SERMONIC FUGUES

EVALUATED IN A THEMATIC COLLECTION

OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN HOMILETICAL RESPONSES

TO THE 9/11 TRAGEDY USING

DISTANT READING ANALYTICS

by

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DISSERTATION

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my father—the late Pastor Willie James Ford, Sr.—who inspired and shaped my love for preaching, and my mother—Rhunette Ford—who gave me my first concordance which helped nurture my logophilia.

Abstract

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This dissertation project introduces and evaluates the coined rhetorical/homiletical concept of the *sermonic fugue*. The term is an expanded adaptation of the musico-literary fugue principally in the context of thematic collections and homiletical analytics. It defines recurring—common or contrasting—rhetorical patterns presenting themselves particularly within multiple sermons. This research critiques the sermonic fugue against a select collection of African-American homiletical responses to the 9/11 tragedy. The evaluation is further conducted using distant reading and topic modeling analytics to identify the presence and notable patterns of sermonic fugues within the collection. The methodology of the research is performed in phases which involved collecting select sermons preached in September 2001, conducting appropriate computational analytics, constructing relevant datasets, and conveying the findings of the research through data visualizations and narrative storytelling.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 *From Soloist to Symphony*

Within the world of literary criticism, much has been gained from viewing works of

literature as products of a culture. More value is added when these products are weighed against

the social, political, and economic histories, practices, and material cultures of their time.

Although most literary works are developed, delivered, analyzed, and evaluated as singular

pieces of artistry, the field of literary studies is discovering hidden treasures along the terrain of

large collections and corpora by employing new evaluative tools and paradigms. Such is also the

case with scholarly analysis of sermons or homilies. Preachers—or homilists—frequently appear

to perform independently as solo instrumentalists. They are in essence, playing their sermonic

songs from the stage of their isolated pulpits without conscious regard to the multitude of other

pulpiteering instrumentalists who are playing the same or similar song, at the same time. The

difference is in the sheet music—arranged for a different section, but still a part of the same

orchestra. From a balcony view, it may at first sound merely as a cacophony of noise—that is

until the conductor stands before the group organizing those individual, isolated melodies into

collective coordination of symphonic harmony. Perhaps a more apropos scenario, is the

contemporary wonder of the virtual choir. This is where a single engineer brings together singers

from various locations, synchronizing—potentially hundreds of solo user-generated videos—into

a symphonic virtual choir through the use of new technology and media ("About the Virtual

Choir – Eric Whitacre's Virtual Choir").

The syncretizing of a multitude of African-American homiletic soloists responding to a

national, cultural, political, or any thematic focus reveals underlying communal thoughts and

emotions. This harmony is often unapparent when experienced in singularity or observed

collectively without any coordination. At their assembling, it may initially sound as though these

sermons are isolated and disoriented. However, once properly engineered through computational

literary studies[1] (CLS)—such as distant reading and topic modeling analytics—there emerges

from these soloists, a harmonized symphonic sound of philharmonic proportion. It is from this

symphonic paradigm that this project introduces and explores the coined expression henceforth

known as the *sermonic fugue*[2].

The sermonic fugue defines recurring—common or contrasting—rhetorical patterns

presenting themselves possibly within a solo sermon but more particularly amongst a collection

of sermons composed around a shared theme. The thematic research collection is best

comparable to a performance compilation of individual homilists' solo sermonic renditions.

Imagine having a digital album with several separate tracks of different instrumentalists'—such

as a flutist, trumpeter, violinist, and pianist—each playing their own rendition of Handel's

Messiah. The final track, however, is an orchestral arrangement of all the various solo pieces into

one symphonic overlay of the music. This track, in effect, brings together the harmony of chords

and syncopation of rhythms revealing a profound synergistic experience of sound. For sermons

particularly—and rhetorical proses in general—distant reading, topic modeling, and data

visualizations act as the tools used to compose such an orchestral music score. Each of their parts

or phases help bring into view the hidden harmonic melodies of the sermonic fugues whose

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[1] Computational Literary Studies (CLS) is the statistical representation of patterns discovered in text mining which evolves sets of rhetorical strategies including currently existing knowledge about literature, literary history, and textual production. "Practitioners of CLS shore up their shaky findings by analogizing them to familiar methods of traditional literary criticism" (Da B18)

[2] Fugue is a musical term which is defined as "a musical composition in which one or two themes are repeated or imitated by successively entering voices and contrapuntally developed in a continuous interweaving of the voice parts" (*Definition of FUGUE*).

sophistication is duly appreciated once symphonically chorded together. Black preaching, even more specifically, has been noted for its unique display of musicological elegance. This is mostly accredited to the closely shared racial experiences, faith lens, and perspective of patriotism of the homilists and community. The musicology, faith infusion, and national pride—as harmonized in Black preaching—are prominently visible beyond its ethnic boundaries often during televised funeral services of high profiled African American celebrities—such as Whitney Houston and Aretha Franklin—or victims of racial tragedies—as in the case of Rev. Clementa Pinckney and George Floyd. Commonalities in the preaching themes, language, and patterns are ever present and can be identified and highlighted through intentional critical analysis. It is from this type of rhetorical and symphonic sophistication that sermonic fugues can be scholarly and critically elicited through thematic collections, such as that of African-American homiletical responses to the 9/11 tragedy.

