were, of putting texts together in conversation. Thus, we might consider Walker a cultural editor, which is a description used by Ernest to describe William Wells Brown and his work with *Clotel*.⁴⁸ Once we consider Walker a cultural editor of sorts, then the narrative techniques he uses to make his *Appeal* become clearer, and the narrative tradition in African American pamphleteering is brought into greater focus as an antecedent to the first published African American novel.

The circulation of texts and discourses in the *Appeal* are figures for the political acts of reading, analyzing and writing with which Walker tasks his readers. For example, the *Appeal*'s stated intent is "to awaken in the breasts of [its author's]...afflicted, degraded and slumbering brethren, a spirit of inquiry and investigation respecting our miseries and wretchedness in this *Republican Land of Liberty!!!!!!*"⁴⁹ Walker defines what he means by "a spirit of inquiry and investigation" in Article III, which examines what constitutes education and literacy by imploring his reader to "seek after the substance of learning" and interpret the significance and meaning of various discourses when it comes to the struggle of African Americans to be recognized as fully human in U.S. society.⁵⁰ He adds that his colored citizen must teach others how to read, engage, and then contest the dense discursive formation race had become by the 1820s, writing: "Men of colour, who are also of sense, for you particularly is my APPEAL designed. Our more ignorant brethren are not able to penetrate its value. I call upon you therefore...to do your utmost to enlighten them—*go to work and enlighten your brethren!*"⁵¹ He tasks his fellow "men of colour" with doing the same pedagogical work his pamphlet intends to do. His reader is required to recapitulate Walker's narrative persona by reading the text aloud to those who are unable to interpret written words.

Walker's narrative persona represents what he believes should constitute a black national public mind. He positions this mind as a reflection of a body of contestatory thought opposed to a white supremacist public mind. Walker represents these minds as conflicting languages swirling in a pluralistic American public sphere. Because he represents a plurality of languages in complex, and often confrontational, relationship, Walker's rhetorical and literary imagination in *Appeal* is quasi-novelistic. However, I

should clarify my point here by saying that I am not reading *Appeal* as a novel. Rather, what I am arguing is that the discursive and ideological work the pamphlet does is somewhat novelistic in character. For example, Russian literary theorist M. M. Bakhtin argues that part of what makes for novelistic discourse in the representation of speaking persons as ideologues and their words as ideologemes (a fundamental unit of ideology); in the novel, “language is always a particular way of viewing the world, one that strives for social significance...discourse becomes the object of representation in the novel.”⁵² Bakhtin assumes a novelistic genre here, but I should note that the narrative persona Walker constructs in his pamphlet exceeds the confines Bakhtin sets for what he terms rhetorical genres. In rhetorical genres, “double-voiced discourse is very widespread...but even [in these genres]...it is not fertilized by a deep-rooted connection with the forces of historical becoming that serve to stratify language...[these genres] are at best merely a distanced echo of this becoming, narrowed down to an individual polemic.”⁵³ Walker’s persona narrates a story about race and the representation of race in America, and this persona is thus not strictly rhetorical in character. What makes the voice in *Appeal* quasi-novelistic is that it renders discourse as an object of narrative figuration, which is to say that discourse itself is as important as those who speak or write it in the pamphlet. Moreover, circulating discourses that represent public minds in a re-visionary narrative of American society allows Walker to represent particular world views. If not entirely novelistic, then the *Appeal* is at least narrative in character and imagination, and thus similar in style to the pamphlets that John Marrant and Prince Hall published to tell a story of black uplift in the early republic. Ultimately, my point here is that Walker constructs a text that is mostly rhetorical, but also has certain novelistic characteristics

when it comes to authorial voice and the arrangement of authorial voice in relation to other speakers in the text.

In the spirit of racial uplift narrative, Walker casts himself as the black protagonist. His primary, white antagonist in the *Appeal*'s dramatic narrative of race and racial ideologies in America is Thomas Jefferson. Walker uses citations from Jefferson in particular not as a way to represent a single point of view but rather as a way of representing a language system characteristic of white supremacy. *Appeal* performs a critical reading of Jeffersonian racial discourse by refracting it through Walker's literary voice. His narrative persona guides readers through a text in which multiple speakers and languages are represented as part of an historical struggle to determine the meaning of race in America. He represents the socio-political discourse expressing racial thought in antebellum-era America, and how such thought in this era is the result of historical, social, and political forces. He implicates Jefferson, a founder of the U.S. nation, as a founder of what had become a much denser discursive formation, white supremacy and black subordination, by the time Walker's pamphlet was published. *Appeal* tells its readers, "[the verses he cites,] having emanated from Mr. Jefferson, a much greater philosopher the world never afforded, [have] in truth injured us more, and [have] been as great a barrier to our emancipation as any thing that has ever been advanced against us...Mr. Jefferson's remarks respecting us have sunk deep into the hearts of whites."⁵⁴ While it might be tempting to characterize Walker's engagement with Jefferson as a dialogue, it is not a dialogue in the classic, rhetorical sense, which is to say it is not constructed as a deliberate interaction between two competing, individual points of view, such as in African American preacher and pamphleteer David Coker's *Dialogue Between*

a Virginian and an African Minister (1810). Instead, *Appeal* is arranged around a dramatic confrontation between Walker's black nationalist epistemology and Jeffersonian racial knowledge. As an antagonist to Walker, Jefferson does not simply represent himself. Rather, he represents a common, white supremacist world view.

Walker's first mention of his primary antagonist sets up his pamphlet's refraction of white supremacist discourse on the "nature" of race. This mention occurs in Article I, after a reference to the opinion in the white American public sphere that blacks were related to "tribes of *Monkeys* or *Orang-Outangs*." That opinion is broached when he asks the reader, "Has Mr. Jefferson declared to the world, that we are inferior to the whites, both in the endowments of our bodies and our minds?"⁵⁵ With this question, Walker makes reference to an entire white supremacist discourse of black inferiority traceable to a man who was pivotal to the formation of the United States. He continues, "It is indeed surprising, that a man of such great learning, combined with such excellent natural parts, should speak so of a set of men in chains."⁵⁶ Walker follows this critical discussion of racialized discourse with a consideration of whether slavery was a "natural" condition for blacks. In an examination of pro-slavery discourses on the "naturalness" of hereditary chattel enslavement as a black condition of life, Walker writes, "I do not know what to compare it to, unless, like putting one wild deer in an iron cage, where it will be secured, and hold[ing] another by the side of the same, then let it go, and expect the one in the cage will run as fast as the one at liberty."⁵⁷ Here, he uses metaphor to represent the lack of true comparison made between natural and unnatural states in pro-slavery discourse. Walker does not just put Jefferson's language into a citation, he also uses a literary device to show the reader how to read and understand the language. When Walker exclaims in

his pamphlet “Look!! look!!! at this!!!!,” as he does in a footnote on the strength of numbers black people have in America, he refers not only to the text or example he presents but also to the interpretation of the example he gives.⁵⁸ Soon after the lines quoted above, Walker makes his first reference to white slaveholders as the “natural enemies” of black people, beginning an ironic refraction of the discourse of Jeffersonian natural history.⁵⁹

In another reference to Jeffersonian racial theory, Walker cites Jefferson’s contention, based on his comparison of ancient slavery, which allowed for the humanity of enslaved persons, to modern American chattel slavery, which did not. Walker writes, “let us review Mr. Jefferson’s remarks respecting us some further. Comparing our miserable fathers with the learned philosophers of Greece he says...It is not [the blacks’] condition then, but nature, which has produced the distinction [between ancient, white slaves and modern, black slaves].”⁶⁰ Nature, like race, is not a fixed thing for Walker. His explanation of natural enemies helps explain the fluid definition of “Nature” that he works with in the text. In Article IV, he writes, “I do not think that we were natural enemies to each other. But the whites having...subjected us to slavery...[and have]...murdered millions of us, in order to make us work for them.”⁶¹ Instead of simply engaging Jefferson’s racial theories head-on, Walker appropriates the concept of nature itself, ironically suggesting that “lovers of natural history,” which Jefferson confesses to be, are less lovers of a natural history and more beholden to a fictitious narrative that confuses natural conditions with a condition created by enslavement and systemic white supremacy. What his engagement with Jefferson does is unveil racial essentialisms as

fictions. Once Walker does this, he is able to re-cast race as a concept that must be thought of in the context of national narratives.

Of course, he is not the only antebellum-era African American author to appropriate, contest, and rewrite American national narratives. William Wells Brown took a similar approach to writing *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter*.⁶² Like Walker's *Appeal*, Brown's novel incorporates text from newspapers, journals, and histories, and in doing so appropriates and criticizes prominent cultural discourses on topics like religion, politics, and race. These two works have more in common than scholars of African American and American literature have yet acknowledged. Both authors strategically use their texts to show readers new ways of navigating America's discursive terrain. I contend that the quasi-novelistic narrative voice that marks *Appeal* is a direct predecessor to the voice found in *Clotel*, and that the narrative personae Walker and Brown imagine and the uses to which they put them point to the connections between *Appeal* and *Clotel*. Once these connections become clear, we can see how early nineteenth-century African American pamphlet culture helped set the stage for the emergence of *Clotel; or The President's Daughter*.

From Pamphlets to the Novel: William Wells Brown and Clotel; or, The President's Daughter

The connections between *Clotel* and antebellum-era black pamphleteering, particularly *Appeal*, begin with what has been described as Brown's work as a "cultural editor."⁶³ As a cultural editor, Brown brings together diffuse and varying texts that remark on race, nation, and slavery in order to present them in new contexts, and thus

allow readers to derive new meanings from them. By drawing together the various texts that contribute to the discursive formation of race in the early 1850s, Brown represents a world and its discourse that often seems incomprehensible. As John Ernest writes, Brown “gather[s] the documents [or discourses] that reveal the national disunity—not the meaninglessness of the national text but rather its meaningful incoherence—and he constructs or reshapes the various narrative lines to instruct his readers to read beyond the text to a moral realm presented not as the ideals of the left column but rather as the interpretive tools one needs to read one’s world.”⁶⁴ However, as argued above, the work of the cultural editor is not unique to Brown’s novel, for we have seen similar kinds of editorial and revisionary work done with cultural texts and discourses by such as David Walker and the Sons of Africa. That said, by repeating the imaginative and rhetorical strategies of his literary predecessors, he shapes these strategies into something new—the first African American novel. But before taking a look at *Clotel*, a brief consideration of Brown’s life and career prior to the publication of his novel is in order.

William Wells Brown is one of the most prominent black authors in mid to late nineteenth-century African American literary history. He was born a slave in Kentucky on November 6, 1814. His career as a writer began with the publication of an autobiographical pamphlet, *Narrative of William Wells Brown, A Fugitive Slave. Written By Himself* (1847). Soon after releasing his pamphlet, he started working the abolitionist lecture circuit, eventually leaving the United States for England in 1849, when he was elected as a delegate to the International Peace Conference in Paris. After the conference, he began working as an antislavery lecturer in England, and remained there after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850. This act, passed by Congress as part of the

Compromise of 1850, allowed Southern slave catchers to pursue fugitives into the North as well as encouraged the kidnapping of free men and women in the North under the pretense that they were fugitives.⁶⁵ His freedom in danger, and not only as a result of his celebrity, but because Northern authorities were required by federal law to act as slave catchers, Brown stayed abroad until 1854, when British philanthropist Ellen Richardson, who led the group of contributors who purchased Frederick Douglass's freedom during his trip to England in 1846, purchased Brown's freedom. While in England, Brown published *A Description of William Wells Brown's Original Panoramic Views* (1850), a pamphlet companion to his visual exhibit, *Original Panoramic Views*—a set of drawings he used in his lectures there. He also wrote for London newspapers and sold copies of his autobiographical pamphlet to financially support his life across the Atlantic. He published his first book, *Three Years in Europe; Or, Places I Have Been and People I Have Seen* (1852; retitled and expanded as *The American Fugitive in Europe: Sketches of Places and People Abroad* in 1855), and the first version of his novel, *Clotel*, in England, too.

Clotel inaugurated a new era in African American literary history: an era of popular fiction. The 1850s saw a proliferation of fictional narratives by African Americans: Frederick Douglass's "The Heroic Slave," published as part of a collection of anti-slavery pieces titled *Autographs for Freedom* (1853); Frank J. Webb's *The Garies and Their Friends* (1857); Harriet E. Wilson's *Our Nig: Sketches From the Life of a Free Black* (1859); and Martin R. Delany's *Blake; Or, The Huts of America* (published serially in *The Anglo-African Magazine*, January to July, 1859, and *The Weekly Anglo-African*, November 1861 to May 1862). This decade in African American literary history has been characterized as one that saw a shift from the autobiographical narrative modes used by

African American writers in the 1840s to fictional narrative modes.⁶⁶ Yet, Frederick Douglass describes his 1845 autobiographical *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* as a pamphlet in *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855). This description suggests that American writers did not necessarily see these autobiographical texts as slave narratives, which is something of a retrospective critical designation.⁶⁷ Instead, writers like Douglass saw these texts as abolitionist pamphlets. Thus, it makes more sense to see the 1850s as a decade of transition from an African American print culture dominated by pamphlets (and newspapers) to one including novels, popular fiction, and African American periodicals like *The Anglo-African Magazine* and *The Weekly Anglo-African*—the latter of which published the serialized second version of Brown’s novel, *Miralda; Or, The Beautiful Quadroon*, from 1860 to 1861. In fact, we might consider the 1850s to be the first decade of sustained bound-book publication by African American writers.

Clotel, along with Martin R. Delany’s *Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (1852), helped to usher in this decade. *Clotel* was released at a time when the industrialization of the print trade made book publication a more financially viable enterprise. The result of industrialization in the print trades was an increase in the total value of printing and publishing from 11.5 million dollars to 31 million between 1850 and 1860.⁶⁸ Printing by plates rather than movable type made book production much more efficient beginning in the 1830s, and the rate and ease of production in the printing industry only increased during the 1850s. Cylinder presses made the mass production of printed discourse possible, and these types of machines dominated the American print industry. As Walt Whitman boasted, “of the

twenty-four modern mammoth two-double, three-double, and four-double cylinder presses now in the world,[that] print by steam, twenty-one of them are in These States,” in 1856.⁶⁹ Cylinder presses changed the periodical industry, while book publication was revolutionized by plates that allowed printers to duplicate pages without re-setting the type for each printing. The book industry itself was dominated by the Adams Power Press, which was invented by Isaac Adams in the 1830s and the standard in the industry by the 1850s. Small runs of books were more feasible for publishers and authors alike, and manufacture by machine began to replace manufacture by hand in the paper production industry and in the book binding process (even though many books were still hand bound in the 1850s). The result of these advances was a print culture in the 1850s where “most books for which any continued demand could be expected were printed from plates, and it is a marked feature of publishing during this period that books, once published, remained in print.”⁷⁰

Industrialization in the print industry allowed African American authors to think about book publication in new ways. By 1853, when *Clotel* rolled off the presses, books were becoming as common in print economies as pamphlets had been for centuries. The result was an embrace of the book, and the novel in particular, as a means of interceding in public debate and discourse, a means that had been the almost exclusive province of African American pamphleteers before the 1850s. However, the connections between *Clotel* and African American pamphleteering are not simply material. The greatest influence African American pamphlet culture had on Brown’s novel is aesthetic. William Wells Brown believed that fictional narrative was a useful genre for revealing the truth of American culture. *Clotel* deliberately confuses what constitutes truth and what constitutes

fiction in America, consistently showing readers that what they perceive as truth is often fiction, and vice versa.

Brown hoped his readers would question narratives in which a social, political, and economic system supported by white supremacy and black chattel slavery can characterize a pious, democratic, and republican nation. He intended to lead his readers to the following conclusion: narratives supporting such hierarchies and racisms are fictions, and the ostensibly fictional narrative of *Clotel* is, in fact, much closer to the truth. For example, at the conclusion to his novel, Brown tells his reader, “I may be asked, and no doubt shall, Are the various incidents and scenes related founded in truth? I answer, Yes. I have personally participated in many of these scenes. Some of the narratives I have derived from other sources; many from the lips of those who, like myself, have run away from the land of bondage...To Mrs. Child...I am indebted for part of a short story [“The Quadroons,” first published in *The Liberty Bell*, in 1842]. American abolitionist journals are another source...All these combined have made up my story.”⁷¹ Brown is letting the reader know that his novel is no exercise in pure fictionalization. In fact, he seems to be conveying a sense that there is more truth to his fictional narrative than there is to the dominant narratives of American national identity, as shown by the lines that follow his acknowledgement of sources. He proceeds, with David Walker-like irony, by writing a “statement...which he leaves [his readers] to draw their own conclusions [: there are,] in all, 660,563 slaves owned by members of the Christian church in this pious democratic republic,” the United States of America.⁷² Like the Sons of Africa’s 1773 petition and essay, *Clotel* is a form of Du Boisian propaganda. Furthermore, I argue that the intentional blurring of the lines between truth and fiction at the end of *Clotel* caps a

narrative that works with the aesthetics of de-concealment or unveiling this dissertation has argued is present in works by the Sons of African, John Marrant, Prince Hall, and David Walker.

Of course, Brown does not wait until the end of his novel to blur the line between truth and fiction. Throughout *Clotel*, he prepares his readers for his final declaration of the novel's (more or less) "true" sources by highlighting the inconsistent truths and persistent fictions of racist culture. The first instance comes after telling the story of Salome Miller in a chapter titled "A Free Woman Reduced to Slavery," which recounts the experience of a German immigrant to New Orleans who was seized by two men claiming to have purchased her as a slave. Since Miller could not find a white person to support her claim that she had never been a slave, and since, having never been a slave, she was unable to produce papers attesting to her free status, she remained a slave. Miller was only freed when another white woman who had traveled across the Atlantic with her recognized the German immigrant and testified on her behalf. After relating Miller's story, Brown writes, "This, reader, is no fiction; if you think so, look over the files of the New Orleans newspaper of the years 1845-6, and you will there see reports of the trial."⁷³ Like David Walker in the *Appeal*, Brown guides his reader through the cultural terrain of the American print sphere to show how racial and racist fictions have been allowed to masquerade as truths. Furthermore, he uses a similarly ironic and acerbic narrative voice to expose how the truth of racial equality has been derided as some sort of fiction. In sum, we see how Brown, like Walker, constructs a narrative voice that seeks to guide readers through a chaotic discursive terrain in which multiple texts and diverse voices compete to define the meaning of race and nation in America. Finally, as Brown points

out multiple times in his novel, Truth and fiction are crucial fields of contest in the struggle against slavery and white supremacy.

The second instance when Brown conflates truth and fiction comes after a scene in which a character in the novel, William, a friend of the title character, Clotel, negotiates a price for railway travel at a rate reflecting the transportation of luggage; he has been required to travel in the luggage car, since he had been restricted from traveling in the carriage car on account of his complexion. After detailing the scene, Brown again writes, “This, reader, is no fiction.”⁷⁴ A third example of Brown using this kind of phrasing to highlight the truth-value of his ostensibly fictional narrative comes in a chapter near the end of the novel. This chapter ends the narrative line constructed for Clotel’s sister, Althesa, who was “as white as most white women in a southern clime...[but] born a slave,” and also born the grand-daughter of Thomas Jefferson, which “no doubt, increased [the] value” of her and Clotel “in the market...where two of the softer sex, accustomed to the fondest indulgence, surrounded by all the refinements of life, and with all the timidity that such a life could produce, [were] bartered away like cattle in Smithfield market.”⁷⁵ The title of this chapter is “Truth Stranger Than Fiction”; it ends with the death of Althesa by a broken heart, after a fractured life lived in constant danger of sexual exploitation, and despite her place in the third U.S. president’s lineage. “Truth Stranger Than Fiction” exposes the blurred boundary between truth and fiction in a white supremacist society. At the end of the chapter, Brown again tells the reader, “This, reader, is an unvarnished narrative of one doomed by the laws of the Southern States to be a slave.”⁷⁶ Brown works against traditional understandings of fiction and the genre of novels, which, as literary theorist Michael Riffaterre writes, “always contain

signs whose function is to remind readers that the tale they are being told is imaginary.”⁷⁷ To the contrary, Brown’s novel contains signs whose function is to remind the reader that the tale being told is anything but imaginary—that the tale being told contains truths much stranger than the fictions undergirding dominant narratives of American identity. In some ways, *Clotel* offers the reader a panoramic view of U.S. discursive terrains, shifting the frames for interpreting these terrains and challenging what constitutes truth and what stands as fiction in American national life. The novel is, arguably, an extension of the work Brown did on the abolitionist circuit with his *Original Panoramic Views of Slavery* (1850), a project combining visual images and narrative that also seeks to de-mystify white supremacism.

Original Panoramic Views of Slavery can also be viewed as a project in the tradition of Walker’s *Appeal*, intent as it was on undermining the discursive and ideological landscape of slave culture. Panorama is a term that means “a complete and comprehensive survey or presentation of a subject,” or “an unbroken view.”⁷⁸ As an aesthetic medium, a panorama is “A picture of a landscape or other scene, either arranged on the inside of a cylindrical surface, to be viewed from a central position (also called *cyclorama*), or unrolled or unfolded and made to pass before the spectator, so as to show the various parts in succession.”⁷⁹ The panorama emerged as an important medium that crossed between entertainment and instruction in the early nineteenth century; it “afforded viewers the illusory experience of unlimited viewing, using elaborate gimmicks to create a sense of movement through history and space”—Brown’s *Original Panoramic Views of Slavery* “[revises] landscape conventions and iconographies of race.”⁸⁰ He brought his panorama to Britain, showing it to audiences there, and distributing a

pamphlet titled *A Description of William Wells Brown's Original Panoramic Views of the Scenes in the Life of an American Slave* to those who had come to see his panorama—the panorama has been lost, but the descriptions of it given in his pamphlet remain.⁸¹ Sergio Costola, a theatre scholar, has argued that Brown's *Original Panoramic Views* “re-present[s] what was visible but not seen and uncover[s] a complexity that rejected the unilateral truth of the traditional picture frame” of racist culture in America.⁸² *Clotel* works in the same way by rejecting the unilateral truths of traditional frames for viewing American discursive terrains.

Brown begins his critical interrogation of America's discursive terrains in the opening pages of the novel by questioning the discourse of domesticity and the production of American family life. His critical analysis of American family life unfolds into a similar analysis of American national identity. First, Brown intervenes in conversations about racial mixture and the potential for amalgamation to corrupt the white, racial purity of the nation. He shows readers how to (re)interpret what some, like “the late Henry Clay,” feared would result from the abolition of slavery: “the amalgamation of the races.”⁸³ Referencing statements on racial mixture from Clay and another Southern slaveholder, John Randolph of Virginia, the novel then declares, “In all the cities and towns of the slave states, the real negro, or clear black, does not amount to more than one in every four of the slave population.”⁸⁴ By changing the meaning of amalgamation and moral decay, Brown makes clear that the lightened complexions among Southern slaves are the result of a “society [that] does not frown upon the man who sits with his mulatto child upon his knee, whilst its mother stands as a slave behind his chair.”⁸⁵ Following this brief meditation on the incoherence of slaveholders'

moralities, the novel launches into a discussion, framed by references to official policies of Southern religious organizations, of the marriage bond among slaves. Marriage, Brown tells the reader, “is, indeed, the first and most important institution of human existence—the foundation of all civilization and culture.”⁸⁶ After pointing to official declarations that the marriage bond cannot exist among slaves (but also after his look at racial mixture implicitly questions the sanctity of the marriage bond among white slaveholders), he lets the reader know that his brief look at the discourses and practices surrounding the institutions of marriage and family in the South is intended to “prepare the reader for the following narrative of slave life,” during which they will be shown how “the present system of chattel slavery in America undermines the entire social condition of man.”⁸⁷ By uncovering the truth of America’s “domestic institution”—slavery—and its influence on the domestic institutions of family and marriage in America, Brown, as Castronovo writes, “questions the *form*, the narrative strategies...the antebellum generation used to construct an affirmative national history.”⁸⁸

The plot of *Clotel* tells a different national history that shows how the story of America might be read by those who do not share the affirmative views of some of Brown’s white contemporaries. Ostensibly centered on a trio of Thomas Jefferson’s enslaved female descendants, the plot actually has a dual focus. On the one hand, *Clotel* tells the story of Jefferson’s descendants. On the other hand, the novel performs a critical reading of America. The story Brown tells is of an America as experienced by those deemed inferior to whites and unfit for incorporation into the national body politic. To create this narrative arc, he does not just repeat and revise the cultural texts of printed discourse. Rather, he combines the available materials of American print culture with the

ideological materials of American discourses on race and nation. In particular, he combines national narratives surrounding Jefferson as a founding father of the nation, and national narratives concerning the character of the nation, with his own narrative of slavery and the trade in human bodies, thus bringing the truth of these national narratives into question. Jefferson becomes the progenitor of the Declaration of Independence as well as of two young women who are to be sold on the auction block as “mulatto girls of rare personal qualities.”⁸⁹ As in Walker’s *Appeal*, the national narrative centered on Jefferson is not simply countered, it is contested and confronted as a fiction obscuring a more complex and difficult truth: that despite Americans’ proclamations otherwise, the nation is far from a paragon of political and moral virtues. What Brown shows us is that there is not one dominant and one subordinate narrative but rather conflicting narratives, which he represents with two ships, one arriving in New England with Puritan settlers and the other arriving in Virginia with a cargo of slaves. As he writes: “On the last day of November, 1620...Each a parent, one of the prosperous North; the other the mother of slavery, idleness, lynch-law, ignorance, unpaid labor, poverty, and dueling, despotism, the ceaseless swing of the whip, and the peculiar institutions of the South...When shall one of those parallel lines come to an end?”⁹⁰ In this passage, there are strong resonances of the “who are we?” questions asked by the Sons of Africa (in the context of republican identity), John Marrant and Prince Hall (in the contexts of Masonic and Christian identities), and David Walker (in the context of African American and American national identities). Like these writers, Brown deploys an African American literary voice as an interpretive guide through the conceptual morass of race and nation in America,

beginning with the cultural fictions and hysterias surrounding racial mixtures and barriers.

