

MCFARLAND, EBONE, M.A. *Why Whites Riot: The Race Riot Narrative and Demonstrations of Nineteenth Century Black Citizenship*. (2011)  
Directed by Dr. Mark Rifkin and Dr. SallyAnn Ferguson. 74 pp.

*Why Whites Riot: The Race Riot Narrative and Demonstrations of Nineteenth Century Black Citizenship* examines the Philadelphia riots between 1834 and 1849 and the Wilmington 1898 riot to explore how black fiction counters white explanations of race riots. White newspaper reports of race riots have historically depicted blacks as the oppressors and whites as victims, but black fiction illustrates race riots as white onslaughts against blacks who suffer the brunt of injuries, typically involving physical injury or property destruction. Particular narratives in the black literary tradition are uniquely constructed around race riots, offering it as a lens through which readers can examine the ways black intellectuals challenge dominant narratives on race riots and specifically the ways they theorize the relation between violence, “race,” property, and citizenship. I figure race riot narratives as particularly distinguished by their rhetorical aims to contest black substantive citizenship as untenable and by their exposure of white violent social practices as evidence of white fear of black social, political, and economic power. In this thesis, I examine *The Garies and Their Friends* and Charles Chesnut’s *The Marrow of Tradition* as two defining texts of the race riot narrative genre. These texts demonstrate how the black domestic/public space serves as a signifier for the social, economic, and political privileges of substantive citizenship. The black domestic space, then, becomes important to understanding why black property ownership threatens whites, and in particular, why whites riot.

WHY WHITES RIOT: THE RACE RIOT NARRATIVE AND DEMONSTRATIONS  
OF NINETEENTH CENTURY BLACK CITIZENSHIP

by

Ebone McFarland

A Thesis Submitted to  
the Faculty of The Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

Greensboro  
2011

Approved by

---

Committee Co-chair

---

Committee Co-chair

©2011 Ebone McFarland

To God for giving me strength and for blessing me with a creative mother, a father with perseverance, a wise grandmother, and a wonderful partner who shows his endless support. Without a piece of each of you within me, my thesis would not have been possible. I love you.

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Co-Chair \_\_\_\_\_  
Mark Rifkin

Committee Co-Chair \_\_\_\_\_  
SallyAnn H. Ferguson

Committee Member \_\_\_\_\_  
Michelle Dowd

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Acceptance by Committee

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER	
I. TOWARD A THEORY OF THE RACE RIOT NARRATIVE GENRE.....	1
II. FREE STATE, CONTESTED STATUS : PHILADELPHIA RACE RIOTS AND THE FREE BLACK POPOULATION.....	10
III. THE BLACK DOMESTIC SPACE AS A SIGNIFER FOR BLACK CITIZENSHIP IN FRANK J. WEBB’S <i>THE GARIES AND THIER FRIENDS</i> .....	20
IV. BLACK CITIZENSHIP POST-RECONSTRUCTION AND THE 1898 WILIMINGTON RACE RIOT.....	42
V. LEGAL CITIZENSHIP AND SUBSTANTIVE RIGHTS : CHARLES W. CHESNUTT & THE NEGOTATION OF BLACK CITIZENSHIP.....	53
VI. CONCLUSION.....	72
WORKS CITED .....	75

CHAPTER I  
TOWARD A THEORY OF THE RACE RIOT NARRATIVE GENRE

In 1621, Anthony Johnson arrived in Jamestown, VA as an indentured servant. Like other Africans who were brought to the Virginia colony, Johnson had a four to seven year contract to labor on a Jamestown plantation. In 1640, Johnson, his wife, Mary, and their four children gained freedom, and by 1650, Johnson acquired 250 acres of land. Shortly thereafter, Virginia courts began enacting laws to establish slavery in the colony. The changing nature of Virginia society and possible aggression from white planters, forced Johnson to move from Virginia to the Eastern shore of Maryland. While in Maryland, Johnson reestablished his success by obtaining 300 acres of land. However, when he died in 1669, the property inherited by his two sons was challenged by a white colonialist. Evidence suggests that the sons were denied their inheritance because the court ruled that “as a black man, Anthony Johnson was not a citizen of the colony” (Horton 21). Nonetheless, the court’s decision did not change Johnson’s status as a free man though it restricted his access to social power. The question therefore becomes, why was Johnson denied full rights of citizenship? And more importantly, why did his socioeconomic position so threaten whites that they legally reduced his status and thus prevented his descendants from progress?

What interests me about Johnson’s story is how it reveals the history of black/white social relations and how land ownership and whiteness connect to provide an

understanding of citizenship socially and legally. Johnson's experience is not a story of colonial opportunity (he was captured from his African homeland, sold, bought, and suffered at the hands of white planters just as his descendants), but the degree of freedom and opportunity he was given and the changing social relations as an effect of his success, establish the social construction of "race" and citizenship. His socioeconomic mobility from indentured servant to property owner so threatened white Englishmen because they began to see that owning colonial land meant sharing power. Threatened by the idea of sharing wealth and power, whites designed laws to complement public sentiment and codified privileges for whites based on black subjugation. The limitations placed on Johnson's property rights, and more broadly his social rights, challenged his access to substantive citizenship that the court proposes is inseparable from the entitlement of whiteness.<sup>1</sup>

Although blacks had access to rights and privileges as citizens in the emerging U.S. body politic, they were soon envisioned as internal dangers to whites' access to economic control, and therefore legal and social regulations were placed on free blacks to ensure they occupied a subordinate status. In Johnson's case, white Virginia planters short circuited his citizenship by forcing him out of the Virginia colony and denying his children the right of inheritance. Johnson's story therefore marks social relations in the

---

<sup>1</sup> I use the term substantive citizenship in context of sociologist Thomas Humphrey Marshall's examination of citizenship and social rights. Marshall argues that social rights allow citizens to fully exercise civil and political rights that are abstractly granted through law. According to Marshall, citizenship is not just a matter of formal legal status, it is a matter of belonging which requires recognition by others members of society and includes civil, political, and social rights.

colonial era and helps define future notions of citizenship, illustrating the ways black citizenship has historically been mediated by white jealousy of black economic progress.

In the face of socioeconomic competition, whites found ways to deny blacks access to substantive citizenship. Leon Litwack notes that from the colonial period up until the *Dred Scott* decision in 1857, the legal status of free blacks was not federally defined. As a result, free blacks were subject to state race-based legislation along with lynchings, torturous beatings, and other forms of violence whites initiated as an extra legal tide against black citizenship (Litwack 50). Even after the Reconstruction Amendments that guaranteed blacks' full social and legal incorporation, whites still sought to subjugate blacks in order to claim complete social, political, and economic control. Based primarily on the interpretation that whites had the divine natural right to rule, white supremacy is built on black subjugation by positioning blacks in inferior positions to justify white superiority (Bay 14). In reality, as the Johnson case illustrates, white supremacy masks a white inferiority complex that formed under the pressure of white inability to compete economically with blacks. White supremacists attempted to eliminate competition and ensure their full social, economic, and political control through social exclusionary practices and black subjugation.

In this thesis, I explore the ways that black fiction exposes white supremacy as a racist fantasy that can only be maintained through violence. Black fiction offers an explanation for white violence that uncovers the insecurities whites had about black social, economic, and political success. As the Anthony Johnson example demonstrates, visual evidence of black privilege produced through the black domestic space triggered

whites' frustration and violence. In "Whiteness as Property," Cheryl Harris argues that the equation of whiteness with property is rooted in oppression and racial domination of blacks. It was not the master-slave relationship alone that systematically operated to uphold whites as superior, but the "interaction between conceptions of race and property which played a critical role in establishing and maintaining racial and economic subordination" (Harris 1716). The theoretical connection between property and whiteness is highly important to legal formations of identity, as the law recognizes and protects whiteness as a set of legal property entitlements that it denies to blacks. As Harris's theory suggests, whiteness depends upon material possessions. The black domestic space then becomes important to an understanding why black property ownership threatens whites, and in particular, why whites riot.

As a manifestation of black social, political, and economic power, and by extension a visible marker of citizenship and the "privileges of whiteness," the black domestic space becomes the target of white aggression because it concretizes blacks' social status. Black fiction formulates the race riot as an extra-legal action organized by whites in order to consolidate white political authority, gain access to wealth, and punish blacks for rising above the inferior spaces they had been placed into by whites to validate their superiority. White supremacists used race riots as a form of police power, which Saidiya Hartman argues maintains white comfort and black suffering (Hartman 199). Christopher Tiedman also observes that,

police power of the government, as understood in the constitutional law of the United States, is simply the power of the government to establish provisions for the enforcement of the common as well as civil law maxim. This police power of

the state extends to the protection of the lives, limbs, health, comfort, and quiet of all persons, and the protection of all property within the State. (Tiedman 4)

Tiedman explains how the federal government has an obligation to protect the welfare of all its citizens. However, as Hartman illustrates, the invocation of whiteness or white supremacy as a form of police power eclipses legal citizenship which afforded black individual rights and equal protection under the law (Hartman 199). In Tiedman and Hartman's formulation, full citizenship becomes equated with whiteness, and power gets attributed to sentiment rather than to federal or state governments. Though race riots defy the laws protecting blacks' rights and privileges, black fiction details how whites organizing race riots mediate the boundaries of black citizenship, exceeding, superceding, and transcending the actual laws passed by the state and the federal government.

Historians and literary scholars such as Paul Gilje and Shelia Smith McKoy have done extensive research on race riots and their studies elucidate how white newspaper reports of race riots have historically depicted blacks as the oppressors and whites as victims, but as Paul Gilje points out, the rise of race riots during the nineteenth century were "violent onslaughts by whites against blacks" that were brought on by the emergence of the socioeconomic independent free black community (Gilje 88-89). Therefore, in the context of this thesis, I define race riots as white onslaughts against blacks who suffer the brunt of injuries, typically involving physical injury or property destruction. Sheila Smith McKoy's examination of race riots demonstrates the relationship between white historical accounts of riots and black fiction by exploring how black narratives counter white depictions of race riots, and instead, casts them as "white

riots” (Smith McKoy 5). Smith McKoy highlights the fact that most black printing presses during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century were burned by whites in riots because they threatened to incite social change. She therefore claims that black fiction, and in particular black historical fiction, remains the only medium for blacks to resist the invisibility of “white riot” (Smith McKoy 28). Black fiction, then, provides a historical account of race riots from the black perspective and recovers the social commentary that would have appeared in black newspapers if that history had not been intentionally erased by white rioters. As a counter narrative to white newspaper accounts of race riots and as a substitution for the black printing press, black fiction works within the public print narrative system to provide social commentary. Both black fiction and white newspapers produce meanings about “race,” and both offer commentary on the existing social order. More specifically, as the comparison relates to my exploration of race riots, they both create narrative records of black belonging which informs the history of black citizenship in the United States.

As such, particular narratives in black fiction are uniquely constructed around race riots, offering a lens through which to challenge dominant narratives of black citizenship and to theorize the relation between citizenship, “race,” property, and violence. I figure race riot narratives as particularly distinguished by their rhetorical aims to contest black social citizenship as untenable and by their exposure of white violent social practices as evidence of white fear of black social, political, and economic power. The race riot narrative is concerned with: (1) white superiority as a social myth maintained by racial violence; and (2) the articulation of black citizenship constituted

outside of legal status, and rather produced through social interactions. In this way, race riot narratives are a part of public discourse and provide a counter narrative to the history of black citizenship.

The race riot narrative as a genre in black fiction offers a critical tool to interpret black identity in the black literary tradition. Black writers read and critique other narratives “as an act of rhetorical self-definiton” (Gates 124). Therefore, race riot narratives align with the purpose of the black literary tradition critically to engage white historical narratives (newspaper reports, media accounts, and histories) in order to expose and disrupt the normativity of white identity and to articulate a different understanding of black identity, not as abject or powerless, but as a people with agency, ever signifying on systems that seek to cast them otherwise.

For the purpose of this thesis, I read Frank Webb’s *The Garies and Their Friends* and Charles Chesnutt’s *The Marrow of Tradition* as two defining texts of the race riot narrative genre. Published during the antebellum period, Webb’s narrative marks the ways free black status afforded social and economic privileges of citizenship and the particular motivations behind the white violence that accompanied black progress. *The Marrow of Tradition* is set after Reconstruction when formal recognition of black citizenship failed to lead to substantive black citizenship or the remediation of white supremacy, and in, fact intensified white racism, creating the basis for southern states to create segregationist laws that legally undermined the social, political, and economic progress blacks achieved through emancipation. Each of these texts mark a crucial turning point in American history regarding black status in the United States, and they

use the black domestic space and historical race riots during the time to define black citizenship before and after the Civil War. In this way, I read Webb and Chesnut's race riot narratives as different from the riots or "insurrections" in slave narratives and the riots during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as fictionalized most popularly by Ralph Ellison in *Invisible Man*, though these narratives fall within the race riot narrative genre and undoubtedly make contributions to the discussion of black citizenship in America. My particular focus on 19<sup>th</sup> century race riot narratives offers a starting point in the nation's history for an analysis of citizenship that delineates the distinction between substantive citizenship and non-chattelhood.

I have divided this thesis into five chapters to explore the way each text grounds itself in historical race riots and then fictionalizes them, placing the black domestic space at their center to theorize black citizenship. In Chapter II, I explore the historical context of the Philadelphia race riots that Frank Webb fictionalizes in *The Garies and Their Friends*, paying particular attention to how the history reveals white insecurities stemming from the rise of the black middle class. Chapter III provides an analysis of the race riot in *The Garies and Their Friends*. I argue that Webb emphasizes the race riot in his narrative to articulate free black status during the antebellum period. Webb's race riot narrative shifts the focus away from legal definitions of citizenship and defines it through the social sphere. Chapter IV explores black citizenship after Reconstruction through the Wilmington 1898 riot. And lastly, in Chapter V, I explore the difference between blacks' legal citizenship and their substantive rights in Charles Chesnut's *The Marrow of Tradition*.