An ancillary question worthy of attention is why is the time period surrounding the September 11, 2001 terrorism event as the point focus of this study? It should be noted that mass thematic collections of homilies could and at times should widely vary in scope, focus, and diversity. There are many scholarly benefits in 'Persons of Interest' (POI) collections, such as visualizing and mapping sermonic fugues within the corpus of a single homilist's repertoire. However, focus on the unique benefits derived from multiple homiletic responses to a single event has great significance and implications as well. There are many events which should at some point be the center of a research project. Among them are corpora critiques of homiletic responses to sociocultural events such as: mass shootings; police shootings; social protests; presidential elections; even the present COVID-19 coronavirus epidemic. All of these events are

worthwhile scholarly research subjects. However, a critique of sermonic responses themed around the 9/11 tragedy is seminal for multiple reasons.

This particular period is important, in part, for its national and historical significance. Never before in modern history has a coordinated terrorist attack of this magnitude been made on American soil. President George W. Bush began his address to the nation on that fateful day by acknowledging that "our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts" (Bush, George W.). The impact on that way of life by this 9/11 event marked a profound moment of cultural shift. Air travel—particularly airport security protocol— is an example of how life in America was greatly and forever altered. The specific locations where the planes crashed—New York, Virginia/Washington D.C., and Pennsylvania—were geographically and symbolically relevant to the tone and tenor of the homilies. That is to say that the homiletic responses in New York would expectantly be different from pulpits in Texas. However, the national symbols that were targeted pulled upon a common heartstring throughout the country. Hence the synergistic effect of this tragedy created by its national impact, cultural effect, and the personal connections called for an orchestration of homiletic voices to respond and resound its implication on the nation. Because there existed—and continues to exist— notable differences in racial perspectives toward nationalism as well as cultural applications of faith, this 9/11 event is meaningful. It is additionally valuable to view it in the light of the ethnographic distinctions from and on the African-American community as conveyed through Black preaching.

The timing of this event is another reason September 2001 has significance to this project. The 9/11 attacks occurred near the beginning of the twenty-first century which is also approximately the time of the advent of a surge in digital born and digital orality material. It was

at the turn of the century that the second wave in the evolution of Digital Religion studies is marked by trending Internet practices within religious groups (Campbell 17). These dynamics are significant to research involving digital collections and oral homilies with regard to CLS. Overall, the event of 9/11 is both a worthy and wealthy choice as a foundational premise for this thematic homiletical study. This period in time provides an amalgamation of historical, sociological, ethnographic, technological, and faith elements. These collection conditions provide a context that is ripe for excavating valuable research data from this corpus of sermonic responses to this event by a plethora of African-American homilists.

1.2 *Thesis Statement*

Jane Garmey is credited to have said that "the original Greek meaning of the word anthology is a collection or gathering of flowers in bloom" (Garmey). In light of that analogy, it is reasonable to submit that oratory homilies and sermons are in essence the daylilies within anthological studies. That is to say, if they are not collected the day they bloom, by nightfall they will have faded away. Anthologies—including thematic research collections—are by design comprised primarily of select works which have been deemed worthy contributions towards better research, scholarship, and pedagogy with regards to a particular genre or topic of discourse (Palmer 351–52). Although traditional anthologies and collections are certainly advantageous for most genres, topics, and timeframes, there remains a gap in the volume of anthologized religious orations. This highlights the need for the inclusion of an additional cache of material that gives greater attention to Christian homiletics—and particularly those within the African-American evangelical oral tradition—as rhetorical and archival subjects.

Early in American history, print and published material were considered the secondary source for exerting and perpetuating evangelical influence. Oratory has consistently been the

steadfast primary means of affecting change through the Christian faith. Richard Allen—the founder of the first African-American denomination in the United States of America, the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church—perhaps saw the path and importance of preserving the African evangelical sermonic moment through published materials. He, however, was also quite astute to the control and sanitization of such printed works through white publishing houses. Allen therefore determined that the A.M.E. Church would be best served by establishing its own Book Concern. According to Eric Gardner, "the African Methodist Episcopal Church was committed to print from its beginnings" but goes on to note that after several failed attempts to print material by means of a weekly newspaper, to date no copies of that publication have been recovered (Gardner). Fortunately, modern scholars of African-American literature have since begun to recognize the benefit in considering the voice, arguments, and impact the African-American homilist has had on the social and political landscaping of American history. Cedrick May asserts that "ignoring the use of Christian language and ideologies for a scholarship of representation results in an uncritical discourse of tokenism" (May, *Evangelism and Resistance in the Black Atlantic, 1760-1835* loc. 130). Well appreciated is the fact that the influential voices of clergy and evangelical figures continue to resonate well into the twenty-first century—albeit still more so over podiums in pulpits than by pen-to-paper. Therefore this thesis is borne in order to further assert homilies as worthy considerations and subsequently greater inclusion in modern anthological scholarship.