In the tradition of the narrative styles strategically adopted by early African American pamphleteers such as the Sons of Africa, Marrant, Hall, and Walker, Brown appropriates discourse and re-circulates it through an African American narrative voice. The double-voiced discursive style of early African American pamphleteers is thus crucial to the narrative aesthetics of the first African American novelist. For example, once Brown ends his meditation on America's domestic institutions—race, slavery, marriage, and family—he begins the narrative proper by “kidnapping,” as one scholar has put it, text from a newspaper ad for the sale of slaves in Richmond, Virginia, drawn from a popular anti-slavery work, Theodore Weld's *Slavery As It Is* (1839).⁹¹ The textual kidnappings Brown stages are similar to the practice of citation in *Appeal*. The advertisement from a Virginia newspaper is incorporated into the fictional narrative when Brown adds the family at the center of his story—Curren, an enslaved woman who kept house for Thomas Jefferson, and her two daughters, whom Jefferson fathered while she was in his employ—as part of the sale. By kidnapping and then incorporating a variety of existing cultural texts to form crucial portions of his narrative, Brown forms what has been called “a stunning example of literary pastiche...[that also] makes use of the (post)modernistic technique of bricolage, a close cousin to pastiche, which involves taking bits and pieces of writings (sometimes long lost pieces) and (re)assembling those ‘found’ cultural materials into something new.”⁹²

One of the most important “found” cultural materials from the American print sphere that Brown weaves into his narrative is Lydia Maria Child's popular, sentimental

short story, “The Quadroons,” which was first published in *The Liberty Bell* (1842), a gift book (a popular form of print media at the time) edited by New England women and containing anti-slavery literature. “The Quadroons” deploys what scholars of African American literature describe as the trope of the mulatta, or woman of mixed, white and black descent. Brown shows his readers how to interpret this trope in new and potentially more meaningful ways. By arranging a series of character types and tropes in the novel, Brown destabilizes ideas of fixed individual identity and, by having his protagonist, Clotel, travel across region and race in a search for her daughter, he launched what at least one scholar has referred to as “a critique of the identity politics of the 1850s and the evidentiary biases that authorized them...[and that] saturated the public sphere (finding their way into newspapers, narratives, and novels).”⁹³

This sort of critique is especially compelling in Brown’s final version of the novel, *Clotel; Or, The Colored Heroine* (1867), in which his mulatta protagonist emerges as an educator and promotor of the uplift of the newly-freed Southern black masses. By the 1860s, the mulatta trope was an established presence in American letters, a fact highlighted in the opening lines of the narrative: “For many years the South has been noted for its beautiful Quadroon women. Bottles of ink, and reams of paper, have been used to portray the ‘finely-cut and well-moulded features,’ the ‘silken curls,’ the ‘dark and brilliant eyes,’ the ‘splendid forms,’ the ‘fascinating smiles,’ and ‘accomplished manners’ of these impassioned and voluptuous daughters of these two races.” This opening to the 1867 version of Brown’s novel “shifts from the [1853 version’s discussion of] the birth of actual mixed-race people to the production of the trope of the mulatta that over ‘many years’ of ‘portray[al] has become synonymous” with

the features listed in the opening; it suggests that “racial mixture is most legible...as a set of literary tropes,” or, if we play out the significance of the term “trope,” as a set of turns, alterations, or changes away from the actual and toward the figurative.⁹⁴ Of course, to get to this point, Brown changed his story in a couple of other versions of the novel published between the 1853 *Clotel* and the 1867 *Clotelle*.

The Novel as a Paper Bullet: Four Versions of Clotel

Like Walker’s pamphlet, Brown’s novel is published in multiple, revised versions that account for a shifting cultural landscape. But while Walker published multiple versions of his pamphlet that add material as well as respond to the responses to his pamphlet, Brown published multiple versions of his novel that respond to the historical and cultural changes the nation went through between 1853 and 1867. If we read the four versions of *Clotel* in the context of an African American literary tradition of pamphleteering, then we are able to see the three revised and re-circulated versions Brown published after 1853 in new ways. Brown’s narrative voice does change in the later versions of *Clotel*, so I am not arguing that the second, third, and fourth versions are narratively similar to the first. The argument I am making is about the material circulation of these later versions. Like David Walker’s second and third editions of the *Appeal*, the later versions of *Clotel* adjust and change the novel’s message. Brown approaches the book as form of interventionist publication, capable of quick responses to changes in cultural and historical circumstances. In short, he imagined the novel as a “paper bullet” with the potential to frame or set the agenda in the way of the pamphlet. I should note that not all 1850s and 1860s African American novels that intercede in social

and political debate are as profoundly influenced by the pamphlet tradition. For example, Frank J. Webb's *The Garies and Their Friends*, a novel about a mixed-race middle class family in Philadelphia, draws from the nineteenth-century traditions of the sentimental novel and narratives about family and home life, traditions marked by works such as Susan Warner's *The Wide, Wide World* (1850) and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), even as it responds to black pamphleteering in Philadelphia as well. Other mid-nineteenth-century African American novels, such as Martin R. Delany's *Blake; or The Huts of America* more self-consciously draw on this tradition. I focus on *Clotel* because it is the strongest example of the influence of pamphleteering on the aesthetics of some early African American novels and, as I will suggest below, on the circulation of the novel well. The four versions of Brown's novel are especially compelling examples of early African American novels imagined as intercessory forms of print publication.

There has been some debate over how scholars of African American literature should read the four versions of Brown's novel. One scholar suggests that we "[treat] the novel as an evolving whole...a great deal is to be lost by reading one version in isolation," and that we ought to read the novel as work that exists "in four historically determined states."⁹⁵ The last point is true: we ought to read the four versions as historically determined texts. Moreover, we ought to read the novel as an evolving work as well. If the final version of *Clotel* is an "antecedent of the literary strategies and concerns of the post-reconstruction period," as M. Giulia Fabi contends, then that is because the novel helps accomplish a transition from a largely pamphlet-centric pre Civil War African American literary culture to an African American literary culture increasingly centered around popular fiction in the post-bellum decades. Placing the four

versions of *Clotel* in the context of an African American literary tradition of pamphleteering helps reconcile these different approaches to Brown's revisions and re-circulations of the novel. In particular, we are able to see how Brown imagined the novel and popular fiction as a means of interceding in public debates, discourses, and dialogues as they were being conducted in specific ways and in particular locales around the nation and across historical contexts. Ultimately, we are able to see how the genre of African American pamphleteering helped establish not only the aesthetic approaches authors like Brown took to the composition of novels but also the material approaches they took to the publication and circulation of novels. For Brown, the novel extended the work of the pamphlet into the realm of popular fiction, for he realized that mid-nineteenth-century literary culture was becoming a crucial site for contesting and confronting white supremacy in America.

Brown published his first version of *Clotel*—a panoramic view of America's discursive terrain—for a foreign audience in England. The first version of the novel published in America appeared in the *Weekly Anglo-African* from December 1860, to March 1861, as a serial narrative, titled, *Miralda; Or, The Beautiful Quadroon*. The second version of the novel was intended for a primarily black readership and intervened in African American debates over the possible future for black people in a nation that had recently affirmed white supremacy as the policy of both slave and free states in the Dred Scott decision of 1857. In this decision, the U.S. Supreme Court decided black people had no civil or social rights white people were bound to respect, and that persons of African descent, slave or free, cannot possibly be regarded as U.S. citizens. *Miralda* revises the domestic narrative of the tragic mulatta—how to forge the space for African

American family in the U.S. nation, if such a thing is possible— to make an emigrationist argument to the primarily African American readers of the *Weekly Anglo African*, urging them to seek “in another land, and among strangers...that liberty which will not be granted...here.”⁹⁶ Thus, *Miralda* intervenes in the debate over emigration that had gripped African America since Walker’s era.⁹⁷ Of course, Brown’s promotion of Haitian emigration at the time *Miralda* was published deserves mention here, too. Brown’s involvement with emigrationist politics is connected to the beginning of his work with the white editor and publisher James Redpath, who became editor of the *Weekly Anglo-African* in 1861.

The third version of the novel, titled *Clotelle, A Tale of the Southern States*, was published in 1864 as part of Redpath’s “Books for the Camp Fires” series meant for Union troops during the Civil War. The revisions to the novel’s narrative structure were made with a specific audience and a specific historical context in mind. The audience consisted of Union soldiers and the context was the post-Emancipation Proclamation Civil War era. The war and the Emancipation Proclamation changed Brown’s position on the Haitian colonization he had emphasized at the end of *Miralda*. Brown had come to support the war by the end of 1862, and in 1863 was recruiting black soldiers to fight in the Union army. The Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 probably gave Brown further cause to support the war, and the third version of his novel gives rhetorical support for what had become a war for freedom in the South. Thus, we can read the 1864 version as form of post Emancipation Proclamation inspiration for Union troops. Redpath’s editorial note at the end of the novel indicates that “if it serves to relieve the monotony of camp-life to the soldiers of the Union, and therefore of Liberty, and at the same time kindles

their zeal in the cause of universal emancipation, the object of both its author and publisher will be gained.”⁹⁸ The title is changed, which renders the novel a regionally specific tale, and by removing the emigration arguments from the novel, Brown now focuses his audience’s attention on the depravity of Southern society in order to “kindle their zeal” for fighting a war of emancipation.

The fourth version of the novel, *Clotelle; or the Colored Heroine. A Tale of the Southern States*, was published as a book in 1867, after the end of the Civil War, and the ending to the novel charts out a late nineteenth-century course for African American literature. This final version has Brown’s heroine return to the South, and it also marks his return to the kind of intervention in African American cultural politics we see in *Miralda*. The final version of the novel is also the first instance in which Brown concludes his narrative with an African American family space on U.S. soil. The 1867 *Clotelle* adopts the same text as the 1864, but adds new chapters describing Clotelle’s return to the South after the end of the Civil War. In these chapters, Brown pushes his narrative past the romantic endings that had been used in previous versions, and has his heroine assume a social role within the African American community. His fictional mulatta Clotelle becomes the “Angel of Mercy,” and does not simply transcend her circumscribed role as the tragic mulatta of the earlier novels’ marriage plots, but actually ascends into a role as a cultural archetype for uplifting a newly freed black community in the post-bellum era. Her ascension into a Reconstruction literary role is indicative of Brown’s realization that “the cultural vocabulary most dominant in nineteenth century America [may not] function within postbellum black protest fiction.”⁹⁹ What we see at

the end of Brown's repetitions and revisions of his fictional narrative is a colored heroine who is positioned as a model for black uplift. At the conclusion of the novel, he writes:

Everywhere the condition of the freedmen attracted the attention of the friends of humanity, and no one felt more keenly their wants than Clotelle; and to their education and welfare she resolved to devote the remainder of her life, and for this purpose went to the State of Mississippi, and opened a school for the freedmen; hired teachers, paying them out of her own purse. In the summer of 1866, the Polar Farm, on which she had once lived as a slave, was confiscated and sold by Government authority, and was purchased by Clotelle, upon which she established a Freedmen's School, and where at this writing, — now June, 1867, — resides the "Angel of Mercy."¹⁰⁰

One could view late nineteenth-century black novelists like Frances Ellen Watkins Harper and Pauline Hopkins as "Angels of Mercy" in their own right, who wrote, published, and circulated popular fiction as a way of linking Northern and newly freed Southern black communities by the power of print. In some ways, then, the ending of the fourth version of Brown's novel shows how popular fiction could function in the manner of a pamphlet as an organizing tool capable of promoting important cultural work among those who sought to resist white supremacy. At the turn of the century, Sutton E. Griggs took up the mission begun, at least in fictional form, by Brown's "Angel of Mercy."

Griggs learned a good deal from his predecessors such as Walker and Brown. Griggs began his career with a novel, *Imperium in Imperio* (1899), he intended to function as a hybrid genre—part novel and part pamphlet—in the spirit of *Clotel*.

However, the novel also presented a comprehensive theory of black uplift in narrative form in the spirit of Marrant and Hall's early national pamphlets and Walker's seminal, antebellum-era black uplift treatise. In a rather interesting inversion of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century movement from the pamphlet toward the novel in African American literary history, Griggs actually moves from publishing novels to publishing pamphlets. The next chapter begins this dissertation's study of Sutton E. Griggs as a novelist/pamphleteer by taking a close look at *Imperium in Imperio* in the context of a long-nineteenth-century tradition of African American pamphleteering, theoretical black uplift narratives, and the novel as a paper bullet.

¹ David G. Holmes, *Revisiting Racialized Voice: African American Ethos in Language and Literature* (Carbondale: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 45.

² Christopher Mulvey, "Clotel: Four Versions," in *Clotel: An Electronic Scholarly Edition*, ed. Christopher Mulvey (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), <http://rotundaupressvirginia.edu:8080/clotel/online>

³ The year of Walker's birth is not known for sure. An excellent source for background information on David Walker is Peter P. Hinks's, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren: David Walker and the Problem of Antebellum Slave Resistance* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997). Hinks contends Walker was born in 1796/1797. Some historians have argued for an earlier birth year, around 1785. See Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 10-11.

⁴ Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 55.

⁵ Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told*, 87.

⁶ Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, fourth printing, ed. Peter P. Hinks (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 3.

⁷ The free black population of Charleston grew from 950 in 1790 to 3,615 in 1820. It was the third largest free black population among all Southern cities. See Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 22.

⁸ Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 28. White efforts to suppress the church were an important motivation for Vesey's plot.

⁹ He makes this claim in *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren* and in his edited edition of *Appeal*. Hinks also suggests that the suppression of the AME church in Charleston motivated the conspiracy.

¹⁰ See Richard Wade "The Vesey Plot: A Reconsideration" in *The Journal of Southern History* 30.2 (May 1964): 143-161; Michael Johnson, "Denmark Vesey and His Co-Conspirators" in *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58.4 (Oct. 2001): 915-976; the forum in response to Johnson's article, "The Making of a Slave Conspiracy, Part Two" in *The William and Mary Quarterly* 59.1 (Jan. 2002): 135-202; and James Spady, "Power and Confession: On the Credibility of the Earliest Reports of the Denmark Vesey Slave Conspiracy" in *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68.2 (Apr. 2011): 287-304.

¹¹ Carrie Hyde, "Novelistic Evidence: The Denmark Vesey Conspiracy and Possibilistic History" in *American Literary History* 27.1 (Spring 2015): 26-55.

¹² Hyde, "Novelistic Evidence," 31.

¹³ Robert S. Levine, *Dislocating Race and Nation: Episodes in Nineteenth-Century American Literary Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 73.

¹⁴ Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 66.

¹⁵ Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 73.

¹⁶ Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 75.

¹⁷ “Document II: David Walker Addresses the Massachusetts General Colored Association, 1828,” 85-86. (The speech is included in Hinks’s edition of *Appeal*.)

¹⁸ Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 79.

¹⁹ On the topic of “national narratives,” see Russ Castronovo, *Fathering the Nation: American Genealogies of Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). For another approach to the construction of narratives of American national identity, see Lauren Berlant’s discussion of the “national symbolic” in *Anatomy of a National Fantasy: Hawthorne, Utopia, and Everyday Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) and *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

²⁰ Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 116-151. See his chapter titled, “Getting the Good Word Out: Circulating Walker’s *Appeal*.”

²¹ Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 196.

²² 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).

²³ See “Disseminating *Common Sense*: Thomas Paine and the Scene of Revolutionary Print Culture,” in Loughran, *The Republic in Print*.

²⁴ Peter P. Hinks, "Editor's Note: The Three Edition of the *Appeal*," in *David Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, ed. Peter P. Hinks (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), xlv.

²⁵ Hinks, "Editor's Note," xlv.

²⁶ Hinks, "Editor's Note," xlix.

²⁷ Hinks, "Editor's Note," l-li.

²⁸ Marcy J. Dinus, "'Look!! Look!!! at This!!!!': The Radical Typography of David Walker's *Appeal*," *PMLA* 126.1 (January 2011): 55-72.

²⁹ Dinus, "'Look!! Look!!!," 56.

³⁰ Elizabeth McHenry, *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 34-37.

³¹ Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., *The Origins of African American Literature, 1680-1865* (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 2001), 180.

³² Sterling Stuckey, *The Ideological Origins of Black Nationalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972) and *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), and *Classical Black Nationalism* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); Dean E. Robinson, *Black Nationalism in American Politics and Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Dexter B. Gordon, *Black Identity: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Nineteenth-Century Black Nationalism* (Carbondale: University of Southern Illinois Press, 2003); David Kazanjian, *The Colonizing Trick: National Culture and Imperial Citizenship* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Robert S. Levine, *Dislocating Race*

and Nation: Episodes in Nineteenth-Century American Literary Nationalism (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); John Ernest, *Chaotic Justice: Rethinking African American Literary History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

³³ Gordon, *Black Identity*, 80.

³⁴ See Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe, *The Subject of Philosophy* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1993) and *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics*, ed. Christopher Fynsk (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989).

³⁵ Walker, *Appeal*, 70.

³⁶ M.M. Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays By M.M. Bakhtin*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 302.

³⁷ Bruce, *The Origins of African American Literature*, 182.

³⁸ Bruce, *The Origins of African American Literature*, 181.

³⁹ Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 29.

⁴⁰ See Robert S. Levine, "African American Literary Nationalism," in *A Companion to African American Literature*, ed. Gene Andrew Jarret (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2010).

⁴¹ McHenry, *Forgotten Readers*, 36.

⁴² See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)" in *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: NLB, 1971): 121-173.

⁴³ Kazanjian, *The Colonizing Trick*, 126-133.

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- ⁴⁴ Kazanjian, *The Colonizing Trick*, 132.
- ⁴⁵ Ernest, *Liberation Historiography: African American Writers and the Challenge of History, 1794-1861*(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 85-86.
- ⁴⁶ Levine, "Circulating the Nation," 96.
- ⁴⁷ Levine, "Circulating the Nation," 101.
- ⁴⁸ John Ernest, "The Profession of Authorship and the Cultural Text: William Wells Brown's *Clotel*," in *Resistance and Reformation in Nineteenth-Century African American Literature* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1995).
- ⁴⁹ Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 5.
- ⁵⁰ Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 34.
- ⁵¹ Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 29-30.
- ⁵² Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 333.
- ⁵³ Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 325.
- ⁵⁴ Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 29-30.
- ⁵⁵ Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 12.
- ⁵⁶ Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 12.
- ⁵⁷ Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 12.
- ⁵⁸ Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 66.
- ⁵⁹ Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 13.
- ⁶⁰ Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 17.
- ⁶¹ Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, 63.
- ⁶² Castronovo, *Fathering the Nation*.
- ⁶³ Ernest, *Resistance and Reformation*.

⁶⁴ Ernest, *Resistance and Reformation*, 34.

⁶⁵ The Compromise of 1850 was a series of laws and acts passed by Congress to resolve the question of how to incorporate slavery into the territories captured in the Mexican-American War (1846-1848). The body of legislation known as the Compromise of 1850 was conceived by Senator Henry Clay of Kentucky—an antagonist in Walker’s *Appeal*—as a way of balancing the numbers of slave and free states in the union. California was incorporated into the U.S. as a free state, and the question of slavery was allowed to be decided by popular vote in New Mexico and Utah. Even though the Compromise did avert a sectional crisis over the expansion of slave power, it also strengthened abolitionist opinion in the North. The Fugitive Slave Act required Northern officials to enforce Southern property rights to human chattel in free states, a requirement that effectively extended the reach of Southern slave power beyond its regional boundaries. The Act is cited by Harriet Beecher Stowe as an inspiration for writing *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, a novel that had a significant influence on Northern anti-slavery politics after 1852.

⁶⁶ This perspective on African American literary history, that fictional narrative is an outgrowth of a literary culture centered on the autobiographical narratives of former slaves, is a hallmark of early 1990s critical work on the emergence of African American fiction. See William L. Andrews, “The Novelization of Voice in Early African American Narrative,” *PMLA* 105.1, Special Topic: African and African American Literature (Jan. 1990): 23-34, and Carla S. Peterson, “Capitalism, Black (Under)Development, and the Production of the African-American Novel in the 1850s,” *American Literary History* 4.4 (Winter, 1992): 559-583, for examples. However, as noted in the introduction, this dissertation is, in part, an effort to destabilize established narratives of early African

American literary history by emphasizing the role of pamphlets and pamphleteering in the emergence and development of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century African American literary traditions. Remember, as my brief look at Douglass's 1845 *Narrative* suggests, we might begin to think of African American slave narratives as an element (or sub-genre) of black pamphlet culture as it joined the field of abolitionist discourse in popular American print culture. For an excellent take on the discursive contortions required of slave narratives, see Dwight McBride, *Impossible Witness: Truth, Abolitionism, and Slave Testimony* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

⁶⁷ Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, ed. John David Smith (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 269.

⁶⁸ Michael Winship, "Manufacturing and Book Production," in *A History of the Book in America, Vol 3: The Industrial Book, 1840-1880*, ed. Scott E. Casper, Jeffrey D. Groves, Stephen W. Nissenbaum, and Michael Winship (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 10-13.

⁶⁹ Whitman, "Letter to Ralph Waldo Emerson," *The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Vol. B*, seventh edition, ed. Robert S. Levine and Richard Krupat (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2007), 2291.

⁷⁰ Winship, "Manufacturing and Book Production," 46.

⁷¹ William Wells Brown, *Clotel; Or, The President's Daughter*, ed. Robert S. Levine (Bedford Cultural Edition, 2000), 226.

⁷² Brown, *Clotel*, 226.

⁷³ Brown, *Clotel*, 148.

⁷⁴ Brown, *Clotel*, 172.

⁷⁵ Brown, *Clotel*, 197.

⁷⁶ Brown, *Clotel*, 199.

⁷⁷ Michael Riffaterre, *Fictional Truth*, second printing (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 1.

⁷⁸ “panorama, n.” OED Online. September 2014. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oed.com.libproxy.temple.edu/view/Entry/136923?redirectedFrom=panorama>
(accessed October 30, 2014).

⁷⁹ “panorama, n.” OED Online. September 2014. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oed.com.libproxy.temple.edu/view/Entry/136923?redirectedFrom=panorama>
(accessed October 30, 2014).

⁸⁰ Michael A. Chaney, *Fugitive Visions: Slave Image and Black Identity in Antebellum Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 113.

⁸¹ See “William Wells Brown, A Description of William Wells Brown’s Original Panoramic Views of the Scenes in the Life of an American Slave,” in *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, ed. C. Peter Ripley (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985-1992), I: 190-224.

⁸² Sergio Costola, “William Wells Brown’s Panoramic Views,” *Journal of American Drama and Theatre* 24.2 (Spring 2012): 14.

⁸³ Brown, *Clotel*, 81.

⁸⁴ Brown, *Clotel*, 81.

⁸⁵ Brown, *Clotel*, 82.

⁸⁶ Brown, *Clotel*, 83.

⁸⁷ Brown, *Clotel*, 84.

⁸⁸ Castronovo, *Fathering the Nation*, 177.

⁸⁹ Castronovo, *Fathering the Nation*, 87.

⁹⁰ Castronovo, *Fathering the Nation*, 180-181.

⁹¹ See Levine's "Introduction: Cultural and Historical Background," in the first Bedford Cultural Edition of *Clotel; Or The President's Daughter* (Bedford/St. Martin's: Boston/New York, 2000), 6-8.

⁹² Levine, "Introduction: Cultural and Historical Background," 7.

⁹³ Loughran, *The Republic in Print*, 406.

⁹⁴ Jonathan Senchyne, "Bottles of Ink and Reams of Paper: *Clotel*, Racialization, and the Material Culture of Print," in *Early African American Print Culture*, ed. Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Alexander Stein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 150.

⁹⁵ Christopher Mulvey, "*Clotel*: Four Versions." Mulvey also contends his online scholarly edition presents the novel in the form it is most appropriately read: a "*Clotel-Miralda-Clotelle-Clotelle...meta-state*." See "*Clotel*: Four Versions." John Ernest suggest that the versions are best read as four separate books drawn from the same material, which is a better approach than seeing the four as a unified project. See Ernest, *Resistance and Reformation*, 28. M. Giulia Fabi argues these four separate books in four separate, historically determined states have different significances to the making of African American fiction, and "In its first version, [*Clotel*] accomplishes the transition from autobiographical to fictional authorship; by its last, it emerges as an antecedent of the literary strategies and concerns of the post-reconstruction period." See M. Giulia

Fabi, "The 'Unguarded Expressions of the Feelings of the Negroes': Gender, Slave Resistance, and William Wells Brown's Revisions of *Clotel*," *African American Review* 27.4 (Winter 1993), 639.

⁹⁶ Brown, *Miralda; Or, The Beautiful Quadroon*, 185. Cited from the online, digital version. <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/clotel/Clotel1860.pdf>

⁹⁷ This debate was marked by competing conventions, one in support of emigration and one opposed, held by Martin R. Delany and Frederick Douglass, respectively, in 1854 and in response to the pro-emigration ending of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). See Robert S. Levine's *Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, and the Politics of Representative Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997) for more on the rivalry between these two antebellum-era black leaders, their differing embraces of Stowe's novel, and their two conventions. I should also note that emigration is usually interpreted by scholars as an elective departure from the United States, while colonization was somewhat more enforced.

⁹⁸ Brown, *Clotelle, A Tale of the Southern States*, 179. Cited from the online digital version. <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/clotel/Clotel1864.pdf>

⁹⁹ Jennifer James, "'Civil' War Wounds: William Wells Brown, Violence, and the Domestic Narrative," *African American Review* 39.1-2 (Summer 2005): 39-54.