## CHAPTER II

### FREE STATE, CONTESTED STATUS:

#### PHILADELPHIA RACE RIOTS AND THE FREE BLACK POPULATION

In the nineteenth century, Philadelphia was home to America's largest free black population. The state had been a haven for blacks because of its proximity to the South, which allowed slaves to seek refuge in the free North that afforded more protection due to the area's abolitionist community.<sup>2</sup> The population of free blacks in Philadelphia reached close to 15,000, and as such, they began to forge independent communities that fostered the development of the black middle class (Miller and Pencak 191). According to historian Emma Lapsansky, "By [the] early nineteenth century, [the] Philadelphia Afro American community had begun to establish itself. A half dozen churches. Several independently run schools, self-help organizations—even an insurance company attested to the industry and stability of this emerging community" (*Black Presence* 11). Although the passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law attempted to disrupt the progress of the free black community, its members continued to flourish as they purchased close to \$600,000

---

<sup>2</sup> Although protest against slaveholding in Philadelphia began in 1688, it was only until 1780 that Pennsylvania officially outlawed slavery. It was the first state to free itself from the institution by means of a gradual process over twenty eight years. In 1790 there were reported to be 3,737 slaves in Pennsylvania. Then years later that number decreased in half. Shortly after Frank Webb was born in 1830, there were 386 slaves in the state. The 1840 census finally indicated that slavery in Pennsylvania had died out. See Richard R. Wright Jr., *The Negro in Philadelphia: A Study in Economic History*, 13.

worth of individual/family owned property and community real-estate (Miller and Pencak 191). The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 worked to disenfranchise free blacks and enforced more severe restrictions than the Constitution's Article IV "Fugitive Slave Clause" and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 (Basinger 308). The fugitive slave laws not only regulated slave mobility, but also placed limitations on free blacks' social rights. Ira Berlin claims that the strengthening of fugitive slave laws gave whites the right to violate free blacks' liberties by "demand[ing] proof of free Negro status; even if his [or her] paper were in order, an unemployed free Negro could be jailed or enslaved and his [or her] children bound out to strangers" (Berlin 95). Although free blacks may have resided in a free state, fugitive slave laws contested their status and ensured that the institution of slavery had sociopolitical power over free spaces in the North.

*Prigg v. Pennsylvania* (1842) illustrates how fugitive slave laws compromised the status of free blacks during the antebellum period. The case involves a lawsuit by Edward Prigg against the state of Pennsylvania for violating his federal right to detain and return a slave under Pennsylvania state law. Prigg was attempting to capture Margaret Morgan, who moved with her husband, a free citizen, from the state of Maryland to Pennsylvania. Even in the Maryland slave state, Margaret Morgan had lived in virtual freedom, though neither she nor her parents ever received formal emancipation by their owner. After Morgan's owner died, his heiress hired Prigg to capture her "property," and when he found Morgan, he applied to a state magistrate for certificates of removal under the federal Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 and an 1826 Pennsylvania personal liberty law. Prigg needed the certificates legally to remove Morgan and her two children to Maryland, but

the magistrate refused to issue the certificates. Prigg returned Morgan to her “owners” in Maryland, and shortly after, Pennsylvania indicted Prigg for kidnapping under the state’s 1826 law. Following his conviction, Prigg appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court where they ruled that Pennsylvania law was unconstitutional because it conflicted with federal law (*Prigg v. Pennsylvania* 625). As a result of the Court’s ruling, Morgan had to leave her black middle class life behind and assume the life and conditions of a slave.

*Prigg v. Pennsylvania* contains an early reference to the division of police power between federal and state government. Pennsylvania was attempting to protect the rights of free blacks, but the federal government ruled that the state’s police power was immaterial and unconstitutional if it conflicted with federal slave law (*Prigg v. Pennsylvania* 626). Pennsylvania’s police power was therefore only upheld when it protected the interests of slaveholders. *Prigg v. Pennsylvania* is important in exploring free black status during the antebellum period because it illustrates the protection of black citizens under the law in free states. The purpose of the fugitive slave laws was to protect the sentiments and interests of white slaveholders. Ironically, the courts decided to align police power with white supremacist action rather than with constitutional interest to guarantee “the citizens of each state [...] all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several states” (U.S. Const., Art. IV, §2, cl. 1). Fugitive slave laws policed the boundaries of black citizenship, and John Quincy Adams remarked that free blacks were, “already doomed by their complexion to drudge in the lowest offices of society, excluded by their color from all the refined enjoyments of life accessible to others, [and] excluded from the

benefits of a liberal education [...] This barbarous article deprives them of the little remnant of right yet left them—their rights as citizens and as men” (Adams 209-210).

Despite such laws that tried to govern black mobility, evidence of black middle class achievement in Pennsylvania countered efforts to enforce subordination. The fugitive slave laws were offset by the free black population in the 1850’s, which Emma Lapsansky notes,

Had at that point the largest, most aggressive, and wealthiest free black population in the western world. Philadelphians knew it. Americans knew it [...] Everybody saw Philadelphia as the prototype of what a free African American would look like, and what a free African American would do. That is to say, they'd buy property; they'd take over the public space; they would see themselves [...] as gentlemen and ladies. (*Africans in America*)

As Lapsansky’s observation demonstrates, the prosperity of the free Black community was highly visible because of its manifestation in black owned property. Visible signs of black prosperity made it impossible to deny that blacks were social participators in Philadelphia’s public sphere. Edward Raymond Turner notes that as free blacks progressed economically, many whites “believed that the negro would soon prove in every respect the white man’s equal” (Turner 143). Though Turner describes the legal status of free blacks in Philadelphia as “far from being free as a white man,” he notes how the display of black economic prosperity exhibited public participation, which precipitated riots (Turner 113,141). Therefore, white hostility towards the black community was routine because black public and domestic space threatened to collapse the distinction between white and black privileges of citizenship. Public sentiment against black progress culminated in a number of race riots in Philadelphia between 1834 and

1849. Although Philadelphia was a free state, white supremacists in the area shared the same racist ideology as the neighboring slave states that blacks should hold subjugated positions in order to guarantee white socioeconomic power. Philadelphia's white residents therefore were opposed to equal citizenship because they depended on economic and social stratification to uphold their own white supremacist agendas.

White attacks on black property reveal the particular relationships between race and class that support whiteness and white superiority. Black property ownership visibly exhibits class homogeneity while unmasking racial distinctions as a cover up for class concentrations. More concretely, riots in Philadelphia trace how the iconic status of black property encompassed economic prosperity, social belonging, and political independence and how this particular space became a site of privilege. Philadelphia race riots demonstrate how black public and domestic space signaled equality and how white public sentiment asserted property ownership as a marker for full citizenship. Examining the black domestic space from this vantage point elucidates race riots as vital practices in maintaining white superiority.

John Runcie addresses the first full scale riot in 1834 in “‘Hunting the Nigs’ in Philadelphia.” Drawing from a series of newspaper accounts in the *Philadelphia Gazette*, *Pennsylvanian*, *Daily Courier*, and *Commercial Herald*, he observes:

It began early on the evening of Tuesday, August 12, when a mob, several hundred strong, attacked a building on South Street which housed a carousel machine known as the “Flying Horses,” and which was popular with both the Negroes and the whites living in the neighborhood. The mob soon wrecked the building and its contents and overcame the resistance of those blacks who dared to retaliate [...] According to visiting Englishman, Thomas Brothers, many of the rioters described their activities as ‘hunting the nigs’ and so successful were they

in this respect that many Negro families abandoned their homes and sought refuge in the city itself, or across the Delaware River in the neighboring state of New Jersey. (Runcie 190)

Runcie's analysis of the Philadelphia race riot in 1834 examines the undercurrents of the city's social temper and reveals the deep racial antagonism that permeated the city. The Flying Horse was a popular entertainment site for blacks and whites living in the South Street neighborhood. After accosting the blacks there, an estimated mob of 400 or 500 whites moved beyond South Street into the Moyamensing where three nights of rioting ensued:

With brickbats, clubs, and paving stones, they destroyed black churches and orphanages, and devastated entire blocks of black homes. Firemen who tried to extinguish the flames engulfing black-owned property were physically molested and verbally threatened by the white mob. One black person was killed and several others were severely injured (Runcie 23).

As Runcie describes, the rioters intimidated many black families to leave their homes. He concludes that there were a variety of motives that stirred collective violence, but he attributes most of the violence to a socio-economic competition between Irish immigrants and Blacks.

In *How The Irish Became White*, Noel Ignatiev also highlights the particulars of the "Flying Horse" race riot and Irish involvement in the attacks, claiming that the Irish attacked black property to eliminate them as economic competition and to place themselves more firmly within white privilege by showing allegiance towards the white supremacists agenda (Ignatiev 125-133). Though the Irish participated in the violence against blacks in Philadelphia, Lapsansky provides another explanation for the riots

against Philadelphia's black population. She argues that the targets of the riots were black elites and symbols of black success; therefore competition between the Irish and the black population for class position was not the major cause for the riot. She contends that whites were frustrated with blacks who had middle class respectability and plotted riots against visible signs of prosperity (*Africans in America*). White supremacists did not act alone; Irish antagonism helped to fuel the violence. However, it was mainly white jealousy that contributed to the devastation of the black community during the "Flying Horse" riot.

Three years later a mob burned down the abolitionist Pennsylvania Hall in 1838.

Samuel Otter notes,

when the light-skinned Robert Purvis helped his darker-skinned wife down from a carriage while attending the opening ceremonies at Pennsylvania Hall, the largest public meeting place in Philadelphia, newly dedicated to varieties of social reform and especially to the abolition of slavery, the gesture was perceived by spectators as an outrage of racial amalgamation. The moment, repeatedly invoked, helped to justify the burning of the Hall three days later. ("Still Life" 738)

It is important to read the incident Otter describes as a fight over black social rights rather than concluding that the riot erupted over amalgamation. Pennsylvania Hall emblemized black social and political progress. During the same year as the riot, Pennsylvania drafted a state constitution denying black males the right to vote and the abolitionist movements in the state could have helped to reinstate black voting rights.<sup>3</sup> The Hall was therefore burned because of the threat it represented to whites' political

---

<sup>3</sup> See Roy H. Akagi, "The Pennsylvania Constitution of 1838," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 48(4) 1924: 301-333.

monopolization. Whites sought to disenfranchise blacks, so they destroyed the space where blacks convened to advocate for political and social rights. The riot ultimately sent a message to blacks that their citizenship could only be exercised as much as whites would allow. In this sense, white public sentiment superseded blacks' civil rights by replacing the police power of the state government to protect its black citizens with the police power of white public sentiment to protect white privilege. Laura Lovell, a delegate of the Fall River Female Anti-Slavery Society, reports the complicity government officials exhibited toward white vigilantes on the day of the Pennsylvania hall burning: "It seemed to me that the police were very inefficient or they would not have suffered the boy to break the windows of a building where thousands of people were assembled by throwing stones upon them" (Lovell 12). The riot not only sent the message that blacks lacked legal protection, but also that whites would police black progress to protect their superiority through violence.

As the Flying Horse and Pennsylvania Hall riot illustrate, mob violence was directed towards black public spaces; however, as Paul Gilje points out, most of the violence during the riots targeted black middle class homes (Gilje 89). For example, in *The Philadelphia Negro*, DuBois comments on a Philadelphia riot where the majority of homes destroyed were owned by blacks: "A mob devastated the district between Fifth and Eighth streets, near Lombard street, assaulted and beat Negroes and looted their homes, burned down a Negro hall and a church; the following day the rioting extended to the section between South and Fitzwater street" (DuBois 29-30). DuBois describes the geographical significance of the race riot in black neighborhoods, specifically linking

white violence to black property. Why was it important for white Northerners to attack black domestic space? If free blacks were biologically and socially declared inferior, why were whites threatened by black progress? As Paul Gilje explains, race riots were necessary to maintain the myth of white identity whose foundation laid on the hierarchical construction of “race” (Gilje 94). Robert S. Levine’s study of early-nineteenth-century novels examines race riots as evident of the fears and anxieties about Black progress. He writes, “conspiratorial discourse more often than not manifests at its least flexible and more repressive a culture’s dominant ideology—the network of beliefs, values, and, especially fears and prejudices that help social groups to construct and make sense of their social identity and reality” (Levine 12). According to Levine’s premise, race riots can tell us something about the reality of white identity. If in fact whites were superior to blacks, they would have no need to contest their place through black property destruction. The riots in Philadelphia illustrate that white identity is not based on naturally superior attributes but on establishing, maintaining, and defending a racial system of wealth, power, and privilege. Black property ownership therefore created distress for whites because it visually signaled equal social, economic, and political status. Determined to keep the appearance of natural superiority, white supremacists not only instigated race riots, but also cast blacks as a threat to public order to justify racial violence and black exclusion. As blacks pressed their rights to full citizenship and social inclusion through property ownership, whites became extremely anxious about losing their sense of superiority and how black privilege would contest whites’ status as always, already superior.

CHAPTER III  
THE BLACK DOMESTIC SPACE AS A SIGNIFIER FOR BLACK  
CITIZENSHIP IN FRANK J. WEBB'S *THE GARIES AND THEIR FRIENDS*

Set in Philadelphia during the 1850s, Frank Webb's *The Garies and Their Friends* combines the historical race riots between 1834 and 1849. Because the riot in the novel is not traceable to a specific riot event, Webb creates a narrative that articulates the delusion of white supremacist identity while also highlighting black agency in combating racialized citizenship. This type of intentional indirect fictional representation calls attention to the socio-political context of the riot rather than the heinous act itself. Black agency is important to Webb's race riot narrative because it reveals the stakes in white violence.

