

Distributed Agency: David Walker's *Appeal*, Black Readership, and the Politics of Self-Deportation

GORDON FRASER

Living as we are in a time of deportations, scholars must turn with renewed urgency to the resistance networks that have not only shaped prior moments of crisis but have also enabled resilience. We need a renewed understanding of how nineteenth-century literatures enabled communication networks among peoples that the United States government rendered subsovereign. Such a renewed understanding will allow us to examine the American Colonization Society, which in the nineteenth century presented one of the earliest schemes for deporting ostensibly subsovereign people. Officially formed in January 1817, the ACS was dedicated to the proposition that nominally free black people born in the United States should practice what came to be called “self-deportation,” which meant that free black people would emigrate of their own volition from North America to the west coast of Africa.¹ The turn I propose—a consideration of the ACS as a foundational moment in the discourse surrounding United States deportations—reflects what Eric Gardner has called “literary criticism’s dominant presentism.”² This focus reveals the networks of critique and resilience through which black people, nominally free and enslaved, voiced and practiced opposition.³ First and most



American Colonization Society membership certificate, [1840?], American Colonization Society Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, [3], available online at <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/african/images/memcertf.jpg>.

obviously, such a study brings us to David Walker, whose *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (1829) defiantly condemned the ACS. But a return to Walker is not enough to fully understand resistance networks. Rather, we must understand not only those who voiced opposition, but those who distributed, circulated, read, or listened to critiques that Walker and others made.

This essay connects the Southern reading community that Walker's *Appeal* produced and the Southern distribution agents and readers of two contemporaneous black newspapers: *Freedom's Journal* (1827–29) and the *Rights of All* (1829). The circulation of these newspapers and Walker's *Appeal* makes visible a single, if disaggregated and transforming, literary assemblage, as I will discuss below. *Freedom's Journal* folded in 1829 when editor John Russwurm aligned himself with the ACS' emigrationist politics and moved to Liberia. That same year, Samuel Cornish, Russwurm's former partner, founded the *Rights of All* and expressed confusion and concern at Russwurm's volte-face.⁴ As 1829 ended, Walker's *Appeal* appeared, offering a more full-throated, radical condemnation of the colonization society (*F*, 201, 252).⁵ Russwurm, Cornish, and Walker all cultivated a wide-ranging readership, one that included people in Virginia, North Carolina, Louisiana, and other seemingly implausible places. Indeed, at least five Southern cities to which Walker distributed the *Appeal* were on the distribution lists of *Freedom's Journal* and the *Rights of All*, and both the pamphlet and the newspapers also circulated in many of the same Northern cities.⁶ Walker, moreover, anticipated readers who were familiar with *Freedom's Journal*, and even occasionally referred them to the newspaper's back issues.⁷ Finally, as I will show, Walker's agents also reproduced the distribution strategies that prior newspaper agents deployed, such as using a tavern to distribute their paper.⁸

Walker and his *Appeal* have long symbolized uncompromising resistance to the structural operations of white supremacy broadly and to the ACS' quasi-voluntary deportation schemes specifically. As Tavia Nyong'o notes, Walker's *Appeal* offers a "negative cosmopolitanism that sets up black collective memory as a counterapparatus to sovereign subjectification."⁹ The *Appeal*'s moral clarity, in essence, prefigures contemporary scholars' historical hindsight. Walker reveals how a regime of white supremacist deportation renders life intolerable for people of color, produces "wretchedness," and coerces them into exile (*A*, 9, 21, 37, 47). Yet, as I will suggest, we must examine Walker's clearly articulated moral vision in relation to the shifting ground of resilience. We must scrutinize not only what Walker wrote but also how the *Appeal* and its immediate precursors moved within and reconfigured a heterogeneous assemblage of agents, readers, listeners, and texts.

By recovering the history of readers and circulating agents for *Freedom's Journal*, the *Rights of All*, and Walker's *Appeal*, we can trace the resilience of an antideportation reading network made manifest through a form of distributed agency.¹⁰ I use the phrase *distributed agency* in two senses: First, this reading network depended quite literally on distribution agents, who transmitted reading material to black people through a Southern boardinghouse, a tavern, a post office, and perhaps even a barbershop. These agents lived throughout the United States, including in the South. Second, agents' widespread distribution enabled the resilience of the reading community as a whole. Black reading in the South—inchoate and fragile as it was—did not cease with Russwurm's decision to close *Freedom's Journal* and depart for Liberia, nor did it conclude with the financial failure of the *Rights of All* or David Walker's death in 1830 ("T," 269–71). Individual distribution agents repudiated Cornish or left the South entirely, and yet the larger assemblage of readers and texts transformed and persisted.¹¹

This community of agents, readers, and listeners endured, moreover, despite the pressures of a deportation regime—a system of laws, social practices, and philanthropy that encouraged black people in the United States to self-deport. While much of this Southern readership remains invisible to contemporary scholars because agents hid their work from white authorities, it is not entirely irrecoverable. The present essay advances our collective understanding of these agents' lives, although much archival work remains to be done.¹² In the pages that follow, I will extrapolate from what is known about this community by considering how the *Appeal* functioned within and across an assemblage of agents and readers. Then, I will trace reading practices back across various texts—the *Appeal*, the *Rights of All*, and *Freedom's Journal*—demonstrating readers' persistence even as the distribution agents' network transformed under pressure.

In a different context, Elizabeth Maddock Dillon has observed that thinking through the logic of the assemblage enables us to reconstitute “a world in which sub-agential subjects cohabit with semi-agential objects, a world in which the assemblage of things and bodies is the locus of meaning, possibility, and poesis.” In reconstructing the Southern black reading community and theorizing it in terms of what Dillon calls “distributed agency,” we can understand the movement of black print as more than a singular effort to resist the forces of white supremacy that were newly resurgent in the era of Jacksonian populism. Rather, we can recognize that the *Appeal* emblemizes a resistant, counterhegemonic surplus, a negative cosmopolitanism articulated not *by* a single black intellectual but *through* a complex system of ongoing exchange.¹³ In short, we can understand the resilience that bears up against a quasi-state deportation scheme not as the work of a single author or pamphlet, but as a mobile, transforming constellation of authors, readers, and texts.



THE RESILIENT ASSEMBLAGE IN AN
ERA OF SELF-DEPORTATION

Russwurm wrote in 1829 that he believed any future emancipation of enslaved people in the United States would cause an irresolvable refugee crisis. Justifying his decision to permanently leave the United States—to self-deport—he explained: “Suppose that a general law of emancipation should be promulgated in the state of Virginia, under the existing statutes which require every emancipated slave to leave the state, would not the other states, in order to shield themselves from the evils of having so many thousands of ignorant beings thrown upon them, be obliged in self-defence [*sic*] to pass prohibitory laws?”¹⁴ Russwurm believed that the restrictions on free black people in the North would, in the context of emancipation, grow more, not less, severe. And without access to citizenship, remunerative employment, or public services such as schooling, life for freed slaves would be intolerable. In essence, Russwurm predicted the appearance of stateless or undocumented migrants immiserated by a government committed to coercing them into exile.