¹⁰⁰ Brown, *Clotelle; or The Colored Heroine. A Tale of the Southern States*, 198. Cited from the online digital version. <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/clotel/Clotel1867.pdf>

Chapter Three: *Imperium in Imperio*: Novel, Pamphlet, Collective Efficiency

Griggs shares much with the nineteenth-century African American author William Wells Brown. Like Brown, Griggs works with many of the same ideas from text to text, fashioning previously published works into new works, and modifying previously expressed ideas to account for historical and cultural changes. Also like Brown, Griggs saw the problems of his era as a repetition of the problems of the antebellum period. Both of these writers saw the problems of their eras in connection with a problem—racist culture—as a legacy of the system of slavery and its influence on American society over 250 years. For example, consider Brown’s assertion that the problem of black inequality did not go away with the emancipation of enslaved black people in America during and after the Civil War. In *My Southern Home; or, The South and its People* (1880)—a book that Griggs may have read—Brown writes, “During the Rebellion and at its close, there was one question that appeared to overshadow all others; this was Negro Equality.” Brown continues to outline solutions to this one great question that Griggs would repeat numerous times in his own work, such as equal protection under the law, securing the right to vote for black Americans, and allowing black laborers to compete freely in Southern labor markets.¹ Faced with the return of a problem—the color line—that in an earlier phase, according to the African American writer, intellectual, and sociologist W.E.B. DuBois, caused the Civil War, Griggs turns to the aesthetic, philosophical, and material strategies writers had been using to critique the color line since the early national period.²

The repetition of a problem can, at times, mean the repetition of a solution. The ultimate solution Griggs offers to the problem of the color line is the science of collective efficiency. Looking back to the antebellum-era black nationalization movement helps us to better appreciate Griggs's emphasis on combination, co-operation, and moral and intellectual education as inheritances from a long nineteenth-century African American literary tradition of pamphleteering. In this way, he echoes the black uplift programs of the 1820s and 1830s, a period in which "an irrepressible enthusiasm for combination was spreading rapidly among a number of notable free blacks in the North...these figures increasingly looked beyond their own localities and sought ways to unite with blacks in distant cities in towns."³ For example, and as discussed in the previous chapter, David Walker's *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* reflects a black bourgeois perspective that black communities needed to unite and form an African American nation within the U.S. nation. Griggs adopts the idea of a black nation within the nation for use in the title of his first novel, *Imperium in Imperio*, which is Latin for "sovereignty within sovereignty."

I contend that the dialectic of repetition helps explain how the work of Sutton E. Griggs revisits early nineteenth-century African American theories of racial uplift, and, in doing so, adapts them to the particular circumstances of early twentieth-century American and African American culture. Viewing his body of work through this dialectic helps us in turn see the history of African American literature in different ways, with less emphasis on singular moments and more emphasis on recursive replication, or a "process of 'repetition and revision' vital to African American literary history."⁴ A dialectic of repetition means "that which is repeated has been—otherwise it could not be repeated—

but the very fact that it has been makes the repetition into something new.”⁵ The paradox of the dialectic of repetition is that “the privileged now has always already been, and what had been could always become...[the dialectic of] ‘repetition’ ...tries to keep the divergent dimensions [of sequence and instance] together in one movement.”⁶ Situating Griggs in a long nineteenth-century African American literary tradition of pamphleteering helps to keep the ostensibly “divergent dimensions” of early nineteenth-century African American pamphleteers and turn-of-the-century African American novelists such as Sutton Griggs “together in one movement.” Ultimately, we should look at Griggs’s body of work in fiction and non-fiction as voicing, again and again, not only the major concepts in each, but the major concepts of black uplift theorists preceding him as well as those of his contemporaries.

This chapter examines Sutton E. Griggs’s first published novel, *Imperium in Imperio* (1899) in relation to the African American tradition of pamphleteering. The full title of this novel is *Imperium in Imperio: A Study of the Negro Race Problem*. This subtitle suggests that the novel is more than just a work of narrative fiction. In fact, it aligns the novel with non-fictional texts from the same period, such as *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), by W.E.B. DuBois, and *The Negro Problem* (1903), a collection of essays by some of the leading African American thinkers, politicians, and writers of the early twentieth century, including Du Bois, Charles W. Chesnutt, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and Booker T. Washington. Griggs would later use the same kind of descriptive subtitle in his first major political pamphlet, *The One Great Question; or, A Study of Southern Conditions at Close Range* (1907). That he would characterize these works as attentive readings or careful examinations of the race problem should not be surprising, for he

spent his entire career formulating solutions to what he saw as the source of the race problem: white supremacy. His initial solution is presented in his first novel, which was intended to function, simultaneously, as a work of popular fiction and as a political pamphlet. To give his readers an ambitious vision of black uplift philosophy and turn-of-the-century African American political leadership, he crafted a hybrid text that has challenged readers and critics since its publication in 1899.

Imperium in Imperio is more than a narrative—it is a literary work that merges the generic conventions of popular, novelistic fiction and African American pamphlets in order to give its readers a complicated theory of black social and political uplift. On the one hand, the book was printed, marketed, and sold as a novel. Attention to the material dimensions of the text makes clear that Griggs hoped it would appeal to readers as a work of popular fiction. On the other hand, in much of the text it seems he wants his readers to approach the book as a political pamphlet, for *Imperium in Imperio* is not a conventional novel by any means. For example, in the prefatory text “To the Public,” Griggs claims that the narrative that follows is not, in fact, a narrative. He tells his reader that the book is actually a collection of documents he has been given by a member of the Imperium in Imperio, a secret black government that has mirrored the U.S. government for over one hundred years. The documents he circulates originate from the Imperium, and they tell the story of two men—Belton Piedmont and Bernard Belgrave—and the conflict between them over the direction of this secret black government, and thus the direction of a black nation within the U.S. nation. In a way, then, Griggs’s collection of documents from the Imperium is similar to the 1773 pamphlet *The Appendix; Or, Some Observations on the Expediency of Petition of the Africans, Living in Boston, &c, lately presented to the*

General Assembly of the Province, in that his collection observes the debate between Belton and Bernard. However, *Imperium in Imperio* goes a step further and challenges readers to resolve an indeterminate ending where neither Belton nor Bernard is elevated as the leader of African America. Where *The Appendix* observes, *Imperium in Imperio* asks its readers to act on what they have observed.

Griggs wanted readers of *Imperium in Imperio* to approach it as something the author did not necessarily have complete control over. The choice he challenges his readers to make—Belton, Bernard, or neither—is a strategy for drawing a bottom-up form of leadership from the community for which he intended the book: the relatively recently freed Southern black masses. By presenting his reader with choices—which of these characters has the better plan for black uplift and national development, and what is the best way for African America to rise and take its place in the U.S. nation—he suggests his preference for a de-individualized form of leadership that relies on the collective will of America's black masses. Because the novel does not resolve the plot but rather tasks the reader with leading the way out of the predicament present at its end, *Imperium in Imperio: A Study of the Negro Race Problem* constitutes his ambitious first vision of the science of collective efficiency, a philosophy of political and social development Griggs would revise and re-circulate in various ways throughout his career.

Imperium in Imperio's subtitle, "A Study of the Negro Race Problem," demonstrates why it is important to take a view of the novel that accounts for its theoretical intentions. What this subtitle suggests is that *Imperium in Imperio*, while a work of fiction, is, simultaneously, a work of social theory. In fact, one of Griggs's early champions, Professor Kelly Miller, characterized the book as social analysis. He

responded to Griggs's request for comment on *Imperium in Imperio* with the following: "Your book deals in a comprehensive way with all the factors of the race problem, and from the standpoint of grasp[ing] upon essential features and analytic treatment, it has no superior of its class."⁷ Miller, who founded Howard University's sociology program in 1895, served as the university's dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, edited *The Crisis* (a periodical published by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), and wrote prolifically on social and political topics. He was a major influence on Griggs, and it seems that Griggs had an influence on Miller as well. The Howard professor was so impressed with the novel he sent copies to a "carefully selected twenty of the more prominent Negroes in public life at that time...with a request for comment"; unfortunately, only four replied.⁸ Neither Griggs nor Miller, it seems, imagined the novel simply as an exercise in story telling or a realist imitation of African American national life, but rather as a form of social and political analysis and action.

In his own time, Griggs was better known as a social theorist than as a writer of popular fiction, even though he did gain credit for his work as a novelist.⁹ But since the 1970s, scholars working on Griggs have mostly read him as the latter, and few have really given extended consideration of him as the former.¹⁰ However, we can reconcile how contemporaries like Kelly Miller saw him with how present-day scholars of African American literature tend to see him now by looking at his novels as simultaneously theoretical and fictional texts. Feminist literary critic Barbara Christian has argued that theorization is central to the African American literary imagination. She writes, "people of color have always theorized—but in forms quite different from the Western form of abstract logic...our theorizing...is often in narrative forms...in the form of the

hieroglyph, a written figure that is both sensual and abstract, both beautiful and communicative.”¹¹ Locating Griggs as part of a theoretical tradition in African American letters helps us get a better sense for why he constructed early plots with indeterminate endings, why he imagined characters that were projections of social and political types, and why his creative experiments and commercial failures with fiction led him to write more explicitly philosophical treatises like *Wisdom’s Call* and *The Guide to Racial Greatness*. His work in fiction and in prose envisions new, and contests existing, terms of individual racial identification and collective senses of African American national being. The novels and pamphlets of Sutton E. Griggs show us how fiction and philosophy are both mimetic acts that project, erect, or install much more than they simply reflect, represent, or imitate.¹² The intent of his work in fiction and in philosophy is to “deconceal” certain truths about race, racial uplift, and the U.S. nation.¹³ Like John Marrant, Prince Hall, David Walker, and William Wells Brown before him, Griggs believed narrative was a crucial form for exposing racialized and racist discourses as fictions with a problematic truth value in American culture. Griggs’s works in prose consistently strive to, as he writes, “[lay] bare the things that should characterize the new order of things for the human family”; this “new order” is the science of collective efficiency.¹⁴

Griggs’s theoretical model for African American racial greatness eventually culminates in two texts: first, the pamphlet *The Science of Collective Efficiency* (1921), and, second, *The Guide to Racial Greatness; Or, The Science of Collective Efficiency* (1923), a book-length revision of the 1921 pamphlet. In this chapter, I read *Imperium in Imperio* as a hybrid genre—half novel, half pamphlet—that gives its readers a theory of

black national leadership and black uplift that is ultimately formalized in the 1921 pamphlet and in the 1923 book. To show how Griggs's first book anticipates his programmatic vision for African American national greatness, I read *Imperium in Imperio* and *The Guide to Racial Greatness* together. However, before giving an extended reading of the novel as an early figuration of the science of collective efficiency, it is important to show how the book is a generic hybrid that allows the author to present his developing political and social theories in innovative and interesting ways. Like William Wells Brown, Sutton E. Griggs imagined the novel as a form of print publication capable of quick intercession in public debate and discourse, and a crucial tool in the struggle against white supremacy at the turn of the century. By imagining his works of popular fiction as intercessory texts meant to shape public opinion, and by framing them as generic hybrids, he helps carry the nineteenth-century African American literary tradition of pamphleteering into the twentieth century using methods that are at once traditional and idiosyncratic.

Imperium in Imperio: The Book

Imperium in Imperio is the only work of fiction that Griggs did not publish through one of his own companies. He contracted the Editor Publishing Company of Ohio, a subsidy publisher, to manufacture the book. Because he paid to have the book printed, he was involved in its production along each step of the process, and he made sure that the novel was, materially speaking, beautiful. The first edition of the novel “reveal[s] an attention to certain production details of an author interested in the book as a physical object and the experience of reading”; moreover, “the physical features of

Griggs's books [in general]—beautifully bound in cloth, lettered in gold with particularly beautiful cover designs—were viewed by contemporary reviewers as a distinguishing feature.”¹⁵ Perhaps Griggs believed that a physically beautiful book would entice readers into purchasing his philosophical work or that a beautiful book would be more widely read. Perhaps he believed that the material appearance of a book would encourage the “habit of reading,” which he connects to “the future progress of the Negro race,” in *Life's Demands; Or, According to Law*.¹⁶ Griggs might have believed that in a racist culture, where men and women were judged on the basis of color, his book would be similarly judged, at least in part, by its cover. Of course, there is also the possibility that he put so much effort into his book as a consequence of authorial pride. I suspect that he was motivated by a combination, in varying degrees, of all of the above.

The fact that Griggs could afford to contract a press to manufacture *Imperium in Imperio* is a testament to the increased and (relatively) inexpensive opportunities for book publication available to authors by the 1890s. Such opportunities had only grown since William Wells Brown published the first African American novel in 1853. Beginning in the 1840s, the industrialization of the book trade resulted in bound volumes that were cheaper to produce, easier to publish, and more affordable investments to risk printing without the guaranteed sales advance subscriptions secured for earlier writers.¹⁷ By the 1850s and 60s, the technological advances in print production were becoming more widely used. Consequently, the cost of producing and circulating books continued to go down, especially once the widespread use of plates, instead of movable, hand-set type, became an established practice by the 1880s (it remained in use until the 1970s).¹⁸ As book historian Michael Winship writes, “by 1880 the era of the industrial book was

firmly established: new manufacturing methods had profoundly changed the way books and other printed materials were produced and what they looked like...in most places people and machines produced print in ways that would have been unimaginable during the early decades of the [nineteenth] century.”¹⁹ Production technology continued to become faster and cheaper in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, and one of the most important developments in American print culture was the increase in machines for stitching pages together and binding between hard, often decorative, covers. This development in particular was important to Griggs’s production of hard-bound books like *Imperium in Imperio* at a prolific rate in the decade between 1899 and 1909.

Altogether, these technological advances meant that book publication quickly became as efficient, inexpensive, and prolific as the production of pamphlets had been for the previous 400 years. One result was that the novel became more capable of the kinds of rapid discursive interventions African American writers associated with pamphlets in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Including *Imperium in Imperio*, Griggs published five novels (and four long-form pamphlets) between 1899 and 1909; in fact, his first three novels were published between 1899 and 1902—a rate of one novel per year! While Griggs surely enjoyed the craft of fiction writing, he also believed “No single race that had no literature is classified as great in the eyes of the world.”²⁰ Thus his prolific rate of publication was, on the one hand, a result of his passion for writing, and, on the other, a result of his belief that the publication of literature by black writers was crucial to African American national greatness in the early 1900s. For Griggs, the novel was a form of print publication, as William Hamilton wrote of the pamphlet in *Mutual Interest, Mutual Aid, and Mutual Relief* (1809), that, if used in the struggle against white

supremacy, would “put our enemies to blush; abashed and confounded they shall quit the field, and no longer urge their superiority of souls.” For Griggs, the novel was a paper bullet, as Richard Atkyns described the pamphlet’s potential to give “every Male-content [a chance to vent] his Passion in Print” in *The Original and Growth of Printing* (1664), he used to contest and confront racist culture.²¹

Griggs’s self-publication practices are similar to those some authors of African descent had pursued since the late eighteenth century. One noteworthy late eighteenth-century example is Olaudah Equiano’s *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789). His biographer, Vincent Carretta, tells us how Equiano “traveled with a wagonload of mostly the less expensive unbound copies of his book, which local printers could then bind for buyers,” and was a very successful sales agent for his *Interesting Narrative*; in fact, much of the fortune he left for his family was due to his holding the rights to reproduce his work.²² Of particular note to this study, the *Interesting Narrative* could conceivably be read as a petition, for it opens with a statement “To the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and the Commons of the Parliament of Great Britain,” addressing the book to them in an effort to “inspire [their] hearts with peculiar benevolence on that important day when the question of Abolition is to be discussed.” What we have in the *Interesting Narrative* is thus a book that fits in easy relation to the African American petitions of 1773, and a text that can arguably be framed as a more explicitly narrative approach to the petitioning strategy of 1770s African Americans in New England. Similar to Equiano, William Wells Brown “was deeply involved in the writing, production, and dissemination of his books.”²³ For example, when he travelled to England and Europe, he took stereotypes of his autobiography, *The*

Narrative of William Wells Brown, A Fugitive Slave (1847), to allow for easy re-publication and re-circulation of it while he was abroad. Reproducing and then selling copies of his autobiographical pamphlet allowed him to finance his time in England and in Europe. The stereotypes he brought with him were the likely source of the autobiographical text that prefaces his novel, *Clotel; Or, The President's Daughter*.²⁴ *Clotel* and *The Interesting Narrative* are, in their own ways, important antecedents to *Imperium in Imperio*.

While *Imperium in Imperio* is, materially speaking, a book, it is, aesthetically speaking, constructed like a pamphlet. As Coleman writes, “In his nine years as a novelist, Griggs barely disguised the political pamphlets that rested at the core of his fiction. Critics have defined Griggs as a political novelist, but he was more of a political novelist who used the novel as a vehicle for his political activism than he was a novelist with an active interest in politics.”²⁵ *Imperium in Imperio* is an excellent example of Coleman’s point. The “barely disguised political pamphlet” at the core of the book begins with a short prefatory statement, “To the Public,” on its opening pages. In this statement Griggs writes, “The papers which are herewith submitted to you for your perusal and consideration...will speak for themselves.” Griggs functions much like “A Lover of True Liberty,” who introduced and told readers how to interpret the collection of documents that comprised *The Appendix*. After telling the reader how he came into possession of the papers that make up *Imperium in Imperio*, vouching for the honor and integrity of the man who gave them to him, and giving some sense that the papers describe a leadership conflict that dismantled a secret black government, he continues, “There are other documents in my possession tending to confirm the assertions made in [this] narrative.”

Not only does Griggs have documents that comprise the narrative, he has additional documents to support the text against accusations that it is untrue or misrepresents the struggle between Belton and Bernard. While it might be tempting to characterize “To the Public” as para-textual material, the short piece is, in fact, a crucial part of the narrative text itself; it is the rhetorical and aesthetic move beginning the author’s formulation of a grand, ambitious vision for a new kind of African American national leadership and a new, turn-of-the-century program for black uplift.

“To the Public” is an important part of the text that helps establish *Imperium in Imperio* as something more than just a narrative. There are other documents, as it were, in addition to “To the Public” that help establish the book as a generic hybrid—part novel, part political pamphlet. They include “Berl Trout’s Dying Declaration” and the final chapter in the narrative, “Personal (Berl Trout),” which brings the text back to the ideas and voices present at its opening. These other documents also include large portions of the closing chapters, which are not even presented to the reader as narrative but rather as programmatic outlines for the future of African America, or, in other words, as political manifestoes. These chapters, titled “Crossing the Rubicon” and “The Storm’s Master,” offer the uplift visions of *Imperium in Imperio*’s two main characters, Bernard and Belton, respectively. Each chapter details policies and programs under virtually the same headings: “The Industrial Situation”/“The Labor Question”; “Our Civil Rights”; “Education” (Belton does not have an education heading); “Courts of Justice”; “Mob Law”; “Politics.” By arranging his two main characters’ platforms in this way, Griggs foreshadows the same kind of argumentative arrangement he would later follow in his prose pamphlets, not to mention some of the very same points of focus. Ultimately, by

offering his reader a novel/pamphlet, he uses fiction as a vehicle for social study and the theorization of new forms of social arrangement, and if his fiction has been seen as flawed or poorly imagined, then it is because he was more invested in presenting his readers with a comprehensive view of the multiple, varied, and complex issues facing African Americans at the turn of the century.²⁶

Griggs uses the latter chapters of the book to present the reader with competing uplift programs, each of which catalogs the “multivariate and complex issues” facing African Americans, and each of which offers a different vision for surmounting them. The form of these late chapters is similar, in a sense, to the form of Walker’s *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*; however, it is also similar in terms of address: it speaks to readers expected to combine and cooperate according to a vision of black national organization articulated in the text. *Appeal* is deliberately constructed as a black national constitution, with a preamble and four articles that, as Walker wrote, arranged the issues facing antebellum-era African Americans “under distinct heads and expose them in their turn,” and endeavored to penetrate, search out, and lay them open for...inspection.”²⁷ Walker wrote a study of the problems facing antebellum-era African Americans; Griggs wrote a study of the problems facing turn-of-the-century African Americans. In terms of address, Walker speaks to the black citizen being constituted by and in his text. Griggs does similar things, putting the issues facing turn-of-the-century African Americans under “distinct heads” and exposing each in turn for the reader’s inspection; he also speaks to a reader that he hopes will, after reading his book, be reconstituted as an active and engaged citizen of African America. In fact, Griggs writes not only to imagine a black nation within the nation into being, but to bring something

like his fictional *Imperium in Imperio* into being as well. The novel/pamphlet is in this way a turn-of-the-century *Appeal*, similarly striving to imagine a black citizenry into place in order to achieve the vision of black nationhood articulated by the text.

However, where Walker exhorts his reader to take action on the uplift philosophy articulated in his pamphlet, Griggs relies on his faith in his reader's ability to determine a way out of the leadership vacuum left at the end of the novel. This vacuum at the end of the book is a deliberate creative and ideological choice, which is achieved by eliminating both leadership options given in the novel, and is foreshadowed by the material prefacing the narrative proper. Thus, I dispute Finnie Coleman's argument that it is "highly unlikely...that Griggs did in fact expect some of his readers to take his preface seriously."²⁸ If Griggs did not expect readers to take "To the Public" seriously, then why include it? Moreover, if he did not expect readers to take it seriously, then why use the first part of the text as a setup for the (non)conclusion at its end? Coleman's position seems to be based on an approach to *Imperium in Imperio* purely as a novel in conventional, generic terms. While he sees the lack of distinction between the narrative and authorial voices in *Imperium in Imperio* as "unfortunate," I see such a lack as an important strategy for merging the generic conventions of the novel and the pamphlet in *Imperium in Imperio*.²⁹

Imperium in Imperio is not a work of "pure" fiction, and Griggs never intended it as such. Thus, when reading the novel, we should not over-privilege the conventions of fiction. Instead, we ought to privilege the author's intention of writing a different kind of text: a work of political theory that relies on narrative figuration in the manner of such philosophical texts as Plato's *The Republic* and Friedrich Nietzsche's *Also Sprach*

Zarathustra, both of which were written by their respective authors, but uttered, as it were, by narrators. Likewise, *Imperium in Imperio* was authored by Sutton E. Griggs, but is uttered by Berl Trout, his narrator—a point that “To the Public” makes clear.

Deliberately confusing authorial and narrative voices is crucial to Griggs’s intentional abdication of authorial control over the resolution of the text. It is the very lack of resolution that puts the reader in the position to bring Griggs’s theoretical vision into being. That vision is of a collective leadership emerging from the black masses, a core element of the science of collective efficiency.

The science of collective efficiency appropriates many aspects of turn-of-the-century sociological discourse. One of Griggs’s influences was Herbert Spencer, whose *The Principles of Sociology* (1876) was reprinted in the 1890s. Griggs cites Spencer in his post-*Imperium* work. In *The Principles of Sociology*, Spencer established a biological analogy for human societies. He claimed that “A Society is an Organism, and wrote, “a society [is] an entity, because, though formed of discrete units, a certain concreteness in the aggregate of them is implied by the maintenance, for generations and centuries, of a general likeness of arrangement throughout the area. And it is this trait which yields our idea of a society.”³⁰ However, I should note the fact that Spencer did not draw a one-to-one analogy between Darwin’s laws of survival among species in the wild; rather, he used these laws as a conceptual framework to “revise intellectually dishonest ideas inherited from Enlightenment thinkers to fit the racial dynamics and exigencies of [his] moment”—a moment when Jim Crow segregation was emerging as a system of domination and subordination to replace the abolition of slavery in the United States.³¹

Another social theorist Griggs would have been familiar with is William Graham Sumner. Sumner was Spencer's student as well as one of the first professional American sociologists. He built on his mentor's work, and Sumner's theories were a crucial source of support for the cultural logic that led to the Supreme Court's decision affirming Jim Crow in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). Sumner hoped to rationalize economic and political inequalities in a democratic state by arguing that some peoples of the earth, specifically non-whites, cannot possibly compete on an equal plane with white peoples. He contended that the laws of nature rendered European peoples as a dominant race, and the "process of extension from Europe...[is incomparable] as a drama of human life on earth...At the present time the process is going on under a wrangle of discordant ethical judgments about its nature and the rights of the parties in it." ³² According to social theorists like Sumner, whites must dominate the darker peoples of the earth in order to protect what they considered more advanced white civilizations from the degenerative influences of non-whites, and it was up to whites to bring less advanced non-white civilization under a degree of subordination for the continued advancement of human society. "Those men who cannot or will not come into the process [of the extension of higher civilization over the globe]," Sumner mused, "will be crushed under it."³³

Sumner posited racial segregation and Jim Crow laws as a necessary measure for the protection of national mores. In *Folkways*, he writes, "before the civil war, whites and blacks had formed habits of action and feeling towards each other. They lived in peace and concord, and each one grew up in the ways which were traditional and customary. The civil war abolished legal rights and left the two races to learn how to live together under other relations than before. The whites have never been converted from the old

mores. Those who still survive look back with regret and affection to the old social usages and customary sentiments and feelings. The two races have not yet made new mores.”³⁴ Racial difference and black subordination to white power was a defining more in the United States for Sumner; even though racial difference and black subordination were not part of an inherently natural order, they had become naturalized as accepted customs, values, and behaviors in American society. In fact, according to social theorists like Sumner, racial difference and black subordination were defining characteristics of American society that kept America “American.” Drawing on contemporary social theory, and adapting the discourse of competition to form a discourse of co-operation, Griggs conceived his science of collective efficiency.

Griggs was not the only African American writer and intellectual to adopt turn-of-the-century sociological discourse as a way of framing a black uplift philosophy. Kelly Miller, who, as mentioned above, was a major influence on Griggs, does the same in a speech to the Alumni Association of the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in 1899 titled “The Primary Needs of the Negro Race” (the speech was also published and circulated in pamphlet form). In “The Primary Needs of the Negro Race,” Miller challenges his audience to “understand the meaning and the purpose of the training [received] from the schools, and to appreciate the great responsibility which it imposes”: cultivating the folk and continuing the nineteenth-century project of building an African American nation within the nation.³⁵ He tells his audience, “Life is a continual warfare against internal and external foes,” and humans, whose sphere of competition is among nations or peoples and not in the natural world, are “a special emergence” among “animal creation.”³⁶ He then states the intent of his lecture: to “consider...the requisites of a new

people who are just entering into civilization”—the somewhat recently freed masses in the South, who were no more than forty years removed from the stifling influence of slavery. Miller tells his audience that Southern black folk, a newly formed free civic body and just recently adapted to the habits and expectations of American *and* African American national life needed to “catch up” in the race of nations. He contends that men like himself and Griggs are responsible for showing them how to do so. The Southern black masses Miller highlights as most needing uplift were the target audience and ideal readers for Griggs’s first four novels, which often mythologized the power and potential of the masses.³⁷ These masses were the intended audience for *Imperium in Imperio*, and the people Griggs believed must take the lead in implementing his theoretical vision for black uplift at the turn of the century.