The narrative reveals that white violence, as the quotidian expression of white supremacy, is not just an expression of prejudice or discrimination, but acts as a power that presents blacks as inferior so that whites can define themselves as superior. Property represents civil and social equality, so black property owners took away whites' power to label them as inferior while also exposing that no aspect of supremacy was inherent in whiteness. Moreover, blacks' privilege of owning property proved that whiteness was not a fixed social status but an unstable identity produced through racialization. The race riot narrative in *The Garies and Their Friends* then has a twofold

purpose: (1) to illustrate the presence of the free black middle class in nineteenth century Philadelphia; and (2) to redefine the terms of belonging and black citizenship. Webb's race riot narrative ultimately illustrates how black characters determine their own citizenship by rejecting the limitations of "race." *The Garies and Their Friends* provides a competing discourse to historical accounts, such as the race riot report John Runcie records in his study of the Flying Horse riot, that imagine blacks as scared, helpless, and weak in the face of white violence and replaces it with stories of black resistance, critiquing historical and social accounts that position blacks otherwise.

Frank Webb published *The Garies and Their Friends* in London in 1857, the same year that Chief Just Roger Taney delivered the majority opinion in *Scott v. Sandford*. During the year of its publication, the novel was not widely received in the United States, but a British reporter criticized Webb for not providing a sentimental account on the horrors of the black experience under slavery.<sup>4</sup> When the novel began to receive scholarly attention in the U.S., critics expressed the same sentiments as the *Sunday Times* reviewer claiming, "we do not find a direct attack on slavery anywhere" (Bell 42). In 1989, Blyden Jackson dismissed the novel as an accommodationist tale that provides an inauthentic portrait of the black middle class (Jackson 349). These dismissive claims ignore the historical specificity in which Webb writes *The Garies*. Contrary to the

---

<sup>4</sup> Phillip Lapsansky notes, "though the publisher had a distribution network [in the United States] scholars have not yet found record of any significant American responses" (28). "Afro-Americana: Frank J. Webb and His Friends," *Annual Report of the Library Company of Philadelphia for the Year 1990* (Philadelphia: Library Company of Philadelphia, 1991): 28.

belief that *all* blacks were enslaved from 1619 to 1865 as these critics seem to purport, Webb provides an account of the lived experience of free blacks in Philadelphia.

Webb's novel attempts to answer Stowe's question that prefaces the novel regarding black self-government and citizenship. Stowe asks, "Are the race at present held as slaves capable of freedom, self-government and progress" (Webb xix)? Legal debates in the United States on the status of blacks had taken on a particular currency in the Supreme Court with *Scott v. Sandford*. Stowe's questions that frame Webb's novel are a part of the discourse in the *Dred Scott* case, which interrogate the limitations of black citizenship. Prior to 1857, free blacks were not legally denied citizenship. Since no federal act specifically defined black status, Leon Litwack points out that "the Negro sometimes benefited from the existing confusion and exercised the rights of white citizens" (Litwack 50). In several states, free blacks had the right to vote, participate in the military, and hold public office (Wright 27-30). In particular, Richard Wright Jr. describes free black status in Pennsylvania as "a distinctly lower legal and social status than the white, though not so low as that of the slave" (30). As such, free blacks in Pennsylvania exercised privileges as quasi-citizens, but whites sought to disenfranchise them from the few rights they did possess in order to eliminate their competition for political, economic, and social control. Litwack notes,

In 1790, Congress limited naturalization to white aliens; in 1792, it organized the militia and restricted enrollment to able-bodied white male citizens; in 1810, it excluded Negroes from carrying the United States mails; in 1820, it authorized the citizens of Washington, D.C. to elect 'white' city officials and to adopt a code governing free Negroes and slaves. (Litwack 140)

In spite of these limitations, blacks still progressed, positioning them beyond slave status and drawing them closer to the privileges of whiteness (Schweniger 63).

*The Garies and Their Friends* begins with questions of “race” and citizenship as Webb tells the story of the Garies, “a family of peculiar construction,” composed of a wealthy, white southern planter, his pregnant, mulatto slave wife, and their near white complexioned children (Webb 1). We are introduced to the dynamics of the Garies’ relationship when Mrs. Garie makes a proposition to her husband that they move from their Southern plantation to the North. Mrs. Garie believes that her move to the Northern free states will guarantee her and her children’s right to freedom and social mobility. Mrs. Garie longs for her unborn child to be born in the Free states, exclaiming “it is a fearful thing to give birth to an inheritor of chains” (Webb 55). It is Mrs. Garie’s logic that moving to the North, where she legally has the ability to protect herself and her children through marriage, will grant her legal rights to Mr. Garie’s status and wealth.<sup>5</sup> According to Jeffery Clymer, the move North emphasizes the fact that Mrs. Garie and her children “successfully stake a claim to their white father’s property [and] represents Webb’s effort to rewrite the racially exploitative property laws. Their claim enacts a monumental effort to transform slaves into persons with legally defensible economic rights” (Clymer 223). Mrs. Garie and her children’s potential inheritance from Mr. Garie contradict the legal/social racial hierarchy that declares blacks cannot inherit the rights of citizenship because they were an “inferior class of beings, who had been subjugated by the dominant

---

<sup>5</sup> See *Hinds v. Brazeale* 43 U.S. 837 (1838); *Vance v. Crawford* 4 Ga 445 (1848); and *Mitchell v. Wells* 37 Miss 235 (1859) for examples of court cases that all resulted from white slave masters attempting to leave property to black women and their children.

race, and, whether emancipated or not, remained subject to their authority” (*Scott v. Sandford* 405). Ultimately Mrs. Garie and her children force Mr. Stevens and other whites in the novel to consider the hierarchal consequences of inheritance across the color line and how that privilege inverts black subjugation and black socioeconomic status.

Mrs. Garie’s attempt to free herself from slave status and move North to claim protection as a free black citizen in Philadelphia is met by white Northern aggression when whites become aware of her black identity. When the Stevenses, their white supremacist neighbors, find out that Mrs. Garie and her children are black, they go to great lengths to displace them from their home and community. The Stevens represent white supremacists in Philadelphia history who attempted to disenfranchise blacks economically through violent displacement. In particular, The Flying Horse riot illustrates how white supremacists planned riots in black communities in order to intimidate black families to leave their homes. Using reports from a committee that investigated The Flying Horse riot, Harper Barnes explains that whites violently attacked black homes because they felt that “blacks were flooding the labor market, driving down wages, and taking jobs away from whites” (Barnes 8).

Webb explicates the financial motivation behind race riots in Philadelphia by detailing Mr. Stevens’s riot conspiracy as a plot to gain access to black property cheaply and resell it at a higher value for profit. For Stevens, the riot serves as a means to acquire resources and ensure that he had social and economic power. His confrontation with Mr. Walters, the black man who he rents his home from, demonstrates social and economic

subordination to blacks in the novel. Stevens tells his wife, “I wanted some money of him the other day on rather ticklish securities for a client of mine, and the black wretch kept me standing in his hall for at least five minutes, and then refused me” (Webb 126). For a black man to keep a white man waiting violates the unwritten social law that positions blacks always, already subordinate to whites. Stevens’s contempt for Mr. Walters stems from his social and financial dependence on a black man. Instead of expressing his anger toward Mr. Walters’s “hauteur,” Stevens has to “be as mild as milk with him” because Walters has financial power over Stevens (Webb 126). In order to reestablish his social control as a white man and black subjugation, Stevens “sacrifice[s] conscience and everything else to the acquisition of wealth” (Webb 127). As such, Stevens plans a race riot to rob blacks of their social and economic rights so that he can have greater access to those privileges.

Stevens’s social position is further threatened by Mrs. Garie and her children, because of their association with Southern white aristocracy. According to Stevens’s family history, he is the son of Garie’s aunt who had been cast out by her family because of her decision to marry a poor white carpenter from New York. Despite her father’s commands to her to “connect herself with any of the highest families in the State” Steven’s mother decides to marry a “greasy mechanic” (Webb 102). Stevens is the only child his mother had from her low marriage, and he is estranged from his grandfather’s slave wealth. The wealth that Stevens does attain is not inherited, but rather results from his “disreputable legal practice” and his “slipperiness” (Webb 125). Amy Schrager Lang notes that the description of him as “Slippery George” mirrors the instability of his social

status (Lang 58). His family history reveals the myth behind his social and economic status. Stevens's white supremacy is therefore called into question. How can the Stevens maintain they are socially and economically superior if Mrs. Garie and her children enjoy the same power and prestige through inheritance and property ownership?

The Garies' home as a black domestic space upsets the racist formula that equates "whiteness" with freedom, entitlement, and ownership and blackness with limitations, subordination, and servitude. According to Stevens, it is bad enough that they rent their home from Walters, but their worst fear came true when he put "a family of niggers" in the house next door (Webb 129). Although Mr. Garie is a white man, the Garie household is considered a black domestic space, a black "lived in" space that is both owned and occupied by blacks, and most importantly, will be passed down to generations of black inheritors. The legitimacy of Garie's marriage to Emily symbolically disinherits Stevens from white patriarchal control. Though Mrs. Garie's move to the North and marriage to Mr. Garie transforms her status from slave to quasi-citizen, she could not escape white supremacists' sentiments that blacks needed to be kept in an inferior status. Stevens felt the need to protect his economic and social position by violently destroying the Garies' home, stealing the Garie children's inheritance, and stealing black property. After Stevens kills Mr. Garie in the riot, his lawyer, Mr. Balch tells Mr. Walters, "He proves himself, undoubtedly, to be the first cousin of Mr. Garie. You are, no doubt, aware that these children being the offspring of a slave-woman, cannot inherit, in this State (Webb 253). The papers that Mr. Balch claims proves Stevens as "undoubtedly" the first cousin of Mr. Garie disinherits the Garie children from their white father's wealth and gives

Stevens authority to claim their inheritance. The Garie children only have access to their father's estate if Mr. Stevens "prove to be a man of generosity" (Webb 253). They are completely at the mercy of Stevens for financial support, which places Stevens in a superior position to determine the distribution of wealth. Thus, just as the white rioters in Philadelphia illustrate, violence appears as the only means Stevens sees to stop black socioeconomic competition for fear that they would take away white access to economic power.

Whether Mrs. Garie's right as a black woman to socioeconomic mobility was written in the law as a part of her privileges to citizenship or not, Mrs. Garie reaps the benefits of social citizenship because of her marriage places her in an economic position where she is able to enjoy material possessions that Stevens attempts to monopolize. As such, Webb demonstrates how social citizenship supersedes legal citizenship because it enforces and challenges belonging through everyday interactions. The lived experience of Mrs. Garie is particularly illuminating because her story demonstrates blacks' ability to change their social position from slave to citizen through space (Mrs. Garie's move to the North and the black domestic space she owns because of that movement) and illustrates how citizenship is not simply a fixed legal status, but a fluid status that is produced through social practices.

As such, Mrs. Garie's character disrupts the theory of whiteness as property and of white only, white inherited citizenship that ensures whites have primary claim to social, economic, and political privilege. Mrs. Garie causes a disjunction in the white socioeconomic hierarchy, and the first attempt to prohibit her mobility is expressed

through Uncle John's attempt to persuade his nephew, Mr. Garie, not to marry a black woman so that he would maintain "pure" family lines. Uncle John warns,

As long as you live here in Georgia you can sustain your present connection with impunity, and if you should ever want to break it off, you could do so by sending her and the children away [...] But go to the North and it becomes a different thing [...] When I am gone, you will be the last of our name; I had hoped that you would have done something to keep it from sinking into obscurity. (Webb 100-101)

Uncle John tries to encourage Mr. Garie to keep his sexual relationship with his slave by staying in the South, which would prohibit Mrs. Garie from having any claim to the family's wealth and property, and in Clymer's formulation, "Uncle John tries to prevent personal intimacy from affecting the white privileging, larger structure of property distribution in America" (Clymer 221). I further Clymer's claim by adding that Uncle John seeks to make sure Mrs. Garie does not inherit the family's estate so that his white family could easily acquire wealth.

The pattern of using white inheritance cloaked in familial discourse is also situated within Stevens's plan for the race riot. The race riot narrative begins with the chapter titled, "Mr. Stevens makes a Discovery," where readers learn that Mr. Stevens is sent papers that were "time worn and yellow with age" (Webb 164). The content of the letters is not revealed to the reader; however, one can assume that the papers link him to his thwarted family inheritance and establish him as Mr. Garie's cousin. In order to claim his possession of the Garie family fortune, Stevens plots a race riot to kill Garie and his family and steal other black property for financial gain. After his marriage to Mrs. Garie, Mr. Garie completed a will executed by Mr. Balch, giving his wife and his children legal

claim to his estate. Just as Uncle John had promised Mr. Garie that “heirs would spring up from somewhere,” Steven proves himself to be the first cousin of Mr. Garie after he kills him in the riot. The will was destroyed by Stevens during the riot; however, his lawyer claims that the Garie children “being the offspring of a slave woman, cannot inherit, in this State” (253). As in the Pennsylvania Hall riot in 1838, which was instigated because of supposed instances of racial amalgamation that the abolitionist committee tolerated, the Garies represent the threat interracial relationships pose to white economic status. As John Runcie notes, white reports on race riots minimize if not erase the importance of economic competition between blacks and whites as a cause of race riots by arguing that the violence was primarily a reaction to the rise of the abolition movement and the supposed threat of racial amalgamation (Runcie 196). These factors were certainly a part of Philadelphia’s racial tension, but Webb points out that the charge of abolitionism represents white fear of interracial mixing that in effect produces black socioeconomic equality. The main purpose of Stevens’s riot plot is to kill Mr. Garie and steal Mrs. Garie and her children’s inheritance, but Stevens’s plans would be uncalled for if his rights to familial inheritance and economic supremacy were absolute. Webb’s depiction of the riot Stevens organizes illustrates the real motivation behind white supremacist violence as white fear of black economic progress—a fact that contemporary white accounts attempt to erase. Therefore, Stevens’s riot plan was based on two aims: maintaining the illusion of white supremacy through “white only” property ownership; and overturning the Garie children’s financial inheritance to ensure that they would not upset the white economic hierarchy.