Russwurm had already witnessed the effects of self-deportation logic, which enabled him to make this prediction. As Northern states ended the institution of slavery, white philanthropists began to pressure free black people to leave the country. These philanthropists also founded the ACS in 1817—the same year that the New York legislature expanded the scope of its gradual emancipation law.¹⁵ The ACS sought to encourage free black people, the vast majority of whom had been born in the United States, to emigrate to Africa and the newly established settlements on the Pepper Coast, known today as Liberia. But the ACS depended on state-imposed immiseration to realize its political project. Colonization advocates painted a grim picture of life for free black people

in the United States. They reported, for instance, that free blacks made up only about 3 percent of Pennsylvania's total population but comprised half the state's prison population. Explaining such statistics, colonization outlets would blame "poverty and vice," not state racism.¹⁶ The ACS served as the publicity arm of a larger, partly state-sponsored project of immiseration, which frequently induced self-deportations.

But acts of reading—and the related acts of writing, publishing, circulating, and distributing print—functioned as a powerfully decentralized system for tempering the wretchedness that state action and deportation philanthropy imposed. As Russwurm, *Freedom's Journal's* distribution agents, and others made the decision to self-deport, the larger body of writers, readers, and circulating agents transformed but persisted. Walker's pamphlet traveled along routes that the earlier circulation of *Freedom's Journal* and the *Rights of All* made available. And, as Lori Leavell has observed, newspaper editors throughout the United States reprinted portions of Walker's *Appeal*.¹⁷ New avenues for distributing information emerged. New methods and different people joined a transforming literary assemblage.¹⁸

I use the word *assemblage* here advisedly. By thinking in these terms, I suggest, we can attend to agency's dispersal. As an analytic, the assemblage enables us to see how author, printer, agent, reader, and auditor constitute an interlocking, mobile, and transforming system through which collective modes of enunciation were constituted. The concept, moreover, has been critical to black studies scholars in articulating a materialist tradition of critique.¹⁹ Alexander Weheliye is particularly attentive to how the logics of racialization encode emancipatory possibilities. He writes that the racializing assemblage "also produce[s] a surplus, a line of flight..., that evades capture, that refuses rest, that testifies to the impossibility of its own existence."²⁰ The distribution of black print through and across an emergent, white-dominated field of nationalist print production is just

such a “line of flight”—a fugitive trajectory only partly visible to contemporary scholars.²¹

Walker and those who preceded him exemplify this line of flight. While *Freedom's Journal* had begun as an anticolonization project, editor Russwurm began to change his views by late 1828 and early 1829. In March 1829, he closed the newspaper and decamped to Liberia (*F*, 201, 252). Baffled by this development, Cornish founded the *Rights of All*, a newspaper that attempted to hold together the previous publication's readership.²² But Cornish's readership did not last. Indeed, at least one of his Southern distribution agents, Louis Sheridan, would ultimately favor the colonization scheme, and Cornish struggled to keep the second newspaper financially solvent. He shuttered the *Rights of All* in October 1829, although he briefly revived the paper in Belleville, New Jersey.²³ We must consider the readership of Walker's *Appeal*, then, in the context of Russwurm's decision to endorse the ACS and Cornish's failed attempt to continue the first black newspaper.

Much of the *Appeal* attacks the colonization scheme, and the assemblage of *Freedom's Journal* readers changed as individual agents decided to read and transmit Walker's *Appeal*—or to report and denounce it. Walker, in this sense, was not merely an individual actor. An entire system of circulation, distribution, reading, and listening changed when *Freedom's Journal* closed. Yet the great extent of the distribution network first produced through *Freedom's Journal* and the *Rights of All* enabled its resilience. Walker's pamphlet followed geographic routes first blazed by the earlier newspapers, and the pamphlet and the newspapers shared readers even in enslaving cities such as Baltimore and in the Deep South. Walker's *Appeal* extended deeply into the South, I suggest, because black newspaper editors, as well as a diverse array of agents and readers, prepared the way.

As Jacqueline Bacon has pointed out, the *Freedom's Journal* readership included the nominally free and the

enslaved. It included those who were literate, those who were learning to read, and those who merely listened to others read the newspaper aloud (*F*, 8). The newspaper itself preserves evidence of these exchanges. *Freedom's Journal* published correspondence from North Carolina and Virginia, Connecticut and Maryland. One *Freedom's Journal* correspondent from New Bern, North Carolina, wrote to Russwurm in September 1828 that he or she had witnessed a ship loaded with captives and bound ultimately for New Orleans. "To hear the screams and moans of them and their bereaved parents left behind," the correspondent writes, "was enough to pierce the hardest heart." A reader from Baltimore wrote in August 1828 that an eleven-year-old girl, Eliza Pisco, had been kidnapped, and her family suspected that she had been sent on a ship to the Deep South and to enslavement. The reader encouraged all to be "on the look out ... wherever they meet with any person who may answer the description of the lost child." *Freedom's Journal* not only communicated information to Southern readers but also enabled them to communicate with each other.²⁴ The network of agents enabling this readership changed but persisted, despite a wave of denunciations and self-deportations, because this network did not depend on individual heroic actors. Agency was dispersed.

In practical terms, mapping the overlap between Walker's network of agents and the earlier newspaper network is difficult, and a complete reconstruction of this relationship is very likely impossible. Nonetheless, in the pages below, I explore how the distribution of Walker's pamphlet represented a continuation—rather than a repudiation—of the distribution routes upon which *Freedom's Journal* and the *Rights of All* depended. Peter Hinks has most systematically mapped the movements of Walker's pamphlet between its publication in late 1829 and 1830 ("T," 116–73). Hinks' study tracks arrests and rumors of the pamphlet's circulation, but he does not consider the *Appeal* in relation to the agents

who had been disseminating *Freedom's Journal* and the *Rights of All* for nearly three years (*A*, xxv; *F*, 266–67). Yet the extant archive reveals that *Freedom's Journal*, the *Rights of All*, and Walker's *Appeal* shared geography, methods of distribution, and even readers, if not agents. It is to this overlap that I will now turn.



DISTRIBUTING THE *APPEAL* ACROSS
A TRANSFORMING ASSEMBLAGE

Thanks to Hinks' foundational work, scholars today know that Walker's *Appeal* reached more than eleven cities in addition to Boston.²⁵ Moreover, Leon Jackson has recently discovered that Walker distributed some fourteen hundred copies of the *Appeal*, of which authorities only interdicted about three hundred.²⁶ Tellingly, at least eight of the eleven cities in which Walker definitely shipped his pamphlet were on the subscription list for *Freedom's Journal* or the *Rights of All*.²⁷ In one of these places, Middletown, Connecticut, a witness reported that individuals read aloud Walker's pamphlet again and again, until its "words were stamped in letters of fire upon our soul."²⁸ And historians have otherwise explained the pamphlet's distribution to the remaining cities, such as Wilmington, North Carolina; Savannah, Georgia; and Charleston, South Carolina.²⁹ Walker's *Appeal*, in sum, followed a geographic route similar to that of *Freedom's Journal* and the *Rights of All*, although Hinks and others have found evidence that the pamphlet made its way through Southern cities and into the hinterland ("T," 123, 139).

Walker had reason to expect that his pamphlet would find an avid readership in the South. He had been part of the circulation networks of both *Freedom's Journal* and the *Rights of All* and was certainly aware of the other newspaper agents, subscribers, and readers. Each issue's final page listed "David Walker" as a Boston agent, sometimes near paid

advertisements Walker purchased for his used clothing store.³⁰ Russwurm even published Walker's own writing in *Freedom's Journal*.³¹ The *Appeal's* text, moreover, reflects Walker's close association with the earlier newspaper projects. The pamphlet anticipates readers who have access to *Freedom's Journal*, or who have at least heard of it. In the final section, Walker asks his reader to "see my Address, . . . which may be found in *Freedom's Journal*, for Dec. 20, 1828" (*A*, 74). Only a few pages earlier, he reprints a speech from Methodist Bishop Richard Allen, giving the *Freedom's Journal* citation "Nov. 2d, 1827—vol. 1, No. 34" (*A*, 59n). The *Appeal* continued a conversation—about colonization, about emancipation, and about revolution—that had been available to Southern and Northern black readers for several years.