An Ambitious First Vision of the Science of Collective Efficiency

Imperium in Imperio: A Study of the Negro Race Problem is the first attentive reading Griggs gives Southern conditions and the nature of America’s problem with race. The conclusion of the narrative does not resolve its central conflict but rather presents the reader with competing programs for solving the Negro Problem, while tasking the reader with assuming individual responsibility for joining with others in collective action. The novel is the most ambitious of Griggs’s visions of collective efficiency because it is intentionally ambiguous and places a considerable amount of faith in the reader to apprehend what, exactly, Griggs is suggesting as a solution to the nation’s race problem—if he even suggests a solution at all.

The indeterminate ending of *Imperium in Imperio* can frustrate readers. Rather than tie up neatly by either endorsing or condemning the strategies of political action presented by the main characters, a statement titled “Personal (Berl Trout),” issued from a character appearing only at the opening and close of the novel, is placed at the conclusion. This same character, Berl Trout, issues a “Dying Declaration” at the work’s beginning that declares him either a patriot or a traitor, asking readers to decide based on the narrative testimony that will follow. In fact, his betrayal of the Imperium and Bernard Belgrave’s plans for race war are offered as the very reason Sutton Griggs comes into possession of the documents he claims to have collected and circulated rather than conceived and written. Presenting the text as a collection of documents and the testimonies of another allows Griggs to represent a debate over black leadership and political strategies without seeming to appear committed ideologically. What the reader is offered is an extended figuration of the arguments over the form and function of black politics at the turn of the century. The plot and narrative presentation are designed to slowly cast doubt on limited and limiting options.

This determined indeterminacy anticipates the later articulation in Griggs’s career of the science of collective efficiency, a theory of social action that his earlier efforts at fiction writing are an effort to figure and develop. Thus, we might understand *Imperium in Imperio*, especially the conclusion, as the first presentation of the progressive philosophy and political strategy outlined in the *Guide to Racial Greatness* (1923). Using collective efficiency as an interpretive lens helps us understand the rhetorical intent of the novel’s ambiguous ending, which should be read as a call to collective action on the part of the audience and an abdication of authorial control. Situated at either end of Griggs’s

career, the two texts represent the first and final efforts to formulate a method of political action that would empower the community to lead itself. Rather than read this first work as a poorly executed novel, we should read it as an experiment with fiction, as a vehicle for community and political action that strives to re-imagine the relationship between author and reader as a partnership—a joint exploration of matters of mutual concern, such as leadership, combinations, and education, as defined in the *Guide to Racial Greatness*. However, before looking closely at themes of collective efficiency in *Imperium*, we need to develop a fuller understanding of Griggs's theories on leadership in relation to the group.

The principles of collective efficiency as elaborated in the *Guide* are intended to inspire or even provoke a community-based and collectively driven black leadership that includes the farmer and the philosopher, as well as the mechanic and medical student, all of whom are necessary parts of a collective national consciousness. If there is a theory of revolution to be read into *Imperium*, however, we can say that the novel offers multiple theories of revolution and ultimately does not favor one particular formula for political action. The novel presents two characters representative of different types of political action: Bernard Belgrave—president of the Imperium, a black shadow government based in Texas—who advocates a violent revolt against the U.S. government, and Belton Piedmont—the man who presents a conservative alternative to Bernard's militant vision of black nationalism and who deposes Bernard. Bernard is too much the aggressive separatist and political individualist, acting in his own interests instead of the group's, while Belton, despite his status as the narrative's representation of New Negro political and cultural identity, is too much the cautious assimilationist. Instead, a third character,

Berl Trout, is used as a narrator whose reliability the audience might question as a prompt to action, as he offers a personal statement, an explanation of his actions, and not a political solution.³⁸ Through this character, the either/or politics represented by the struggle between Belton and Bernard is unraveled, though Griggs will ultimately deny Berl Trout a clearly defined narrative status. Based on Griggs's critical dissolution of the radical-submissive binary, readers are left to conceive of another method of politics that avoids the mistakes made by the work's two main characters. This third way is not simply a new political strategy, but also part of the late nineteenth century literary project of representing a New Negro cultural identity. In accordance with the principles of collective efficiency, this new identity is not individualized in representative characters but rather communalized in the combinations they form.

The limited political choices available to the audience are figured in the radically confrontational proposal to the Imperium offered by Bernard Belgrave, and an accommodating, gradual, and assimilationist political action in the proposal given by Belton Piedmont. Arlene Elder has argued that *Imperium* is "Griggs's own political statement...intended to arouse in his readers an awareness of the two directions in which African-Americans might move...[it is] a blueprint for possible racial action."³⁹ However, the "blueprint," as it were, is a plan for the interrogation of the limited presentation of political options to the community by their leaders. The available political options are cast as authoritarian determinations of limited choice that result in political paralysis rather than political movement. Not endorsing either end of the political binary represented in the novel is the first step in a project that would span Griggs's literary career, finally culminating in the *Guide*.

Best described as “liberation sociology,” collective efficiency is given fuller development in Griggs’s 1923 *Guide to Racial Greatness; or, the Science of Collective Efficiency*.⁴⁰ While *Imperium* stands at one end of Griggs’s career, the *Guide* stands at the other, and, as Finnie D. Coleman writes in his remarkable book on Griggs, “*Imperium in Imperio* contains Griggs’s first published musings over a body of theories that would eventually form his social science of collective efficiency.”⁴¹ The *Guide* is an interdisciplinary racial uplift text that “selects from sociology, history, ethics, religion, chemistry, biology, zoology, entomology, and all other available sources, information contributing to the development of the one thing that concerns it, namely, the ability of men to function successfully and enduringly as groups, meeting in adequate fashion the responsibilities that they encounter as groups.”⁴² Rather than focus on individual uplift, Griggs’s attention is directed primarily toward group uplift and social progress. What is important here is that the science of collective efficiency situates a unified African American community as the locus of leadership, and not individual leaders, such as externally sanctioned “race men” who would presume to speak for an African American community as a whole. This theory of social organization seems to be a theory of political revolution—or at least a revolutionary style of politics—within the African American community more than it is a theory of physical revolution within a dominant white cultural space. The revolutionary political style mediated rather than directly conveyed in *Imperium in Imperio* is more directly articulated in his *Guide to Racial Greatness*. Thus, we may understand his first novel as a representation of a politics and political strategy that Griggs would return to over the course of his career, one that would

gain greater clarity in *The Hindered Hand*, but would not be formalized and cast as programmatic until the 1923 *Guide to Racial Greatness*.

The *Guide* outlines a strategy of racial progress focused on how to best develop an African American collective to contradict racist presumptions that the black social, economic, and moral status is the result of inherent incapacity rather than a repressive cultural and political environment. The *Guide* also acknowledges that among all groups there must be leaders. The text works to develop a symbiotic theory of leadership in keeping with its focus on community as a kind of social organism. Griggs writes that “in a group characterized by collective efficiency, ways are worked out to enable the most effective leader to be in the lead...Since all in a group are affected in some way or another by the leadership of that group, it is a joint task to see the best possible leadership is obtained.”⁴³ The science of collective efficiency stipulates that the group is not only responsible for choosing an appropriate leadership, but also for guiding its leadership along a path most beneficial to the group. Leadership “must have assistance from the public in general...must know what the public is thinking,” and “the public must respond to the steps that are taken” by its leadership.⁴⁴ The relationship between the group and its leaders is symbiotic. The group depends on an effective leadership, and effective leaders depend on the response, input, and support of the group.

This relationship between individuals in leadership positions and the many represented by such leaders is similar to the process of “de-colonization” that Frantz Fanon observes among intellectual leaders in the colonial Other’s community. Fanon describes this process as a maturation of the national consciousness. He presents intellectuals as leaders in their communities. Likewise, for Griggs “the presence of

collective efficiency makes sure the leadership is of greater intelligence.”⁴⁵ By virtue of the process of de-colonization, Fanon explains, the colonized intellectual begins to abandon the subjective ontology of the colonizer in favor of a communal ontology among the colonized. Fanon writes that “Involvement in the organization of the [liberation] struggle” teaches the colonized intellectual a new, collective vocabulary, including the words “brother,” “sister,” and “comrade”; over the course of this process, “Personal interests [become] the collective interest.”⁴⁶ The intellectual under the science of collective efficiency comes to realize that building towers from which to view the world and the group in a subjective, remote space serves only to disconnect the leader from the people he wishes to lead. Any such leadership strategy is necessarily an individualistic pursuit, as it has the interest of the individual and not the group in mind. The leader who identifies with the masses learns a vocabulary of commonality, and such leaders are reeducated in the principles of communal being. These leaders realize that “it is not possible to transcend the community; community frames our being because being is always *being in relation to others*.”⁴⁷

Collective efficiency enables a community to most effectively take on the joint tasks that it faces, but when individualistic leaders dominate a group, joint tasks are often subsumed to individual needs or motivations. The *Guide to Racial Greatness* posits that individualism causes a “hazy view of every relationship of civic life,” and that the individualist is like the “tubercular germ establish[ing] itself in vital tissue and proceed[ing] to multiply and eat, utterly unmindful of the fact that it is pursuing a course that must destroy the body.”⁴⁸ Thus, the individualistic leader, in his pursuit of selfish goals, provides an inappropriate model of leadership that, if followed by other

community members, will inevitably destroy the community and leave only a handful of well-fed germs at its expense. “Every man for himself” is a disease that inevitably destroys the bonds holding people together in a community, and the onset of this cultural condition is a precursor to the death of the African American body politic. One of the primary tasks of a group that follows the path of collective efficiency is to recognize these individualistic leaders and depose “unworthy leadership.”⁴⁹ When an individualistic leader commands a group that adheres to the principles of collective efficiency, the most important joint task then facing the group is the removal of such a leader and the reassertion of collective goals.

Imperium in Imperio foreshadows this formal articulation of the need to remove individualistic leaders should they threaten the success, stability, or even existence of the group, positioning Bernard Belgrave as an example of individualistic leadership. Bernard is elected to the presidency of the secret black government, the Imperium, and gives a speech outlining “what shall be the relations that shall henceforth exist between us and the Anglo-Saxon race of the United States of America.”⁵⁰ As a means of closing his speech, Bernard asks the Imperium, “How are we to obtain [our] freedom,” and argues that since “the modern implement of revolutions [the vote] has been denied us,” the Imperium must “march through the only gate left open”: armed revolt.⁵¹ As Griggs would later write, “Countries in which armed revolutions are needed to remove undesirable leaders are lacking in collective efficiency.”⁵² The push toward armed conflict indicates that the Imperium has moved away from collective efficiency as a governing policy under Bernard’s control. His resolution to separate blacks from whites, and create a racially bounded, independent black state in Texas and Louisiana is not formed out of

concern for the benefits of the group but rather out of an oath sworn to his deceased love, Miss Viola Martin.⁵³ Thus, Bernard is not a leader whose actions are driven by collective efficiency; he is a leader motivated by individualistic interests.

Committed to Viola's dying wish, and not the collective interest of his community, Bernard cloaks his stewardship of the Imperium in public interest while using it to serve individualistic interests. His resolutions do more to advance a personal agendas and less to help the community progress as a whole. Driven by selfish desires from the beginning, he is a poor leader and an example to the reader of whom not to follow. After Bernard meets his white father, and is charged with "scaling the walls of prejudice" in order to break them down,⁵⁴ the reader is told that Bernard's commitment to racial politics is the result of "his own desire for glory...[and the desire to compel the world] to give its sanction to the union that had produced such a man as he."⁵⁵ The mission given to Bernard by his white father—a man ashamed of the union that created Bernard—is to ameliorate relations between whites and blacks, and to gain cultural sanction for interracial relationships; but this mission changes irrevocably after the death of his lover, Viola Martin, whom he wanted to marry. Bernard takes as his cause Viola's plea: "dedicate your soul to the work of separating the white and colored races. Do not let them intermingle. Erect moral barriers to separate them. If you fail in this, make the separation physical; lead our people forth from this accursed land."⁵⁶

Bernard does not attend to the joint tasks facing the Imperium, and instead uses the power of the organization to pursue his own goal: geographical segregation of blacks and whites to prevent racial mixing. Rather than work to achieve a more perfect union by reforming U.S. culture and improving race relations, Bernard chooses separation and

dissolution. In contrast, Belton argues to the Imperium that there is a joint task facing the African American community that nullifies armed revolt as an option most beneficial to the health and vigor of the African American community. As citizens of the national community of the United States, the challenge facing the Imperium is not to lead the black community against the nation but rather “to wash the flag free of all blots, not to rend it; to burnish every star in the cluster, but to pluck none out.”⁵⁷ Belton sees the African American community as part of a larger U.S. community. Thus, an integral aspect of Griggs’s black nationalist aesthetic is the hybridized appropriation of “America” as conceptual space just as is the case with some of Wheatley’s poems, Walker’s *Appeal*, and Brown’s versions of *Clotel*. Indeed, the Imperium’s plan to “occupy,” for all intents and purposes, Southern states such as Texas or Louisiana seems an assertion that geographic and national spaces defined as “white” can be made “black” through a majority appropriation of political power, and exposes the complexion of national spaces as a fiction representing political power structures rather than a presumptively innate national identity.⁵⁸ Belton argues that America as both geographic and conceptual national space is as much African American as it is Anglo American, an argument DuBois would make in *The Souls of Black Folk* less than five years later when writing “Our song, our toil, our cheer, and warning have been given to this nation in blood-brotherhood... Would America have been America without her Negro people?”⁵⁹

However, despite his willingness to act against individualism in a rhetorical sense, Belton is unable to follow the principles of collective efficiency and depose Bernard. Berl Trout is left as the character who must act in the interest of collective efficiency and, by extension, the interests of the African American and national communities as well. Berl

Trout is the novel's major voice, and therefore all of the action is recounted through his perspective. Griggs disavows any responsibility for the text itself in his prefatory "To the Public," when he writes that the papers "submitted to [readers] for...personal consideration...by Mr. Berl Trout...speak for themselves."⁶⁰ However, while the narrative is presented to the reader as based on documentary evidence, it does not include these documents in any direct fashion as part of its formal arrangement. This seeming paradox works to dissociate the author from the preferential perspective of his narrator. Berl is introduced as a reliable narrator, with attestations to his "strict veracity," and assertions as to Griggs's "perfect faith in the truthfulness of the narrative," but without direct evidence in the form of the documents on which the narrative is purportedly based. Considering Berl's preferential representation of Belton despite being a "warm personal friend" of both Belton and Bernard, there is room for the reader to question Berl's point of view as that of an interested party.⁶¹ Ultimately, the choice of "traitor or patriot" is not Berl's or even Griggs's, but the reader's instead. Berl Trout tells the story, and he does foil Bernard's plans, but Griggs uses an ironic tone at points that undercuts Berl's narrative perspective and functions as a second narrative foil, casting doubt on any authorial preference for Belton's plan.

 Berl Trout is arguably the central character in the novel. After Belton is executed, Berl is left to act in the interest of collective efficiency and depose individualistic leadership. Griggs contends that individualistic leadership "causes institutions designed for the public good to be converted into agencies for serving personal ends,"⁶² and Bernard certainly converts the Imperium to a tool for his own revenge. As Berl tells the readers after Bernard's ascension

Henceforth, Bernard Belgrave's influence would be supreme. Born of distinguished parents, reared in luxury, gratified as to every whim, successful in every undertaking, idolized by the people, proud, brilliant, aspiring, deeming nothing impossible of achievement, with Viola's tiny hand protruding from the grave pointing him to move forward, Bernard Belgrave, President of the Imperium in Imperio, was a man to be feared.⁶³

Berl understands that Bernard does not work for what is in the best interest of the group but rather at the behest of his deceased love, whose dying wishes become the impetus for his actions and thus the overriding, if not overt, motivations for the resolutions and policies of the Imperium. When a group is able to recognize an individualistic takeover, it is governed by the science of collective efficiency, and "when an individualist betrays a sacred trust [the trust a collective has in its leaders] he is dethroned if he is surrounded by people having the true co-operative nature."⁶⁴ The fear that Bernard instills in other members of the Imperium prevents them from removing him from his position, and this fear destroys the "cooperative nature" of the Imperium. Berl Trout is not paralyzed by a fear of Bernard, and is able to fulfill the requirements of genuinely community-minded leadership by deposing him.

Because exposing Bernard's plans requires Berl to reveal the Imperium, he, like Belton, is executed as a traitor, but his status as a traitor is questionable. Berl's role at the conclusion is to get readers to consider questions of loyalty: should Berl have been loyal to Bernard's individualism or Belton's collectivism, and which is more beneficial to the interests of the group? Even though he might be conceived of as a traitor to the Imperium, he is a patriot for the cause of a common humanity, acting "in the interest of

the whole human family—of which my race is but a part.”⁶⁵ Of course, the reader may also question whether Berl is loyal to the community and the science of collective efficiency or if, in the end, he is loyal to Belton. The problem of Berl Trout, and the matter on which his status as a traitor or patriot turns, is his negative representation of Bernard Belgrave and his positive representation of Belton Piedmont. Furthermore, the problem Berl Trout allows Griggs to avoid is that of responsibility for a narrative representation and the implications of authorial judgment were he to write in the first person.

Allowing Bernard’s plans to reach fruition by permitting a race war to ensue would further rend the two races apart. The science of collective efficiency is not meant to drive the races further apart but rather to bring them together and acknowledge the broader national benefits that securing “those rights for which [the Imperium] organized” will bring the African American community.⁶⁶ Because Bernard acts in contradiction to the science of collective efficiency, he is not a suitable leadership option, and thus is not represented as a viable option for solving the crisis in black leadership figured in the novel. Berl, as the narrative voice, a source noted for “strict veracity and for the absolute control that his conscience exercised over him,”⁶⁷ must act as the presumptive hero in the end. However, there is still the question of Belton’s narrative role: he seems to be an admirable character for most of the novel. But what flaw ultimately nullifies him as a lasting leadership option, and how are readers given clues to identify this flaw? What leads to his failure to depose Bernard Belgrave, and what explains his politics combining solidarity and submission?

The *Guide* emphasizes that the African American community must combine and use collective rather than individualized political power. Individual merits may do much for a person's own social standing, and perhaps, even if only by implication, that of a community. But, as Griggs asserts, "if [a community's] internal condition shows that it lacks the capacity for teamwork, it will not be summoned to the council table of the great powers of the earth."⁶⁸ Collective efficiency is not about individual conditions, but the conditions under which individuals must operate to form effective combinations in support of racial/social progress. Furthermore, collective efficiency is not simply about combining individuals into groups, or finding and developing an appropriate leadership, but ultimately about racial ascendancy, or, to use social Darwinist terminology from the early twentieth century, the evolution and progress of African American civilization. The *Guide* asks

Does a race aspire to occupy the highest ranks? Does it wish to escape the burdens and heartaches that are the accompaniments of a low estate?

Does it covet the respect of all mankind? Does it wish to enjoy the highest blessings that earth affords? Does it desire to be able to respect itself in the inner recesses of the soul? Then let it remember how exalted is the goal of collective efficiency.⁶⁹

The social and political combinations that are necessary for racial uplift concern not only the cultural and material conditions of the African American community but also its internal conditions, psychological and spiritual. Collective efficiency is not simply a social science: it is a spiritual science that enables a group to reach "exalted" collective goals by exploring the mind and soul of the social body. Combinations articulated by the

science of collective efficiency are the first step in the attainment of such goals, one of which is the articulation of a new African American cultural identity.

The combinations *Imperium in Imperio* imagines as a part of collective efficiency contribute to late nineteenth-century literary figurations of a New Negro identity. Collective efficiency's New Negro is a communal identity, and not a template for individual aspirations. While the New Negro as a formalized cultural identity is best known as part of Alain Locke's *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (1923), published in the same year as the *Guide to Racial Greatness*, the New Negro as a literary trope is an important part of post-Reconstruction African American literature, considered by Henry Louis Gates as a "period of black intellectual reconstruction."⁷⁰ Griggs is a central voice participating in this reconstruction, and the New Negro he represents as a part of the science of collective efficiency is his contribution to the reformation of the African American cultural image. Belton Piedmont is the narrative embodiment of this presence through the combinations he helps form. Gates writes, "the image of a 'New Negro' has served various generations of black intellectuals as a sign of plenitude, of regeneration, of a truly reconstructed *presence*."⁷¹ For Griggs, "the voice of the New Negro would not be a single voice, but a multiplicity that would capture the intellectual depth and girth of a vibrant nation within a nation."⁷²

The New Negro envisioned in the science of collective efficiency is unafraid of combinations and does not fear cohesive, group action as a means of political and racial uplift. Griggs believed that a reluctance to combine, organize and act in unison and with a communal voice for change and equality represented an "Old Negro" political consciousness. For example, when Belton first brings the matter of the black teacher

denied a seat at the dining table with the white teachers to the other students at Stowe University, all “readily agreed” that some action should be taken, “but it seemed as though no one dared to suggest a combination.”⁷³ The narrator indicates that “during slavery all combinations of slaves were sedulously guarded against, and a fear of combinations seems to have been injected into the Negro’s very blood.”⁷⁴ However, this unnatural presence, this “injection” in the “Negro’s blood” that threatens the health of the African American body politic is what the science of collective efficiency seeks to destroy. The destruction of those characteristics that slavery has “injected into the Negro’s very blood” is indicative of a rhetorical “[turn] away from the ‘Old Negro’ and the labyrinthine memory of black enslavement and toward the register of a ‘New Negro,’ an irresistible, spontaneously generated black and sufficient self.”⁷⁵ This tropological movement in black literary self-representation is an affirmation of the potential that the future holds for a self-determined racial uplift guided by non-individualistic leaders beholden only to the African American community.

The leaders who help create the combinations that are crucial to a New Negro identity are the leaders of the future. The students at Stowe under the guidance of Belton function as a model for collectivized African American politics leading into the twentieth century. Those students who oversee and organize the group protest are represented as “the future leaders of their race...[who had] learned the power of combinations.”⁷⁶ The shift to a new, collectivized cultural identity implicit in these acts of resistance represents “the passing of one and the ushering in of another great era in the history of the colored people of the United States.”⁷⁷ This new “great era” is the epoch of the New Negro. In fact, “the New Negro for Griggs was not an individual or a type, but a generation of

young and talented Blacks with widely diverging backgrounds and political dispositions.”⁷⁸ As such, the organization of black communities into powerful collectives that allow themselves a voice at the local, regional, or even national council tables is representative of not only a new period in the “history of colored people,” but also of a new means of black self-identification. As Griggs writes, “the cringing, fawning, sniffing, cowardly Negro which slavery left, had disappeared, and a new Negro, self-respecting, fearless, and determined in the assertion of his rights was at hand.”⁷⁹ However, while Belton would seem a hero because of the combinations he helps engender, this presumptive status is undercut by his education, which leaves an opening in the text for his removal as a viable political option.

Education is one of the most important “Agencies of Transformation” in the *Guide* and one of the greatest joint tasks facing a community; if properly administered, agencies of transformation are able to change fractured, disunited groups into communities governed by and producing leaders eminently suited for guiding their people according to the science of collective efficiency. Unless run properly, under the supervision of the community they serve, schools may mis-educate students, and thus stunt or even thwart the development of collective efficiency.⁸⁰ The problem with the education system in which Belton becomes a leader is that it is not overseen by the community and is in fact largely run by outside, which is to say white, interests. Griggs writes that “the teacher should regard himself as the link in the chain of endeavor that has for its mission the changing of a separatist into a co-operator.”⁸¹ The type of cooperation that is taught is key here, as Carter Woodson would later argue by citing Jessie O. Thomas in a critique of black schools under white control: “The Negroes do the ‘coing’

and the whites the ‘operating.’”⁸² As Thomas suggests, the type of cooperation between blacks and whites in education is of key concern. Belton’s mis-education under the guidance of outside interests is his tragic flaw, and this mis-education creates for him a limited frame of reference in which to conceive of the relationship between individual and cultural being. Belton may have learned a collective vocabulary of “brother,” “sister,” and “comrade,” but he is unable to extricate himself from conceptions of liberty and freedom that are independent of some sort of debt to a culture of white supremacy.

Early episodes that occur within the Piedmont home set the stage for education to be an integral part of racial uplift, and thus an integral part of the science of collective efficiency. These episodes, when contrasted to Belton’s distance from the community by the end of the novel, as represented by his estrangement from his wife and child, are an indicator of the distance he travels: despite his commitment to organizing the community, Belton is still unable to act wholly independently of outside interests. The resolutions he proposes to the Imperium are arguably as influenced by such interests as Bernard’s are by his individualism. But, having used Berl Trout to discredit Bernard, Griggs is left with the subtle tools of tone and implication as a means of dismantling Belton’s preferred place in what is ostensibly Berl’s narrative. Just as Berl acts as a foil to Bernard, and shows that Bernard’s strength—his radical activism—also stands as his weakness, so too does the text’s tone at points indicate that Belton’s strength—his too measured, too conservative politics and sense of indebtedness to whites—is his leadership flaw as well.