This project positions that distant reading analytics applied to a collection of African-American homilies responding to a thematic subject or event will identify sermonic fugues and reveal common and contrapuntal themes. Such scholarly engagement of sermonic fugues will allow for 1) broadening the scope of African-American evangelical literature to include the

amassing cache of digital content being produced, 2) expanding scholarly evaluations of the modern rhetorical elegance and influence of African-American homilists—such as the underlying rhetorical patterns noted within collective sermonic responses—and 3) advancing the treatment of Black preaching and homiletics within the field of digital studies.

This thesis concedes that the historical significance of the homiletic influence of African-American pulpiteers has for many years been validated through traditional literary evaluation practices, such as close readings of prioritized written texts. Although the influence of these Black preachers has been forged through the Black church, the effect is proven by their impact on the thoughts and actions of its religious, patriotic, and racially invested communities. Literary evaluations of Bishop Richard Allen and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr—both their famous as well as not so familiar—texts and writings are prominent examples. These select written materials of influential clergy have endured traditionally very close readings for their influences on sacred and secular concerns. For Bishop Allen, scholars inside and outside of the A.M.E. Church have meticulously examined the contents of his autobiography, entitled *The Life, Experience and Gospel Labours of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen* to ascertain and apply its influential content. Active research of the many documents produced by Dr. King continues even today for their cultural impact. This effort is led in large part by The Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute of Stanford University. That is not to say that oral sermons—transcribed into written text—have not contributed to the validation of the African-American clergy's influence as well. C. L. Franklin's late twentieth century sermon, "Without a Song" underwent scholarly evaluation for its treatment of historical responses to oppression. Gary Hatch in his close analysis of the sermon, noted that Franklin logically and methodically argued the different responses of biblical Israel to the Babylonians, historical African slaves to their White oppressors, and—

relatively recent to the time of its delivery—Ronald Hayes to Nazi Germany (Hatch 233–34). He in essence supports the argument that perhaps the reason Black preaching is not better represented in literary evaluation practices is because "the emotional element of Black folk sermons has traditionally presented a problem to some scholars" (Hatch 227). This perhaps is why a more serious and close scrutiny of Jeremiah Wright's sermons were not conducted when his sermonic influence was called into question during the 2008 presidential campaign of Barack Obama. It is therefore because of such a diminished regard for meaningful literary evaluations of homiletical works that a pivotal focus of academic research using modern methodologies for evaluating big data is warranted.

Synthesizing large quantities of ethnographically select sermonic speeches, born or converted onto new media platforms—necessitates adequate accessibility to well-structured database collections. These collections must be well organized to accommodate the textual mining of pertinent research content for the purpose of advancing scholarship and archiving. In context of this project, this claim holds that with the availability of such thematic collections, several areas of scholarship would have marked opportunities for advancement. The sub-discipline of African-American Evangelical Literature would be materially broadened by the integration and normalized inclusion of homiletic collections. Modern rhetorical studies could more effectively increase the scholarly critiquing of homilists—as in the case of Wright's sermon repertoire—while encouraging a stronger interconnectivity with contemporary homiletics. Digital Religious Rhetoric studies could extend its depth with a more consistent emphasis being placed on the rapidly evolving and technologically influenced adjustments being made in Black preaching. Thus, this project provides a process structure for building a thematic collection of Black digital sermonic material, new apparatuses for conducting distant readings

and rhetorical evaluations, and opportunity to foster ongoing accessibility to Black sermons as collections and anthologies within African-American literature.

1.3 *Challenges & Gaps*

It is necessary to acknowledge that building these thematic databases and developing computational methodologies and analytics to evaluate sermonic fugues is not without its challenges. Written material has historically been a more permanent and farther reaching record, therefore deemed more amenable for historical criticism, research, and scholarship. Texts which were printed, published, and widely distributed tended to have had a greater chance of preservation for future access and—at the time of publication—provided broader visibility and stronger credibility for writers. This thereby, positioned them as more influential voices due to a larger readership. With such a priority being placed on written material, authors who are well known due to their published works are more often anthologized. This then leads to their lessor known works, or iterations of their primary text(s), to being sought after for deeper evaluations of their collective work and intellectual arc. The emphasis on published written material is understandably a key criteria for traditional anthology construction. Nevertheless, with regard to scholarship within the genre of African-American homilies, limiting the collection to written and traditionally published material creates a significant breach in the scope of research.

Given the frequency in which homilies are presented from pulpits and like platforms, many clergy become more than just luminaries within religious circles. Many find themselves somehow extended as powerbrokers in cultural and community spaces. Often their ecclesiastical position allows them to leverage social influence beyond the 'sacred desk', thus becoming a secular power figure shaping the thoughts and deeds of citizens and leaders—ultimately affecting community policies and cultural trends. Homilies of those who preach with pastoral and itinerate