One might expect, then, that the intact network of agents of which Walker was a member would enable the *Appeal's* circulation, and at least one recent scholar has speculated about this possibility. Benjamin Fagan has suggested that Walker might well have "drawn upon the newspaper's network of subscribers as well as his own personal connections when selecting potential allies."³² After all, Walker was himself an agent, and he would have seen the other agents' names associated with cities such as Baltimore and New Orleans—places his pamphlet reached.³³ Many of the newspaper agents disseminated printed texts to Southern and Northern readers month after month, remaining in place for years. Yet no direct evidence suggests that Walker contacted any of the Southern subscription agents, and circumstantial evidence suggests that some Southern agents would have been deeply skeptical of Walker's incendiary prose. The newspapers relied on a tiny group of upwardly mobile black distribution agents—in two cases the legal owners of other people—who had the autonomy, mobility, and resources to distribute newspapers.³⁴ These agents did not represent a unified class, but they were nonetheless freer, wealthier, and more likely than their readers to support the ACS.³⁵

White authorities only interdicted a fraction of the *Appeal* copies that Walker distributed throughout the South. Agents, readers, and listeners, then, became the arbiters of *Appeal's* meaning in the months and years after it was first distributed. Recognizing the importance of the *Appeal's* reception invites us to decenter Walker as the sole arbiter of the pamphlet's distribution and consider the network of writers, printers, agents, readers, and auditors as a mobile, transforming assemblage. By decentering Walker, we can make inferences about the changing network of agents and readers of which Walker was a part. Such a project reveals, ultimately, that Southern readers of *Freedom's Journal* and the *Rights of All* transmitted Walker's pamphlets even when Southern newspaper agents repudiated Walker's ACS critique or emigrated from the United States.



READING AGAINST SELF-DEPORTATION

A scholarly focus on those who write and publish typically obscures the less visible acts of reading and distributing printed material that are ultimately the means by which publications transmit ideas. And yet the Southern readers of *Freedom's Journal* and the *Rights of All* have left material traces in the archive. Understanding these readers is important, moreover, because their decisions to read and respond to Walker's incendiary pamphlet would reshape the culture of Southern black reading after Russwurm and several of his agents ceased distributing printed matter and decided to self-deport. These readers—and auditors—would continue to serve as an audience for writers such as Walker. Moreover, some would remain open to critiques of the ACS even as the original newspaper agents repudiated Walker, self-deported, or simply fell silent.

After Walker's pamphlet first became known in 1829, observers recalled that *Freedom's Journal* and the *Rights of*

All had been welcomed by Southern black readers. One anonymous correspondent to William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator* explained that free and enslaved Southern black people had developed a culture of reading aloud in order to disseminate information from newspapers. This practice was hardly anomalous in the nineteenth century, but among Southern black people it radically extended the reach of black-authored newspapers—and prepared the ground for Walker's later pamphlet. The correspondent explains that he or she witnessed a group of people reading from either *Freedom's Journal* or the *Rights of All*: "A few years since, being in a slave state, I chanced one morning, very early, to look through the curtains of my chamber window, which opened upon a back yard. I saw a mulatto with a newspaper in his hand, surrounded by a score of colored men, who were listening, open mouthed, to a very inflammatory article the yellow man was reading. Sometimes the reader dwelt emphatically on particular passages, and I could see his auditors stamp and clench their hands. I afterwards learned that the paper was published in New-York, and addressed to the blacks."³⁶ This statement's anonymous author—who signed the article as "V."—recalls a scene of black reading that is communal and animated, and that would have enabled the transmission of news across multiple informal networks.

While the scene might have occurred in Baltimore, Richmond, Fredericksburg, New Bern, New Salem, New Orleans, or Elizabethtown, the writer's most important observation is that a culture of black reading—and listening—existed in the South. These readers, moreover, were not merely encountering the products of a white literary culture. They were reading newspapers addressed to them and published by black editors. As Marcy J. Dinius has observed, Walker's pamphlet anticipated precisely this kind of reading experience. The capitalizations, manicules, and exclamation points guided the performance of those who would read his work aloud to a group of listeners.³⁷ Walker's anticipation

of reading as performance thus aligned with Southern black newspaper subscribers' material reading practices.

This Southern and mid-Atlantic reading culture, moreover, left traces in *Freedom's Journal* through letters to the editor, such as the one from Baltimore announcing the kidnapping of eleven-year-old Eliza Pisco. But the closure of *Freedom's Journal*, the financial failure of the *Rights of All*, and the sudden appearance of Walker's incendiary pamphlet changed the conditions of black reading throughout the South—from mid-Atlantic cities such as Baltimore to coastal North Carolina to New Orleans. As Southern authorities came to fear that black-authored print was circulating in coastal cities and even in the rural hinterland, they subjected the agents of *Freedom's Journal* to new forms of suspicion—and pressured them to self-deport.



“I WAS NOT AWARE THAT DAVID WALKER ... WAS ONE OF
THE AUTHORIZED AGENTS”

The newspaper agent for Elizabethtown, North Carolina, offers the most extreme example of the pattern I am describing: he came under sudden, public pressure to denounce Walker and eventually self-deported. Scholars have not found any correspondence between Walker and this agent, Louis Sheridan, and so it is unclear whether he participated in Walker's efforts to distribute the *Appeal* in the South. What *is* clear is that a white newspaper editor publicly accused Sheridan of collaborating with Walker and that, in response, Sheridan lied—claiming that he had no knowledge of Walker whatsoever. It is also clear that black readers in Bladen County, Sheridan's distribution region, somehow became familiar with Walker's *Appeal*.³⁸

White authorities became suspicious of Sheridan in September 1830. That month, a North Carolina newspaper editor named Archibald Hooper claimed that “emissaries

have been dispersed, for some time, throughout the Southern states, for the purpose of disseminating false principles and infusing the poison of discontent." Hooper's primary concern was David Walker, but he had just learned that Walker had been part of an earlier project of black print distribution. Hooper had discovered two issues of the *Rights of All*, now published from Belleville, New Jersey, and he named for his readers the Southern agents that the newspaper's final page listed.³⁹ Additionally, Hooper sent a letter to Sheridan demanding an explanation for his decision to circulate black-authored print in the South. Sheridan replied. This reply, moreover, is revealing not only of his attempts to distance himself from Walker, but of his role in circulating the two earlier black newspapers.

In his letter, Sheridan aligns himself with Russwurm's procolonization politics, distances himself from Walker and the *Rights of All* editor Samuel Cornish, and reveals that he provided Elizabethtown readers with twelve subscriptions to *Freedom's Journal* and ten to the *Rights of All*. Sheridan also reveals that he made the newspaper available "for the perusal of travellers [*sic*] and other persons calling at his boarding house." Yet his repudiation of Walker, Cornish, and the project of black print circulation is implausible: "I never authorized the editor of 'The Rights of All,' to make use of my name as an agent," he explains, although he acknowledges that he had paid Cornish for subscriptions on behalf of other readers and that he had appeared on the agent list of every issue of that newspaper. "My knowledge of the paper, is almost entirely limited to the title," he writes, even though he also acknowledges that he personally distributed the newspaper to subscribers and kept copies available for perusal in his boardinghouse. "I was not aware that David Walker of Boston was one of the authorized agents of the paper," he continues, even though Walker's name had appeared, in one form or another, in every single issue of both newspapers.⁴⁰ Sheridan not only denies his affiliation with Walker, now

a known radical, but also repudiates his links to Cornish. Facing significant pressure, he distances himself almost entirely from the project of black print distribution.