Webb further illustrates how the threat of black inheritance is a key antagonism fueling the race riot through Stevens and Mr. Morton's conversation about the disgrace of black property ownership and the plan to move blacks out of spaces that should belong to the white elite. Immediately after Stevens reads the mysterious letters concerning his relation to the Garie estate, Mr. Morton walks in and inquires about the tenth street property he is trying to procure. Stevens tells him, "I am afraid you will be compelled to abandon your building speculation in that quarter until his [black property owner's] demise—he is old and feeble and can't last many years; in the event of his death you may be able to effect some more favorable arrangement with his heirs" (Webb 166). Stevens's advice that Morton compromise with the heirs of the tenth street estate demonstrates that whites not only shared space with blacks but also that they recognized black property rights. Webb positions Morton and Stevens's conversation as a confession of black rights as social citizens. In order to disenfranchise blacks, Stevens conspires a riot plan that he proposes will grant the socioeconomic position he and Mr. Morton seek:

Hear my plan, and then you can decide. In the first place, you know as well as I that a very strong feeling exists in the community against the Abolitionist, and very properly too; this feeling requires to be guided into some proper current, and I think we can give it that necessary guidance, and at the same time render to subservient to our own purposes. You are probably aware that a large amount of property in the lower part of the city is owned by niggers; and if we can create a mob and direct it against them, they will be glad to leave that quarter, and remove further up into the city for security and protection. Once [we] get the mob thoroughly aroused, and have the leaders under our control, and we may direct its energies against any parties we desire; and we can render the district so unsafe, that property will be greatly lessened in value—the houses will rent poorly, and many proprietors will be happy to sell at very reduced prices. (Webb 166)

Stevens draws on white public sentiment towards abolitionists and their agenda to change the social hierarchy between whites and blacks. As Robert Nowatzki notes, “white racist also ostracized whites who married people blacks or mulattos, often accusing them of supporting abolition, a doctrine that anti-abolitionist saw as a dangerous form of ‘social equality’” (Nowatzki 31). Stevens’s anger towards abolitionists is expressed through his comment about Mr. Garie’s marriage to Mrs. Garie, labeling him as “one of those infernal abolitionists, and one of the very worst kind; he lives with a nigger woman—and what is more, he married her!” (Webb 179). According to Stevens, white supremacists’ disgust for abolitionists was not only because they attempted to break the link between master and slave, but also because the abolition of slavery would legally and socially change the subordinate status of blacks, affording them the opportunity to compete for social, economic, and political power on equal levels with whites. According to Stevens’s plan, he will use abolitionism as an excuse to mobilize public sentiment against black property owners whose homes visually represent the social and economic equality among “races” that abolitionists advocate. According to Stevens, directing the riot towards black domestic spaces will help to eliminate any social or economic equality between whites and blacks.

The riot plans also demonstrate how public sentiment acts as a form of police power that eclipses the state’s obligation to protect blacks’ rights. Stevens continues explaining his riot plan by detailing how he will manipulate political elections so that those who are supposed to protect the blacks will “wink at the disturbances.” He starts putting his riot plan in action by encouraging “several disturbances, in which a number of

inoffensive coloured people had been injured in their persons and property” (Webb 175). According to the narrator, “although the authorities in the district had received the most positive information of the nefarious schemes of the rioters, they had not made the slightest efforts to protect the poor creatures threatened in their persons or property, but let the tide of lawlessness flow on unchecked” (Webb 203). As White argues, because white attacks went unpunished, blacks lost their faith in the reliability of police protection (White 296). Though politicians had a legal obligation to protect blacks against white vigilantism, Webb illustrates how the Pennsylvania government illegal helped to disenfranchise blacks by not protecting blacks’ legal rights and by allowing white public sentiment to take over as police power. Just as Laura Lovell observed the indifference of police officials during the Pennsylvania Hall burning, Webb demonstrates how the state and federal government failed to provide police protection for its black citizens, which sent the message that white public sentiment held power over the government to decide what rights and privileges blacks could exercise.

Although the Garies are Stevens’s primary target for the riot as described earlier, Mr. Walters’s and the Ellises’ homes are also objects of his racial aggression because they represent “the proportion of blacks in Philadelphia [...] in the early nineteenth century [who] threatened the precarious racial hierarchy” (Nash 173). More emphasis is given to themes of miscegenation and inheritance surrounding Mrs. Garie and her children, yet much of the narrative takes place on Mr. Walters’s property. While, as I have demonstrated, the Garies represent a threat to white lines of property inheritance, Mr. Walters and the Ellises illustrate whites’ intimidation by black independent

socioeconomic mobility. As Robert Reid-Pharr argues, the Ellises and Mr. Walters are separated from the Garies because their homes represent an authentic black space, but it seems that Reid Pharr essentializes the black home as representative of a unified environment that does not account for difference within the “pure” black space (Reid-Pharr 74). More concretely, I argue that Webb purposefully separates the Ellises’ black domestic space from Mr. Walters’s home socioeconomically to reveal how black domestic space as a whole, whether it be “pure,” racially ambiguous, middle class, or bourgeois, deconstructs white ideologies of “race.” I agree with Anna Engle’s claim that “African Americans offend the white mob not merely because of their skin color but also because of their enviable class position” (Engle 158). Mr. Walters is described as the “Negro of property,” who occupies a “stately house” richly decorated with “elegantly carved furniture” (121). His wealth is matched by his political power; he is rich enough to buy the hotel that refuses him service, and he has enough political presence to demand an audience with the Philadelphia mayor to protect the black community against the riot (Webb 126-203). Even when the government fails, he stands in and uses his home as protection against white rioters. Mr. Walters represents the ideal of social, economic, and political power that white men wish to attain through their construction of “race.” For whites’ ideal of their own identity to fall on a man who is “of jet black complexion” (121) denies the logic that free blacks during the antebellum period had no claims to citizenship. If blacks were not legal citizens of the U.S. and if their state citizenship rights were limited, Mr. Walter’s character demonstrates how blacks included themselves as social citizens by gaining recognition as public participants in the economic market.

Stevens himself acknowledges the power that Mr. Walters has, declaring, “there is not a better man of business in the whole of Philadelphia than that same Walters, nigger as he is” (Webb 126). Stevens uses Mr. Walter’s socioeconomic position as a reputable businessman as “reputation evidence” that, for a moment, places him outside descriptions of “race.” Ariela Gross uses the term “reputation evidence” to refer to “testimony about a person’s acceptance in the community, including the person’s associations with blacks or whites and the racial status his neighbors assigned to him—what he ‘passed for’” (Gross 147). While Mr. Walters receives hesitant respect for his social position, he does not look for white validation to support his identity. Gross suggests that “reputation evidence” is linked to passing; however, passing indicates that there is a degree of racial performativity—that blacks are “acting white” to receive social recognition. While there are certain privileges of whiteness that Mr. Walters possesses, he does not base his identity on white standards or what constitutes white respectability.<sup>6</sup> Instead of working for and through whites to create a space for himself in the community, Mr. Walters is an

---

<sup>6</sup> Robert Nowatzki claims that Webb’s novel deemphasizes “race” to make an argument about class. I agree with Nowatzki’s definition of class as “a set of values, behaviors, manners, and styles of dress traditionally associated with certain socioeconomic class” (34), but I disagree with his formulation that links those attributes to a “performance of ‘whiteness’” (36). On these grounds Nowatzki still normalizes white identity leaving no room for an “authentic” black middle class. Otter voices the risk in conflating class with whiteness in “Frank Webb’s *Still Life*: Rethinking Literature and Politics through “The Garies and Their Friends.” Otter notes that black literatures presenting the black middle class are often criticized for “adopted white middle class values of industry, frugality, circumspection, and moral punity in a bid for social acceptance” (728). Whites, however, failed to live up to these ideals themselves, so to strictly attribute positive characteristics as white feeds into the white superiority ideology. For a critique of Otter see John Ernest, “Still Life, With Bones: A Response to Samuel Otter” *American Literary History* 20(4): 2008, 753-765.

entrepreneur and in fact urges the Ellises to make their son Charlie economically independent, saying, “The boy that learns to sell matches soon learns to sell other things; he learns to make bargains; he becomes a small trader, then a merchant, then a millionaire” (Webb 63).

To the extent that whiteness is associated with economic opportunity and success, the Ellises represent as much of a disturbance to the racial logic of white Americans as Mr. Walters even though they come from a different socioeconomic background. The Ellises are working class blacks. Mr. Ellis is a carpenter, the Ellis women sew for white families, and Mr. and Mrs. Ellis’s son, Charlie, is hired out to work in white homes. Carla Peterson claims that the Ellises acknowledge black dependence on white social and economic structure (Peterson 578). Although they rely on the white domestic space to make a living, the Ellises are still a self-reliant family that manages to own their home—a privilege that that the Stevenses cannot afford. Their home is of modest taste and lacks the luxurious decorations of Mr. Walters’s home, yet their house is still a target in the riot. Though the Ellises are not as wealthy as Mr. Walters, their home is burned during the riot because it represents social and economic equality and because doing so moves economic power from black hands to white pockets. In fact, they endure more effects of the riot than any other black characters mentioned in the text. Ellis is caught by the mob on his way to warn the Garies of the surmounting violence, and his hands are mutilated, depriving him of the economic resource to continue his carpentry business.<sup>7</sup> The attack

---

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed analysis of Mr. Ellis’s psychological trauma after being mutilated by the white rioters see Stephen Knadler’s *Traumatized Racial Performativity*.

on the Ellis family illustrates how black socio-economic mobility jeopardizes whites' complete control of economic resources. Critics often associate the Ellises and Mr. Walters's success as white mimicry. These black characters however, can be read as representative of black prosperity that emerges despite oppressive white constraints. It is therefore the Ellises' home, Mr. Walters's success, the presence of blackness separated from white connotations of inferiority that compel Stevens and his rioters into violent action.

Webb writes against white public sentiment that attempts to deny black sociopolitical power. Instead of characterizing the black community as powerless, he illustrates how they declare their right for full citizenship by making the home an uncontested site "of presence and definition" (Reid Pharr 79). In spite of the fact that the government should have protected their rights during the riot, the black community positions Walters's home as a place where they could literally fight for their rights as citizens. The narrator notes, "the authorities of the district had received the most positive information of the nefarious schemes of the rioters, [but] they had not made the slightest efforts to protect the poor creatures threatened in their persons and property, but let the tide of lawlessness flow on unchecked" (Webb 203). White rioters used extra legal means to deny blacks their rights as citizens, yet the state refused to protect them. Instead of becoming poor creatures threatened by white violence, the black community uses Mr. Walters's home not only as a "protective fortress," but also as a defensive strategy against disenfranchisement. Tapping into the cultural and political power of the black domestic space as a sign of citizenship, Webb emphasizes black property in his race riot

narrative to unveil whites' struggle in maintaining the ideology of "race" based on white superiority and black subjugation. According to Amy Lang, "the black home unwrites race—that is, offers respite from a social universe organized around racial distinctions, thereby challenging the saliency of those distinctions—it is perpetually under siege by those who profit from the maintenance of racial difference" (Lang 49). Through Walters's leadership, the black community is able to defend themselves against white encroachers through strategic use of rifles and pistols, stones, and cleaning concoctions. John Runcie notes that many of the white newspapers reporting on the Philadelphia riot of 1834 describe blacks as victims, running helpless away from their homes because they were so intimidated by white rioters (Runcie 190). Webb, however, counters the white depiction of black powerlessness by characterizing the black community as a collective power against white attempts to subordinate them by driving them out of their homes.

*The Garies* represents violence as a means for Stevens to monopolize access to economic resources, eliminating blacks as competition. The narrative that Webb creates through the riot establishes that whites are threatened by prosperous blacks who limited whites' access to economic power. As previously mentioned in Chapter II, whites sought to contest black status in free states by placing limitations on black privileges through fugitive slave laws. Blacks however still continued to prosper, so whites used extra legal means, such as race riots, to enforce black subjugation. Webb sets *The Garies and Their Friends* in Pennsylvania, which is a free state that recognizes blacks as citizens of the state, to illustrate the means whites had to use since they could not maintain control over blacks through the violence that the institution of slavery sanctions. Stevens suggests that

a riot is the only means to inscribe power and submission onto free space(s) in the North. The race riot therefore provides him with the necessary means to police hierarchies of race and to ensure that his position would not be disturbed.

Though Stevens is the main conspirator of the race riot, he uses McCloskey, an Irish rabble-rouser, and his ambition to be a participator in white privilege to disenfranchise the black middle class. Stevens is able to hide his insecurities behind McCloskey so that the race riot can be cast as a battle among lower class populations. Anna Engle claims that Irish involvement in Philadelphia race riots was a fight for class position with poor blacks:

Between 1845 and 1889, approximately three million Irish immigrated to the United States especially during the famine decade of 1845-1855 [...] the majority were extremely impoverished and poorly educated. Although not enslaved, in their educational and financial status Irish immigrants in this decade resembled the majority of African Americans. (Engle 151)

According to Engle, most Irish immigrants matched the low social status of blacks but used their skin privilege to forge an alliance with whites to promote white supremacy. Interestingly, Engle fails to connect the historical context of the Irish she provides to an analysis of *The Garies and Their Friends*, and in fact, McCloskey is never mentioned in the article. A straightforward comparison of the Irish to Webb's fictional characterization of McCloskey cannot be made because as Emma Lapsansky points out, poor blacks were not targets in Philadelphia riots but rather black elites.

Webb highlights the racial tension between the Irish and the black elites in Philadelphia by illustrating the socioeconomic self-interest the Irish had in subjugating

the black middle class. Depicted as a law breaking, poor immigrant whose speech and attire opposite from the white and black characters, McCloskey has less wealth and social respectability than the black characters in the novel. Stevens bribes McCloskey to instigate the riot by promising him racial privilege, but as Robert Nowatzki notes, McCloskey becomes white only as it benefits Stevens's plan to steal blacks' wealth and property. Stevens tells McCloskey, "I want the place made so hot down there that the niggers can't stay. Go a-head, don't give them any rest—I'll protect you from the consequences, whatever they be: I've great things in store for you" (Webb 176-177). With McCloskey's help, Stevens is able to subjugate blacks socioeconomically by violently removing them from their homes. Stevens offers McCloskey the privilege of white protection and financial security that will enable him to "return to Ireland a moneyed man" only if he follows Stevens commands (177). Stevens uses McCloskey's desire for racial privilege to create a white supremacist agenda that subjugates blacks and ensures his unlimited access to social and economic power.