regularity help to assemble a more informed arc of their preaching. This reflects some of the value lost in the missing cache of material that would be useful in scholarship development. May points this out as he recognizes, concerning Bishop Richard Allen, that "while none of Allen's sermons have survived, his extant writings offer much information, explaining the circumstances that led to his involvement in the development of one of the most influential institutions for black America" (May, *Evangelism and Resistance in the Black Atlantic, 1760-1835* 99). This continues to hold true in modern history as contemporary preaching is constantly evolving to include more 'newish technologies' that not only enhances the preaching moment, but ensures its permanence (Gates Jr. et al. 56). Furthermore, the orality element of preaching aligns the genre more succinctly with sermonic fugue motif. The musicality used to vocalize preached ideas help to identify the thematic harmony of homilies in ways in which visual text alone cannot capture. *Whooping*, for example, is a common trope of Black preaching that refers to the pulpiteer's use of a cadence or rhythmic repetition as an emphasis of a key theme or idea of the sermonic message. Sermons captured in written form at times edited out or deemphasize these vocalized stresses as perhaps a synergistic emotionalism between the preacher and audience. By doing so, a sermonic fugue void is perhaps formed because it was relegated as a mere tangential digression of the preaching event, or simply edited out for publication (M. J. Simmons and Thomas xi). Hence, while there are published written sermon texts available, oral homilies must also be well represented, anthologized, and made accessible for research alongside any other extant media captured sermon texts.

Critical analysis of a solo work of literature or rhetorical record—even if included within an anthological collection—has proven to provide valuable insight into an author's style and nuances of that work's contribution to scholarship. This level of critique is usually evaluated

through close reading or exegesis seeking to uncover obscure details embedded within that

singular piece. However, there is much evaluative benefit to be gained, particularly through big

data analysis and distant reading of a corpus of literary works over or around a span of time or a

particular instance/occasion in time. This approach is particularly useful when considering

contemporary African-American homiletical scholarship. Unlike in the past, the potential yield

of a voluminous amount of contribution is highly feasible. It is becoming common practice for

weekly sermons to be recorded, uploaded, and made available through websites and mobile

application services. Consequently, the volume of audio recordings of homilies have far

outpaced the number of written sermons including early published texts which have been

digitized for wider access. A cursory search for "sermons" on the Internet Archive website

returned with results of 21,374 texts and 158,732 audio files. Even more telling is that when

filtered by year, the results returned that from 1900 – 1999 there are 4,816 sermon records

whereas from 2000 – 2019 there are 58,434 ("Sermons Search Results"). Although most

recordings are siloed on a specified website or localized database, methodologies can be

developed and digital repositories constructed that centralizes and organizes the large trove of

material.

1.4 *Contemporary and Scholarly Relevance*

Modern technologies, algorithms, and new media platforms have already begun to do

some of the heavy lifting through the advent of an extraordinary number of sermons being

regularly and digitally captured across demographics. The need for furthering African-American

evangelical scholarship and collection development is perhaps best addressed by placing

continued attention on its advancement during this time when Digital Humanities (DH) is

burgeoning as a discipline across many fields of study. Proper coordination of oratory sermon

corpora requires consideration of the archiving of such resources. Additionally, the functionality and feasibility of transcribing audio recordings to text while encoding necessary metadata for research and analysis must also be factored into the process. Once established, accessible, and useable for distant reading and text mining, these orally delivered homiletic discourses will have the potential of becoming normative components of anthologies and collections.

Homiletical thematic collections are essential for orchestrating text mineable data viable for uncovering embedded sermonic fugues. These collections are also vital in conducting evaluative analysis into how homiletical influencers rhetorically negotiate and align their personal ideologies, religious convictions, ethnic predilections, and patriotic allegiances. Within the American Christian church there has long been a delicate balancing of spiritual awareness, personal identity, and social positioning. This counterweights are often influenced by the clergy who is called upon to guide the parishioner—often throughout their entire lifetime. This balancing act is far more pronounced in the Black church and requires a complex mediation of W. E. B. DuBois' notion of "double consciousness". The pulpit therefore becomes both a classroom where heads and hearts are inspired, as well as a war room where hands and habits are instructed. Rita Roberts points out that "Blacks accepted evangelical Christianity not only because it met spiritual interests, but also because it supported their political and social ends" (Roberts 37–38). The attracting and guiding voice of the church which drew such followers was that of the preacher. The preacher has the attention of parishioners week after week, often for many decades of their life, thereby becoming a formative influencer of their thoughts and deeds. Hence individual sermonic repertoires—whether select or in its entirety—and thematically driven collections are extremely valuable in evaluating and appreciating the underscored theologies and ideologies that continue to inform cultural concerns even today. It is the

resonance of such sermonic fugues—captured within the select thematic collection—which are targeted for revelation and then evaluation through this project.

1.5 *Research Questions and Objectives*

The established lack of attention and inclusion of sermonic assets in scholarly anthological research has exposed many gaps. These often include breeches to the accessibility of organized source material useful for conducting computational analytics on oratory homilies. Furthermore, it reveals the need for a greater emphasis on—and the development of—scholarly purposed digital projects and thematic collections of oral Christian sermons for inclusion in digital libraries, archives, and anthologies. Limiting the African-American homiletical body of literature to primarily written and published material creates an even wider cavity in the scope of CLS material given the high prominence of orality over chirography within this genre.