And yet, in doing so, Sheridan reveals his earlier role in that project. At the time, the population of Bladen County—of which Elizabethtown was the county seat—was about 42 percent black.⁴¹ Moreover, in a study of black literacy in the antebellum South, Janet Cornelius found that the plurality of literate enslaved people resided in the urban centers of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.⁴² Even as Sheridan repudiated Walker and Cornish, and even as he publicly endorsed the goals of the ACS, he revealed that he had been distributing two black newspapers through an urban boardinghouse and forwarding copies of these newspapers to individual readers in a region of North Carolina that contained relatively high levels of black literacy. There was an audience for black-authored print in Bladen County, and that audience would persist despite attacks on Sheridan.

Of course, Sheridan had good reason to repudiate Walker. As he concludes in his letter, it would be “folly” for him to say anything that might force him to sacrifice “the rights and privileges which as a freeman, I enjoy under the Government of this State.”⁴³ Sheridan was a property owner, but he recognized that this status was legally precarious. He noted to an acquaintance in 1834, for instance, that authorities could confiscate his property if he were to remain away from it for over ninety days.⁴⁴ In the short term, his rhetorical strategy appears to have been wise. The *Recorder* editor found Sheridan’s reply plausible, particularly his untestable claim that he had “never seen” Walker’s pamphlet.⁴⁵ Hooper, the editor, writes that Sheridan is “innocent” and that all evidence “tend[s] to exonerate [him] from deserved suspicion.”⁴⁶ Whether Sheridan’s role in circulating black print ended with the failure of the *Rights of All* or whether he continued to secretly distribute reading material—such as Walker’s pamphlet—remains unknown.

During this time, Southern white authorities pressured an emergent assemblage of black agents and readers. As a result, that assemblage changed, although not necessarily in the ways that authorities had anticipated. Sheridan is a case in point, repudiating Walker while (possibly) continuing to participate in emancipationist politics. Of course, Sheridan's relationship to Walker's *Appeal* is too ambiguous to characterize with confidence. His forceful denial of any association with Walker would be understandable regardless of whether or not he participated in the pamphlet's distribution. Sheridan, moreover, was a complicated and contradictory individual. Although he was the legal owner of enslaved people, he also freed at least some of his enslaved workers "for conscience sake," at least according to the tradition of a family of free blacks who named their son after Sheridan.⁴⁷ And while he would emigrate to Liberia later in life, he expressed only lukewarm support for the ACS' self-deportation schemes, and that only after having been publicly accused of participating in subversive activity. Without more evidence, it would be impossible to ascertain Sheridan's precise relationship to the *Appeal*. But attention to Sheridan's reading network—centered on a black boardinghouse in Elizabethtown, North Carolina—reveals that there was a small, inchoate black readership in Bladen County in the months and years preceding the appearance of Walker's pamphlet. This readership included those who subscribed directly to *Freedom's Journal* and the *Rights of All* as well as those "travellers" who merely perused it in a boardinghouse. These readers, moreover, would later show they were familiar with various arguments about colonization: arguments made by Walker, by Russwurm, by Cornish, and by others ("T," 144).

I will return to evidence of this Bladen County readership in a moment. First, however, it is important to illustrate how frequently the networks for transmitting black print changed in the South—and how frequently they persisted.



“THIRTY TO FIFTY LASHES, TO GET THEM TO
CONSENT TO GO TO LIBERIA”

Southern white authorities took extreme measures to prevent the *Appeal*'s distribution, including arresting agents and seizing pamphlets. Under this pressure, the informal reading networks that newspaper agents built in the years prior to the *Appeal*'s publication transformed or eroded. Nonetheless, what remains visible of Walker's 1829 and 1830 network of illicit agents shares methods of distribution, geographic regions, and sometimes even readers with the earlier black newspapers published between 1827 and 1829. People read Walker's *Appeal* in cities as far apart as Baltimore and New Orleans, and the pamphlet even reached deep into rural North Carolina—just as *Freedom's Journal* and the *Rights of All* had. Moreover, the *Appeal* circulated through North Carolina boardinghouses, just as the earlier newspapers had. An enslaved man named Jacob (or James) Cowan distributed the pamphlet by this means in Wilmington, North Carolina.⁴⁸ And yet as Southern authorities made arrests, many of the prior newspaper's agents avoided any public association with Walker's pamphlet. The system of agents, readers, and means of distribution changed in the face of this pressure, but did not collapse. Instead, as a resistant assemblage, this network transformed and adapted even as many of its constituent members denounced the project of black print circulation or self-deported.

We should consider three brief examples: First, in Baltimore, a twenty-nine-year-old free black man named Hezekiah Grice distributed *Freedom's Journal* and Benjamin Lundy's *Genius of Universal Emancipation* (1821–39).⁴⁹ Years later, a writer recalled that in the mid-Atlantic region during this period, “disguised whites would enter the houses of free colored men at night, and take them out and give them from thirty to fifty lashes, to get them to consent to

go to Liberia.”⁵⁰ Baltimore, in short, was a city in which self-deportation politics were extreme.⁵¹ Between 1 and 11 August 1830, Grice met with William Lloyd Garrison, who was in Baltimore attempting to found a journal that he planned to call the *Public Liberator, and Journal of the Times*. In an account published twenty-eight years later, the *Anglo-African Magazine* described their meeting in this way: “When [Grice] visited Mr. Garrison in his office, and stated his project, Mr. Garrison took up a copy of Walker’s *Appeal*, and said, although it might be right, yet it was too early to have published such a book.”⁵²

The account is fascinating for what it leaves unspoken. Did Grice endorse the pamphlet, condemn it, or express confusion about its contents? During this time, the city of Baltimore stood as such an example of free-thinking among black people that Grice’s former employer had threatened to “take the Baltimore out of” him with a “cow-hide” when he resisted her authority.⁵³ It is unsurprising, then, that white officials in that city never interdicted the *Appeal*, even as Garrison casually “took up” the pamphlet in a Baltimore meeting with a black activist in August 1830.⁵⁴ If this account is accurate, then Garrison’s meeting with Grice reveals that the *Appeal* had indeed reached the city and at least one reader of *Freedom’s Journal*, Grice himself. Yet this account also reveals that the distribution methods for the two texts differed. Grice was not necessarily, or even probably, Walker’s agent.