As the end of the novel illustrates, however, even Stevens's social power over McCloskey is false. Stevens allows McCloskey's participation in white supremacy, but Stevens still attempts to exert authority over him declaring, "You shall do as I wish: you are in my power! I need your services, and I will have them—make up your mind to that" (Webb 177). McCloskey reverses the power Stevens claims to have by blackmailing Stevens for the money he took from the Garie children after he killed their father. McCloskey continually threatens to expose Stevens as a murderer—an exposure that would not affect Stevens's known "slippery" reputation, but reveal his false claim to

economic prosperity. McCloskey threatens, “How would you like to make yer appearance at court so fine moring on the charge of murther, eh” (Webb 315)? McCloskey’s question highlights the illegal path Stevens took to claim inheritance of the Garie estate, and also raises questions about why Stevens needed to murder in order to claim economic superiority. What was it about the elite black community, and the Garie family in particular, that posed a threat to Stevens? Why was violence the only appropriate action for Stevens’s plan, and more importantly why did Stevens need to hide it? Webb’s race riot narrative names the real motivation behind Stevens’s actions. Stevens murders the Garies, creates a race riot, and covers up his actions through McCloskey in order to shield the illegal measures he took to gain access to wealth. Any admission of direct involvement would make Stevens’s claim to superiority skeptical and call into question the validity of his privileges based on whiteness. The fact that Stevens is white does not give him exclusive rights to socioeconomic privilege. White public sentiment attempted to link citizenship to white privilege, but as Jordan notes, the ideal citizen was not simply a political subject but also a propertied one: “the ideas of freedom and equal rights were intimately linked with the concept of private material property” (Jordan 350). His statement reveals how social citizenship manifested through the black domestic space gave blacks the right to make claims for social and economic power that are linked to white ideas of full citizenship.

Part of Webb’s purpose in emphasizing the race riot in *The Garies and Their Friends* is to create a narrative that shifts the focus away from legal definitions of citizenship to social belonging. Through the narrative surrounding the race riot, Webb

reframes black citizenship as a social conception rather than a pure legal formality, and as Webb argues, the reality of black social citizenship is continually contested through white violence. As the British critic observes in the 1857 review of *The Garies and Their Friends*, the race riot is the most important scene in the novel.<sup>8</sup> Webb frames the riot in the middle of his novel because it provides an account of black citizenship for free blacks in antebellum Philadelphia.

---

<sup>8</sup> Among the few scholarly sources on *The Garies and Their Friends* is a dissertation by Rosemary Faye Crocket, "The Garies and Their Friends: A Study of Frank J. Webb and His Novel" Ph.D diss., Harvard University, 1998 providing extensive research on the novel's reception history. She notes that the *Sunday Times* review consisted largely of an excerpt on the race riot on Walters's property (205).

CHAPTER IV  
BLACK CITIZENSHIP POST-RECONSTRUCTION AND THE 1898 WILMINGTON  
RACE RIOT

As Frank Webb's race riot narrative illustrates, racial tension between whites and free blacks during the antebellum period arose because of the rise in black socioeconomic power. During the antebellum period, free blacks were denied their rights to substantive citizenship by white supremacists who wanted full social and economic control. Black competition was curtailed by race riots as an extralegal means to enact white public sentiment against blacks' full participation in public life. In 1857, the *Dred Scott* decision which declared that blacks were not citizens of the United States legalized the well-established sentiment that blacks had no place in American society. The passage of the Reconstruction Amendments, guaranteeing black emancipation and the rights of black males to vote, granted blacks U.S. citizenship. Emancipation, however, did not indicate how much blacks would be allowed to participate in the body politic. Did blacks now hold the same rights and privileges as whites? Did emancipation grant blacks substantive citizenship?

In an attempt to answer these questions, the Civil Rights Act of 1866 provided blacks with full rights and privileges of citizenship:

All persons born in the United States and not subject to any foreign power, excluding Indians not taxed, are hereby declared to be citizens of the United States: and such citizens of every race and color, shall have the same right in every State and territory of the United States, to make and enforce contracts, to sue, be parties, and give evidence, to inherit, purchase, lease, sell hold, and convey real and personal property, and to full and equal benefits of all laws and proceeding for the security of person and property, as is enjoyed by white citizens, and shall be subject to like punishments, pains, and penalties, and to none other, any statute, ordinance, regulation, or custom to the contrary notwithstanding. (Civil Rights Act of 1866, 14 Stat. 27)

This act guaranteed the promise of full citizenship for blacks which previously had been held exclusively by whites. The Civil Rights Act blurred the line between black and white rights and privileges, with a central characteristic of citizenship being the rights to property ownership. Black property was protected by the federal government through the Fourteenth Amendment that declares it unconstitutional to “deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.” Reconstruction not only meant a change for America’s black population, but whites were also confronted with an identity crisis that literally stared them in the face when they looked outside their windows at neighboring black homes.

The Fifteenth Amendment gave “the right of [male] citizens of the United States to vote,” without regard to “race, color, or previous condition of servitude,” and as Nancy Bentley and Sandra Gunning point out, after the Civil War, Congress barred whites who had fought against the union in the war from political positions, which made way for blacks to enter the political sphere. Working with Republicans, who for the most part supported black political mobility, blacks used their political power to rewrite laws restricting blacks from testifying in court, traveling freely, obtaining education, and

owning property (9). At the beginning of Reconstruction, there was a wave of blacks nationwide who participated in the voting privileges of citizenship.

In particular, North Carolina had a large group of black voters who frustrated white political domination. At the end of the nineteenth century, Wilmington was the largest city in North Carolina with a high population of black residents who voted for the Fusionist ticket. According to Leon Prather, “Wilmington was one of the best cities for blacks in the American South” in the later nineteenth century because the 1894 political campaigns had succeeded in unseating the white supremacist Democratic Party—a defeat that led to more political and economic power for the black community (Pranther 16). North Carolina politics had been in a state of upheaval during the 1890s as the Republican party began to merge with the white, working class Populist Party, and blacks developing the Fusionist Party (Edmonds 8). The new political party made it possible for blacks to gain stronger political power by revising election laws (Anderson 145). The Democratic Party began losing its voting base and from 1894-1898, and the Fusionist Party held state political power in North Carolina. Eric Anderson notes that the Fusionists’ economic policies granting blacks wealth through their political power led Democrats to use “drastic” measures to regain control of the state (Anderson 252). Further, he argues that white supremacist Democratic leaders used the rhetoric of “Negro domination,” which was “shorthand for the notion that the interest of white men were threatened by the improving political status of blacks” (255). For blacks to have political power meant that they had a chance to control the distribution of wealth and property.

Edmonds records how Democrats embarked on a “white supremacy campaign” to overtake the Fusionist Part and disenfranchise black voters, which culminated in the Wilmington race riot of 1898. Before the riot took place, the Democrats attempted to restrict black voting rights. First, in 1865 and 1866, the South passed “Black Codes,” separate laws modeled in part on the antebellum laws restricting free blacks in both the North and South. These laws restricted African Americans’ basic contract and property rights, imposed particularly severe criminal and vagrancy punishments, and otherwise established a legal basis for second-class citizenship. In particular, Frenise A. Logan notes how the North Carolina legislature began taking steps to decrease the voting power of blacks between 1877 and 1894. He writes, “The legislative session of 1876-1877 fired the opening barrage when it passed a series of suffrage qualification laws [...] The wide, almost autocratic powers granted to the registrars and judges of elections, the residence requirements, and the right of one voter to challenge another” (Logan 55). These North Carolina laws ultimately reduced the number of Black voters in the state. As David Brown and Clive Webb point out, denying blacks the right to vote on the basis of their “race” was a violation of blacks’ Fifteenth Amendment rights. However, states held constitutional conventions to accomplish black disenfranchisement through “legal subterfuge” (187). Wilmington’s determination of black citizenship rights were primarily based on white public sentiment. Whites felt the loss of political and economic control so they sought to limit black citizenship in the social sphere. However, as Brown and Webb highlight, disenfranchisement laws did not result in a sudden or total loss of blacks’ political rights, so what white supremacists could not achieve through manipulating the

law, they carried out through violence on black communities (185). Despite attempts to disenfranchise blacks, the black middle class never faded from the body politic. Violence then, as Elizabeth Grace Hale suggests, was used to counter black success and maintain the myth of absolute white racial control. Whites often created stories about blacks breaking southern race relation codes in order to justify their violent actions and cast them as a police protection for the good of the public.

One such opportunity arose in Wilmington, North Carolina when Alexander Manly, the black editor of *Daily Record*, printed a response to Rebecca Felton's call for white men to "lynch a thousand times a week if necessary" in protecting white women from black rapists (Bently and Gunning 411). According to Manly, Felton's plea was a false cry for help. He declares that white women "are not any more particular in the matter of clandestine meetings with colored men than are the white men with colored women. Meetings of this kind go on for some time until the woman's infatuation or the man's boldness bring attention to them and the man is lynched for rape" (Bently and Gunning 408). By creating the black male rape myth, white women erased the fact that they possessed the same sexual desire for black men that white men had for black women.<sup>9</sup> Outraged at the claims Manly made in his article, white newspapers reprinted the story with headlines like "Negro Editor Slanders White Women," "Negro Defamer of

---

<sup>9</sup> For further readings on the southern rape complex, see Jane Dailey, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Lisa Lundquist Dorr, *White Women, Rape, and the Power of Race in Virginia 1900-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Martha Hodes, *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth-Century South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

White Women,” and “Infamous Attack on White Women” which were used as a rallying cry to unite men throughout North Carolina around the protection of white women and the purity of the white race (Prather 73).

These headlines place emphasis on white womanhood as something to be protected rather than a person. As Jacquelyn Dowd Hall claims, the image of a hypersexual black male “thrust [white women] in the role of personal property or sexual objects, ever threatened by black men’s lust, ever in need of white men’s protection” (Hall 339). On one hand, the conflation of white women with property represents the white sentiment that white women’s sexuality must be protected to maintain the purity of the race. One way whites maintain political, social, and economic domination is through bloodlines and inheritance. Thus, sexual intercourse between white women and black men meant that black men had the opportunity to change the racial geography and claim wealth through white inheritance. On the other hand, the claim of miscegenation served as a convenient excuse for whites to target black men who threatened white economic power and social privilege. As African Americans made political and economic progress during the postbellum era, whites often expressed fear of black competition by focusing on black male sexuality and the need to protect white women from purported threats to their purity. Successful black men challenged the security of whites’ wealth, so to combat black males’ success, white racists began disseminating images of animalistic black rapists who preyed on the purity of white women. According to Andrea Meryl Kirshenbaum, “the myth of ‘negro domination’ over white womanhood became the powerful tool that the white supremacists used throughout their campaign to dismantle

African Americans' political and economic power and to restore Democratic hegemony.” One of the central aims of police power is to establish public happiness and maintenance of public welfare, therefore, white politicians used the image of the black male rapist to legitmate lynching and race riots as police power (Hartman 199).

Reprints of Manly's article in white newspapers spoke of racial amalgamation, economic and political “Negro domination,” and Republican corruption that undoubtedly created fear for whites who had based their economic success on politically and socially subjugating blacks. As Edmonds notes, Manly's article was not reprinted to make the white public aware of black male rapists, but was instead reissued around election time to convince the white public that they needed to free themselves of black terrorism (Edmonds 159). Organized by Furnifold M. Simmons, chairman of the Democratic Party, and led by Charles B. Aycock, Robert Glenn, and Francis Winston, the Democrats launched a “White Supremacy Crusade” and used the white newspapers as a vehicle to play on the fears of “Negro domination” to pull white voters away from the Fusionist ticket (146 Bishir). Edmonds documents two white newspapers in particular, *The Morning Star* and *The Messenger*, that claimed that Wilmington had degenerated economically and socially under “Negro rule” (Edmonds 159). According to Edmonds, white newspapers reported,

Negroes were in the majority in Wilmington and voted slavishly the Republican ticket. They also related that the Fusionist permitted Negroes to hold many offices, insisting on substituting ignorant officeholders for intelligent ones; allowed Negro police flagrantly to arrest whites; willfully and maliciously turned the city over to Negro rule; tried to force upon Wilmington social equality between the races. (158)

The articles printed in Democratic newspapers were designed to stir white public sentiment towards a sense of racial exclusiveness through which whites could protect their privileges of social and economic superiority that blacks were equalizing through their political power.

The white supremacist rhetoric reached a breaking point in Wilmington on November 10, 1898 when a white mob led by Alfred Moore Waddell burned the offices of the *Daily Record*, the headquarters of Alexander Manly's black newspaper. An armed crowd of whites invaded Wilmington's black neighborhood not only burning Manly's press, but also destroying other black property. Encouraged by their success of driving blacks from the city during the riot, the rioters coerced the mayor and other local Fusionist officials to resign. They held an unofficial election the day after the riot which placed the Democratic Party back in the political position of power. Waddell declared that whites needed to rid Wilmington of "Negro rule," "even if [they] have to choke the Cape Fear River with [black] carcasses" (Pranther 26). Waddell's declaration reflects the extralegal methods whites used to prevent whites' economic control from eroding.