The inclusion of orally produced sermons of Black homilists is important to the scholarship of African-American evangelical literature for several reasons. One reason is that the volume of material produced by most homiletical influencers is primarily done through oral delivery. There are now multiple ways to adequately preserve this traditionally fleeting mode of communication. With the advancement of new technology and media, a voluminous amount of unorganized material is presently available. However in order for scholarly criticism and computational analytics to take place, proper organizing, managing, and grafting of this material is required. Another critical cause for inclusion is that, given both the quantity and frequency in which sermons are delivered, homiletical analysis is further served when conducted though a corpus of sermons as opposed to being relegated to the study of only a single or a few select pieces whether written or oral in nature. Methodologies for evaluating large quantities of texts through distant reading analytics are evolving at a rapid pace. As such, the inclusion of lesser

known homilists is viable which allows for these otherwise silenced voices to be considered within scholarly critiques rather than being marginalized or eliminated as mere obscurities.

There are, consequently, critical implications to leaving out this cache of material from among research and scholarship resources. Principally, an entire segment within the genre of African-American literature will be overlooked if not adequately captured, preserved, and archived for scholarly use. As previously noted, countless influential homiletical messages delivered in oral form have been lost over past centuries due to a lack of intentionality to capture and preserve them. To neglect this opportunity to assemble these rhetorical works or dismiss them as insignificant would be an injustice to scholarship and academic research. Furthermore, it would deny the historical and continuing sociological influence, rhetorical gifting, and cultural impact of African-American homilists and the Black church at large. Dereliction of scholars to pursue the chance to close this gap would most certainly diminish the trailblazing legacies of renowned clergy such as Richard Allen and Martin Luther King, Jr. The breech could widen given the careless scrutiny of the work of pulpiteers such as Jeremiah Wright. To abandon this opportunity would further promote the unfair maligning of the rhetorical impression that the Black sermonic tradition has particularly on persons of prominence—as was done of Wright's preaching influence on the forty-fourth President of the United States, Barack Obama.

In order to better appreciate the problem and demonstrate its significance to scholarship, there must be a narrowing of focus to a specific context through which these gaps and challenges may be observed and addressed. Hence, this project raises for exploration as its primary research question this inquiry:

How does a digital thematic collection of select African-American homiletical responses to 9/11 benefit the distant reading of those sermons?

This question is considered particularly with regard to identifying sermonic fugues relative to the rhetorical negotiations between religious, patriotic, and ethnic interests conveyed within the homilies.

Subsequently, this question prompts additional queries to be considered which include:

1. Are topic modeling tool(s) effective in constructing or conditioning a digital thematic collection that is useful for engaging scholarly research, especially for critiquing homiletic influences on sociocultural experiences as wielded through orality?

2. How efficient are transcription methodologies and tools for converting recorded audio to digital text files that are sufficient for scholarly computational textual analysis?

3. Does existing text mining algorithms adequately account for the nuanced stylisms and vernacular of Black preaching that is adequate to accommodate its oral tradition?

These are a few underlying questions which helped navigate this study and uncover areas of vulnerability as well as opportunity for added benefits in developing the sermonic fugue notion as a viable tool for literary criticism.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Twenty-First Century Literature on Black Preaching

Selecting September 11, 2001 as the temporal anchor for this project is important because it focuses attention on a period of time when there was significant shifting in American culture and technology. However, it also highlights a natural chronological marker commonly used to historically note the space of a new century. As previously noted, literature reflects insights into the culture, behavior, and thought parameters of its time. A review of the dynamics of literature produced over the past twenty years in the area of Black preaching has revealed that a plethora of texts have been written by both academic scholars and ministerial practitioners. Subsequently, these works of literature in large part address the artistry of Black preaching, emphasizing aspects such as style crafting and delivery techniques. However there are meaningful literary contributions which address more the intellectual depths of Black preaching with regard to its theological, sociological, and historical importance to the hermeneutics and homiletics of the African-American community. These materials often cited and leveraged one particular writer's contribution to the subject and genre of Black preaching—the noted scholar and homiletician— Henry Mitchell. In 1990, Mitchell provided revisions and an amalgamation of two of his previous books written in the 1970's—*Black Preaching* and *The Recovery of Black Preaching* (Mitchell 7)—into one foundational text for the next century of authors of African-American homiletics. Mitchell's conflation established that Black preaching was multi-dimensional and exposed the various aspects of the genre including its importance, history, hermeneutic, style, and structure. Hence, although the majority of Mitchell's published contributions to Black preaching was prior to the twenty-first century, his literature and scholarship was a great

influence on the critical thinking as well as both the practical and scholarly critiquing of the genre in this new era.

Of the many available texts on Black preaching published since 2000, I'd like to highlight two in particular. The first is Cleophus LaRue's *The Heart of Black Preaching* published in 2000. In this text, LaRue presents a paradigm for evaluating Black preaching—categorically and characteristically—using relatively traditional as well as new lenses. He blends together in this book the two prime vantages of artistry and intellectualism using familiar concepts while establishing fresh insights. In a broad sense, LaRue concludes that at the heart of Black preaching is a common hermeneutic that sees God as an omnipotent presence who acts and advocates "on behalf of dispossessed and marginalized people" (LaRue 17). It is because of this earnest belief and through passionate conveyance that Black preaching links the biblical God's intervention for the downtrodden to the present Omnipotence's involvement in the oppressive and challenging life experiences of African Americans. To align LaRue's paradigm with the sermonic fugue notion, one could consider using his characteristics of Black preaching as a type of 'tuning fork' useful in synchronizing the key and pitch of the massive number of sermons within the tradition. There are four distinctive characteristics LaRue notes and suggests that these traits set Black preaching apart from other homiletic traditions. They are: 1) strong biblical content, 2) creative uses of language, 3) appeal to emotion, and 4) ministerial authority. Although all of these characteristics are important, I will highlight only a couple in this review.