A second example concerns a more Southern, rural region. In New Salem, North Carolina, a white Quaker postmaster named Seth Hinshaw distributed *Freedom’s Journal* beginning in January 1828. Hinshaw’s participation in this network was not simply an experiment in using the US postal service. The 1830 table of postal officials for Randolph County, of which New Salem was a part, lists twelve total postmasters. Hinshaw is the only one who appears on the *Freedom’s Journal* distribution list.⁵⁵ Yet Hinshaw ceased to

be a distribution agent following the newspaper's closure in March 1829, and by 1838 a "Seth Hinshaw" appears as the distribution agent in Greensborough, Indiana, for the Quaker periodical the *Friend*. (Another Hinshaw—"Jesse Hinshaw," possibly a relation—appears as the distribution agent for the *Friend* in New Salem, however.)⁵⁶ While there is no evidence that the *Appeal* ever reached rural Randolph County, the *Appeal*'s network certainly included Quakers and postmasters, as Hinks' foundational scholarship has revealed. Witnesses in December 1830 observed a Quaker in New Bern, North Carolina, speaking to a Methodist meeting using language that recalled Walker's *Appeal* ("T," 142).⁵⁷ Walker himself, moreover, was perfectly willing to use the post as a means of distribution, at one point mailing twenty copies to the editor of the Milledgeville, Georgia *Statesman & Patriot*, Elijah Burritt ("T," 123). It is likely that New Salem, unlike Baltimore, became essentially unreachable by black publishers without Hinshaw's participation. Yet the methods that enabled Russwurm's newspaper to reach New Salem (Quaker agents, the post) persisted in other regions of the South.

The third example features New Orleans, where a man named Peter Howard served as the agent for *Freedom's Journal* and the *Rights of All* beginning on 4 July 1828. Howard is listed in the 1830 census as a free black man between age thirty-six and fifty-four and a resident of the Upper Suburbs—a majority white region that was nonetheless home to three thousand enslaved people and fifteen hundred free black people. Unlike Sheridan, Howard did not legally own other people. But the so-called Upper Suburbs was a relatively wealthy, mixed-race neighborhood and home to a number of white people and free people of color who legally owned others.⁵⁸ Howard likely regarded himself as part of the quasi-national community that *Freedom's Journal* was building. When authorities in the Crescent City interdicted the *Appeal*, however, they found it in the city proper, far

from the Upper Suburbs. Four men, all of them literate and two of them legally free, were arrested on 8 March 1830 for their association with the *Appeal* (“T,” 149).⁵⁹ Just as in North Carolina, the *Appeal* was distributed in New Orleans among literate and illiterate black people. But Peter Howard, the *Freedom’s Journal* agent living in a relatively wealthy neighborhood, escaped scrutiny.

Walker’s agents did not reproduce the network built by Russwurm and Cornish, and yet the *Appeal* and the newspapers exhibited a similar geographic reach and similar distribution methods. Most importantly, readers persisted. Grice, the Baltimore activist, was familiar with both *Freedom’s Journal* and the *Appeal*—just as Walker expected his readers to be. And other, less well-known readers persisted in their efforts to read and understand the writing of black Northerners.



THE PERSISTENCE OF READERS

As we have seen, evidence suggests that *Freedom’s Journal*, the *Rights of All*, and the *Appeal* shared readers, even in parts of the South. Grice, in Baltimore, is one example of this shared readership. But there are other examples. For instance, in December 1830, Joseph B. Hinton reported with alarm on “an intelligent free [black] man of Bladen County,” whose county seat was Elizabethtown. This was the location, remember, of Louis Sheridan’s boardinghouse and the twelve subscriptions to *Freedom’s Journal* and ten subscriptions to the *Rights of All*. When a member of the ACS approached this Bladen County man about self-deporting to Liberia, the man wrote in reply that “he would not go & the people of Colour were fools to go—that if the United States would free the negroes & give them a territory for them to colonize within their limits—or in Canada—they would go there—if they would give them no freed territory—they must free

the negroes & admit them to all the rights of Citizens & amalgamate with the whites without distinction—or the whites must take their certain doom—for come sooner or later it would be said.” The reply concerned Hinton, and he described it as expressing “very nearly the identical views & language of Walker[']s pamphlet.”⁶⁰

But Hinton was wrong. Certainly, the Bladen County man’s utter rejection of the ACS plan for Liberian exile conjures the tone of Walker’s anticolonization jeremiad. The man’s prophesy of “certain doom” recalls Walker’s apocalyptic language, as does his repudiation of the “fools” who would consent to deportation (*A*, 63). But the man’s reply does not merely echo Walker, who, for instance, does not recommend that black people establish a colony in Canada or that the United States establish a separate territory within its borders. Instead, Walker claims that “America is more our country, than it is the whites[']” (*A*, 73). The Bladen man offers alternatives: a settled region within the United States, a region in Canada, or full citizenship. Perhaps he had read in the *Rights of All* about Cornish’s proposal for an independent black community on the banks of the Delaware River.⁶¹ Perhaps he had read a *Freedom’s Journal* article about Upper Canada, a region to which “some hundred (perhaps thousands) of slaves have escaped.” From this article, he would have learned that laws in Upper Canada make the capture of fugitives “utterly impossible.”⁶² Perhaps he had also read Walker’s *Appeal*, which was rumored to have reached a North Carolina community called “Elizabeth,” and which Sheridan protested—too much, perhaps—that he had never seen (“T,” 139).⁶³

In short, the system of distribution for *Freedom’s Journal*, the *Rights of All*, and Walker’s *Appeal* demonstrated resilience despite pressure. This resilience was enabled, moreover, by the widespread distribution of agency. As we’ve seen, Elizabethtown agent Louis Sheridan came under public suspicion and repudiated Walker specifically, but Walker’s

pamphlet nonetheless reached readers in Bladen County. Baltimore agent Hezekiah Grice ceased circulating black newspapers in March 1829, but he nonetheless encountered a copy of Walker's *Appeal* seventeen months later in the hands of William Lloyd Garrison. New Bern newspaper agent John C. Stanly, himself the legal owner of human beings, would have been unlikely to support the distribution of a text such as Walker's, and yet black readers in New Bern could access the *Appeal* through a roundabout route. "A fellow named Derry" transmitted the pamphlets from James Cowan's Wilmington tavern to New Bern ("T," 138–39).⁶⁴ And even after Cornish shuttered the *Rights of All* due to financial insolvency, Archibald Hooper discovered back issues of the newspaper circulating among black people in North Carolina alongside Walker's *Appeal*. The resilience of black print distribution, particularly in the South, matters because enforced self-deportation functioned as an effective strategy for suppressing emancipatory politics. In many cases, black political leaders self-deported to protect themselves physically, financially, and even spiritually. Like Russwurm, who departed for Liberia in September 1829, and Sheridan, who emigrated from North Carolina to Liberia, Grice made a similar decision, moving to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in 1832.⁶⁵

Yet reading material continued to circulate. In New Orleans, New Bern, Baltimore, and elsewhere, black people continued to read and write, despite significant prohibitions against these practices. By 1837, the emergent black print culture of the 1820s had returned in a somewhat different form. In a language that recalled Walker, Samuel Cornish would write in 1837 that "the endeared name, 'AMERICANS,' [is] a distinction more emphatically belonging to us, than five-sixths of this nation."⁶⁶ Cornish's words appeared in the *Colored American*, a new black newspaper owned by Philip A. Bell, a journalist who had not been part of the earlier black print distribution project. The resilience of the black reading network lay in its distribution of agency. New writers,

readers, and editors joined with those who remained. Lines of thought developed in one context (“America is more our country, than it is the whites[’],” Walker had written) were taken up anew. It is easy to imagine that the *Appeal*, animated by David Walker’s distinctive authorial voice and aggressive commitment to distribution, is a singular document—a radical abolitionist pamphlet existing apart from the emergent respectability politics of an upwardly mobile black middle class. In many ways, it is. Yet Walker’s *Appeal* is also part of a much larger story: the story of a reading community that grew, transformed, collapsed in places, emerged in others, and periodically regenerated.