After the riot, many of the newspaper accounts downplay white involvement in the instigation of violence. For example, on the day after the riot *The Wilmington Morning Star* reports:

Bloody Conflict with Negroes White Men Forced to Take Up Arms for the Preservation of Law and Order BLACKS PROVOKE TROUBLE Negro Newspaper Plant Destroyed—The Whites Fired Upon by Negroes—The Firing Returned—The Killed and Wounded—State Guarded Out. The testimony of the witnesses before the coroner's jury will prove conclusively that the Negroes were the aggressors in the unfortunate affair and the white men were forced to fire as a matter of protection. (Hossfeld 40)

The news story portrays whites as protectors and blacks as the aggressors. “Blacks Provoke Trouble” in all capital letters, paints the picture that whites only acted in response to black violence. The phrase “the killed and wounded” does not connect to a specific group or name individuals injured in the riot; however, the phrase connects to the earlier statement, “The Whites Fired Upon by Negroes.” It creates a parallel comparison, and the phrases are structured to present the whites as “the killed” and the “Negroes” as “wounded.” Moreover, the article positions blacks as a threat to social order, and along with the testimony of white “witnesses” who confirm their aggression, black voices are silenced by the power of the white press. One particular witness statement by Mr. Kramer, a Wilmington Alderman says, “In the riot, the Negro was the aggressor. I believe that the whites were doing God’s service, as the results for good have been felt in business, in politics and in Church” (Hossfeld 40). According to Bryan Wagner, police power during the Reconstruction era designates the right and duty to dispose threats to public welfare (*Disturbing the Peace* 4). Mr. Kramer’s comments situate blacks as violent aggressors who threaten the public’s economic, political, and religious survival. Thus, Kramer feels that it is whites’ duty to use police power in order to protect the civil well-being of Wilmington. Wagner argues, “police power is about self-defense, and this is why so many laws implemented under its authority employ enumeration, rather than deduction, to define their range” (5). In other words, although race riots defy blacks’ legal rights as citizens, vigilante violence is justified because blacks are cast as potential threats to public good.

North Carolina's political history demonstrates that black citizenship was imaged within white social order as rights and privileges that must have restrictions and limitations. Citizenship after emancipation was beyond the scope of judicially recognizable rights, and the social and economic privileges that accompanied full citizenship would only be accessed freely if blacks held political power to remove themselves from socially subjugated positions. The promise of U.S. citizenship created the illusion of political equality among whites and blacks within an unequal social and economic market. In this way, citizenship is tied to economic prosperity. Blacks were consigned to second-class citizenship because race riots restricted them from fully exercising their social, political, and economic rights in the public sphere.

Though whites' political manipulations attempted to mediate black social and economic status, black property owners in North Carolina during Reconstruction challenged the boundaries of social inclusion through the black domestic space that stood in as a visible sign of economic and political autonomy. Robert Kenzer notes that free blacks had already started a tradition of land ownership during the antebellum period, and thus owned land and property after emancipation (Kenzer 14). While Ransom and Sutch's study also examines the economic history of the South after emancipation, they contend that white jealousy of black advancement retarded black economic development. It is no doubt that whites had success in creating political power relations to subjugate blacks economically, but as John Hope Franklin's study demonstrates, blacks managed to maintain economic stability and become property owners. He argues that blacks understood the home as a space where rights of citizenship could be negotiated,

specifically around the link the black domestic space created between economic power and social recognition (Franklin 162).

Black authors use the representation of black property to theorize how this iconic space comes to signify black citizenship after Reconstruction. Similar to race riots during the antebellum period, race riots after Reconstruction also direct energy towards destroying black public spaces such as black newspapers, schools, and hospitals which represent the institutionalization of black economic power gained through political inclusion. In “Landmarks of Power,” Catherine Bishir argues that white Southern elites used the public landscape as a means of articulating their nostalgia for race relations in the southern past (Bishir 145). She argues that white elites claimed certain spaces during Reconstruction to shape public memory in ways that supported their authority (141). While Bishir focuses her essay on public monuments and historic sites that were built in honor of the white aristocratic southern past, I am interested in the way her argument figures race riots as a claim over black public and domestic space, which provides a re-linkage to white economic superiority built on black subjugation. I argue that the black public and domestic space represents the economic effect of black political inclusion that whites felt they had to combat through violence.

## CHAPTER V

### LEGAL CITIZENSHIP AND SUBSTANTIVE RIGHTS: CHARLES W. CHESNUTT & THE NEGOTIATION OF BLACK CITIZENSHIP

The destruction of the black printing press during the Wilmington riot erased the black perspective from historical record. White newspapers continuously cast blacks as the instigators of the riot, but conveniently no reporter commented on what drove black citizens to such violence. Sheila Smith McKoy's analysis of *The Marrow of Tradition* illustrates how Charles Chesnutt recovers black commentary on the "white riot":

It is at this juncture that the roles of African-American literature and the press converge. Only two copies of the [Daily] Record survived the violence; neither of them contains the editorial around which the civil unrest was constructed [...] Interweaved into the story of the riot. Chesnutt provides the reader with a historical format though which to consider the "fictionalized" event. This rewriting of history questions the press accounts of the events, placing "truth" in the province of literary imagination rather than in editorialized versions incumbent to the process of white racialized ululation. (McKoy 105)

The "truth" that *The Marrow of Tradition* provides through its fictionalization of the 1898 Wilmington riot leads readers to consider how white depictions of race riots disguise white fear of black political and economic power. During the race riot in the novel, Chesnutt particularly highlights the importance of black owned public space to blacks' political voice. Bryan Wagner analyzes how Chesnutt uses black property to

understand the motivation behind *The Marrow of Tradition*'s race riot. He claims that Chesnutt presents the Wilmington (Wellington) riot as a response to the rising black middle class, which had reconfigured Wilmington as a city belonging to the white elites to one overwhelmed by the appearance of black equality ("Epistemology of Racial Violence" 312). His claims suggest that the sight of blacks in places of economic power disrupts white distribution of privilege (Wagner 313). In this chapter, I want to build on Wagner's observation by proposing that Chesnutt understood the black public/domestic space, bound to political and economic power, as a manifestation of citizenship.

The black public/domestic space in Chesnutt's race riot narrative provides an understanding of the multiple layers of citizenship post Reconstruction. Published just two years after *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which declared segregation among "races" legal, *The Marrow of Tradition* was written at a moment when the boundaries of black citizenship were particularly uncertain. Some blacks were legally recognized as citizens, they had access to political rights, but the extent to which they could exercise their rights in the public sphere determined their access to substantive citizenship. As Thomas Humphrey notes, public participation in the social, economic, and political market actualized the promise of formal inclusion, which made the abstraction of black status written in the law socially substantive. *Plessy v. Ferguson* illustrates, however, that white public sentiment limits the degree to which blacks could participate in the public sphere. Segregationist policies as well as white violence caused blacks to face a degree of exclusion even though they were legally incorporated. Black status after Reconstruction, then, distinguished legal and substantive elements of citizenship. While *The Marrow of*

*Tradition* explores black citizenship in terms of both formal membership and substantive rights, Chesnutt demonstrates that whites' attempts to deny blacks substantive citizenship do not entirely reduce blacks to second class citizen status or withhold them from the means to gain social, economic, or political recognition. More concretely, Chesnutt's representation of black public space through his race riot narrative allows him to illustrate how blacks were at once recognized as substantive citizens in the public sphere and socially excluded by racist violence. Whites recognized that blacks had access to substantive citizenship, but they refused to accept it for fear that the acknowledgement would equalize the distribution of economic and political power.

As implied in the novel's title, Chesnutt begins the narrative by picking up on the idea of custom to reveal how white Southern tradition violates blacks' Fourteenth Amendment rights. He establishes the context of Southern custom through the intertwinement of the Carteret and Miller families—histories that reveal white nostalgia for a pre-Reconstruction past. He opens the novel with the birth of Theodore Felix Carteret (Dodie), who represents Major Carteret's hope "to have children to perpetuate the name of which he was so proud, to write it still on the roll of honor" (Chesnutt 2). Major Carteret's anticipation for Dodie's birth emphasizes the vexed race relations between blacks and whites after Reconstruction. The Major's family, "one of the oldest and proudest in the state," was impoverished by the Civil War (Chesnutt 1). With the death of his father and brother, the Major's wealth does not come through the southern traditional patriarchal lineage, but from his wife, Olivia Merrell. While Carteret's loss of white male authority is reflected in the domestic sphere through his dependence on

Olivia, her family history also reveals how the distribution of wealth changed after the Civil War.

At the beginning of the novel, we learn that Janet Miller, Dr. Miller's wife and the black half-sister of Olivia Carteret, owns Carteret's childhood home that she and her husband have inherited from his father, Adam Miller, a former slave, revealing the shift in socioeconomic power towards blacks after the Civil War. Major Carteret views this tangled history as a violation of white patriarchal space, which he seeks to reclaim through his son. Material privileges connect the social and economic elements of substantive citizenship. Before the War, Carteret could claim that his whiteness legitimated his economic privilege, but formal emancipation dismantled the immediate connections between whiteness and economic prosperity. Before Reconstruction, white citizenship linked white privilege to the subordination of blacks through their noncitizen status. Blacks' exclusion from formal citizenship was an attempt to restrict blacks' access to social and economic mobility. As the novel demonstrates, however, the recognition of black formal citizenship rights changed the basis of privilege. Major Carteret tries to reposition whiteness as a claim to a superior socioeconomic status by investing in a cotton mill whose "profits would enable his son, upon reaching manhood, to take a place in the world commensurate with the dignity of his ancestors, one of whom, only a few generations removed, had owned an estate of ninety thousand acres of land and six thousand slaves" (Chesnutt 19). The narrator's juxtaposition of Dodie's future with the life of his slaveholding forefathers represents white supremacist nostalgia for the Old South and exemplifies Joe Roe's suggestion that Dodie "embodies Southern tradition

itself, the idealized socio-economic order founded on colonial racism” (231-232). As previously mentioned in the discussion of *The Garies and Their Friends*, white notions of citizenship are linked to inheritance, property ownership, and economic prosperity, therefore the Millers’ ownership of a previous white estate gives them access to substantive citizenship, leaving Carteret to question where the status of his family lies in relation to the black family. Indeed, Carteret is lowered on the social and economic ladder due to the elite class position the Millers attained in the wake of the Civil War.

Through the Miller family, Chesnutt revises southern custom. In white southern memory, blacks are traditionally characterized as lacking economic, social, and political power, but John Hope Franklin emphasizes the socioeconomic authority free black property owners had during the antebellum period which carried over after emancipation (Franklin 150). Chesnutt presents the Millers as occupying a black middle class position, challenging the assumption that there is a natural link between privilege and whiteness. Janet Miller and Olivia Carteret are both daughters of Sam Merrell. After Merrell’s wife (Olivia’s mother) died, he married his servant Julia (Janet’s mother) and had a child with her. When Janet tries to claim her inheritance from her husband, Polly Ochiltree tells her,

the money belongs to Mr. Merrell’s estate, which belongs to my niece, his daughter Olivia. I saw you steal them. My word is worth yours a hundred times over, for I am a lady, and you are—what? And now hear me: if ever you breathe to a living soul one word of this preposterous story, I will charge you with theft, and have you sent to the penitentiary. (Chesnutt 89)

Olivia’s aunt immediately connects the privilege of inheritance and the distribution of Merrell’s wealth to Olivia because she is his white child. Though Julia and Merrell

marry during Reconstruction, and she has legal claims to his estate, Polly argues that she is stealing white property. In reality, Polly is the one who steals from her brother-in-law's estate, but as she explains, her word as a white woman will be taken over that of a black servant. Julia should have access to legal protection, but the confrontation reveals that Polly's social status as a "lady" protects the property interest of her white privilege. Not only does Polly fail to acknowledge Julia's legal status as Merrell's wife, but she also threatens her social mobility by claiming she will send her to jail if she does not stay in her "place" (89). This scene reveals how white claims to privilege undermine blacks' legal rights. Polly's link of privilege to status identifies whiteness as an aspect of material possessions, moving whiteness from an identity to property (Harris 1725). She claims that Olivia's entitlement to her father's estate arises from her superior status in relation to her black sister, but that status can only be maintained if Janet is denied her legal and social rights, if she is forced to never "breathe to a living soul" the manipulation and illegal means Polly takes to secure her family's economic superiority.

Chesnutt emphasizes that, despite Ms. Ochiltree's manipulation, Janet still manages to become included in middle class privilege. The novel highlights how the Millers's home and hospital serve as visual manifestations of the economic privileges their social status affords. Chesnutt uses the Millers' property as an entry point to imagine black substantive citizenship. According to Mammy Jane, Janet and her husband had the opportunity to be educated at the best schools and travel around the world, but it is the Miller's home that particularly "makes de majah mad, 'ca'se he don' wanten see cullud folks livin' in de ole fam'ly mansion w'at he wuz bawn in" (Chesnutt 6).The

image of the Millers occupying the space that previously belonged to Carteret demonstrates the manifestation of hierarchy disruption. Miller's hospital also occupies a space previously owned by white aristocrats. When Olivia tells her aunt Polly that Miller's hospital replaced an antebellum mansion, she exclaims, "The new colored hospital, indeed, and the colored doctor! Before the war the negroes were all healthy, and when they got sick we took care of them ourselves! Hugh Poindexter has sold the graves of his ancestors to a negro,—I should have starved first! The world is upside down" (Chesnutt 127). As Polly sees white aristocracy decline and the black middle class rise in its space, she responds by recalling slavery's social order as the "normal" arrangement of society. In fact, she seems to think that white aristocracy showed benevolence to blacks by claiming that "when [blacks] got sick we took care of them ourselves," therefore she does not understand why the social order has been turned "upside down." Polly's disgust with Miller's hospital lies with her insecurity that blacks no longer need whites to protect them as inferior dependents. To Polly, the hospital actualizes black equality and forces whites literally to see blacks' inclusion as independent members of society.

The Millers' property as a sign of black social, economic, and political power, connects to other scenes of black representing substantive citizenship in the narrative.

General Belmont, a white southern aristocrat, tells Major Carteret,

A negro justice of the peace has opened an office on Market Street, and only yesterday summoned a white man to appear before him. Negro lawyers get most of the business in criminal court. Last evening a group of young white ladies [...] were forced off the sidewalk by a crowd of negro girls [...] We cannot stand that sort of thing, Carteret,—it is the last straw! Something must be done, and that quickly! (21)

In order to combat “Negro domination,” Major Carteret, along with his co-conspirators General Belmont and Captain McBane (The Big Three), plan a race riot to politically disenfranchise the rising black middle class. According to Belmont’s formulation, the recognition of black equality begins with black inclusion into the political sphere as illustrated by his example of the black justice of peace. Belmont suggests that allowing blacks to hold political positions, such as the “Negro lawyers,” will transfer wealth from whites to black businessmen. Lastly, Belmont claims that black political and economic power leads to an “awful condition” where blacks see themselves as social equals to whites. Belmont asserts that blacks’ access to political, economic, and social control has become a “spectacle” that makes his “blood boil with indignation” (21).