Throughout the chapters detailing Belton’s education, the reader is given a set of “keys to his future life,”⁸³ which are used to open the reader to a sense of doubt concerning Belton as the preferred political option in the text. The keys to which the text

refers are not just the keys to Belton's future, but the keys by which the reader might unlock a critical reading of Belton's politics as well. The line referencing these keys to Belton's politics is followed by the imperative "Remember it,"⁸⁴ a foreboding and ironic intimation of its significance. The chapter that follows refers to Belton's "first taste of rebellion against the whites," and an indication that his "teachers and school-mates" predicted he would become a "moving, guiding, and controlling spirit."⁸⁵ Belton's schoolmates see his potential as a leader as the reader might. However, Belton's white benefactors see this potential even before his schoolmates at Stowe do, and are able to channel it into a style of leadership less threatening to white power structures.

For example, one important key to Belton's future is a dream recounted to him by his college financier, Mr. V. M. King, a man who "for several years had given the negro problem most profound study," reaching the determination that "if this teaching [of the principles of liberty] had the desired effect upon the white man [of deifying liberty] it would also be powerful enough to awaken the negro standing by his side."⁸⁶ King's dream, which he tells Belton of in order to explain his reasons for sending him to Stowe University, concerns the relationship between whites and blacks, and scripts racial interaction within a paternalistic frame wherein "negroes," cast initially as hogs, are "feasting off of the same thought"—acorns dropped by the "white" oak trees—and "become the same kind of being as the white man."⁸⁷ This dream asserts a racialized hierarchy wherein blacks are "raised" to the level of whites, and in which whites relate to blacks as parents do children. The dream is interpreted by King to mean "negroes should not be over boastful, and should recognize that the lofty conception of the dignity of man and value and true character of liberty were taught him by the Anglo-Saxon."⁸⁸ King's

main concern seems to be the potential for violent revolt, should “awakened negroes [come] to ask for liberty, and if refused, slay or be slain.”⁸⁹ Motivated on the one hand by condescending paternalism and on the other by fear and self-protection, King sees Belton as a man who could stop any such radical confrontation. Belton adopts this submissive, indebted perspective, one that requires African Americans to remain conscious of a subordinate position, and that seems to erase a history of trauma in slavery, as evidenced by his declaration to the Imperium that “when we calmly survey the evil and good that came to us through American slavery, it is my opinion that we find more good for which to thank God than we find evil for which to curse man.”⁹⁰

In the course of his education, Belton’s politics are colonized by the imperatives of white supremacist historiography that script the historical relationship between blacks and slavery as one wherein blacks “owe” their enslavers for positioning them paradoxically close to the Anglo-Saxon lessons of liberty and freedom. If Belton’s first mistake is to cut off his connection to the folk, who are not seen after he leaves his childhood home, and separate himself from the broader community, as represented by his abandonment of his wife and child, then his second is to presume that the discourse of liberty is preeminently Anglo-Saxon; he is unable, perhaps even unwilling, to recognize that the Anglo-Saxon, while professor of the discourses of liberty, is even more adept at the discourses of white supremacy. In fact, the conceptual whitening of liberty is part and parcel of the cultural discourses of white supremacy. As early as his last year of secondary school, Belton is extolling the virtues of Anglo-Saxon culture in his award winning speech, “The Contribution of the Anglo-Saxon to the Cause of Liberty,” a speech that revealed to his white audience “a [clear] conception of the glory of their

race.”⁹¹ Belton’s third mistake is to presume that the answer to the race question is to “pull the veil from before the Anglo-Saxon that he may see the New Negro standing before him humbly but firmly demanding every right granted him by his maker and wrested from him by man.”⁹² Given that white knowledge of black subjectivities within a cultural system based on racial stratification and subordination should not be seen as knowledge but rather as the projection of a self-fulfilling fantasy, Belton is foolish to presume that simply rending the Anglo-Saxon veil is enough to disabuse many whites of their false cultural consciousness.

If the science of collective efficiency defines education as an agency of transformation, then any and all transformations should be made under the auspices of the community served in order to avoid a transfer of interest and a loss of a community’s control over how it is changed. Belton becomes such a product of his benefactors and educators that he is all too ready to concede to white culture credit for a language and principles it has not consistently upheld. He seems not to realize or recollect that some of the most powerful contributions to the discourses of freedom and liberty are made through the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as part of a long rhetorical tradition of African American literary and political production. In a manner different, though not entirely dissimilar, from Bernard, forces and perspectives outside of his community influence Belton and he is unable to fully assume the role of community leader in accordance with the science of collective efficiency. While Bernard advocates separatist revolt under the influence of self-interest, Belton argues for humble submission under the influence of interests outside of and, at times, inimical to, the African American community.

Imperium in Imperio leads the reader through a process of political mirroring wherein representatives at the ends of an either/or political spectrum are conflated into a single image of a failed African American political leadership that is inevitably subsumed by the very discursive manipulations and distortions they sought to combat and correct. While Bernard is too much the violent revolutionary, Belton is too much the forgiving assimilationist, and thus, caught between two extremes, the novel is unable to offer a viable political solution any-where other than between the lines, and in an ambiguous ending meant to prompt the reading audience to act and become the leadership that is missing. As Gillman contends, “despite their differences,” both Belton and Bernard “end up in the same place.”⁹³ Regardless of their arrangement on ostensibly opposite ends of the political spectrum, both Belton and Bernard become equally flawed black leaders whose politics are co-opted by the imperatives of systemic white supremacy, albeit in divergent ways, and whose policies become saturated with its discourses as well.

Reading *Imperium in Imperio* as the first step in Griggs’s articulation of the science of collective efficiency helps us to understand the ending not as representative of an inability to choose one or the other end of a binary political equation but as a calculated move to render such binaries as non-solutions that work against rather than empower people. Furthermore, collective efficiency helps us to understand the novel not simply as an effort to represent a debate but also to create a narrative movement meant to push the audience from the act of guided, critical interpretation into action that moves beyond debate. The theory of revolution offered is as follows: that individualistic or individualized leadership in the struggle for human rights and racial equality will tend toward an authoritarian recapitulation of the discourse of the dominant culture; that a

middle way requires that the people lead themselves; and that true leadership is collectivized rather than individualized. The science of collective efficiency bears some resemblance, even if slight, to the communist movements in the African American community of the 1920s and 30s, which were a revolutionary form of community-based and -powered politics themselves. These movements at times celebrated the folk as a frame of reference for cultural being, but also embraced the role of the educated leaders as long as those leaders did not separate themselves from the folk. As such, *Imperium in Imperio* could be read as anticipating the Black Belt thesis, which argued that African Americans constituted an oppressed nation within a nation. The science of collective efficiency may in turn be understood as an early expression of the importance placed on African American community-wide empowerment for racial uplift and civil rights strategies. In the end, Griggs shows his readers that revolutionary politics need not work toward revolt as traditionally understood but may also be seen in the development of new and innovative forms of community organization.

Unfortunately, *Imperium in Imperio* was a commercial failure, and the novel's call for a new form of black community organization and leadership went unheeded. Undeterred, Griggs wrote another novel, *Overshadowed*, the first publication issued by his Orion Publishing Company, that issued an ambiguous challenge to readers to find a way out of the "racial dungeons" it represented by supporting the right kind of leader when he does emerge.⁹⁴ As with *Imperium in Imperio*, *Overshadowed* adopts an aesthetic strategy of deliberate indeterminacy, but Griggs does revise his approach in his second novel by making it somewhat clearer that the novel presents readers with theoretical, organizational, and political challenges: it will illuminate a problem, but not determine

how the reader should solve the problem; it will call for support, but will not explicitly outline what the reader ought to support (other than people and ideas that intend to advance African American racial greatness); it will call for a leader, but will not indicate who that leader is nor where the reader ought to look for him. Unfortunately, like *Imperium in Imperio*, *Overshadowed* was not a commercial success, nor did it generate the ideological support Griggs hoped readers would provide for him.

Perhaps the result of the realization that his intentional ambiguity was a failed aesthetic strategy, Griggs's third novelistic effort, *Unfettered*, adopts a much clearer shift in strategy away from indeterminacy and a supreme faith in his selected audience, the Southern folk, to see the answers his novels offer to America's so-called Negro Problem. The increased theoretical clarity of collective efficiency in the third novel he published is most directly the result of a pamphlet he bound together with the narrative, "Dorlan's Plan, a Sequel to *Unfettered*." In both this third novel as well as his fourth, *The Hindered Hand*, which is the last work of fiction he would write for a primarily black audience, pamphlets assume crucial formal and narrative roles. He did publish a fifth novel—*Pointing the Way* (1908)—but I want to move away from connecting his fiction with the African American literary tradition of pamphleteering in the next chapter in order to focus on Griggs as an early twentieth-century pamphleteer. Perhaps even more so than his novels, Griggs's pamphlets were integral to the repetition, revision, and re-circulation of the ideas that are eventually presented as a programmatic uplift philosophy: the science of collective efficiency.

¹ My citation comes from the recent critical edition of *My Southern Home* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 122-123.

² Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, reprint (New York: Bantam, 1989), 10.

³ Peter P. Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 92.

⁴ John Ernest, *Chaotic Justice: Rethinking African American Literary History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 21.

⁵ Søren Kierkegaard, “Repetition” in *Repetition/Fear and Trembling*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 148-149.

⁶ Arne Melberg, “Repetition (In the Kierkegaardian Sense of the Term),” *Diacritics* 20.3 (Autumn 1990): 75.

⁷ Griggs, *The Story of My Struggles* (Memphis: National Public Welfare League, 1914), 8.

⁸ Griggs, *The Story of My Struggles*, 8-9.

⁹ I should note that Griggs did not go unrecognized as a novelist by his peers, but, rather, he was never embraced by the folk readership he imagined as the ideal audience for his novels. DuBois was pleased Griggs signed on to represent the black novelists of the time as part of the Niagara Movement, and, as noted, Kelly Miller was an enthusiastic supporter of *Imperium in Imperio*, but by the time he had aligned himself with the Niagara Movement (around 1906), he was nearer to the end of his work in fiction than he was to its beginnings. Clearly, Griggs was *known* as a novelist, but it is just as clear from reading his autobiography that he was not celebrated to the degree that he had hoped and, arguably, expected to be.

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- ¹⁰ Finnie Coleman and myself are two examples of scholars who read Griggs as a theorist/novelist.
- ¹¹ Barbara Christian, "The Race For Theory," *Feminist Studies* 14.1 (Spring 1988), 68.
- ¹² Phillippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "Typography," 71.
- ¹³ Martin Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Perennial Classics Edition, 2001), 38.
- ¹⁴ Sutton E. Griggs, *Guide to Racial Greatness* (Memphis: National Public Welfare League, 1923), ii.
- ¹⁵ Tess Chakkalakal, "Reading in Sutton E. Griggs," in *Jim Crow, Literature, and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs*, ed. Tess Chakkalakal and Kenneth W. Warren (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2013), 146.
- ¹⁶ Griggs, *Life's Demands; Or, According to Law* (Memphis, TN: National Public Welfare League, 1916), 98.
- ¹⁷ While Griggs did, in fact, sell some novels by subscription, it is unlikely that he followed the late eighteenth-/early nineteenth-century model. He more than likely sold books by mail order, as first editions of some offer information for ordering others, which explains the postage cost attached to some sales (Chakkalakal, "Reading in Sutton E. Griggs," 146).
- ¹⁸ Michael Winship, "Manufacturing and Book Production," in *A History of the Book in America, Vol 3: The Industrial Book, 1840-1880*, ed. Scott E. Casper, Jeffrey D. Groves, Stephen W. Nissenbaum, and Michael Winship (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 40-41.
- ¹⁹ Michael Winship, "Manufacturing and Book Production," 68.

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- ²⁰ Griggs, *Life's Demands; Or, According to Law*, 98.
- ²¹ Richard Atkyns, *Original and Growth of Printing* (London: John Streater, 1664), B2. Web. http://gateway.proquest.com.libproxy.temple.edu/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:54586:3
- ²² Vincent Carretta, *Equiano, the African: Biography of a Self-Made Man* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 337-338.
- ²³ Chakkalakal, "Reading in Sutton E. Griggs," 148.
- ²⁴ I am not trying to imply that these two authors saw self-published and circulated texts as counterweights to slavery's negation of personhood, like the famous example of Douglass, whose self-published, second autobiography, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, completes the process of full emancipation he claims was begun by the publication of his 1845 pamphlet. For more on this, see Lara Langer Cohen's "Notes from the State of Saint Domingue: The Practice of Citation in *Clotel*," in *Early African American Print Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).
- ²⁵ Finnie D. Coleman, *Sutton E. Griggs and the Struggle Against White Supremacy* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007), 38.
- ²⁶ Coleman, *Sutton E. Griggs and the Struggle Against White Supremacy*, 35.
- ²⁷ David Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, fourth printing, ed. Peter P. Hinks (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 5.
- ²⁸ Coleman, *Sutton E. Griggs and the Struggle Against White Supremacy*, 45.
- ²⁹ Coleman, *Sutton E. Griggs and the Struggle Against White Supremacy*, 45.
- ³⁰ Cited from *Herbert Spencer on Social Evolution: Selected Writings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 135-136.

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- ³¹ Stuart C. Gillman, "Political Theory and Degeneration: From Left to Right, From Up to Down," in *Degeneration: The Dark Side of Progress*, ed. J. Edward Chamberlain and Sander L. Gilman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 190.
- ³² Sumner, "The Proposed Dual Organization of the World," *War and Other Essays*, 272-273.
- ³³ Sumner, "The Proposed Dual Organization of the World," 273.
- ³⁴ Sumner, *Folkways: A Study of the Sociological Importance of Usages, Manners, Customs, Mores, and Morals* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1906), 77.
- ³⁵ Kelly Miller, "The Primary Needs of the Negro Race" (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1899), 7.
- ³⁶ Miller, "The Primary Needs of the Negro Race," 3.
- ³⁷ Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 180.
- ³⁸ See Roger Whitlow's "The Revolutionary Novels of Martin R. Delany and Sutton Griggs" (*MELUS* 5.3: 26-36). Peter Schmidt also addresses the collapse of binaries in his chapter on Griggs, "Conflicted Race Nationalism: Sutton Griggs's *Imperium in Imperio*," in *Sitting in Darkness: New South Fiction, Education, and the Rise of Jim Crow Colonialism, 1865-1920* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008).
- ³⁹ Arlene Elder, *The "Hindered Hand": Cultural Implications of Early African-American Fiction* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978), 77.
- ⁴⁰ My use of the term "liberation" here signifies that the science of collective efficiency is like James Cone's liberation theology, or even John Ernest's liberation historiography, in that it is an adaptation of a particular discursive mode to the exigencies African American

cultural and historical situation in the United States, working toward the realization of freedom, equality, and self-determination.

⁴¹ Coleman, *Sutton E. Griggs and the Struggle Against White Supremacy*, 35.

⁴² Sutton E. Griggs, *The Guide to Racial Greatness; or, the Science of Collective Efficiency*, “The New Science, Introduction” (Memphis: National Public Welfare League, 1923). I should note that the *Guide* does work with gendered notions of leadership and community. When referring to groups operating under the science of collective efficiency, Griggs refers to such groups as “groups of men,” or “races of men,” as though women play little to no part in the administration of communities and communal activities. Furthermore, the leaders that rise out of the science of collective efficiency are consistently gendered as male. However, women are given a role in the science of collective efficiency—the role of the mother as an institution of transformation. In addition to the gendering of the African American community, Griggs also uses Asian cultures or nations, especially the Chinese, as representations of groups that lack collective efficiency, and that such a lack results in “backward” cultures unable to compete with the “great” Western nations.

⁴³ Griggs, *Guide*, 14.

⁴⁴ Griggs, *Guide*, 14-15.

⁴⁵ Griggs, *Guide*, 14.

⁴⁶ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 11-12.

⁴⁷ James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 97. Emphasis in the original.

⁴⁸ Griggs, *Guide*, 43.

⁴⁹ Griggs, *Guide*, 16.

⁵⁰ Sutton E. Griggs, *Imperium in Imperio*, reprint (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 140.

⁵¹ Griggs, *Imperium*, 148.

⁵² Griggs, *Guide*, 16

⁵³ Griggs's choice of Texas as the site in which the Imperio would try to establish a black majority may be influenced by biographical factors. Griggs was born in Texas, and was primarily educated there, going to school in Dallas and then graduating from Bishop College in Marshall, Texas in 1890. Griggs would then move to Richmond, attending the Richmond Theological Seminary, before working as a pastor in Berkely, Virginia, as well as East Nashville, Tennessee. Griggs returned to Texas in 1826 to take over his father's former pastorate. For more on the role of Texas emigration in *Imperium* see Caroline Levander's essay "Sutton Griggs and the Borderlands of Empire," *American Literary History* 22.1: 57-84.

⁵⁴ Griggs, *Imperium*, 65-66.

⁵⁵ Griggs, *Imperium*, 67.

⁵⁶ Griggs, *Imperium*, 119.

⁵⁷ Griggs, *Imperium*, 168.

⁵⁸ Griggs would return to the idea of mass migration as a concentration of political power in *Unfettered* when black residents of a rural town plan to move en masse to "the city of R----" in retaliation for the murder of one of their own. While the goal of migration in *Imperium* is to concentrate political power, an important component of collective

efficiency, the denial of black labor is also planned as a strategic blow to the local economy.

⁵⁹ W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 187. African American claims to the nation were made as early as 1829. While arguing against what he called the “colonizing trick” of the American Colonization Society, David Walker writes in his *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* that, “This country is as much ours as it is the whites, whether they admit it now or not, they will see and believe it by and by” (58).

⁶⁰ Griggs, *Imperium*, 3.

⁶¹ Griggs, *Imperium*, 3.

⁶² Griggs, *Guide*, 47.

⁶³ Griggs, *Imperium*, 175.

⁶⁴ Griggs, *Guide*, 45.

⁶⁵ Griggs, *Imperium*, 6.

⁶⁶ Griggs, *Imperium*, 177.

⁶⁷ Griggs, *Imperium*, 3.

⁶⁸ Griggs, *Guide*, 37.

⁶⁹ Griggs, *Guide*, 38.

⁷⁰ Henry Louis Gates, “The Trope of a New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black,” *Representations* 24, Special Issue: America Reconstructed, 1840-1940 (Autumn, 1988), 130.

⁷¹ Gates, “The Trope of the New Negro,” 130. Emphasis in the original.

⁷² Coleman, *Sutton E. Griggs and the Struggle Against White Supremacy*, 56.

⁷³ Griggs, *Imperium*, 45.

⁷⁴ Griggs, *Imperium*, 45.

⁷⁵ Gates, “The Trope of a New Negro,” 133. While I agree that the notion of a New Negro identity requires a turning away from supposed or presumed characteristics of an Old Negro identity, and that this is a future-facing turn rather than a past-facing turn, I question the ahistorical nature of this New Negro identity. Gates argues that the New Negro identity is articulated in “the rhetorical shape of black historical fiction—the weary black dream of a perfect state of being, with no history in particular detail, rather than the search for a group of black and especially historical entities” (132). The future-facing posture of this New Negro identity seems very much to recognize the history of slavery; we must remember that to trope is, literally, “to turn.” Thus, there must be something that is being turned from in such representations. This turning, rather than aspiring to some ahistorical sense of cultural being, is not a denial but rather a recognition of such cultural and representative histories that are in fact its occasion. Rather than seek to deny and abandon histories, the trope of the New Negro seems to be a conscious recognition of them.

⁷⁶ Griggs, *Imperium*, 47.

⁷⁷ Griggs, *Imperium*, 46.

⁷⁸ Coleman, *Sutton E. Griggs and the Struggle Against White Supremacy*, 42.

⁷⁹ Griggs, *Imperium*, 46.

⁸⁰ Schmidt writes that “we might say that Griggs’s novel could be subtitled “The Mis-Education of the Negro” (77), and uses the phrase “novel as syllabus” at one point when describing *Imperium*.

⁸¹ Griggs, *Guide*, 213.

⁸² Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, reprint (Chicago: African American Images, 2000), 29.

⁸³ Griggs, *Imperium*, 37.

⁸⁴ Griggs, *Imperium*, 37.

⁸⁵ Griggs, *Imperium*, 47.

⁸⁶ Griggs, *Imperium*, 33-34.

⁸⁷ Griggs, *Imperium*, 35.

⁸⁸ Griggs, *Imperium*, 36.

⁸⁹ Griggs, *Imperium*, 34.

⁹⁰ Griggs, *Imperium*, 156.

⁹¹ Griggs, *Imperium*, 27.

⁹² Griggs, *Imperium*, 163.

⁹³ Susan Gillman, *Blood Talk: American Race Melodrama and the Culture of the Occult* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 96.

⁹⁴ Sutton E. Griggs, *Overshadowed: A Novel* (Nashville: The Orion Publishing Company, 1901), "Proem."

Chapter Four: Sutton E. Griggs, Novelist and Pamphleteer

Reading the pamphlets and the novels of Sutton E. Griggs together can help to explain difficult passages in novels like *Imperium in Imperio*. For example, there is one part of this novel that has challenged critics. The novel's main character, Belton Piedmont, and his wife, Antoinette, have a child together. When Belton sees his son for the first time, he emits "a terrible shriek...The color of Antoinette was brown. The color of Belton was black. The child was white!"¹ What makes this scene confusing is that the child does not stay white. At the end of the novel, we learn that, as he aged, "the child continued to grow darker and darker until he was a shade darker than his father."² A turn to one of Griggs's pamphlets, *The Race Question in a New Light* (1909), helps clarify what he is trying to convey with the example of a black child born white and darkening over time. The pamphlet cites a theory about the origin of racial difference that speculates that all of humanity was initially white, and that darker complexions are adaptations to environment. Complexion, Griggs argues, is not fixed but rather mutable in response to the requirements for the survival of a people. Because dark complexions are a barrier to full social and political incorporation in the United States, racist exclusions, rather than maintaining the color line, actually put it at risk. He writes, "Treat the Negro kindly as a Negro; give him the common rights of a man and a citizen; allow him to hope for preferment and honor though his skin be black; discourage the enactment of such discriminating laws as are intended in the main to serve the purpose, merely, of implying a stigma on the account of color; do this and the normal tendency of species when unvexed to reproduce themselves in the habiliments of their ancestors...and all the latent,

unreasoned instincts will combine to retain the complexion which the race is wearing to-day.”³

While some may be tempted to see this reading of *Imperium in Imperio* and *The Race Question in a New Light* as an effort to use a later text to inform an interpretation of an earlier text, I am not suggesting that the pamphlets of Sutton E. Griggs explain his novels or that the latter explains the former.⁴ What I am suggesting is that Griggs scholars must take a holistic view of the author’s entire career; that Griggs studies are not about reading backward from one point or forward from another but rather about seeing his works as points along a trajectory irreducible to one genre, one moment, or one text. Pamphlets are crucial to that trajectory; so are novels; and so are book-length philosophical tracts, for Griggs is not just a novelist, a pamphleteer, or a political philosopher—he is all of these at once. The sum of his career is, in fact, greater than its individual parts. Pamphleteering is but a neglected aspect of his oeuvre to which Griggs scholars must give more attention, especially as the question of how we ought to read the turn-of-the-century African American author and philosopher becomes increasingly connected to how we might read the African American literary tradition writ large.

At a pivotal point in his career, Griggs began overt pamphleteering as he continued to imagine new, African American and Southern U.S. print and public spheres into being using the theoretical language of combination, co-operation, and racial struggle. In his autobiographical pamphlet, *The Story of My Struggles* (1914), he writes that his pamphleteering was a response to the sluggish sales of his books. He tells the pamphlet’s reader, “Unable to [no] longer issue books I began to publish small pamphlets which I took and peddled here and there.”⁵ One scholar contends that this is an indication

that Griggs believed African Americans were not ready to recognize the value of literature as a form of political action.⁶ However, this contention neglects to consider what he has to say in *The Story of My Struggles*. While the contention that Griggs was disappointed with the lack of support he received from the Southern black masses is valid, there are other reasons why he wrote and published pamphlets. First, he writes that the people to whom he “peddled” his pamphlets “came to [him] with their dimes, and [he] was thus able to at least hold his head above the threatening financial flood.”⁷ Thus, we are told how pamphleteering brought Griggs more financial success than writing novels did, and the stability he sought for his publishing company and the support he sought from his people were both gained as a result. Second, he writes, “Combining, revising and strengthening these pamphlets, I made up my seventh book, ‘Wisdom’s Call.’ The day I finished it, I stepped over to my wife...and said to her, ‘It now matters but little whether I live or die. I have lived to be able to state in a fundamental way the case of the Negro race.’”⁸ Pamphleteering also allowed Griggs further chances for the repetition, revision, and re-circulation of his ideas, chances that resulted in his first book-length philosophical tract, *Wisdom’s Call* (1911), the work he described in his autobiographical pamphlet as a fundamental statement of the Negro’s case for equality in America. Furthermore, Griggs’s pamphleteering gives us important insight into what I describe as the author’s “radical circulation” strategies.

I argue that Griggs, like a number of writers I have discussed in this dissertation, used a strategy of radical circulation to disseminate his work, develop the habit of reading among African Americans, and attempt to create a form of early twentieth-century national literacy among black readers. While he initially thought the novel might be the

best genre for achieving these goals, his fiction failed to motivate readers. Non-fiction pamphleteering became the centerpiece of this strategy, beginning with Griggs's dissertation on the race problem, "Dorlan's Plan," a pamphlet that is a crucial part of his third novel, *Unfettered* (1902). I refer to Griggs's methods as radical for a few reasons. The first is "of or pertaining to a root." The author's radical circulation targeted what he considered the roots of African America, what some of Griggs's contemporaries romanticized as the folk (a rural and urban working class that complemented a black intellectual class DuBois called "the talented tenth"). The second meaning of radical is "basis or foundation." Griggs circulated his pamphlets by going door-to-door in black neighborhoods and visiting "at dinner hours, [the] places where plain workmen toiled" as well as "schools where poor Negro boys and girls were struggling for an education."⁹ Radical circulation is especially appropriate as a description of the methods he used to get his pamphlets in the hands of readers. But he worked to get his novels and books into the hands of readers from among the folk, and often included ordering information for his various titles as para-textual pages in pamphlets and other works. His two publishing companies helped him implement his radical circulation strategy. But Griggs was equally interested in publishing and circulating the work of other black writers. The Orion Press was established "specifically to publish his fiction and the work of other aspiring black writers who wanted to avoid the editorial restrictions placed on Black writers by White presses."¹⁰ Griggs believed that by giving other black writers a similar creative and rhetorical freedom as he enjoyed, he might encourage a more robust African American literary culture to emerge in the areas served by his presses. However, "radical" may be used to describe more than just the material circulation of Griggs's work.