AGENCY, ASSEMBLAGE, AND THE
LOGIC OF SELF-DEPORTATION

Individuals disappoint. We all inhabit fragile and vulnerable bodies. We can be killed or arrested. We may surrender to threats made against our lives, our loved ones, or even our property. This vulnerability is perhaps why individual acts of heroism inspire. And yet the very vulnerability of individuals reminds us that heroism is insufficient. Indeed, the logic of a self-deportation regime depends upon heroism’s insufficiency. David Walker was correct in observing that white philanthropists depended on the “wretchedness” of free black people to achieve their goals. ACS leaders practically admitted as much. One such leader, Robert Finley, wrote that “the state of the *free blacks* has very much occupied my mind. Their number increases greatly, and their wretchedness too.” Finley imagined that the “wretchedness” of free blacks was natural and inevitable.⁶⁷ A deportation regime depends on precisely the logic Finley deploys. Undesirable people are made wretched by a regime that naturalizes both their undesirability and their wretchedness. The only possible solution for individuals, this logic insists, is capitulation to

the regime. And individuals *do* capitulate. Having only a single life, they attempt to live it as best they can.

But while individuals are fragile, assemblages and systems are recalcitrant. Russwurm and Cornish sought out agents from among those they imagined to be community leaders: Grice, Stanly, Sheridan, and Howard, for instance. These leaders (mixed-race men, in some cases property-owning, and in two cases the legal owners of other people) embodied precisely the contradiction that confounded the logic of whiteness, a contradiction that had to be rendered impossible if caste were to be enforced along lines of color. Yet in their visibility, these leaders were vulnerable. They could be threatened, and they were. But even as these agents' efforts were thwarted, the system of circulation they helped establish nevertheless persisted. Although Sheridan's boardinghouse likely stopped sharing controversial black-authored texts, other boardinghouses still distributed them.⁶⁸ Although Russwurm discontinued *Freedom's Journal*, Walker continued referring readers to back issues of the newspaper. Although the *Rights of All* failed financially, old issues circulated as late as autumn 1830. And although some newspaper agents in North Carolina, Maryland, and Louisiana ceased distributing black writing, black-authored texts nonetheless circulated in those places along different routes and via different agents.

We are living, again, in an age of self-deportation. At such a time, it is worthwhile to recall the persistence of systems that depend on distributed agency. Such systems diffuse political action across vast networks of people and objects, each of which might resist or fail in various degrees and at various times. Jane Bennett observes that such distributed agency "broadens the range of places to look" for the sources of harm, calling our attention to individuals, objects, systems, and decisions made across time and geography.⁶⁹ I would add that such a theory of agency also provides us with new places to seek a means of persistence and survival.

The story of how such a distributed network of readers was built—and reconfigured—should not be entirely reassuring. Following the brief moment of the *Appeal*'s circulation, new laws in the South restricted the distribution of “seditious” literature in Louisiana (1829), North Carolina (1830), and Virginia (1831) (“T,” 151, 241).⁷⁰ The enforcement of these laws, moreover, transformed the inchoate project of print distribution and consumption that joined printed texts with readers, orators, and listeners across the United States. By 1831, William Lloyd Garrison complained that his newly launched abolitionist newspaper, the *Liberator*, did not reach Southern readers.⁷¹ And yet, within a history of restrictions, of reactionary violence, and even of self-deportations, we can find a line of flight. Within a racializing assemblage, we can find its counterhegemonic antithesis. And within a system whose very purpose is the production of human wretchedness, we can observe the persistence of texts, agents, and people.

University of Manchester

This work was supported by a fellowship from Pennsylvania State University's Center for Humanities and Information. I thank Leon Jackson, whose insights during the early and final stages of the essay's development were invaluable. The essay's conclusions and shortcomings, of course, remain my own.

NOTES

1. "Self-deportation" as coerced exile appears in the print archive as early as 1824. See John Jones, *The History of Wales* [...] (London: J. Williams, 1824), 3; and "Twelve Hours Trial; or, A Soldier's Fortune: A Tale from the Italian," *Parthenon*, no. 15 (December 1825): 34. In recent years, the phrase "self-deportation" has come to be associated with the policies of former Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who suggested on 5 October 2016 that the Trump administration would produce conditions through which undocumented people would "self-deport," and who was later responsible for the policy of separating parents from young children. As Kamal Essaheb of the National Immigration Law Center observed in the *New York Times*, such a policy would require "leveraging fear." Emily Bazelon, "Department of Justification," *New York Times Magazine*, February 28, 2017. See also Eli Rosenberg, "Sessions Defends Separating Immigrant Parents and Children," *Washington Post*, June 5, 2018, 108. The commentator and former Nixon administration official William Safire summed up the plan in this way: "Make 'em so miserable that they leave the country." Safire, "Self-Deportation?," *New York Times*, November 21, 1994, A15. For more on the origins of the ACS plan, see Douglas R. Egerton, "'Its Origin Is Not a Little Curious': A New Look at the American Colonization Society," *Journal of the Early Republic* 5, no. 4 (Winter 1985): 464.
2. Eric Gardner, *Black Print Unbound: The "Christian Recorder," African American Literature, and Periodical Culture* (New York: Oxford UP, 2015), 17.
3. As Frances Smith Foster writes, our "contemporary concerns have a history and a common genealogy that influence our present and future." See Foster, "Genealogies of Our Concerns, Early (African)

- American Print Culture, and Transcending Tough Times,” *American Literary History* 22, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 368–80, esp. 369.
4. Jacqueline Bacon, *Freedom’s Journal: The First African-American Newspaper* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2007), 266; hereafter cited parenthetically as *F*.
 5. See also Peter P. Hinks, introduction to *David Walker’s Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, by David Walker, ed. Hinks (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 2000), xxv; hereafter cited parenthetically as *A*; and Ousmane K. Power-Green, *Against Wind and Tide: The African American Struggle against the Colonization Movement* (New York: New York UP, 2014), 47–49.
 6. The cities in which Walker distributed the *Appeal* that were also on the *Freedom’s Journal* distribution list are Richmond; Baltimore; New Orleans; New Bern, North Carolina; and Elizabethtown, North Carolina. While Hinks believes that “Elizabeth” refers to Elizabeth City, North Carolina, because of the history of circulation to Elizabethtown, I am more inclined to think that the transmission of pamphlets was to that much closer city. The courier would have traveled roughly 50 miles to Elizabethtown. He would have had to travel 210 miles to Elizabeth City. For Richmond, see William B. Giles to Linn Banks, January 7, 1830, in Hinks, *David Walker’s Appeal*, 95–96. For New Orleans, see *Baton-Rouge Gazette*, March 20, 1830; *Boston Courier*, April 1, 1830; and Peter P. Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren: David Walker and the Problem of Antebellum Slave Resistance* (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1997), 149; hereafter cited parenthetically as “T.” For New Bern, see Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 137, 139–41; and Sylviane A. Diouf, *Slavery’s Exiles: The Story of the American Maroons* (New York: New York UP, 2014), 274. For Elizabethtown, see Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 137, 139; and Diouf, *Slavery’s Exiles*, 274. For Philadelphia, see the *Liberator*, January 29, February 5, and February 19, 1831.
 7. Walker writes, for instance, that readers should “See my Address, . . . which may be found in Freedom’s Journal, for Dec. 20, 1828.” Hinks, *David Walker’s Appeal*, 74.