The Big Three agree that the visual presence of black progress “emblemizes[s] [...] a certain loss of economic and political control, which [...] violate[s] the principle of white supremacy” (Crane 197).

Chesnutt fictionalizes the political battles waged between the Democrats, Republicans, and Fusionists in Wilmington during the 1890’s in order to demonstrate the political furor that was used as an excuse to eliminate blacks from positions of power. The novel highlights the political manipulations as a ploy to deny blacks substantive citizenship. He notes that although blacks had the right to vote, they still did not have full political power because of the larger population of whites in the state (Chesnutt 52). Therefore, “It remained for Carteret and his friends to discover [...] that the darker race, docile by instinct, humble by training [...] was an incubus, a copse chained to the body politic, and that the negro vote was a source of danger to the state” (52). Carteret decides

to use stories of black criminal behavior to present “the negro [as] a menace to the commonwealth,” rousing up white public sentiment against black political participation and thereby limiting black access to wealth, property, and social inclusion (20). Bryan Wagner highlights the various speeches and newspaper articles in Wilmington before the riot that express the complaints of the white public concerning “bluecoated ‘billy’ bedecked negro[s] wearing a badge of authority” who walk around with “an air of arrogance and insolence” (“Epistemology of Racial Violence” 327). Wagner also provides reports from the *Wilmington Messenger* that describe sidewalk skirmishes such as an incident when a black man grabbed a white woman “savagely by the arm, [wheeling] her around” (327). The episodes that the Wilmington newspapers document, serve as a historical referent to McBane’s speech about “Negro domination” in the novel. In Wilmington, these complaints were used to overthrow the Fusion ticket and disenfranchise black voters, but the novel does not focus on the grievances as an intention to defeat the Fusion election. Though the political tension between the Fusionist and the Democratic party is mentioned in the novel, the Big Three use it as a scheme to “extend the lines of the white supremacy campaign” (Chesnutt 52). According to Belmont, “The North, as well as our own people, must be convinced that we have right upon our side. We are conscious of the purity of our motives, but we should avoid even the appearance of evil” (52). If the “Big Three’s” primary concern was the shift in political power, why did they need to extend their campaign outside of the state? Chesnutt notes that “public sentiment all over the country became every day more favorable to the views of the conspirators. The nation was rushing forward with giant strides toward colossal wealth

and world domination, before the exigencies of which were mere abstract ethical theories must not be permitted to stand” (Chesnutt 238). Here Chesnutt presents the “white supremacist campaign” as a translocal effort to coalesce whites from different political, social, and economic backgrounds. At stake is insurmountable access to “colossal wealth” and world domination that can only be maintained through social control and political power. The Big Three recognize that the only way whites can become social, economic, and political gatekeepers is to present blacks as a threat to public welfare (Chesnutt 189). They use stories of black violence to justify their use of riots as police power, as a protective force against black aggressors. Whites abandon the “mere abstract theories” of black citizenship and seek to restrict blacks’ rights and privileges in the public sphere by organizing a race riot.

Chesnutt details the different stakes whites in Wilmington had in coalescing under “white supremacy” through his description of the Big Three’s different socioeconomic backgrounds. As mentioned previously, Major Carteret comes from Southern aristocracy but loses much of his fortune during the Civil War and regains his social and economic stature in the years after Reconstruction through his wife’s inheritance. Although his newspaper is the main force instigating the riot, he shows a less brutal attitude toward blacks than McBane who constantly advocates for “lynch[ing] nigger[s]” (Chesnutt 55). Carteret’s annoyance at McBane’s racist outbursts suggests that Carteret is from a different socioeconomic class. Captain McBane “had sprung from the poor white class, to which, even more than to the slaves, the abolition of slavery had opened the door of opportunity” (34). During slavery, McBane was a sadistic overseer who more than likely

felt confined by his lower class status. When slavery was abolished, the old social barriers that restricted him from climbing the white hierarchal ladder were no longer in place and he now has “enough money to buy out a half a dozen of broken aristocrats, and money was all powerful” (82). While Carteret and McBane may now have the same amount of wealth, it is clear that as the descendant of an indentured bondservant, McBane is “socially unfit” according to Carteret’s standards. Carteret however is able to put aside his feelings toward McBane because his “wealth and energy” are necessary to his “campaign against the negro” (56). On the other hand, McBane joins forces with Carteret and Belmont because he is “ambitious for greater wealth, for office, and for social recognition” (22). The Chapter “The Social Aspirations of Captain McBane” proves that the object of his desire lies with being socially accepted as one of the “sine qua non” in Wellington’s white community. He longs to become a member of the Clarendon, but admission into the club depends on birth, wealth, and breeding. While McBane has wealth, it is clear that his social status excludes him from being a part of white respectability: “McBane was rich [...] but he had never been invited to the home of either General Belmont or Major Carteret, nor asked to join the club of which they were members” (53). McBane, therefore, joins the campaign for white supremacy to ensure strict lines of “race” and class division so that he will be closer to white southern gentry. General Belmont is from the old aristocratic class and maintained his wealth from slavery after the Civil War. As previously noted, Belmont’s major reason for joining the campaign to end “Negro domination” is his nostalgia for the social relations of the Old South. He cannot escape the visual reminders that his aristocratic status is diminishing

and that those whom he once held as slaves now live as his equals. The Big Three's different socioeconomic statuses conceptualize white supremacy as more of a doctrine than an inherent characteristic of white identity and therefore must be carried out by using certain forms of police power, specifically race riots, "as a racial privilege of all whites over all blacks" (*Disturbing the Peace* 7).

Chesnutt's narrative suggests that white supremacists planned race riots to destroy material signs of black privilege, which made their citizenship visible. Formal emancipation and the Reconstruction Amendments changed blacks' legal status and the protection that they had under the law, so whites created extra legal means to combat black social, economic, and political mobility. Race riots were justified as an acceptable practice by white supremacists who convinced lawmakers that vigilante violence protected the well-being of larger society against the threat of black aggression. In the novel, Chesnutt particularly highlights how white newspapers manipulated stories of black crimes to provide justification for race riots. Catherine Edmonds identifies Josephus Daniels, the Democratic editor of the *News and Observer*, as a prototype for Major Carteret. Both use their newspapers to exaggerate and distort interracial issues. Like Daniels, Major Carteret uses an editorial printed in the black newspaper by Barber, who is modeled on Alex Manley, to arouse white public sentiment against black presence. Articles like Barber's that exposed white racist action as well as blacks who acquired enough social and economic power to build their own hospitals and schools, like the Millers, "violate an unwritten law of the South" that requires black social subjugation (55). Although blacks were legally incorporated as citizens, Carteret claims "if we are to

tolerate this race of weaklings among us [...] it must be upon terms which we lay down”

(55). Carteret suggests that whites should determine what black citizenship *looks* like and how substantive it should be. Further, he claims,

Negro citizenship was a grotesque farce—Sambo and Dinah raised from the kitchen to the cabinet were a spectacle to make the gods laugh. The laws by which it had been sought to put the negroes on a level with the whites must be swept away in theory, as they had failed in fact. If it were impossible, without further education of public opinion, to secure the repeal of the fifteenth amendment, it was at least the solemn duty of the state to endeavor, through its own constitution, to escape from the domination of a weak and incompetent electorate and confine the negro to that inferior condition for which nature had evidently designed him. (51)

Major Carteret refuses to accept blacks as social equals or acknowledge their citizenship as anything but a “theory.” He refers to them in subservient positions—caricaturizing them as Sambo and Dinah to illustrate the idea that blacks are unfit to embody substantive citizenship. He creates a narrative that denies black social, economic, and political progress in the public sphere, therefore advocating that their citizenship be repealed in the law as public opinion had already repudiated their inclusion. Carteret acknowledges that white public opinion might not have enough power to overturn the Fifteenth Amendment, so he suggests that state create segregationist policies to limit the access blacks have to substantive citizenship. He outlines what black citizenship should look like: “White people do not object to the negro as a servant. As the traditional negro—the servant,—he is welcomed; as an equal he is repudiated” (59). Carteret’s refusal to grant blacks social equality overshadows the promise of the Reconstruction

Amendments and the Civil Rights Act of 1866 to confer blacks with full rights and privileges as citizens of the United States.

Chesnutt notes that state sanctioned segregationist policies like the “grandfather clause” succeeded in excluding blacks from voting and holding public office, but he affirms “the great steal was made, but [...] the scheme still shows the mark of the burglar’s tools,” suggesting that disenfranchisement served as a red herring for whites’ real motive to remove visible signs of black prosperity because it threatened their claims to monopolize wealth and property (Chesnutt 156-157). When segregationist laws fail to take immediate effect on the sociopolitical landscape of the community, The Big Three decide that they must instigate a riot. They direct the violence toward black entrepreneurs who have diamond rings and carriages, which McBane claims they only have access to because they are given equal opportunity for economic competition (163). They portray the riot to the public as a necessary act to counter “Negro [political] domination,” but Belmont describes assaulting black elites as a process of “remov[ing] the cause as the effect” (163). Belmont’s suggestion that they drive out the black lawyer, real estate agent, and other prosperous blacks in the town reveals that the visual signs of black socioeconomic prosperity caused the riot. Belmont and Carteret continuously try to veil their motive as a “righteous cause” (53). They carefully portray themselves as “conscious of the purity of [their] motives” by “avoid[ing] the appearance of evil,” but McBane repeatedly exposes the men’s hypocrisy (52-53, 164). When Carteret orders the group not to touch Dr. Miller because it could not be justified as a wise regard for the public welfare since his grievance with Miller was based on a personal issue, McBane exclaims,

“Every last one of us has an axe to grind!” He contends that if they allow Dr. Miller to remain in the town, he will not only be an annoyance to Carteret, but he will also set a “bad example” for the rest of the black population making it “harder to keep the rest of ‘em down” (163-614). Carteret responds to McBane’s accusations with a frown because “it robbed the enterprise of all its poetry, and put a solemn act of revolution upon the plane of mere vulgar theft of power” (164). Indeed, Chesnutt uses McBane to lay bare the burglar’s tools that were used to rob blacks of substantive citizenship after Reconstruction.

Chesnutt’s race riot narrative raises questions about distortions of the 1898 Wilmington riot in white newspapers. What did whites, like the Big Three, have at stake to make them cover their motives for instigating the riot? For example, *The Morning Star* printed headlines like “White Men Forced to Take Up Arms for the *Preservation* of Law and Order,” and the New York Herald reports “By *Revolutionary Methods* White Citizens of North Carolina Overturn Existing City Government and at Once Establish Their Own” (Hossfeld 40). Likewise, the novel casts the white perspective of the incident as “a revolution, and not a riot” (162). Whites downplayed their part in vigilante violence to distort their extralegal methods to deny blacks’ substantive citizenship. As Carteret points out, they must avoid certain individuals like the collector of the port because it would bring the government down on them (163). This shows that Carteret acknowledges black legal citizenship and their rights of protection under the law, but fails to allow their legal status to have any weight in the public sphere. If the Big Three let their motives for the riot be known to the public, they risk creating a paradox about black

social inclusion. As previously mentioned, Carteret claims that blacks cannot be substantive citizens because they will never rise above their social positions as servants, but the black middle class contradicts to Carteret's argument. If blacks did not show signs of substantive citizenship then whites would have no reason to riot. Chesnut does not deny that segregationist laws and white violent action present barriers to blacks' access to social, economic, and political power. However, his narrative illustrates that those restrictions do not fully deprive blacks of substantive citizenship.

Chesnut theorizes how blacks rescripted substantive citizenship after Reconstruction to include themselves within the narrative of full citizenship during the turn of the century. As John Hope Franklin points out, after Reconstruction, blacks tend to be represented as oppressed, helpless, disenfranchised, and socioeconomically underdeveloped (Franklin 162). However, Chesnut's race riot narrative not only portrays the lived experience of the black middle class with social, economic, and political power, but it also demonstrates blacks' agency in defending their rights to substantive citizenship. The novel moves the definition of substantive citizenship beyond white *acceptance* to white *recognition* of black social, economic, and political power. While that recognition yields violent consequences, it nevertheless indicates blacks' full social inclusion during a time when their status was continuously contested. According to Claudia Tate, black property serves as a symbolic paradigm for visualizing black inclusion and it also "averts the offensiveness of segregation in the public domain" (Tate 130). In the context of the novel, Miller's hospital represents a discursive sign of "real-life proponents" of substantive citizenship. Therefore, Josh Green's protection of the

hospital during the riot transfigures substantive citizenship as a right not fought for but defended (Tate 130). According to the narrator, “It had been Josh’s plan merely to remain quietly and peaceably in the neighborhood of the little group of public institutions, molesting no one, unless first attacked, and merely letting the white people see that they meant to protect their own” (Chesnutt 194). The narrator’s description of Green’s intention in the riot aligns the protection of black public property with black political self-assertiveness. He refuses to let the white vigilantes deny him substantive citizenship, and he declares “we ain’ gwine ter run away f’ m no place where we’ve got a right ter be” (Chesnutt 182). The emphasis on black public property, protection, and rights in these two passages are metonyms for substantive citizenship, which here is understood as the authority to protect and defend political, economic, and social rights and privileges.

Green’s protection of black public property mediates civil power and converts abstract legal theories of citizenship into a social formation dependent on white recognition and black agency. Green is aware of the legal protection the black community is granted under the law, but he understands that he must negotiate the terms of his substantive citizenship through social relations in order to connect his political rights to black lived experience. For example, Green tells his party, “De gov’ner er de President is gwine ter sen’ soilders ter stop dese gwines-on, an’ meantime we kin keep dem white devils f’ m bu’nin down our hospittles an’ chu’ch-houses” (Chesnutt 194). Green’s statement illustrates Claudia Tate’s observation that black people did not passively accept deterioration of their status when met with hostility in race riots and lynch mobs, but made repeated attempts to exercise their constitutional rights (Tate 10-11).