The first of these traits important to this discourse, is the presence of *strong biblical content*. That is to say that Black preaching has historically been bibliocentric in its invention and exposition. Some homileticians would insist that without having a central text upon which the sermon surrounds, the presentation does not meet the threshold of preaching but is merely a

speech. LaRue confirms that at the turn of the twenty-first century—when this particular text was published—"the Bible's primacy as a rich resource for Black preaching" was still in full effect (LaRue 20). The reason strong biblical content is significant to this project is because one sermonic fugue element to consider in observing the homilies within the thematic collection is the level and pattern of faith content negotiated in the messages. Specifically with regard to the 9/11 homiletical response, the weight of Bible primacy is an important factor to measure against those of ethnicity and patriotism. Although strong biblical content was determined to be a key historical trait of Black preaching at the outset of the twenty-first century, tracking its continued potency throughout the century—particularly at points of sermonic response to critical cultural concerns—is a worthwhile scholarly initiative.

Another characteristic on LaRue's list that is germane to Black preaching and significant to this project is the quality of *ministerial authority*. A fundamental argument of this discourse is that there continues to be a strong African-American clerical influence wielded from the pulpit that emanates into cultural and sociopolitical spaces. This authority stems from a distinctive reverence bestowed upon the African-American preacher since before the Declaration of Independence. LaRue even suggests that "this notion of authority originated prior to the transatlantic slave trade in Africa where the priests and medicine men…were accorded a high degree of admiration and respect" (LaRue 23). The Black church is considered to be the first supposedly self-governing and pseudo-autonomous institution for African descendent peoples in America. This essentially then positioned the Black preacher as the *ipso facto* first recognized leader of the Black community in this country. So from the beginning, sermons preached from the African-American pulpit were not only spiritual in context but cultural and sociopolitical in its sub-context. Ministerial authority as an attribute of Black preaching therefore has sustained its

prominence for generations and continues to be a primary feature well into the twenty-first century. In regard to this project, the historical and continued notability of African-American ministerial authority highlights the value of evaluating this demographic of influence through their most prominent vehicle of persuasion—their sermons. Just as authorial authority is exerted through published literary texts, oratory ministerial influence too invokes critical thinking and committed action in various spaces of life and living. Tracing—or at minimum acknowledging—the consistent presence and potency of this influence, particularly in homiletic responses to thematic events and subject matters, is a worthy scholarly pursuit.

LaRue points out that although strong biblical content and ministerial authority—along with creative use of language and emotionalism—continues to be ongoing characteristics of Black preaching, he admits that Mitchell and his late twentieth century scholar contemporaries somewhat pivoted into concretizing additional attributes of the genre which LaRue says is a more "systematic level of reflection" (LaRue 23). Among several spotlighted is Gerald L. Davis and his 1985 book *I Got the Word in Me and I Can Sing it, You Know* wherein Davis explores the performative aspects of Black preaching. Davis notably explored the "oral formulas, metrical patterns, and narrative methodologies" (LaRue 23) of the African-American sermon tradition. LaRue also referenced Evans Crawford's 1987 *The Hum: Call and Response in African American Preaching.* This text expounded upon the "homiletical musicality" much in line with the Jon Michael Spencer's treatment of the topic in his book *Sacred Symphony: The Chanted Sermon of the Black Preacher*—also published that same year (LaRue 24). These mentions are significant in that they demonstrate seedlings for the sermonic fugue concept early in the 2000's. Thus the notion of the sermonic fugue is well rooted in the traditional character traits of Black

preaching and can be seen as budding into visibility and worthy notability at the turn of the

twenty-first century.

One of the more recent scholarly contributions on Black preaching reviewed is the 2018

book *Voices in the Wilderness: Why Black Preaching Still Matters* by John L. Thomas, Jr. The

overall proposition of this writing was to look at the theological implications surrounding the

historical trending, present challenges, and future implication of Black preaching. Significant to

the purpose of this project, is Thomas's keen observation that although the Black preacher is by

far the resident theologian in most Black communities and "in a culture where words still matter,

it is imperative to give as much attention to what the Black preacher is saying as how it is being

said" (Thomas, Jr. 2). To delve into the content of the sermon has as much—if not more—

relevance to the sociopolitical impact of Black preaching in today's climate as does the manner

in which it is delivered. An extremely fresh case and point is the use of sermonic soundbites and

clips by many political campaigns and pundits —often taken out of context—as a means to

delegitimize the African-American preacher's influence and voice. The most familiar example of

homiletic exploitation is the use of Wrights' sermon content against the presidential aspiration of

Barack Obama. However, a more recent use of this same tactic is the attempt to derail the

political campaign of the Raphael Warnock in his 2021 runoff race for a Georgia U.S. Senate

seat. Warnock has a PhD in philosophy and is the Senior Pastor at Ebenezer Baptist Church in