8. Jacob (or James) Cowan distributed the *Appeal* through a Wilmington boardinghouse. See *Boston Courier*, August 12, 1830, 2; *Boston Courier*, August 26, 1830, 2; and Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 138. For the total number of issues received by Sheridan, see Gordon Fraser, “Emancipatory Cosmology: *Freedom’s Journal*, *The Rights of All*, and the Revolutionary Movements of Black Print Culture,” *American Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (June 2016): 279.
9. Tavia Nyong’o, “Race, Reenactment, and the ‘Natural Born Citizen,’” in *Unsettled States: Nineteenth-Century American Literary Studies*, ed. Dana Luciano and Ivy G. Wilson (New York: New York UP, 2014), 98. Tara Bynum adds that Walker produces “a new way of being that anticipates full citizenship in his revision of these United States.” Bynum, “Why I Heart David Walker,” *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 14.
10. “Distributed agency” has a long scholarly genealogy. For recent uses, see Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke UP, 2010), 37–38; and Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, “Obi, Assemblage, Enchantment,” *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 177.
11. As late as 1831, Southern authorities continued to find back issues of the *Rights of All* in North Carolina. See “The Ninth and Tenth Numbers of a Newspaper,” *Recorder* (Wilmington, NC), September 2, 1831, 3.
12. Indeed, the process of recovering the lives of early circulating agents would benefit from a larger, coordinated research effort, similar to the extraordinary work on the nineteenth century’s Colored Conventions. See Colored Conventions Project: Bringing Nineteenth-Century Black Organizing to Digital Life, University of Delaware, accessed April 22, 2019, <http://coloredconventions.org>.
13. Dillon, “Obi, Assemblage, Enchantment,” 173, 176.
14. [John Russwurm], “Colonization,” *Freedom’s Journal*, March 14, 1829, 394.
15. See “An Act Relative to Slaves and Servants; passed March 31, 1817,” in *The Revised Statutes of the State of New York* (Albany: Packard and Van Benthuysen, 1836), 158.

16. "From the New York Tract Magazine," *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 1, no. 3 (1825): 91–92.
17. Lori Leavell, "'Not Intended Exclusively for the Slave States': Antebellum Recirculation of David Walker's *Appeal*," *Callaloo* 38, no. 3 (Summer 2015): 679–97.
18. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who first articulated the logic of assemblage to which I refer, write that in literature, as in other discursive modes, "there is not primacy of the individual; there is instead an indissolubility of a singular Abstract and a collective Concrete." Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2003), 100.
19. See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000); Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 37; and Manuel DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2016).
20. Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke UP, 2014), 51–52.
21. For more on the relationship between print production and the rise of Jacksonian populism, see John L. Brooke, "Print and Politics," in *A History of the Book in America*, ed. David D. Hall, vol. 2, *An Extensive Republic: Print, Culture, and Society in the New Nation, 1790–1840*, ed. Robert A. Gross and Mary Kelley (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2010): 179–90.
22. Power-Green, *Against Wind and Tide*, 47–49.
23. For a reference to the revived numbers of the paper, see "The Ninth and Tenth Numbers of a Newspaper," 3. See also Willard B. Gatewood Jr., "'To Be Truly Free': Louis Sheridan and the Colonization of Liberia," *Civil War History* 29, no. 5 (December 1983): 341–42; and Hinks, *David Walker's Appeal*, xxv.
24. See "Missing," *Freedom's Journal*, August 15, 1828, 166; and "Domestic Slave Trade," *Freedom's Journal*, October 17, 1828, 284–85. Others in the South also corresponded. For a letter from Virginia, see "For the Freedom's Journal. Wilkesville, (VA.)," *Freedom's Journal*, July 13,

- 1827, 2. For one from Maryland, see “Scipio C. Augustus,” *Freedom’s Journal*, August 15, 1828, 166.
25. See Robert Austin Warner, *New Haven Negroes* (New York: Arno P, 1969), 100; William H. Pease and Jane H. Pease, “Walker’s *Appeal* Comes to Charleston: A Note and Documents,” *Journal of Negro History* 59, no. 3 (July 1974): 287–92; Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 119n6, 137, 138, 139–41, 149, 151–52, 152n98; Hinks, *David Walker’s Appeal*, 95–96; and Diouf, *Slavery’s Exiles*, 274.
26. Leon Jackson (@DrLeonJ), “Woah! Just found a letter recounting an interview w David Walker in which he reveals how many copies of his Appeal were printed & smuggled!,” Twitter, November 1, 2017, 7:41 a.m., <https://twitter.com>; and Leon Jackson, email message to author, January 23, 2018. Jackson’s findings are based upon a letter that he discovered in 2017 in an archive in the Deep South. These findings have not yet been published or subjected to the scrutiny of peer review but are nonetheless suggestive of the reach of Walker’s *Appeal* beyond the currently known community of readers.
27. These cities include Richmond (Hinks, *David Walker’s Appeal*, 95–96); New Orleans (*Baton-Rouge Gazette*, March 20, 1830; *Boston Courier*, April 1, 1830; and Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 149); New Bern (Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 137, 139–41; and Diouf, *Slavery’s Exiles*, 274); Elizabethtown (Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 137, 139; and Diouf, *Slavery’s Exiles*, 274); Philadelphia (*Liberator*, January 29, February 5, and February 19, 1831); New Haven (Assorted newspaper clippings, Scrapbook of Amos G. Beman, vol. 2, p. 87, box 2, James Weldon Johnson Collection in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven; Robert Austin Warner, *New Haven Negroes*, 100; and Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 151–52); Middletown (Assorted newspaper clippings, Scrapbook of Amos G. Beman, p. 87; Warner, *New Haven Negroes*, 100; and Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 151–52); and Providence (Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 152n98). The *Appeal* was also discovered in Wilmington (*Boston Courier*, August 26, 1830, 2; and Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 138); Savannah (Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted*

- Brethren*, 119n6); and Charleston (Pease and Pease, "Walker's *Appeal*, 287–92).
28. "Letters from the People," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, October 13, 1854, [3].
 29. Walker had lived in Wilmington before moving to Boston and likely had contacts there. Moreover, he sent the *Appeal* to Savannah in the care of a white ship's steward, who delivered sixty copies to a black Baptist minister, the Reverend Henry Cunningham (Cunningham immediately returned them upon learning of their contents.) Finally, a white mariner ignorant of local reading networks disseminated the *Appeal* in Charleston. He was caught after distributing only six copies. For Wilmington, see *Boston Courier*, August 26, 1830, 2; and Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, xiii, 38. For Savannah, see Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 118. Hinks offers a revised and corrected account of the circulation to Savannah but bases it on Clement Eaton, "A Dangerous Pamphlet in the Old South," *Journal of Southern History* 2 (August 1936): 326–29. For Charleston, see Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 145–46.
 30. See for instance "Clothing" and "Authorized Agents," *Freedom's Journal*, October 31, 1828, 255, 256.
 31. David Walker, "Address," *Freedom's Journal*, December 20, 1828, 295.
 32. Benjamin Fagan, *The Black Newspaper and the Chosen Nation* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 2016), 41.
 33. For New Orleans, see *Baton-Rouge Gazette*, March 20, 1830; *Boston Courier*, April 1, 1830; and Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 149. For Baltimore, see "The First Colored Convention," *Anglo-African Magazine* 1, no. 10 (1859): 307.
 34. These two agents were John Carruthers Stanly and Louis (sometimes written as Lewis) Sheridan. See "From the Pennsylvania Freeman. Louis Sheridan," *Colored American*, August 4, 1838, 96; and Loren Schweninger, "John Carruthers Stanly and the Anomaly of Black Slaveholding," *North Carolina Historical Review* 67, no. 2 (April 1990): 171, 179, 177. Because Stanly and Sheridan both had complicated relationships with the institution of slavery, I have declined here to refer to them as enslavers. That said, evidence suggests that Stanly,