The political connotations of “radical” are also applicable to the work of Sutton E. Griggs for he consistently seeks to convey a vision of black American national life that advocates “thorough or far-reaching political and social reforms.”¹¹ Imagining new ways of seeing the world and the truth of racial being in American were a crucial part of his literary imagination; in fact, his literary imagination is just as philosophical, which is to say ontological and metaphysical, as it is traditionally literary. Reading the pamphlets and novels of Sutton Griggs together helps illuminate the theoretical aesthetic that informs all of his works, fiction and non-fiction.¹² As one critic points out in a reading of *The Hindered Hand* (1905), the novels of Sutton E. Griggs “attempt to reconstitute the many factions of American political and social life to provide African Americans with the means by which they might appeal to reason and principle in a nation that had largely abandoned both.”¹³ This process occurs not only in *The Hindered Hand*, but in each Griggs novel and pamphlet published before as well as afterward. Moreover, even Griggs uses the term “radical” to describe the kinds of changes he calls for, writing, “the fact that a radical change in spirit from what nature first bestows...should not of itself be a discouragement [from pursuing the goals of collective efficiency]” in a pamphlet titled *The Science of Collective Efficiency* (1921). Griggs’s aesthetic radicalism is akin to Walker’s in that it seeks to generate new ways of seeing the world by unveiling the false paradigms that readers use to view it. Thus, in the works of Sutton E. Griggs, we see a series of creative acts characterized by a mimesis of production, and not acts of realist imitation or reflection.¹⁴

In this chapter, I look at some of the post-*Imperium* novels and pamphlets of Sutton E. Griggs. Focusing on pamphlets appearing in or bound with novels as well as

the series of pamphlets as he transitioned from fiction to non-fiction, I argue that he was a turn-of-the-century pamphleteer, and, in doing so, articulate a perspective that has yet to be given full voice in Griggs studies. Scholars in this field have not done enough to read the author's non-fictional works in relation to early African American literary traditions. The majority of scholarship in Griggs studies focuses on the five novels he wrote in the span of a decade—1899 to 1909—and with good reason: there are few African American writers who matched Griggs's prolific production during this period (especially when considering he not only wrote five novels but five pamphlets, too).¹⁵ However, the pamphlets of Sutton E. Griggs are just as important as his novels to turn-of-the-century African American literature. They make crucial contributions to the racial uplift philosophies of his era, which, as DuBois famously wrote, was being defined by the color-line, or "the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea."¹⁶ Once we recognize the inseparability of Griggs's work with the pamphlet from his work with the novel, we are able to recognize him as a capstone figure for the African American literary tradition of pamphleteering for a long nineteenth century, 1773 to 1923.

Pamphlets, Representing Collective Efficiency

Unfettered, Griggs's third novel, and *The Hindered Hand*, his fourth (and the last work of fiction he would write for a predominantly black audience) each include a prose pamphlet bound together with a fictional narrative as crucial, formal components of the book, and both novels feature pamphlets as integral narrative presences that help resolve central conflicts. Griggs's turn to the pamphlet as a vehicle for increasingly clear and

determined professions of his social theories, as well as a means of resolving the major character oppositions in his novels, anticipates the author's eventual embrace of the genre as a mode of theoretical expression as he transitioned to writing book-length philosophical tracts. In some ways, we might understand pamphlets as symbols for collective efficiency in *Unfettered* and *The Hindered Hand*, for in each of these books they represent collective action and co-operative compromise by unifying primary characters that are initially opposed. We should also understand the pamphlet as a link between the two phases of Griggs's career in print—it is a genre that allows him to experiment and refine the presentation of the science of collective efficiency in prose.

Unfettered, the third iteration in fiction of Sutton E. Griggs's vision for black national organization and collective action does not just adapt the production and distribution methods of early-nineteenth-century black pamphleteers to early-twentieth-century print culture like his first two books. The novel actually returns to the very same genre—the pamphlet—that writers, intellectuals, and activists first used to convey uplift philosophies nearly one hundred years earlier. I contend that a major if not central purpose of *Unfettered* is the radical circulation of a pamphlet bound with the novel. Fully titled “Dorlan's Plan (Sequel to “Unfettered.”): A Dissertation on the Race Problem, by Sutton E. Griggs,” the pamphlet gives us important insight into the narrative architecture of this and other of his novels.¹⁷ On the one hand, “Dorlan's Plan” helps Griggs repeat the formal strategy he adopted for *Imperium in Imperio*: give the reader a manuscript to consider, a move that allows the author to represent his work as both fiction and something more than just an entertaining story—a challenge, a call, and a choice. On the other hand, it is integral to the clearest resolution the author had yet to give one of his

fictional narratives. Dorlan Warthell, the novel's main character, is asked to write a comprehensive study of and solution to the race problem in order to win Morlene Dalton's hand in marriage. The result of her challenge and Dorlan's efforts is "Dorlan's Plan." Conflated with Griggs's dissertation on the race problem, the "Plan" for racial greatness bound with *Unfettered* is delivered to readers in the guise of the main character's treatise and under the cover (quite literally) of popular fiction. At the same time, the book rather conspicuously points to Griggs as the real author of its most crucial text. An important step in the cultivation of his black uplift philosophy, Griggs's dissertation on the race problem is where readers may find the literal roots of the science of collective efficiency as an organized, programmatic theory of racial struggle.¹⁸

Writing a pamphlet allowed Griggs to do things that he could not quite do with fiction but that were still crucial to helping his novel achieve the success he hoped for and the recognition he craved. He does not at all reinvent his theories in "Dorlan's Plan"; instead, he repeats them in prose. For example, the combinations *Imperium in Imperio* presents as essential to a new era in black American life and that *The Guide to Racial Greatness* places at the center of its argument are evoked in the pamphlet's example of an "African genius" who developed "a device...whereby the several strengths of individuals could be conjoined and the sum of their strengths thus applied."¹⁹ This device is offered as an historical precedent for the "the scattered sons of [Africa]...[to understand] their first great need," an inherent racial obligation, "Co-operation."²⁰ The implication of this figure is that efficient African American cooperation is not a new stage in black civilization but rather a reiteration of great works in African kingdoms and empires of the past. There are echoes of the Afro-centric Masonic and Christian history John Marrant

told in *A Sermon Delivered to the African Lodge* (1789) in Griggs's historical vision of past African racial greatness rendered in "Dorlan's Plan." Writing that, "Our initial step must be the creation of a device [to harness] the several strengths of the millions of Negroes in the world," Griggs had already begun imagining such a device.²¹ This "device" is the science of collective efficiency and its division of racial labor according to individual talents and leadership capacities.

As a work that, in part, casts itself as having been "co-authored" by Griggs and his protagonist, "Dorlan's Plan" blurs the lines between fictional and actual authorship. Ultimately, though, the pamphlet does work to bring its readers' attention to Griggs as a political philosopher by unveiling him as a sort of ghostwriter—the real genius behind Dorlan's "Plan"—just as Dorlan is the behind-the-scenes-brain and speech writer for the white congressman, Hezekiah T. Bloodworth, in *Unfettered*. More than any other work to that point in his career, the novel's pamphlet points to its author's own works as important contributions to African American national life and the formation of a unified, efficient, black national community. "Dorlan's Plan" claims authority over the meaning of Griggs's work that neither *Imperium in Imperio* nor, to a lesser degree, *Overshadowed* did. However, even though he does claim determinative control over the meaning of his narrative in *Unfettered* by including an explanatory pamphlet with the novel, he remains reluctant to go too far without a supporting vote from the print public, which is, as his science of collective efficiency points out, crucial. Thus, with a gesture that repeats his earlier role in fulfilling Trout's "dying request by editing his Ms., and giving it to the public," he writes that it is "For the sake, therefore, of posterity we have concluded to place on record a copy of Dorlan's Plan."²² The literary co-operation he performs for the

reader in this quotation is something that he both craved for *Unfettered* and would later present as an important habit of readers among the great races of the world in *The Guide to Racial Greatness*. In *The Guide*, he would write, when “an exceptional character appears in the race, it is a racial duty to see to it that what he works out is scattered as an inheritance to all the people.”²³

“Dorlan’s Plan” is not only imagined, even if only temporarily, as a co-operative work, but is intended as a sequel to *Unfettered* that explains how, exactly, African Americans might unfetter themselves and achieve racial greatness. As, arguably, the most important part of the book, the pamphlet is integral to Griggs’s imagination of his third novel as “a supreme effort to decide that knotty problem” of who was in error: the author for believing his works were brilliant studies of the problems facing African American national development, or the black print public for not reading and accepting the ideas he presented. So he “put forth all there was in [him], so that there could be no shadow of doubt as to where the fault was,” he would tell readers of his autobiography.²⁴ Reflecting the stakes he set for his novel and his dissertation, the narrative’s conclusion may be an attempt by Griggs to work out his own frustrations with the unenthusiastic response his first two novels received. At the story’s end, Dorlan asks for Morlene Dalton’s hand in marriage, and she agrees on the condition that he write an essay that solves the race problem “once and for all” (a tall challenge indeed!). Anxiously waiting for Morlene’s response to his work, Dorlan says to himself, “I am impatient because that dear girl on whose heart the woes of the world rest has not hastened in deciding that I had harnessed the forces that will solve one of the most difficult problems that ever perplexed mankind.” Dorlan recognizes that it is unreasonable to expect a hasty answer to “a

question that demanded such earnest thought...He saw that the time allowed Morlene, in what he regarded as his saner moods, was thoroughly inadequate."²⁵ Perhaps having had a similar realization, Griggs writes a third novel to give African American readers another chance to realize the genius of his philosophy by putting it before them clearly and authoritatively.

Like Dorlan, he patiently offers his readers more time with his ideas in both narrative form but also (and for the first time) in the form of clear directions out of the racial quandaries his fiction illustrated for readers. Ever the idealist, Sutton Griggs hoped the "knotty problem" of co-operation and support from African American readers would be resolved just like his marriage plot, with everyone "happy that they are freed from the narrowing problems of race; happy that at last they, in common with the rest of mankind, may labor for the solution of those larger humanistic problems that have so long vexed the heart of the earth."²⁶ As was the case with *Imperium in Imperio*, the final verdict on the manuscript will depend on a cooperative relationship between reader and the writer, but unlike his first vision of collective efficiency, he is much clearer about the intentions for his third book in a "Foreward." "Be it remembered," he writes, "it often requires more courage to read some books than it does to fight a battle. Such may be the case with Dorlan's Plan, and all have fair warning."²⁷ This "fair warning" is a direct admonition to his audience to read, reflect, and act that is a significant revision to the previous two novels' deliberately indeterminate endings. With *Unfettered* and "Dorlan's Plan," if readers of popular African American fiction were unable to recognize the author's selfless work on the twentieth century's iteration of America's race problem, then it would not be because he did not show them where and how to look.

Unfortunately, *Unfettered* was not well received by African American readers, and his call for the creation of a “device whereby the several strengths of the millions of Negroes” might be harnessed went unheard, just as his challenges to organize and rise to action in his first and second novels went similarly unheeded. Convinced that his ideas were not the root of his inability to gain the support of African American readers and intellectual elites, Griggs “lifted the blame from [himself] and sorrowfully laid it at the door of [his] race.”²⁸ Fortunately, his creative energies were renewed when the National Baptist Convention (NBC) called on him with a promise of support and asked for a book that would contest the racist distortions of African American life and life in the American South in Thomas Dixon’s white supremacist novel, *The Leopard’s Spots*. Reflecting on the NBC’s choice to sponsor one of his novels, Griggs wrote in his autobiography that “a vast body of men...had voluntarily called upon me to be their spokesman”; he believed that the vision his novels strove to usher into reality had finally come true, admitting “it was this bright dream of co-operation that led me back to my desk as an author.”²⁹

Significantly, in *The Hindered Hand* Griggs has a pair of characters perform a similar act of literary co-operation that resolves the novel’s primary intra-racial political conflict. They make sure that a pamphlet, “To the People of the United States of America,” is printed and then circulated throughout the nation. Perhaps under the impression that his moment had finally arrived, Griggs adopts the aesthetic strategy he used in *Imperium in Imperio*, pitting philosophically opposed primary characters, one representing restraint and the other radicalism, against each other. But in a departure from the indeterminate resolution of the conflict between Belton and Bernard, the opposed character types present in *The Hindered Hand*, Ensal Ellwood and Earl Bluefield, do not

remain on either side of the novel's leadership dyad. Instead, their differences are reconciled and the apparent opposition between violent confrontation and intellectual contestation is collapsed into a collaborative act of print publication and circulation—the ideological distance between them is neutralized by a pamphlet. *The Guide to Racial Greatness* gives us a key to understanding why Griggs returned to the representation of conflicting visions for African American uplift strategies in what would be his last work of fiction intended primarily for Southern black folk. *The Guide* states, “the efficiency of a group depends in large measure upon its capability of maintaining a proper balance between conservatism and progressiveness.”³⁰ The right measures of conservatism and progressiveness, Griggs's body of work seems to suggest, will not come from a top down, authoritarian leadership but rather from the efficient co-operation of the folk in selecting the right cadre of leaders. Ultimately, *The Hindered Hand* shows readers the way to achieve such balance rather than, as he had in his first try at fiction writing, ambiguously suggesting that balance ought to be found.

As was the case in *Unfettered*, the solution to the race problem is a pamphlet. White Americans, the novel suggests, are best confronted with printed discourse, and the ideal field on which to contest white supremacy is that of discourse—a suggestion that would not at all have been new in the context of African American literature and print culture. Literary critic John Ernest has pointed out that Ensal's reliance on the power of the “published word and the reasoned appeal to logic and principle to overturn the judgment of public opinion and, by that means, redirect the underlying logic that governed the cultural system” is a tradition in black American writing that extends all the way back to Boston's black petitioners for freedom of 1773, pamphleteers like John

Marrant, Prince Hall, and David Walker, as well as novelists like William Wells Brown.³¹ However, Ernest attributes “To the People of the United States” to Ensal alone. Even though he does conceive of and write the pamphlet, he leaves for Africa without publishing it; printing and circulating the pamphlet is left to the cooperative efforts of Earl and Tiara, Ensal’s love interest. Tiara’s role in resolving the *Hindered Hand*’s primary character binary is particularly important, for she decides that “her mission” shall be “placing...a copy [of the pamphlet]...in every American home,” thus fulfilling Ensal’s strategic vision as well as echoing the radical circulation methods Griggs adopted for *Imperium in Imperio* and “Dorlan’s Plan.”³² Thus, pamphleteering in the novel is a “joint task” that suggests national literatures are “national” as a result of authorial efforts and the eager support of readers. Earl and Tiara demonstrate the importance of a “ready tendency to second” an instinctive, cooperative “[entrance] into the labors of others” that the *Guide to Racial Greatness* argues is necessary for efficient groups and that Griggs had long hoped for from the African American reading public.³³ Once again, as was the case with “Dorlan’s Plan,” a pamphlet is presented as a symbol for collective efficiency and the complementary role readers had to play in the author’s vision for African American national literature.

“To the People of the United States of America” is introduced in a chapter titled “The Two Pathways.” In this chapter, Ensal and Earl argue over the best strategy for confronting white supremacy. Earl’s plan is not too different from Bernard’s. Earl has decided to take the state capital with a force of five hundred men and put the city at his mercy while another element of his black militia occupies the federal building in order to make the local takeover a national issue. Convinced that physical self-sacrifice will “open

the eyes of the American people to the gravity of this question and they will act,” Earl tells Ensal that all of the men he has chosen are resolved “to not come out of the affair alive” and will die by their own hands if necessary.³⁴ In a recognition of the very real potential for violent resistance by African Americans in response to deteriorations in the rights and privileges of US citizenship earned during Reconstruction, Earl directly states, “It is within the power of the Negro race to bring about intervention at any time it is willing to pay the price,” especially at a time when “the laboring Negro sees a sign of a return to the conditions of slavery.”³⁵

Earl’s point about Jim Crow law, and the metamorphosis of white supremacy and black subordination after the abolition of slavery, helps us understand how Griggs saw the cultural moment and believed literary action was so crucial at a time when the social and political system developed under slavery returned with a new name, Jim Crow.³⁶ Furthermore, as any student of nineteenth-century African American literature knows, African American writers were just as concerned with the impact of white supremacy on American culture as they were with the abolition of slavery. In fact, Earl’s comparison of freedom under Jim Crow to slavery is not too distant from Martin R. Delany’s suggestion in *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (1852) that the free black Northerner is perilously close to enslavement under the legal order established by the Fugitive Slave Act, which was part of the Compromise of 1850.

Earl offers an argument that African American intellectuals had been making for decades: white supremacy can be counted on to adapt to any context, and is not necessarily dependent on slavery to exist, nor are the racial strictures of the slave system

contingent on the presence of slavery. Because white supremacy was such a flexible political and social system, African American intellectuals and activists needed a similarly flexible means of confronting and contesting it. Thus, we should remain mindful of literary critic Gene Jarrett's point that "African American writers across a *longue durée* persisted, through success and failure, in making an artistic and political impact on social attitudes and practices precisely because they recognized that Jim Crow, narrowly or broadly defined, was not the only kind of racism that afflicted the world."³⁷ Ultimately, my point here about Griggs, developed by a close reading of Earl's statement that "the ranks of the plain people" are "ripe for action" in the face of virtual enslavement by another name, is that Griggs recognized the place of his literary work in a long historical struggle. This struggle was against an elusive and often changing opponent, white supremacy and racist culture, as a successor to the cultural work of writers like the Sons of Africa, John Marrant, Prince Hall, David Walker, and William Wells Brown (among others from the first half of a long nineteenth century).

Once Earl has finished making his case for violent confrontation and relating the details of, and rationales for, his plot, Griggs shows us the second pathway: a pamphlet written by Ensal, who foresaw that Earl would demand he join his scheme. Ensal recognizes the readiness of the folk for action, and Earl's desire to give them an outlet, responding, "I understand you, Earl. I must offset your proposition with a better one...Going to his desk he procured a rather bulky document...[a] manuscript...[into which] he had cast all his soul...[and on which] he was relying for the amelioration of conditions to such an extent that his race might be saved from being goaded on to an unequal and disastrous conflict" (this description of "To the People of the United States

of America” is remarkably similar to Griggs’s description of *Unfettered*).³⁸ “Let us print millions of this address and see to it that a copy thereof gets into every American home,” Ensal says after reading the manuscript out loud, giving voice to a radical circulation method not unlike the one the novel’s author followed for *Imperium in Imperio* and “Dorlan’s Plan.”³⁹ Ensal recognizes that African Americans are engaged in a “literary battle” for which Southern whites, “extensive purchasers of books” and “with the natural bias of great publishing agencies on their side,” are better equipped.⁴⁰ His perspective is that a national literature and print culture are more important than crates of rifles and boxes of ammunition “now that repressionists were invading the realm of literature to ply their trade...[and] the Negro was to be attacked in the quiet of the AMERICAN HOME,” contending that printed intercessions in national discourse is a “species of warfare.”⁴¹

Ensal’s words anticipate the speech Griggs gave in 1912 where he refers to the social and political ills fought by early African American intellectuals and activists as having returned in a new guise. Of course, Ensal’s defense of literary production as a form of political action in the ideological battle against white supremacy also reflects the opening theme of the 1847 National Convention of Colored People’s proceedings (published in pamphlet form) and the “Report of the Committee on a National Press.” The Committee characterizes the publication and circulation of printed discourse as an instrument in the “struggle against opinions” or “warfare...in the field of thought.” If we think of Ensal’s perspective on print culture as a figuration of Griggs’s belief in print and print discourse as forms of political action, and literary production, then the “Report of the Committee of a National Press” may be read as an antecedent to “To the People of the United States of America.” The similarities between the two pamphlets make it difficult

to fully embrace novels like *The Hindered Hand* (but also *Imperium in Imperio* and *Unfettered*) as representative of a new, distinct, and unique era in black American writing, which is how Kenneth Warren presents the author's work in *What Was African American Literature?*.⁴² Instead, these novels ought to be recognized as participants in a continuous, flexible, and adaptive tradition that spans the long African American nineteenth century.

At the turn of the century, Griggs was enthusiastic about the collectivizing potentiality of print and print culture. Writing, reading, and circulating printed discourse constituted the linchpin of black national greatness for Griggs in the 1900s. He stipulated that “when the time comes that the Negroes are capable of being moved to action on a large scale by what they read, a marked change in the condition of the race will begin instantly and will be marvelous in its proportions.”⁴³ He celebrated the newspaper as a co-operative force in African America, “a social institution...[that] exists as a result of the co-operation of the publisher and reader...[and] serves the interests of the public” in *The Science of Collective Efficiency*.⁴⁴ He believed that the greatest racial endeavors were to be carried out in literature. For example, consider these lines from “Dorlan’s Plan” on the crucial role of African American literature in the fight for racial equality: “the poem, the novel, and the drama must be pressed into [racial] service...[to] plead our cause in the world of aesthetics.”⁴⁵ Rhetorical intercessions in the public sphere were crucial for Griggs, but so were aesthetic intercessions, and so he worked with a variety of print media: newspaper, novels, pamphlets, and book-length philosophical tracts. He hoped his novels and pamphlets would not only be read but also inspire in particular what Walker

called a “spirit of inquiry and investigation” regarding the problem of the twentieth century—the color line.

Developing the habit of reading was a core part of Griggs’s vision for black uplift. His prolific rate of publication can, in part, be explained as an effort to develop such a habit among the Southern black masses. A section of “Dorlan’s Plan,” titled “Of Making Many Books There is No End,” helps show how he was dedicated to developing a black nation within the nation by broadening black literacy and black readership. In this section, he begins by writing, “Books are the means by which each successive generation comes into possession of the best...that was wrought during all preceding generations of human endeavor. Not only does the art of printing thus connect with all that was good in the past, but it also affords a man the opportunity of becoming a part of all that is being done in his day.”⁴⁶ He continues, “it is evident that a race that does not read must ever be a laggard race. Our racial organization must, therefore, found libraries throughout the regions in which Negroes dwell.”⁴⁷ However, founding libraries is not an end goal. It is the first step in creating “a thirst for reading so that [his people] may have ears to hear what the past and present are thundering at us.”⁴⁸ These lines show that Griggs was not just interested in writing books that speak for and to African Americans. He was also interested in developing a culture of literacy, or a “thirst for reading,” among African Americans. Thus, at the center of his black nationalism is a repetition of David Walker’s black *literacy* nationalism, and as was the case for Walker, circulation was integral to fostering a black nationalism as such in various ways.⁴⁹ Literary publication by African American authors, Griggs believed, would not just regenerate black racial greatness but

prevent American culture in general from the degenerative influences of systemic white supremacy.

Pamphlets, Degeneration, and Literature

“Dorlan’s Plan: A Dissertation on the Race Problem by Sutton E. Griggs” is a theoretical pamphlet included with *Unfettered*, Griggs’s third novel, that continues his 1899 experiments in *Imperium in Imperio* with sociological theory. The emphasis in the pamphlet placed on black collectivity and communal actions in service of a black national struggle for survival is clearest in a section titled “Clasping Hands.” We can imagine this section as an early rendition of collective efficiency. “Clasping Hands” follows a description of the ancient African device indicating a lost history of co-operative black genius discussed above. After citing some of Charles Darwin’s observations that “communities (of animals)...[including] the greatest number of most sympathetic animals...flourish best,” he asserts that “ascending from the lower animals, we find that co-operation is equally...valuable and necessary for man.” In this line, Griggs makes the same jump from biological competitions for survival to social competitions for survival common to social theories of his time. He connects his assertion with another citation from a “recent writer” in the social sciences who has suggested that the differences between the “‘higher’ and the ‘lower’ races...[are marked by varying habits] of cooperation...[and] In whatever direction we turn we find evidence of the universality of this law.”⁵⁰ This passage anticipates a similar reference to cooperation, the laws of nature, and “racial success” in *The Guide to Racial Greatness*: “Let it be remembered that racial success is under a law like everything else in this universe of law,

and whenever and wherever it is not on hand it is absent because some portion of the law governing the matter has not been complied with.”⁵¹ If African Americans had failed to rise following emancipation, then it was not as a result of inherent racial characteristics, according to Griggs. Rather, it was because African Americans remained disunited post-emancipation. Freedom, it seems, was not enough for Griggs; for him, natural law stipulated that combination and cooperation were the keys to African American greatness. Freedom was but a first step.