Atlanta. This is the same church formerly pastored by the late Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King,

Jr. In that highly contested race, Warnock is brutally attacked in political ads that used excerpts

from his sermons to paint him as radical and anti-American, while attempting to tie him to

Wright and his "God damn America" sermon statement. The mis-contextualizing of homiletical

statements—particularly of Black preachers like Wright and Warnock—has not gone unnoticed

by scholars nor the media. Stephanie Saul writes about this in a December 18, 2020 *New York Times* article. It reports that Warnock's opponent issued a press release stating that

> "Warnock has a long history of praising Wright, calling him a prophet and celebrating his infamous 'God damn America' speech days after it was delivered. And Warnock himself has repeatedly said 'God damn America' in his sermons", although "Warnock has uttered that phrase only in instances when he was referring to Mr. Wright's speech, not to endorse that sentiment himself" (Saul).

Hence, Thomas' recognition that scholarly attention to the content of Black preaching is important—now more than ever—is playing out right before our eyes as the line between the sacred and secular continues to blur.

Chapter 2 of *Voices in the Wilderness* provides insight into what Thomas refers to as "The Contextual Necessity of Black Preaching". He suggests that contextual necessity is satisfied when homilies are prepared and presented through lived experiences. This then requires the preacher firstly to "stand as one who shares in the life of the community" and secondly to "focus on the relief of suffering" (Thomas, Jr. 40). The notion is that understanding the contextual positioning and intention of the Black preacher and his/her preaching, aides in understanding the influence of that preaching. Often they are considered to be Moses-like in that there is a shared experience from which the preacher is positioned to lead the people into a better place. The challenge for the Black preacher, however, is what Thomas calls a 'contextual crisis'. He says that "contextual crisis occurs whenever the liturgies of the church—songs, sermons and prayers—are disconnected from the historical realities that gave birth to them" (Thomas, Jr. 43). The tension surfaces as the Black preacher must somehow negotiate and balance the theological

convictions of the ancient text with the present sociological beliefs and experiences being faced

by the community. In this case study of 9/11, the reconciliation between faith, ethnicity, and

patriotism is the contextual crisis every African-American homilist wrestled with in an attempt to

lead their audience out of the shared tragic terrorist experience into a godly place of peace. Aptly

stated, Thomas suggests that "more than a philosophical issue, truth is a contextual matter [in

that] every preacher must engage the dialectical tensions between tradition and tragedy"

(Thomas, Jr. 43–44). Thus, recognition of the contextual necessities and crises which the Black

preacher must contend is an essential consideration. This is especially true in the scholarly

evaluation of homilies and their influences within and outside of Black and religious

communities.

At the point of its 2018 publication, Thomas observes that there had been "no serious

critique about the use of electronic technology and its impact on Black preaching [and] in a time

of social media and tweeting, cultural shifts are occurring rapidly all around us. Black preaching

is not immune to these technological influence" (Thomas, Jr. 181). He then directly calls for a

closer examination of technology and its impact on Black preaching (Thomas, Jr. 182). This

statement and call supports the aspect of this project which insists that the development of

thematic collections of homilies and further criticism tools for distant reading are needed.

Integrating and exploring technology useful in the literary analysis of homilies—especially those

of the Black preaching tradition—will expose the brilliance, complexity, and influences that

emerge from the stylism, theology, and sociology of those sermonic contributions. Other

insightful concepts and models were developed within this particular piece of literature such as

Thomas's 'Four Theological Streams' and 'Dialectical Model'—which will be discussed more in

depth later in this discourse. Overall, this review of the timely explorations of literature on Black

preaching by Mitchell, LaRue, and Thomas, Jr. affirms that further scholarly attention is both important and beneficial to the development of homiletical analytics especially when applied to African-American responses to cultural events.

2.2 *Twenty-First Century Sermonic Anthologies*

Having reviewed select twenty-first century literary contributions on the dynamics of Black preaching, it is reasonable to expand the review to consider anthology projects and collections. Particularly of interest are collections produced also within the twenty-first century which include or feature sermons of African American origin. A broad edited collection of African-American literary works which included sections and excerpts of Black preaching, as well as other literary genres of the Black church tradition, is *The Norton Anthology of African-American Literature,* Third Edition published in 2014. The general editors are Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Valerie A. Smith. According to Norton's website, this two volume edition includes 140 authors within the time span of pre-American Revolution to present day writers in genres and vernacular forms ranging "from spirituals and sermons to jazz and hip hop". More importantly is the bold statement from the publisher testifying that this edition provides "fresh scholarship, new visuals and media, and new selections—with an emphasis on contemporary writers" (*The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*). This acknowledgment is significant in that it purports to sustain the critical need to maintain an up-to-date pulse-reading of the patterns and trends of literature of all stripes—which supposedly would include those generated inside sacred circles. Disappointedly, upon close review of the literature included in this edition—particularly the sermons—this volume does not include any sermons post mid-twentieth century. In fact, there are only two twentieth century African-American Protestant homilies included in the anthology—C. L. Franklin's "The Eagle Stirreth Her Nest" (circa 1953); and a sermon fragment