- in particular, enforced ownership of human beings through corporal punishment and through advertisements for runaways.
35. For example, newspaper agent “W. D. Baptist,” of Fredericksburg, Virginia, might well have been Edward D. Baptist, who was quoted in *Freedom’s Journal* as having presided over a patriotic reading of the Declaration of Independence and toasting gradualist emancipation schemes. See “For the Freedom’s Journal,” 2.
 36. V., “WALKER’S APPEAL. NO. 2,” *Liberator*, May 14, 1831, 1.
 37. Marcy J. Dinius, “Look!! Look!!! at This!!!!: The Radical Typography of David Walker’s *Appeal*,” *PMLA* 126, no. 1 (January 2011): 55–72, esp. 56.
 38. I am referring here to an account of reading in Bladen County that I discuss at greater length later. See Joseph B. Hinton to John Gray Blount, Raleigh, December 23, 1830, in *The John Gray Blount Papers*, vol. 4, 1803–1833, ed. David T. Morgan (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1982): 548. See also Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 144.
 39. Hooper listed “Lewis” [Louis] Sheridan, John C. Stanly, Peter Howard, “M. D. Batsh” [W. D. Baptist], and “Arther” [Arthur] Waring, as well as David Walker. “The Ninth and Tenth Numbers of a Newspaper,” 3. See also Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 143. For more on Hooper, see William Stanley Hoole, *Alias Simon Suggs: The Life and Times of Johnson Jones Hooper* (Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1952), 11.
 40. “The Conclusion of Our Article” and “For the Cape Fear Recorder,” *Recorder* (Wilmington, NC), September 10, 1830, 3. For a calculation of the total number of issues received by Sheridan based upon the amounts he paid Russwurm and Cornish, see Fraser, “Emancipatory Cosmology,” 279.
 41. US Census Bureau, Population Density, Bladen County, North Carolina, 1830, prepared by Social Explorer, accessed June 9, 2014, <https://www.socialexplorer.com/>.
 42. Janet Cornelius, “We Slipped and Learned to Read’: Slave Accounts of the Literacy Process, 1830–1865,” *Phylon: The Atlanta University Review of Race and Culture* 44, no. 3 (1983): 171, 185.
 43. “The Conclusion of Our Article,” 3.

44. For more on Sheridan, see Gatewood, “‘To Be Truly Free,’” 335; and William S. Powell, “Sheridan, Louis,” in *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, ed. Powell (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1994), 5:332–33.
45. “For the Cape Fear Recorder,” 3.
46. “The Conclusion of Our Article,” 3.
47. Gatewood, “‘To Be Truly Free,’” 332.
48. Marshall Ratchleff, “David Walker’s Southern Agent,” *Journal of Negro History* 62, no. 1 (January 1977): 101. See also *Boston Courier*, August 12, 1830, 2; *Boston Courier*, August 26, 1830, 2; and Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 138.
49. Grice was not an agent for the *Rights of All*, however. Thomas Green distributed the latter newspaper in Baltimore and in later years would consider self-deportation. Green chaired a Baltimore church commission investigating whether British Guiana “possesses such advantages as can justify” the migration of free black people from Maryland to that colony. “Report,” *Report of Messrs. Peck and Price [...] For the Purpose of Ascertaining the Advantages to be Derived by Colored People Migrating to Those Places* (Baltimore: Woods & Crane, 1840), 3–4.
50. “The First Colored Convention,” 307.
51. It was in this context that Grice wrote in April 1830 to Richard Allen proposing what would become the first Colored Convention. Asafa Jalata has called the convention the “first civil rights movement in the United States.” See Jalata, “Revisiting the Black Struggle: Lessons for the 21st Century,” *Journal of Black Studies* 33, no. 1 (September 2002): 92. See also Marcia M. Matthews, *Richard Allen* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1963), 134–35.
52. “The First Colored Convention,” 307.
53. “The First Colored Convention,” 306.
54. For evidence that Garrison was in Baltimore from 1–11 August 1830, see Arthur Tappan to W. L. Garrison, Baltimore, August 9, 1830, in Wendell Phillips Garrison and Francis Jackson Garrison, *William Lloyd Garrison, 1805–1879: The Story of His Life Told by His Children*, vol. 1, 1805–1835 (New York: Century, 1885), 202. For a

- copy of Garrison's prospectus for the *Public Liberator, and Journal of the Times*, see 199–202.
55. *Table of Post Offices in the United States, Arranged by States and Counties* [...] (Washington: Duff Green, 1831), 158.
 56. "The Friend. Tenth Month, 6, 1838," *Friend* 21, no. 1 (October 6, 1838): 8.
 57. Hinks quotes John Gray Blount to Joseph B. Hinton, Washington, December 14, 1830, in *The John Gray Blount Papers*, 4:544.
 58. A free person of color named Leda Gouges, who also lived in the Upper Suburbs and was one of Howard's neighbors, was listed in the census as the owner of two people as of 1830. See "Authorized Agents," *Freedom's Journal*, July 4, 1828, 120. The census records Howard as living with a boy under the age of 10 and a woman or girl between the age of 10 and 23, both free black people. See "United States Census, 1830," database with images, FamilySearch, <https://www.familysearch.org>; and "Upper Suburbs of New Orleans, Orleans, Louisiana, United States," citing 101, NARA microfilm publication M19 (Washington: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.), roll 45, FHL microfilm 0009688.
 59. See also "New Orleans," *Rhode Island American, Statesman and Providence Gazette*, April 2, 1830, 4; and "New Orleans, March 11," *Daily National Intelligencer*, April 9, 1830, 2. See also "From New Orleans," *National Gazette* (Philadelphia), April 1, 1830, 5.
 60. Hinton to Blount, Raleigh, December 23, 1830, in *The John Gray Blount Papers*, 4:548. See also Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 144.
 61. See Samuel Cornish, "Land for Sale," *Freedom's Journal*, April 4, 1828, 16.
 62. "Summary. Runaway Slaves," *Freedom's Journal*, January 9, 1829, 321.
 63. See also Diouf, *Slavery's Exiles*, 274.
 64. James F. McRae to Governor John Owen, Wilmington, August 7, 1830, in Governor John Owen, Letterbook, 1828–1830, vol. 28, North Carolina State Archives. See also Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*, 137.
 65. "The First Colored Convention," 310. See also George F. Bragg Jr., *Men of Maryland* (Baltimore: Church Advocate P, 1925), 71.

66. [Samuel E. Cornish], "Title of this Journal," *Colored American*, March 4, 1837, 2.
67. Reverend Robert Finley to a friend, Basking Ridge, February 14, 1815, in *Letters on the Colonization Society; and on its Probable Results* [...], ed. Matthew Carey, 8th ed. (Philadelphia: L. Johnson, 1834), 7.
68. Ratchleff, "David Walker's Southern Agent," 101.
69. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 37.
70. See also Joseph Cephas Carroll, *Slave Insurrections in the United States, 1800–1865* (Mineola: Dover, 2004), 129.
71. Garrison explained, "Unfortunately I have not a single subscriber, white or black, south of the Potomac." William Lloyd Garrison to Joseph Gales and William W. Seaton, Boston, September 23, 1831, in *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison*, vol. 1, *I Will Be Heard!, 1822–1835*, ed. Walter M. Merrill (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1971), 131.