Griggs continues his intercession in contemporary social theory by citing Herbert Spencer, whose work was mentioned in the previous chapter. Engaging theorists like Spencer to form an anti-racist sociology was important because Jim Crow might not have been so quickly entrenched by 1910 without “scientific” support. Such support could be found in the many books asserting final say on racial matters near the beginning of the century; such books were clothed in the language of scientific certainty to establish white supremacy and black subordination as an epistemological truth.⁵² Spencer’s work may have had segregationist leanings, but Griggs nonetheless cites him in “Dorlan’s Plan.” The references to Spencer’s work in “Dorlan’s Plan” help show how Griggs appropriates concepts of descent and inherited characteristics to frame a vision for black uplift, thus amending the discourse of sociology from support for segregation in order to support integration. For example, he offers the following passage from Spencer before musing on the notion of inherited traits, “Mr. Herbert Spencer says: ‘It has come to be a maxim of science that in the causes still at work, are to be identified the causes which, similarly at work during past times, have produced the state of things now existing.’” Of course, Spencer also believed that blacks and whites constituted different kinds of social

organisms, and that a “hybrid society” of blacks and whites without some degree of supremacy and subordination between the two was “imperfectly organizable...[and] cannot grow into a...completely stable[form.]”⁵³ He warned of “interbreeding...those which are widely unlike,” and cites “the half-breeds of America” as evidence to support his warning.⁵⁴ His advice to those interested in a stable society was “strongly conservative in all directions...*keep other races at arm’s length as much as possible.*”⁵⁵

The next sentence after Griggs’s invocation of Spencer shows how Griggs might have used Spencer’s approach to American social theory, but he also adjusted his approach to fit an African American perception of social ills and cures. Griggs follows his citation of Spencer by explaining how white supremacy is a degenerative influence on all Americans, white and non-white. He writes that America has produced “the state of things now existing”—African American subordination; lack of education; lack of political organization in the South—and how this state of things requires a broad, national plan for black uplift. However, he pushes his plan for black national uplift even further by connecting black uplift with white uplift. He writes, “To prevent uprisings on the part of the slaves repressive measures were instituted, and the Southern white man became an adept in the art of controlling others, and his nature became inured to the task...[such that] notions of inherent superiority and the belief in the right of repression became ingrained in Southern character.” After another reference to Spencer’s ideas of derived character, Griggs asserts, “it becomes evident that the repression which the Negro encounters today is but the offspring”—or the repetition—“of his repression yesterday.”⁵⁶

Where theorists like Spencer were concerned about the degenerative influences of racial mixture, Griggs was concerned about the degenerative effects of white supremacy and black subordination. Degeneration theories were prevalent in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century social thought, and degeneration has been positioned by some historians as a force that complemented ideas of progress in early twentieth-century public discourse.⁵⁷ For example, William Graham Sumner, who was also discussed in the previous chapter, was critical of those who believed the non-white, lower races could be civilized through integration into white societies, and contended that Western societies were “more likely to degenerate to the point where they disappear,” and, for him, “the choice [was] liberty, inequality, survival of the fittest—or degeneracy.”⁵⁸ However, Griggs takes a different approach to cultural degeneration. Griggs inverts racist formulae for cultural degeneration by arguing that the kinds of segregation marking racist culture will lead to decay and that the only way to preserve American greatness is through interracial unity. He extends these ideas into the sphere of cultural production, specifically the production of literature as a potentially generative as well as degenerative social act. According to Griggs, African American writers had a crucial role to play in preventing the degeneration of American literary culture, and, from there, the degeneration of American culture in general. For example, “A Hindering Hand,” a pamphlet Griggs wrote and eventually included with the third edition of *The Hindering Hand*, argues that a nation is represented for better and for the worse by its literature, and white supremacist art, characterized for Griggs by the work of Southern novelist Thomas Dixon, Jr., is a sign of American civilization’s intellectual and aesthetic degeneration. The pamphlet thus shows how Griggs had begun to apply Progressive Era social theories

to the production and consumption of popular fiction. If art could signify the ascent of a civilization, as he hoped African American art would, then it could also mark a civilization's decline, as he suggests Dixon's may.

Griggs deploys the discourses of cultural degeneration as a way of framing the threat to American civilization posed by Dixon's work. Griggs writes that Dixon's racist novel *The Leopard's Spots* (1902) "was exciting a great deal of attention and was thought to be arousing much feeling against the Negro race," which inspired Griggs "to plead the cause of [black] people on a larger scale than ever" in response.⁵⁹ Rather than combination, he tells the reader, Dixon's intent was to make the separation of blacks from whites sensible and just by framing a fictional world in which the survival of the U.S. nation was contingent on white supremacy and black subordination in any and all cultural and political spheres. If Griggs used characters as types in his allegories of racial uplift, then Dixon worked in a decidedly opposite direction, and "explained [his] characters on the basis of racist theory."⁶⁰ Griggs refers to Dixon's "literary demagoguery" as "exotic" even in the context of classic American racism.⁶¹ He characterizes *The Leopard's Spots* as "a pioneering" work of white supremacist art, especially "in the matter of seeking to attain [the separation of the races] by an attempt to thoroughly discredit the Negroes," informing its reader that the intent of Dixon's fiction "to cut the cords of sympathy and re-establish the old order of repulsion, based upon the primitive feeling of race hatred is the first item in Mr. Dixon's programme."⁶²

Note how Griggs uses the word "primitive" to describe race hatred; in doing so, he inverts white supremacist pseudo-science that saw "the Negro" as an atavistic type representative of a more primitive human condition and a threat to the inexorable

progress of Anglo-Saxon civilization. Once again, we see how he turns racialized and racist discourse toward studies of white character. Re-circulating and revising the terms and subjects of racial science, the essay assaults Dixon's white nationalist art for "adopting...a course so patently barbaric [that it] stamps Mr. Dixon as a spiritual reversion to type, violently out of accord with the best tendencies of his times."⁶³ The white supremacist, Griggs contends, is a spiritual degenerate and the greatest threat to the survival and progress of American civilization. He then positions African American literary production as essential to righting the U.S. national course. Griggs imagined African American literature as one way to "write something upon the soul of the white man," to contest attempts to distort black character and American history by writers like Dixon, and to contribute to a "composite Americanism," which is an Americanism informed and undergirded by interracial cooperation and combination.⁶⁴ The real problem facing America is not the presence of the Negro but rather "That the contribution of the Negro to the coming composite Americanism may be of the highest quality."⁶⁵

Composite Culture, the Negro Problem: Needs of the South, and The Race Question in a New Light

The value of a composite culture as opposed to a segregated culture is what Griggs works to reinforce in two pamphlets published in 1909: *Needs of the South* and *The Race Question in a New Light*. These pamphlets approach the Negro Problem as a question that was less about the Negro in particular and more about U.S. culture in general. The "problem," as it were, was not the Negro but systemic white supremacy. The two 1909 pamphlets deploy the same kind of socio-scientific discourse that marks

“Dorlan’s Plan,” but, rather than focus exclusively on what African Americans must do to rise, they also attend to what is required of white Southern leadership in order to stave off the degeneration of Southern society. In these pamphlets, Griggs highlights how white supremacy does not establish a fair arena of competition between blacks and whites but rather works to allow the lowest elements of Southern society to assume positions of undue power and influence. The result is a declining Southern political leadership, and the erosion of civilized traditions as well as the formal rule of law.

In a return to the Darwinian discourse of “Dorlan’s Plan” and “The Hindering Hand,” *Needs of the South* opens with the following line: “The scientists tell us that throughout the realm of nature there has been one long, continuous struggle for existence, that in this struggle the weak have gone to the wall, leaving the earth to those who proved to be fittest to meet the conditions that arose in the struggling.”⁶⁶ In the United States, he argues, “class distinctions here have been abolished and the republic has been operated as a mammoth field whereon each individual has been made to battle against all comers”; in America, individuals are expected to compete against each other “unfettered”—the title of Griggs’s third novel.⁶⁷ However, the American South lacks the conditions necessary to insure the fittest leaders represent the region’s states, for many individuals are fettered in the South by the white primary and the exclusion of blacks from the electoral process, thus “the South is not sending into its public life the strong characters that it should...[because the region] lacks those healthy strenuous political battles that try men’s souls.”⁶⁸ If struggle is what conditions individuals and societies for greatness, as turn-of-the-century social theorists—including Griggs—tended to agree, then the mores of the

South—mores defended by William Graham Sumner in *Folkways* (1906)—do not preserve society from degeneration but rather work to the contrary by insuring its decline.

After referring to the struggle for existence, and the benefits of healthy and strenuous political battles to the body politic, the pamphlet then launches into its main argument: the South must foster a political and social climate of equal competition; equal competition will insure strenuous struggles that condition citizens and statesmen for excellence; segregation, a racist legal system, and the license given to the mob impede fair and honest struggle, and thus allow the weakest members of Southern society to assume positions of power. The sum of Griggs's argument is that Southern social degeneration is being furthered not by racial mixture but rather by racist culture. If the South is unable to address racism and white supremacy, it risks an inevitable cultural decline and a loss of place in the U.S. nation and in the world. The solution, Griggs argues, lies not in "bending [the] energies [of Southern politics] toward the task of eliminating the Negro by the sacrifice of its own political well being...[instead,] the white South should turn its attention toward the healthy incorporation of the Negro into the political life of the South."⁶⁹

Griggs ties the lack of real political competition and the degeneration of Southern political culture, and therefore Southern political leadership, to the inability of Southerners to capture the "national power": the presidency. In a gesture toward such degeneration, he writes, "Washington, Jefferson, Marshall, Jackson and Calhoun are all products of the South, but they are of the past. The present South of today has need of the quickening touch of men of to-day who are given the national power."⁷⁰ Note the use of the term "quickenning" to describe the needs of the South—the word is a reference to a

deadened, dissipated political culture in need of rejuvenation or regeneration. The Negro is again pointed to as a factor in stopping the gradual degeneration of Southern political culture, and, once again, segregation and the limits on black participation in Southern political life are identified as major causes of this degeneration. “The Negro is a factor in the situation,” Griggs writes, “Dissatisfied with some conditions in the South the Negroes have gone in large numbers into [states outside the South] that were at one time certain to cast their votes with the South,” and thus leading to an influx of voters swaying such states against Southern politicians vying for the national power.⁷¹ He concludes, “It would be a profitable investment for the South to study the exodus and remove every just cause of complaint.”⁷² The causes of complaint among Southern blacks include poor educational opportunities, unequal dispensations of justice by Southern courts, deliberate laws aimed at discouraging black voters, and segregated (and less than equal) systems of public transportation. But among the reasons of black migration northward, he points to the constant fear of extra-judicial mob violence as a reason for black migration.

Needs of the South argues that one of the most important steps necessary for the salvation of Southern civilization is “The Complete Dethronement of the Mob” (the title of the third and final section of the pamphlet). Griggs shows that the mob is a threat to the rule of law in Southern society, which would turn contemporary, white understandings of the mob as a bulwark against black lawlessness in the South. However, rather than draw attention to the violence of the mob against blacks, which is an argument that might not have convinced his white reader, he highlights the mob’s cultivation of a general sense of lawlessness in the South by showing how its violence is visited on whites as well as on blacks. Griggs shows how the mob does not protect and enforce

formal and informal racial laws but rather works to the contrary with two examples. The first is the lynching of Capt. Quentin Franklin of Tennessee, who was found “dangling from the end of a rope after the order of an humble negro” one morning.⁷³ This incident is offered as an example of the Southern “principle of adjusting grievances or fancied grievances by the methods of the midnight bands” established by the mob’s systematic terrorism of black people in the form of lynching.⁷⁴ Griggs uses an ironic tone here when referring to Southern “principle,” for Southern principle for resolving differences had historically been the more “gentlemanly” (to use the term loosely) tradition of face-to-face dueling or legal arbitration. The pamphlet tells its reader, “those who think that hiding behind logs, dodging bullets, fleeing through the forests, wading through bogs and swamps, suffering the pangs of hunger and thirst, [and] dreading the sight of man...[are] confined to the friendless Negroes” ought to ask “Colonel Tayler, who [unlike Capt. Quentin Franklin,] made his escape from the banks of the Reelfoot” and thus from a murderous mob.⁷⁵ Using examples of prominent, white members of Southern communities helps Griggs to show how the mob threatens established social orders and, if left unchecked, could upend traditional political structures in the South. For Griggs, protecting Southern traditions thus depended not on enforcing the color line but rather on enforcing the law through traditional, judicial means.

The Race Question in a New Light also challenges conventional interpretations of the Negro Problem. The Negro Problem, sometimes referred to as the Negro Question, is a turn-of-the-century return to the question Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia* theoretically asks should Virginia pass a law abolishing slavery: “What further is to be done with them?”⁷⁶ At the turn of the century, the answer to the question of what to do

with African Americans—after the abolition of slavery eliminated one framework for white domination and black subjugation—was to erect a new frame that maintained social and political white supremacy by racial distinction with a series of laws requiring the separation of blacks from whites in practically all areas of public life. One facet of the Negro Problem was the question of how to prevent racial mixture, which late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century pro-slavery white leaders had argued would be the inevitable result of abolition. *The Race Question in a New Light* is concerned with the question of how to maintain racial distinctions, but does so in a manner much unlike conventional (i.e., white) solutions to the so-called problem of racial mixture. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, Griggs’s pamphlet contends that racist policies do more to threaten the most apparent signifier of African blood: a black complexion.

To recap, Griggs references an idea floated by a Prof. Thos. H. Huxley that all humans were once white, and black complexions developed as a natural adaptation to the conditions of life in Africa. The question Griggs posits is whether nature could return blacks to a white complexion; deciding in the affirmative, he then asks whether nature will do so—the answer to that question, he claims, is up to Southern whites, “for they in so large a measure make and constitute the environment of the Negro.”⁷⁷ Since, he contends, a white complexion is a necessary adaptation for survival in the South, racist policies risk achieving the opposite of their intent—an elimination of racial distinction. Concluding his meditation on complexion as an adaptation to the conditions of survival, he warns, “In the event that the Southerner, who would keep the Negro black by slamming the door of hope in his face and keeping the coals of fire upon his head, wakes up to find that [the physical characteristics denoting racial distinction are gone,] let him

not be amazed at what he had unwittingly done, for it would not be the first time in history that men have accomplished the direct opposite of what they planned.”⁷⁸

The first section of *The Race Question in a New Light*, which is summarized above, is a revisionary synthesis of the discourses of natural adaptation and social survival that marked Darwinian evolutionary biology and turn-of-the-century American sociological theory. In the second section of the pamphlet, Griggs returns to a matter that was central to his other 1909 pamphlet, *Needs of the South: Southern leadership*. The section is titled “Southern Statesmanship and the Negro Woman”; it begins by asserting that “the paramount task which Southern statesmanship has set for itself is...preventing the blending of the white and colored races in the Southland...in this work...the white people of the South have need of the co-operation of the Negro woman.”⁷⁹ In a recapitulation of the themes that open William Wells Brown’s 1853 version of *Clotel*, Griggs writes, “That there is a marked tendency on the part of numbers of white men to invade the Negro race and establish in that race what practically amounts to marital relations is well attested”—by “practically...marital relations” here Griggs means sexual relations. “The aid of the colored woman in the work of repelling this invasion is of utmost importance,” he continues.⁸⁰ However, Southern leaders do little to aid Negro women in repelling the sexual predations of white men. Instead, any black male who wished to protect his mother, sister, daughter, or wife from white males is killed by the sexual predator or, as a consequence of killing the predator and protecting a woman’s honor, sent to prison and more than likely lynched by whites and thus murdered in an act of extra-judicial ritual torture.

The Race Question in a New Light continues to point out the degenerative influence of white supremacist rule on Southern culture. Griggs returns to the threat posed by the mob in his second pamphlet of 1909 to show how the mob has seized the kind of power otherwise held by the state. In another example of weakened Southern statesmanship, he points to an instance when a group of black men learned of plans to lynch a black boy who had severely injured a white man who attempted to rape his sister. These men went to the Governor “to save the man’s life, but to no avail. The mob came on scheduled time as forecasted by the sheriff and the lad was duly lynched.”⁸¹ Lynched for protecting his sister from sexual violence, the boy, Griggs ironically notes, was killed “in the heart of modern chivalry, the South,” for the crime of defending himself “from one whom [the boy] had asked to desist from sinister designs on the family honor.”⁸² The mob, as Griggs had told the reader of *Needs of the South* with the example of Capt. Quentin Franklin, exacts a dishonorable form of vigilante punishment for an act that a chivalrous society—one valuing honor and the protection of family, especially mothers, daughters, and sisters—ought to celebrate. Instead, the pamphlet shows the reader how white supremacy leads to the erosion of tradition and honor instead of protecting them. Returning to the theme that opened the pamphlet, he warns the reader of the possibility that mob rule could blur the color line. Griggs writes, “If in the days to come the Negro race is finally made white...[such] that you cannot distinguish the two races apart, let the white South give the mob due credit” for cowing the courage of those who might have otherwise acted “when the family honor is at stake.”⁸³

Segregationists maintained racial mixture would be the disastrous result of a society without legal and social barriers between whites and blacks, and the mob

patrolled the color line. Griggs turns this argument on its head, stressing that racial mixture is largely the result of white sexual predators—a practice protected by the existence of mob rule in the South. Southern white leaders often justified Jim Crow segregation by pointing to the threat black males posed to the physical (i.e., sexual) safety of white women. Such leaders maintained that the color line was constantly threatened by racial mixture consequent to the rape of white women by black men. *The Race Question in a New Light* contends that the real threat to the color line comes not from black men assaulting white women but rather from white men sexually exploiting black women. This contention is a repetition of the opening passages of William Wells Brown’s novel, *Clotel; Or, The Colored Heroine*, which point to the practice of young white men taking black women as concubines, fathering mixed-race children, and thus bringing about the very racial amalgamation proponents of slavery feared as a result of emancipation.

The following passage from *The Race Question in a New Light* is worth quoting at length, as it summarizes the argument made in the section titled “Southern Statesmanship and the Negro Woman.”

Here are a group of facts as plain as the noon-day sun:

The white people of the South do not favor the
incorporation of African blood into their life.

If the African blood loses its distinguishing complexion the
task of preventing a mingling of the races is well nigh hopeless.

The white man who invaded the Negro race for the purpose
of propagating his kind is contributing toward the whitening of the
Negro race.

The shadow of the mob protects the white invader,
shielding him from what ought to be said to him.

The mob therefore unwittingly is contributing toward
breaking down the wall of color between the two races.

If the Southern statesman is to act in keeping with his
assertion that whatever tends towards the final blending of the two
races must give way, it is difficult to see how he can spare the life
of the mob, one of the greatest forces at work to whiten the Negro
race.⁸⁴

In the passage above, we can see how Griggs, like Brown before him, points to white depravity as the threat to racial purity rather than black depravity, a notion that had been at the center of racist thought for at least a century. Furthermore, he connects the sanctity of the color line to the freedom of black men—husbands, fathers, and brothers—to protect the virtue of their mothers, wives, and daughters. If the mob is free to punish blacks for any assertion of their right to defend their families from white predators, then whites have free license to work in contradiction to the very policies that Southern leaders presume will maintain the color line. The unlimited power of the white mob to protect the white rapist is a greater cause of racial mixture in the segregated South for Griggs, just as slavery and the unlimited power of the master over black women was more a cause of amalgamation than emancipation in Brown's novel.

Griggs's Pamphlets After 1910

Griggs wrote the two pamphlets discussed above, *Needs of the South* and *The Race Question in a New Light*, in the year after he published his final novel, *Pointing the Way* (1908). Because these two pamphlets take up many of the same themes as Griggs's final novel, we might read them as complementary narratives to *Pointing the Way*. The 1909 pamphlets perform the same function as the character of Uncle Jack in the 1908 novel by delivering a black perspective on Southern society and the changes that must be made to preserve the region's eroding political culture and general integrity. Griggs first book-length publication after his career as a novelist ended was *Wisdom's Call*, the collection of his post-*Hindered Hand* pamphlets. As was the case with his pamphlets, Griggs did not exactly come up with wholly new material for his first non-fiction book. He simply changed genres. Over the first decade of Griggs's career, 1899 to 1909, we see a consistent exchange between his pamphlets and novels. This exchange articulates a long narrative of black nationalism, black uplift, and collective efficiency.

Griggs returned to the pamphlet at crucial moments in his middle and late career in print. The first was when he published his autobiography, *The Story of My Struggles*, as part of an appeal for broader support from African American readers. I have referred to this text numerous times throughout this dissertation. Now, at the conclusion to this final chapter, I want to focus on another moment when Griggs turned to pamphleteering as he formulated his vision for racial greatness: the publication of *The Science of Collective Efficiency* in 1921. *The Science of Collective Efficiency*, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is Griggs's first attempt at writing down his ideas in the form of a science. Finnie Coleman describes *The Science of Collective Efficiency* as a "more concise...[summarization] of more than twenty years of thinking about the causes and

cures for the so-called Negro Problem and...the first mature version of Griggs's most important contribution to racial uplift doctrine."⁸⁵ However, the concise pamphlet may also be thought of as a draft publication of a book Griggs had been preparing to write for his entire career in print. *The Science of Collective Efficiency* warns readers, "Develop collective efficiency, or suffer disgrace and ultimately perish." This warning might be read as a push for readers to appreciate not only the pamphlet, but the book that would follow as well. If we think of *The Science of Collective Efficiency* as a work that circulates Griggs's new science before finally presenting it in a more finished form, then it is possible to see *The Guide to Racial Greatness* as a sort of capstone work in the history of African American pamphleteering in the long nineteenth century. The science of collective efficiency wraps many of the preceding century's social and political uplift philosophies in the discourses of modern, secular progressivism, but also anticipates the broad embrace of Marxism by early twentieth-century African American intellectuals and artists after the 1920s. As a transitional figure at the end of a long nineteenth-century in African American print culture, Griggs was, paradoxically, both ahead of and behind his times.

If we look at the two-step publication of *The Science of Collective Efficiency* and *The Guide to Racial Greatness* as a final act in the nineteenth-century African American literary tradition of pamphleteering, then we may trace the influence of pamphleteering through a broad stretch of African American literary history from 1773 to 1923. Perhaps the pamphlet was positively received, and Griggs was convinced that publishing another book would not lead to dire financial straits at The National Public Welfare League. The success of the pamphlet and book would have been important to Griggs's work toward

building a public institution in the mold of collective efficiency. These efforts occupied much of his remaining life. However, along the way he published a short work, seventy-seven pages, titled *The Triumph of Simple Virtues, or The Life Story of John L. Webb* (1926). The length of this text, as well as its publisher, the Messenger Publishing Company of Hot Springs, Arkansas, would suggest that it was published as a pamphlet. Griggs turned to the pamphlet once more as he moved to the final phase of his career as an African American political and community organizer.

The Triumph of the Simple Virtues is a biography of John L. Webb (1877-1946), who was Supreme Custodian of the Supreme Lodge of the Woodmen of the Union, an African American fraternal organization established in 1903. Founded in Mississippi, the organization built a headquarters in Hot Springs. The building included luxury hotel accommodations, a bathhouse fed by local hot springs, a bank, and a printing company. The structure of the Woodmen of the Union Building reflected the brotherhood's status as a mutual aid organization serving African Americans in the South. The building and the mission of the Woodmen of the Union were similar to the design and intent of Griggs's academy for collective efficiency. Perhaps Griggs agreed to write a biography of John L. Webb as a means of promoting African American involvement in mutual aid organizations, such as the Woodmen, as well as the organization he was trying to build. Perhaps Webb and the Woodmen wanted to broaden membership in their organization and saw a pamphlet as the most effective means of circulating their message in the form of a story about the organization's founder. What is beyond speculation is that the pamphlet remained an important genre of print publication and for circulating discourse by African American writers from the first decade of the twentieth century to at least the

beginning of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s. Furthermore, even in 1926, as the biographical pamphlet about Webb would suggest, pamphleteering was still a way for African American public institutions to broaden the reach of their discourse, bringing in potential new members by representing the racial vision and purpose of such institutions in print. *The Triumph of Simple Virtues* might be thought of as a pamphlet in the tradition of William Hamilton's *Mutual Interest, Mutual Benefit, Mutual Relief* (1809). Although this dissertation has focused on the pamphlet's vision of early African American literary history, Hamilton used much of his text to promote black uplift in general. *Mutual Interest* worked to promulgate the philosophy behind the New York Society for Mutual Relief, an uplift organization founded and managed by Hamilton. We might also think of the *Triumph of Simple Virtues* in the tradition of Mary Ann Shadd's *A Plea for Emigration; or Notes of Canada West* (1852), a pamphlet Shadd wrote to describe and promote an African American settlement in Ontario, Canada. *A Plea for Emigration* represents the black Canadian settlement as a self-reliant, utopian community. Shadd's pamphlet presents Canadian emigration as a form of black uplift.

Once the connections between pamphlets such as *The Triumph of Simple Virtues*, *Mutual Interest, Mutual Benefit, Mutual Relief*, and *A Plea for Emigration* become clear, the importance of pamphlets and pamphleteering to nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century African American literature is further affirmed. Early African American pamphleteers laid the foundation for much of what writers such as Griggs did and sought to achieve. In sum, there is no African American nationalist literature in the Jim Crow era that does not owe some debt to generations of earlier writers, and there are few, if any, African American national novels in this period absent of some connection (aesthetic,

material, or ideological) to early African American pamphleteers. Literary critics cannot adequately consider the continued ascent of the African American popular novel in the decades after Reconstruction without also considering the legacy of early African American pamphleteers. Thus, we ought to begin foregrounding the pamphlet not just as a way of better understanding nineteenth century African American traditions but also as a way of making the connections among many generations of African American writers clearer. A question that remains to be explored is whether the African American literary tradition of pamphleteering continued to influence twentieth-century African American writers. Asking this question might help us understand the intertwined legacies of early African American pamphleteers and Sutton E. Griggs.

¹ Sutton E. Griggs, *Imperium in Imperio*, reprint (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 94.

² Griggs, *Imperium in Imperio*, 171.

³ Griggs, *Imperium in Imperio*, 13-14.

⁴ Griggs scholar Finnie D. Coleman has argued that my previous work with *Imperium in Imperio* looks to a later work by the author, *The Guide to Racial Greatness*, as a lens for interpreting the novel. Contrary to Coleman's argument, I actually contend we read these works together and that they help explain each other. See Coleman's "Social Darwinism, American Imperialism, and the Origins of the Science of Collective Efficiency in Sutton E. Griggs's *Unfettered*" in *Jim Crow, Literature, and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs*, ed. Tess Chakkalakal and Kenneth W. Warren (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2013), 112.

⁵ Sutton E. Griggs, *The Story of My Struggles*, (Memphis: National Public Welfare League, 1914), 14.

⁶ Tess Chakkalakal, “Reading in Sutton E. Griggs,” in *Jim Crow, Literature, and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs*, 146.

⁷ Griggs, *The Story of My Struggles*, 14.