While Chesnutt provides a more expansive definition of substantive citizenship through Josh Green, he is also ambiguous about whether Green's method is an appropriate means. In the introduction to the novel, Eric Sundquist highlights this tension by comparing Green and Miller's characterization. At first it seems that Chesnutt presents a negative critique of the black middle class accommodationists in the novel by stating that "the negroes of Wellington, with the exception of Josh Green and his party, had not behaved bravely on this critical day in their history" (Chesnutt 204). It seems that Chesnutt figures the race riot as an opportunity to counter white inscriptions of black inferiority and as a crucial moment in history for blacks to stake claims in their rights to substantive citizenship. Yet according to Chesnutt, black elites failed to deliver. According to Watson, a middle class black elite, "Our time will come,— the time when we can command respect for our rights, but it is not yet in sight" (Chesnutt 183). Green decides to take immediate action, and while Chesnutt applauds his bravery, he also questions Green's urge "to go forward and take up the cause of these leaderless people, and if need be, to defend their lives and their rights with his own,—but to what end?" (Chesnutt 183). Helen Edmonds reports eye witness accounts from the Wilmington 1898 riot that describe streets dotted with dead bodies (Edmonds 168). Chesnutt gives careful attention to the role radicalism plays in blacks' fighting for social recognition. At the end of the novel, Captain McBane, Josh Green, and other innocent bystanders die in the riot. Mr. Watson warns "You won't gain anything by resistance," and it seems that Chesnutt struggles with articulating the right method for blacks to defend and exercise their rights.

Though it is clear Chesnut questions the way blacks should assert their right to substantive citizenship, his race riot narrative still develops a different account of black citizenship by illustrating the paradoxes, contradictions, and omissions of black inclusion after Reconstruction.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis, I have attempted to illustrate how race riot narratives articulate black citizenship during the nineteenth century as more than a product of formal or legal recognition. Race riot narratives such as Frank Webb's *The Garies and Their Friends* and Charles Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition* require us to address black citizenship not simply in terms of its legal aspect, but also as a fluid status produced through social practices. Illustrating citizenship through the public sphere allows black authors to depict how citizenship *looks* rather than to explain how it is legally conceptualized. Through their formulation of race riots, Webb and Chesnutt's texts illustrate how whites attempted to restrict blacks' access to substantial citizenship during the antebellum period and after Reconstruction. They demonstrate how the black domestic space signifies social, economic, or political power which in turn provokes violent reactions from white supremacists.

White supremacists attempted to eliminate competition and ensure their full social, economic, and political control through violence and black subjugation. Though race riots defy the laws protecting blacks' rights and privileges, nineteenth-century-race riot narratives demonstrate how whites organizing riots mediate the boundaries of black citizenship, exceeding, superceding, and transcending the actual laws passed by the state and the federal government. Scenes of vigilante violence are key to the construction of what I have been calling race riot narratives, as they mark key points of intersection between citizenship, race, property, and violence, while delineating the distinction

between legal productions of citizenship and the politics of citizenship within the social sphere.

The riots in Philadelphia and Wilmington ultimately sent a message to blacks that their citizenship could only be exercised as much as whites would allow. In this sense, white public sentiment superseded blacks' civil rights by replacing the police power of the state government to protect its black citizens with the police power of white public sentiment to protect white privilege. Webb and Chesnut's fictionalization of the Philadelphia and Wilmington riot(s) illustrate how those state governments illegally helped to disenfranchise blacks by not protecting blacks' legal rights and by allowing white public sentiment to take over as police power. The novels emphasize the state and federal governments' failure to provide police protection for its black citizens, which sent the message that white public sentiment held power over the government to decide what rights and privileges blacks could exercise.

The privileges of the black middle class during the antebellum era and after Reconstruction manifest itself in the black domestic/public space. Webb and Chesnut use the representation of black property to theorize how this iconic space comes to signify black substantive citizenship, despite the fact that whites attempted to limit their access to social, economic and political privileges. Race riots during the antebellum period and after the Civil War were planned to destroy black domestic/public spaces such as homes, black newspapers, schools, and hospitals which represent the institutionalization of black economic power gained through social and political inclusion. However, as Webb and

Chesnutt's race riot narrative illustrate, blacks continually combatted whites' attempts to deny their substantive rights.

*The Garies and Their Friends* and *The Marrow of Tradition* highlight the tension between whites and the black middle class culminating in race riots, which exposes that white identity is not based on naturally superior attributes but on establishing, maintaining, and defending a racial system of wealth, power, and privilege. In this sense, white identity, and in particular, white privilege linked to citizenship is called into question. Indeed, white citizenship gets presented as a fact that preceeds the law, while black citizenship is always examined as a determination of legal proceedings such as in *Scott v. Sandford*, the *Plessy Decision*, or the Reconstruction Amendments. Webb and Chesnutt's race riot narrative, however, cause us to question the boundaries of white citizenship. If blacks were able to show that they had rights and privileges that matched, exceeded, and/ or transcended white privilege, where does that leave white citizenship? How are the boundaries of white citizenship constructed if white privilege no longer depends on black subjugation? Answering these question through the race riot narrative allows for a rewriting of nineteenth century black citizenship that not only explains the limitations of white citizenship, but also why whites riot.

## WORKS CITED

- Adams, John Quincy. *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795-1898*. Ed. Charles F. Adams. Vol. V. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1875. Print.
- Akagi, Roy H. "The Pennsylvania Constitution of 1838". *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*. 48.4 (1924): 301-333. Print.
- Anderson, Eric. *Race and Politics in North Carolina, 1872-1901: The Second Black*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981.
- Avilez, Gershun. "Housing the Black Body: Value, Domestic Space, and Segregation Narratives." *Representing Segregation: Towards Aesthetics of Living Jim Crow, and Other Forms of Racial Division*. Eds. Brian Worman and Piper Kendrix Williams. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010. 131-148.
- Barnes, Harper. *Never Been a Time: The 1917 Race Riot that Sparked the Civil Rights Movement*. New York: Walker and Company, 2008. Print.
- Basinger, Scott J. "Regulating Slavery: Deck-Stacking and Credible Commitment in the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization*. 19.2 (2003): 307-342. Print.
- Bay, Mia. *The White Image in the Black Mind: African American Ideas about White People, 1830-1925*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. Print.
- Bell, Benard. *The Afro American Novel and its Tradition*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987. Print.

- Berlin, Ira. *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in Antebellum South*. New York: The New Press, 1973. Print.
- Bishir, Catherine. "Landmarks of Power: Building a Southern Past in Raleigh and Wilmington North Carolina, 1885-1915." *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity*. Ed. William Fitzhugh Brundage. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000. 139-168. Print.
- Brown, David and Clive Webb. *Race in the American South: From Slavery to Civil Rights*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007. Print.
- Chesnutt, Charles. *The Marrow of Tradition*. 1901. New York: Penguin Classics, 2002. Print.
- Civil Rights Act of 1866, 14 Stat. 27 (1866)
- Clymer, Jeffory. "Family Money: Race and Economic Rights in Antebellum U.S. Law and Fiction." *American Literary History*. 21.2 (2009): 211-238. Print.
- Crane, Gregg D. *Race, Citizenship, and Law in American Literature*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- DuBois, W.E.B. *The Philadelphia Negro*. Milwood: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1973. Print.
- Dowd Hall, Jacquelyn. "'The Mind That Burns in Each Body': Women, Rape, and Racial Violence." *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*. New York: Monthly Press Review, 1983. 328-349. Print.
- Edmonds, Helen G. *The Negro and Fusion Politics in North Carolina, 1898-1901*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1951. Print.

- Engle, Anna. "Depictions of the Irish in Frank Webb's *The Garies and Their Friends* and Frances E.W. Harpers Trial and Triumph. *MELUS* 26.1 (2001): 151-171. Print.
- Franklin, John Hope. *The Free Negro in North Carolina, 1790-1860*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995.
- Gates, Henry Louis Jr. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988. Print.
- Gilje, Paul. *Rioting in America*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996. Print.
- Gilmore, Glenda E. "Murder, Memory, and the Incubus." *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and its Legacy*. Eds. David S. Cecelski and Timothy B. Tyson. University of North Carolina Press, 1998. Print.
- Gross, Ariela J. "Litigating Whiteness: Trials of Racial Determination in Nineteenth Century South." *The Yale Law Journal*. 108.1 (1998): 109-188. Print.
- Hale, Grace Elizabeth. *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940*. New York: Pantheon, 1998. Print.
- Harris, Cheryl H. "Whiteness as Property." *Harvard Law Review*. 106.8 (1993): 1707-1791. Print.
- Hartman, Saidiya. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self Making in Nineteenth Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. Print.
- Horton, James Oliver and Lois E. Horton. *Hard Road to Freedom: The Story of African America*. Rutgers University Press, 2002. Print.
- Hossfeld, Leslie. *Narrative, Political Unconscious, and Racial Violence in Wilmington, North Carolina*. New York: Routledge, 2005. Print.

- Jackson, Blyden. *A History of Afro-American Literature*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989. Print.
- Jordan, Winthrop D. *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro 1550-1812*. Baltimore: Penguin, 1969.
- Kenzer, Robert C. *Enterprising Southerners: Black Economic Success in North Carolina, 1865-1915*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997.
- Kirshenbaum, Andrea Meryl. "The Vampire that Hovers Over North Carolina': Gender, White Supremacy, and the Wilmington Race Riot of 1898." *Southern Culture*. 4.3 (1998): n. page. Web.
- Knadler, Stephen P. "Untragic Mulatto: Charles Chesnutt and the Discourse of Whiteness." *American Literary History*. 8.3 (1996): 426-448.
- Lang, Amy Schrager. *The Syntax of Class: Writing Inequality in Nineteenth Century America*. University of Michigan Press, 2006.
- Lapsansky, Emma. *Black Presence in Pennsylvania: "Making it Home."* University Park: Pennsylvania Historical Association, 2001. Print.
- . "Emma Lapsansky on Philadelphia." *Africans in America Part 3: 1791-1831*. PBS *Online*. WGBH Educational Foundation, 1998. Web. 25 Jan. 2011.
- Lapsansky, Phillip. "Afro-Americana: Frank J. Webb and His Friends." *Annual Report of the Library Company of Philadelphia for the Year 1990*. Philadelphia Library Company of Philadelphia, 1991. Print.
- Levine, Robert S. *Conspiracy and Romance: Studies in Brokden, Brown, Cooper, Hawthorne, and Melville*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

- Litwack, Leon F. *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961. Print.
- Logan, Frenise A. *The Negro in North Carolina, 1876-1894*. Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1964. Print.
- Lovell, Laura. *Report of a Delegate to the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women*. Boston: I. Knapp, 1838. Print.
- Marshall, Thomas Humphrey. *Citizenship and Social Class*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1950. Print.
- Miller, Randell and William Pencak. *Pennsylvania: A History of the Commonwealth*. Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002. Print.
- Nash, June. "The Cost of Violence." *Journal of Black Studies* 4(1973): 153-184. Print.
- Nowatzki, Robert. "Blurring the Color Line: Black Freedom, Passing, Abolitionism, and Irish Ethnicity in Frank J. Webb's *The Garies and Their Friends*." *Studies in American Fiction—Boston*. 33.1 (2005): 29-58. Print.
- Otter, Samuel. "Frank Webb's Still Life: Rethinking Literature and Politics Through *The Garies and Their Friends*." *American Literary History*. 20.4 (2008): 728-252. Print.
- Peterson, Carla L. "Capitalism, Black (Under) development, and the Protection of the African American Novel in the 1850's." *American Literary History* 4.4 (1992): 559-583. Print.
- Prather, Leon. "We Have Taken a City: A Centennial Essay." *Democracy Betrayed: The*

- Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy*. Eds. David S. Cecelski and Timothy B. Tyson. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998. 15-41. Print.
- Prigg v. Pennsylvania*, 41 U.S. 539 (1842)
- Ransom, Roger L. and Richard Sutch. *One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Rasmussen, Brigit Brander. “‘Those That do Violence Must Expect to Suffer’: Disrupting Segregationist Fictions of Safety in Charles Chesnut’s *The Marrow of Tradition*.” *Representing Segregation: Towards an Aesthetics of Living Jim Crow and Other Forms of Racial Division*. Eds. Brian Norman and Piper Kendrix Williams. New York: State University of New York Press, 2010.
- Reid Pharr, Robert. *Conjugal Union: The Body, the House, and the Black American*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. Print.
- Roe, Joe H. “Keeping an ‘Old Wound’ Alive. *The Marrow of Tradition* and the Legacy of Wilmington.” *African American Review*. 33.2 (1999): 231-243.
- Runcie, John. “‘Hunting the Nigs’ in Philadelphia: The Race Riot of August 1834.” *Pennsylvania History*. 39.2 (1972): 187-218.
- Schweninger, Loren. *Black Property Owners in the South, 1790-1915*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990. Print.
- Smith McCokoy, Shelia. *When Whites Riot: Writing Race and Violence in American and South African Culture*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2001. Print.
- Tate, Claudia. *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire: The Black Heroine’s Text at the*

- Turn of the Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Tiedman, Christopher G. *A Treatise on the Limitation of Police Power in the United States*. St. Louis: The F.H. Thomas Law Book Co., 1886. Print.
- Turner, Edward Raymond. *The Negro in Pennsylvania: Slavery, Servitude, Freedom, 1639-1861*. New York: Arno Press, 1969. Print.
- U.S. Const., Art. IV, §2, cl. 1
- Wagner, Bryan. "Charles Chesnutt and the Epistemology of Racial Violence." *American Literature*. 73.2 (2001): 311-337.
- Wagner, Bryan. *Distrubing the Peace: Black Culture and the Police Power after Slavery*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009.
- Webb, Frank. *The Garies and Their Friends*. 1857. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997. Print.
- Wilson, Matthew. *Whiteness in the Novels of Charles W. Chesnutt*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi. 2004.
- Wright, Richard. R. Jr. *The Negro in Pennsylvania: A Study in Economic History*. New York: Arno Press, 1969.