⁸ Griggs, *The Story of My Struggles*, 14.

⁹ Griggs, *The Story of My Struggles*, 14.

¹⁰ Coleman, *Sutton E. Griggs and the Struggle Against White Supremacy*, 24.

¹¹ “radical, adj. and n.”. OED Online. September 2013. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oed.com.libproxy.temple.edu/view/Entry/157251?rskey=x9pnh0&result=1&isAdvanced=false> (accessed October 03, 2013).

¹² This section is inspired, at least in part, by a question I was asked while presenting a paper on Griggs at the American Literature Association’s annual conference in 2009. Near the end of the panel discussion, I was asked (actually, it was more a response telling me how the questioner read Griggs than it was a question about how I read him) something along the lines of, “it seems you see Griggs as a political philosopher, and not really as a novelist.” The person ostensibly asking how I read the author continued, “I prefer to see him as a novelist.” I responded that I do not read him as either/or; I read him as both/and. Reading Griggs as one or the other—novelist or political thinker—does a disservice to Griggs and, I contend, is not how he himself hoped he would be read. We must take more sophisticated approaches to Sutton Griggs, and, beyond him, to the theoretical character of African American literature in general, if we are to appreciate him and authors like him in the way they hoped to be appreciated and understood.

¹³ John Ernest, “Harnessing the Niagra: Sutton E. Griggs’s *The Hindered Hand*,” in *Jim Crow, Literature, and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs*, 188.

¹⁴ Finnie Coleman writes that “realism and naturalism did not find their way into Black fiction in the same ways they found their way into fiction written by most white writers during the same period. Griggs and his peers continued to draw upon romantic archetypes and tropes to build their critiques of life in the United States long after the practice fell out of vogue” and that “romantic tropes and hyperbolic plot [were used] to illuminate the inequities of life in racialized America” (*Sutton E. Griggs and the Struggle Against White Supremacy* 33). I would add that since Griggs was less invested in the reflection of life in racialized America than he was in the (re)creation of black life in America, realist aesthetic strategies were of little use to his production of new forms of community, leadership, and corporate action. With regard to Griggs’s aesthetic strategy of production rather than reflection, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe asserts that “the essence of mimesis is not imitation but production” in *Typography*, ed. Christopher Fynsk (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989): 80.

¹⁵ Finnie Coleman’s contribution to *Jim Crow, Literature, and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs* does connect Griggs with Frederick Douglass, but this is more a moment in the essay than its focus. John Ernest also positions Griggs in relation to an African American tradition of “counting on the published word and the reasoned appeal to logic and principle to overturn the judgment of public opinion” (187) that extends back to the petitions of 1773 in his essay, “Harnessing the Niagara,” which is also included in *Jim Crow, Literature, and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs*. Caroline Levander’s essay in the same volume, “Sutton Griggs and the Borderlands of Empire,” aligns *Imperium in*

Imperio with similar expressions of African American political and social community by nineteenth-century black writers like Douglass and Martin R. Delany. However, none of these essays gives a sustained look at Griggs through the lens of early African American literary traditions, especially pamphleteering.

¹⁶ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, reprint (New York: Bantam, 1989), 10.

¹⁷ Finnie Coleman, "Social Darwinism, Imperialism, and the Origins of the Science of Collective Efficiency in Sutton E. Griggs's *Unfettered*," in *Jim Crow, Literature, and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs*.

¹⁸ Coleman, "Social Darwinism," 139.

¹⁹ Sutton E. Griggs, *Unfettered* (Nashville: Orion Publishing, 1902), 234.

²⁰ Griggs, *Unfettered*, 234.

²¹ Griggs, *Unfettered*, 234.

²² Griggs, *Imperium in Imperio*, 3-4; *Unfettered*, 220.

²³ Sutton E. Griggs, *The Guide to Racial Greatness* (Memphis: National Public Welfare League, 1923), 9.

²⁴ Griggs, *The Guide to Racial Greatness*, 10.

²⁵ Sutton E. Griggs, *Overshadowed: A Novel* (Nashville: The Orion Publishing Company, 1901), 211.

²⁶ Griggs, *Overshadowed*, 215.

²⁷ Griggs, *Overshadowed*, 221.

²⁸ Griggs, *The Story of My Struggles*, 10-11.

²⁹ Griggs, *The Story of My Struggles*, 12.

³⁰ Griggs, *The Guide to Racial Greatness*, 130.

³¹ John Ernest, “Harnessing the Niagra: Sutton E. Griggs’s *The Hindered Hand*,” 186-187.

³² Sutton E. Griggs, *The Hindered Hand*, third edition, reprint (New York: AMS Press, 1969), 215.

³³ Griggs, *The Guide to Racial Greatness*, 110. While discussing the importance of “good seconders to the development of leadership Griggs cites Emmet J. Scott as a “good seconder” who aided the rise of Booker T. Washington, “one of the most famous men of his times in spite of his many handicaps...not a member of the dominant race of his country...born a slave and had to struggle for an education...[and who] encountered much opposition in his own group” (119-120).

³⁴ Griggs, *The Hindered Hand*, 144.

³⁵ Griggs, *The Hindered Hand*, 145.

³⁶ See Charles Mills’s *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997) and David Theo Goldberg’s *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1993) on the persistent metamorphoses white supremacy undergoes as it strives to survive according to new rules and changing cultural and historical contexts.

³⁷ Gene Andrew Jarrett, “What is Jim Crow?,” *PMLA* 128.2 (March 2013), 388-390.

³⁸ Griggs, *The Hindered Hand*, 147.

³⁹ Griggs, *The Hindered Hand*, 160.

⁴⁰ Griggs, *The Hindered Hand*, 207.

⁴¹ Griggs, *The Hindered Hand*, 207.

⁴² Warren, *What Was African American Literature?*, 12.

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- ⁴³ Griggs, *Life's Demands; or, According to Law*, 51-52.
- ⁴⁴ Sutton E. Griggs, *The Science of Collective Efficiency* (Memphis: National Public Welfare League, 1921), 11.
- ⁴⁵ Sutton E. Griggs, "Dorlan's Plan: A Dissertation on the Race Problem by Sutton E. Griggs" in *Unfettered, a Novel* (Nashville: The Orion Publishing Company, 1902), 274.
- ⁴⁶ Griggs, "Dorlan's Plan," 249.
- ⁴⁷ Griggs, "Dorlan's Plan," 249.
- ⁴⁸ Griggs, "Dorlan's Plan," 250.
- ⁴⁹ Robert S. Levine, "African American Literary Nationalism," in *A Companion to African American Literature* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2010), 125.
- ⁵⁰ Griggs, "Dorlan's Plan," 235-236.
- ⁵¹ Griggs, *The Guide to Racial Greatness*, 186.
- ⁵² Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America*, new edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 145.
- ⁵³ Herbert Spencer, "Militancy and Social Evolution" in *Herbert Spencer on Social Evolution, Selected Writings*, J. D. Y. Peel, ed.. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 165.
- ⁵⁴ *Herbert Spencer on Social Evolution*, 257.
- ⁵⁵ *Herbert Spencer on Social Evolution*, 257.
- ⁵⁶ All quotes are from "Dorlan's Plan," 226-227.
- ⁵⁷ For more on turn-of-the-century degeneration theories, see *Degeneration: the Dark Side of Progress*, ed. J. Edward Chamberlain and Sander L. Gilman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

⁵⁸ Stuart C. Gillman, "Political Theory and Degeneration" in *Degeneration: The Dark Side of Progress*, 190.

⁵⁹ Griggs, *The Story of My Struggles*, 12.

⁶⁰ Gossett, *Race*, 280.

⁶¹ Griggs, *The Hindered Hand*, 330.

⁶² Griggs, *The Hindered Hand*, 305-306.

⁶³ Griggs, *The Hindered Hand*, 307.

⁶⁴ Griggs, *The Hindered Hand*, 330.

⁶⁵ Griggs, *The Hindered Hand*, 331

⁶⁶ Griggs, "Dorlan's Plan," 5.

⁶⁷ Griggs, *Needs of the South* (Nashville, Tennessee: The Orion Publishing Company, 1909), 5-6.

⁶⁸ Griggs, *Needs of the South*, 7.

⁶⁹ Griggs, *Needs of the South*, 11.

⁷⁰ Griggs, *Needs of the South*, 14.

⁷¹ Griggs, *Needs of the South*, 15.

⁷² Griggs, *Needs of the South*, 15-16.

⁷³ Griggs, *Needs of the South*, 21.

⁷⁴ Griggs, *Needs of the South*, 20.

⁷⁵ Griggs, *Needs of the South*, 21.

⁷⁶ Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 264.

⁷⁷ Griggs, *The Race Question in a New Light* (Nashville, Tennessee: Orion Publishing, 1909), 7-12.

⁷⁸ Griggs, *The Race Question in a New Light*, 14. Griggs goes on to clarify that he does not wish to see the “disappearance of the dark complexion” but rather “to demonstrate what nature herself could do and might be influenced to do, regardless of the wishes of those who favor the retention of the dark complexion. For our part, we wear with satisfaction, even delight, our badge of racial connection, and would gladly see our progeny wearing the hue of our father and mother unto the end of time” (15).

⁷⁹ Griggs, *The Race Question in a New Light*, 17.

⁸⁰ Griggs, *The Race Question in a New Light*, 17.

⁸¹ Griggs, *The Race Question in a New Light*, 19.

⁸² Griggs, *The Race Question in a New Light*, 20.

⁸³ Griggs, *The Race Question in a New Light*, 20.

⁸⁴ Griggs, *The Race Question in a New Light*, 21.

⁸⁵ Coleman, “The New Science,” 112.

Afterword

At the conclusion to this dissertation, I want to take a quick look at Griggs's final novel, *Pointing the Way* (1908), and address a couple of points regarding this novel Kenneth Warren makes in "Perfecting the Political Romance: The Last Novel of Sutton E. Griggs," which is the final essay in *Jim Crow, Literature, and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs* (2013). A brief examination of this novel and Warren's argument will help reinforce my argument about Griggs's connections to the African American literary tradition of pamphleteering. After looking at *Pointing the Way*, I will offer suggestions for how we might look at two other twentieth-century African American novels—James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912/1927) and Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940)—in the context of an African American literary history that emphasizes pamphlets and pamphleteering as precursors to the rise of the African American novel. Placing these two novels in the context of a history of black pamphleteering will suggest new ways of reading these works. Finally, I will close with some thoughts on how a greater emphasis on pamphleteering might contribute to new theories of African American literary history. But first, a few words on Warren's casual reference to Griggs as an "early" African American author.

This dissertation corrects a critical misapprehension I noticed in the introduction to *Jim Crow, Literature, and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs*. The editors of this volume, Tess Chakkalal and Kenneth W. Warren, twice describe the turn-of-the-century author as an "early" African American writer. After giving this description in the first paragraph of their introduction, Chakkalal and Warren declare that the intent of their volume is "to move Griggs from the margins to the center of African American literary history."¹

As I argued in the introduction to this dissertation, this subtle move to re-arrange conventional narratives of African American literary history via a narrative of Griggs's literary legacy is intended as a form of support for the African American literary historiography Warren articulates in *What Was African American Literature?* (2011), a book that situates Griggs and other turn-of-the-century black writers as "early" African American authors. As I have argued in this dissertation, Griggs is not an "early" African American writer but rather a late African American pamphleteer who brought nineteenth-century African American literary traditions forward into the twentieth century.

Warren and I disagree on the contours of African American literary history, the place of Sutton E. Griggs in such a history, and Griggs's legacy as an African American author. But there are points where we agree. In particular, we are in agreement on what the author intended to achieve with his final novel, *Pointing the Way*. However, these points of agreement actually reinforce my position that Griggs is an important author in a long nineteenth-century African American literary tradition of pamphleteering. Warren writes, "The goal of *Pointing the Way* was to keep within public view (and to persuade a key set of readers of) the urgency of redressing the disenfranchisement of black Americans throughout the South." Expanding the scope of his argument to account for all of Griggs's novels, Warren continues, "a common aspect of Griggs's novels...[are] moments in which characters declare they have a plan to solve the "race problem," one that needs only broader circulation to realize its efficacy...Griggs's novels appear to function primarily as delivery systems" for the author's plans.² Throughout this dissertation, I have pointed out how pamphlets were the most effective form of publication for the broad, efficient, and fast circulation of discourse. The advantages of

pamphleteering were valued by late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century black writers seeking to intervene in contemporary debates and conversations. Thus, the characterization Warren offers of an early twentieth-century novel is as applicable to Griggs's work as it is, say, to William Hamilton's 1809 *Mutual Interest, Mutual Benefit, Mutual Relief* or David Walker's 1829 *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*.

Warren's essay continues to provide inadvertent support for reading Griggs as an early twentieth-century novelist/pamphleteer when it connects *Pointing the Way* with *The One Great Question*. *Pointing the Way*, Warren argues, "depict[s in narrative form] some of the 'suggestions' [for addressing the race problem] enumerated in *The One Great Question*," a pamphlet Griggs's published in 1907. Put another way, we could suggest that *Pointing the Way* should be read as part of an African American literary tradition of political narrative that this dissertation has traced from early African American pamphleteering to turn-of-the-century novels such as *Imperium in Imperio* (1899). However, Warren misses something in the above quotation: *Pointing the Way* depicts not just the solutions to the race problem offered in the pamphlet published before it; the novel also anticipates the solutions represented in the two pamphlets that followed it, *Needs of the South* (1909) and *The Race Question in a New Light* (1909). Thus, the novel is not the only text that kept the "one great question" Griggs continually posited after *The Hindered Hand* (1905) in public view. The two pamphlets that he wrote and published in the year after *Pointing the Way* do the same work Warren argues connects *The One Great Question* with Grigg's last novel. Reading *Pointing the Way* as a moment in Griggs's post-*Hindered Hand* project of appealing to what he hoped was the best of Southern white leadership makes better sense. *Pointing the Way* is not just a narrative depiction of

the solutions offered in *The One Great Question*. The novel is a narrative depiction of the solutions Griggs offered in a series of pamphlets he published between 1907 and 1909. In particular, we might look at the three texts published in 1908 and 1909—*Pointing the Way*, *Needs of the South*, and *The Race Question in a New Light*—as a narrative triptych similar to John Marrant and Prince Hall’s set of three interrelated pamphlets published between 1789 and 1797.

Similar to these late eighteenth-century pamphlets, *Pointing the Way* and its related pamphlets illuminate a path to black uplift, and, from there, to the regeneration of Southern political culture. Unveiling such avenues to the development of sense of racial greatness among Southern blacks, in an interracial political community of blacks and whites, was a major focus of Griggs’s post-*Hindered Hand* career. His literary efforts from 1907 to 1911, when Griggs published *Wisdom’s Call*, a book that combined the three pamphlets he published from 1907 to 1909, were centered on shaping public sentiments among blacks and whites regarding African Americans’ rights to the franchise. For example, near the end of his time in Memphis, Tennessee, he published Orion Publishing Company’s final text, *The Story of My Struggles* (1914). In this pamphlet, Griggs writes, “it is my opinion that our sorrows as a race will continue to multiply until we pay serious attention to the processes at work shaping public sentiment...Let each individual or organization in the Negro race resolve to put literature in the hands of his or its parallel in the white race.”³

Griggs saw himself as an enlightened leader among Southern blacks. He wrote *Pointing the Way* in order to “put literature in the hands” of his equals—enlightened (he hoped), Southern community leaders, black and white—and thereby “[shape] public

sentiment.” In *Pointing the Way*, Griggs uses three black characters to give voice to Southern, African American political and cultural grievances such that they might be heard by sympathetic white Southerners. As Warren writes, Uncle Jack, Eina Rapona, and Baug Peppers “present to the reader...arguments or propositions to be assessed in terms of their political accuracy and the likelihood that they might provide solutions to real political problems.”⁴ These three characters present white readers with a narrative of Southern political culture that exposed what Griggs saw as the real problem facing the South: white, anti-black racism and the systematic political marginalization of African American voters.

Pointing the Way functions to unveil a “truer” view of racist culture and systemic white supremacy than those works circulating in the dominant (i.e., white) culture. The novel shows readers that white domination of Southern politics weakens the region’s political culture and encourages inadequate leadership. *Pointing the Way* thus works much like the pamphlets and novels studied throughout this dissertation, and in the spirit of the narrative tradition I have traced through the history of nineteenth-century African American pamphleteering. The novel and its associated pamphlets are intended to challenge what Griggs referred to as a “common understanding” of the Fifteenth Amendment, which granted African American men the right to vote. Griggs makes his reference to “common understanding” in *Light on Racial Issues* (1921), a pamphlet published the same year as *The Science of Collective Efficiency*. He asks readers, “Has the Fifteenth Amendment been modified by common understanding?” Answering his own question, he continues, “common understanding for the time being has shorn Congress of the privilege of being the power to put it into force...and has assigned to the

several states the power of putting it into force.”⁵ The focus in *Pointing the Way* (as well as in the two 1909 pamphlets that follow the novel) is on challenging political common sense in the South. The novel and the pamphlets have a similar intent as the Sons of Africa’s 1773 petition and “Thoughts On Slavery,” both of which challenged the political common sense of Revolutionary-era Boston.

Reading *Pointing the Way* as a work complementing a series of three pamphlets on matters such as Southern politics, leadership, race, and black uplift philosophy gives us a clearer sense of Sutton E. Griggs’s literary legacy. His legacy is not that of an “early” African American writer. Rather, Griggs shares the legacy of early African American pamphleteers such as the Sons of Africa, John Marrant, Prince Hall, David Walker, and William Wells Brown. As this dissertation has shown, late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century black pamphleteers were among the first writers to conceive, write, and promote African American literature. If Griggs is a signature African American literary nationalist, then it is because he recapitulates the aesthetic and literary strategies of his late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century forebears. Furthermore, if Sutton E. Griggs is a characteristic writer in an African American literary tradition that links literary production with political action, then it is because he understood the role that literary production and consumption had played in African American civic life since the late eighteenth century.

This dissertation’s study of the narrative tradition in early African American pamphleteering and its influence on Griggs is, I hope, an initial step in the process of recovering a crucial facet of African American literary history. This process will help to further develop the connections between the interrelated histories of the pamphlet and the

book. In African American literary history, these two genres similarly functioned as particular forms of discursive and material intercessions in the American public sphere. Black writers often used pamphlets to represent the public sphere and its discourses as well as debates. For example, approaching early twentieth-century African American novels from the perspective developed in this dissertation could result in new ways of looking at James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*. Drawing from some of his own experiences to write a fictional narrative, Johnson first published the *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* anonymously through the New York publisher Sherman, French, and Company. The first edition of *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* was published anonymously because Johnson believed his book would be controversial, and any negative attention might harm his career as U.S. consul to Nicaragua, a position he filled from 1909 to 1913. Unfortunately, the Sherman, French, and Company edition was not a commercial success. However, fifteen years later, a second edition was published by Alfred A. Knopf, a company that worked with a number of African American writers during the Harlem Renaissance.

Republication helped *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* return Johnson's voice to the public conversation on race, the color line, and American culture at the height of the Harlem Renaissance. While the republication and re-circulation of Johnson's novel arguably situates it in a tradition early African American pamphleteers like David Walker and William Well Brown helped to establish, I want to focus on the narrative intent of *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*. A quick reading of the introduction to the 1927 edition will help show how the novel's narrative intent aligns it

with pamphlets like Walker's *Appeal* and hybrid texts like Brown's *Clotel* as well as Griggs's *Imperium in Imperio*.

The 1927 edition was attributed to Johnson and introduced by Cal Van Vechten, a white writer who supported multiple African American writers of the Harlem Renaissance. Van Vechten offered a description of Johnson's novel that echoes Kelly Miller's characterization of Griggs's *Imperium in Imperio*. Of *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, Van Vechten writes, "in 1912...[the novel] stood alone as an inclusive survey of racial accomplishments and traits, as an interpretation of the feelings of the Negro towards the white man and towards members of his own race...[the *Autobiography* is] an invaluable source book for the study of Negro psychology."⁶ This description works as a more elaborate complement to the preface Johnson had included in the 1912 publication, which told readers, "In these pages, it is as though a veil had been drawn aside: the reader is given a view of the inner life of the Negro in America, is initiated into the 'freemasonry,' as it were, of the race."

If we read Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* in the context of the narrative tradition in African American pamphleteering, then we might start a different conversation about this novel's connection to early nineteenth-century texts such as the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845). Johnson uses printed text in the same spirit as Douglass, and the *Narrative* includes a famous scene where the author gives readers a glimpse of the thoughts and feelings of an enslaved person while viewing the ships in Baltimore's harbor. Douglass sees these ships as representative of the freedom he lacks, but desires. The scene gives voice to Douglass's desire, his frustrations, and is intended to show readers the psychological traumas of slavery apart from those stemming

from passage through the “blood stained gates” of physical and sexual violence. Both Douglass and Johnson unveil the inner psychology of people classed as subordinate and less human in a racist, white supremacist culture.

Earlier in this dissertation I have suggested we see the genre of slave narratives as a form of abolitionist pamphleteering. Here, at the conclusion, I suggest we might read early twentieth-century African American passing narratives, which were often fictional stories about black people passing for white, as another form of pamphleteering. *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, as well as Nella Larsen’s novels, *Quicksand* (1928) and *Passing* (1929), published in the two years following the re-issue of Johnson’s novel, are extensions of the autobiographical tradition begun by pamphleteers such as Douglass, William Wells Brown, and others. Similar to Johnson, Larsen used fictional narrative to unveil the psychological reactions of black people to white supremacist culture. Of course, de-concealing the psychological traumas African Americans often experienced in white supremacist culture were not limited to the antebellum period or the Harlem Renaissance.

Before closing with some thoughts on how an emphasis on the African American literary tradition of pamphleteering can contribute to new forms of African American literary historiography, I want to note how the pamphleteering tradition might help us reconsider the publication and circulation of Richard Wright’s *Native Son*. This novel explores the psychology of its main character, Bigger Thomas, and thus it might be discussed in relation to *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* as examined above. However, one of the more interesting connections between *Native Son* and the African American literary tradition of pamphleteering concerns the circulation of the novel and its

intent as a material intercession in the American public sphere, to be sure, but also in Americans' private homes as well. Wright's novel was published by the Book-of-the-Month Club in March of 1940. The Book-of-the-Month Club was a subscription service publisher that would deliver a new title to subscribers each month. Because *Native Son* was published by a company that could guarantee sales and broad circulation, the novel sold around 250,000 copies within the first month of publication. *Native Son* was sent directly to readers' homes, and, in this way, the novel somewhat satisfies the vision Sutton E. Griggs had in *The Hindered Hand* for the circulation of a pamphlet to every American home. If we look at *Native Son* as a form of material intercession in the American public sphere that intended to change how readers interpreted the debates and dialogues over race and racial meaning, then the novel becomes an extension of the protest tradition begun not by novelists but rather by early African American pamphleteers.

Finally, one goal of this dissertation has been to contribute another perspective to the still developing scholarly conversation on how we might best tell the history of the African American literary tradition. The connected histories of African American pamphleteering and the African American novel suggest that we ought to remain mindful of Gene Jarrett's argument that African American literary traditions are remarkably flexible and adaptable. If scholars of African American literature learn to read this tradition with the same flexibility its authors saw in it, then we are better positioned to understand how Griggs's works draw on antebellum-era aesthetic and material strategies even as they help to push African American literary nationalism into a new era. The connections between pamphlets and novels as forms of literary production as well as

forms of political action in the public sphere are evidence that scholars of African American literature should not be concerned (as is Kenneth Warren) with binding the tradition to a specific historical period. African American writers return to similar strategies in different historical periods using various literary genres to achieve consistent goals: confront and contest white supremacy; unveil the fictions of white supremacy as well as the truth of black equality; and make a case for full civil and political rights for black people.

My study of pamphleteering in early African American literary history and the influence of pamphleteering on the rise of the novel, and thus early twentieth-century African American literature, suggests that we ought to give more consideration to John Ernest's vision of African American literary history. Ernest contends that this history is "something other than 'a fixed thing' ...something other than a linear narrative...[or] a literary history defined...simply by authorship or subject matter—and how it is put together by a master narrative connecting authors and subjects—but rather by the way that it functions within an unstable culture, the way that it is considered in its component and dynamic parts, and the way that it is *read* by readers always at once both prepared and unprepared to understand it."⁷ The story of pamphleteering, the rise of the novel, and the literary legacy of Sutton E. Griggs told in this dissertation reinforces Ernest's call for scholars to read African American literary history as something other than a fixed thing. Furthermore, the emphasis in this dissertation on the narrative tradition in African American pamphleteering is intended to show how pamphleteering functioned in a culture that was, in Ernest's words, both prepared and unprepared to understand the kinds of narratives authors such as the Sons of Africa, John Marrant, Prince Hall, David

Walker, William Wells Brown, and Sutton E. Griggs wrote and published. Finally, my study of Sutton E. Griggs and the African American literary tradition of pamphleteering suggests that while we ought to remain mindful of how African American literature was read by readers both prepared and unprepared to understand, we ought to be similarly mindful of how African American literature at times strives to teach its readers *how* to read not just this literature, but the cultural and discursive terrains in which it was published.

¹ Tess Chakkalalakal and Kenneth Warren, "Introduction" in *Jim Crow, Literature, and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs*, ed. Chakkalalakal and Warren (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2013), 8.

² Kenneth Warren, "Perfecting the Political Romance: The Last Novel of Sutton E. Griggs," in *Jim Crow, Literature, and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs*, 255-256.

³ Sutton E. Griggs, *The Story of My Struggles* (Memphis: The National Public Welfare League, 1914), 19-21.

⁴ Warren, "Perfecting the Political Romance," 255.

⁵ Sutton E. Griggs, *Light On Racial Issues* (Memphis: National Public Welfare League, 1921), 35-36.

⁶ Carl Van Vechten, "Introduction" in *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, reprint (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927), v-vii.

⁷ John Ernest, *Chaotic Justice: Rethinking African American Literary History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 11.

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