of G. I. Townsel's sermon "The Way Out Is To Pray Out" (circa 1960) (Gates Jr. et al. 61–69). It's noted that there is one twenty-first century transcribed oration included in this publication— Barack Obama's 2008 speech "A More Perfect Union" (Gates Jr. et al. 1411–19). This is unfortunate since this edition had ample time and opportunity to incorporate at least a single sermon from the present century. Even so, it must be recognized that the purpose and focus of this anthology was not to highlight sermonic literature. Furthermore, and to its credit, it does acknowledge the genre as a part of the African-American literary tradition. This gap is nonetheless overdue for greater reduction. This most likely will be done outside of the broader anthological treatment of African-American literature and more purposely through special collections which emphasize the Black sermon genre and its place within literary canon.

Martha Simmons and Frank A. Thomas provides a major portion of the stop-gap needed towards filling the void of Black sermon representation in the African-American cache of anthological literature. In their 2010 book *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present* these editors adamantly acknowledges the great contribution of Black sermons to the communicative tradition of African Americans. They also point out the neglect to properly preserve theses treasures in the archives of literature. These editors insists that

> Preaching has been the most celebrated method used by blacks to communicate their spirituality, culture, history, victories, visions, and vicissitudes to each other and the world. Unfortunately, up and until the last twenty-five years or so, even the black community failed to systematically document and record much of this genius for future generations. This failure says more about the oral nature of black culture than it does about how much it values the preached word (M. Simmons and Thomas xxiv).

This statement is validated in earlier projects to anthologize Black sermons by editors such as William M. Philpot's 1972 sermon collection entitled *Best Black Sermons.* Philpot endeavors to composite and preserve what is considered by a common abstract of the book as "examples of excellent homiletical form reflecting the black experience" ("Free Read Best Black Sermons") at that time. Black preaching is indeed highly regarded as a major thread of the African-American cultural fabric. The literary prestige of the Black sermon, unfortunately, does not share in that esteem.

Simmons and Thomas approaches and dissects the plethora of sermons in their collection in several ways. Beyond the chronological divisions of the anthology, they also provide a categorical paradigm for grouping the homilies. The major categories are sectioned into: Social Activist Preaching; Black Identity Preaching; Cultural Survival Preaching; and Empowerment Preaching. The significance of these categories aligns with the sermonic fugue notion in the sense that there are patterns, traits, and voices which are so consistent within certain sermons they can be categorized by their common themes. These connective tissues are identifiable when multiple sermons are evaluated collectively and noted patterns and trends are recognized and mapped as significant. Hence, collecting and publishing sermonic anthologies are necessary for the preservation of a treasured component of the African-American oral tradition. Additionally, these activities can also trace the influence that these homilies—and homilists—have on Black social activism, identity, cultural survival, and personal and community empowerment.

Traditional anthological construction, as previously discussed, are primarily reliant on published written texts of notable figures. Consequently, such a narrow archival scope has resulted in a massive number of weekly unprinted and unconsidered homiletical imprints dissipating from any collective record. Granted, there are many factors as to why this particular

deficit was unavoidable. However, in order to advance in the construction homiletical thematic collections, specific methodologies for preserving this genre must be explored and enacted. Within this anthological review, it would be prudent to explore not only published sermonic literature, but projects and studies similar to this research project which have begun to venture into widening the scope beyond written publications.

A project worthy of brief mention is the venture to include Martin Luther King Jr.'s sermons as a central part of his overall archived collection of research and historical material. Stanford University established the Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project —in conjunction with the King Center, Dr. King's estate, and its own Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute. According to the Institute's website, this is one of only a few large-scale research ventures focusing on an African American (Stanford University)—let alone an African-American preacher. It is because of the keen insight to broaden King's collective work beyond merely his written, published, and iconic pieces to include ancillary content—especially selections from his sermon repertoire—that deeper research and scholarship can be drawn. This caliber of repository certainly supports arguments advocating the importance of African-American homiletical anthologies and collections. Additionally, it unveils the potentiality of archives whose assembly includes a broader collection of materials beneficial for greater diversity in research, scholarship, and pedagogy.

A very relevant collection with regard to this project, is the 2019 Pew Research Center study entitled "The Digital Pulpit: A Nationwide Analysis of Online Sermons". This survey conducted a distant reading analysis of nearly 50,000 sermons delivered April 7 - June 1, 2019. These are sermons that had been posted online and were assembled to determine variants and patterns using the metadata collected and more importantly the vocabulary content of the

sermons themselves. The report suggests that the developmental idea of the project is to address the research gap wherein data is gathered concerning Americans' "religious affiliations, beliefs and practices…[although] less is known about what churchgoing Americans hear during religious services" (Pew Research Center 4). This strongly mirrors the intention of this project to consider the homiletical influences of the African-American preacher on their congregants particularly with regard to cultural concerns. The Pew study acknowledges that the sermon by definition brandishes influence on thoughts and actions particularly through theological and religious rhetoric (Pew Research Center 5).

The Pew Research project also employed distant reading and topic modeling analytics which are quite parallel to the methodological approach of this project. The report states that their "analysis begins to explore [the developmental] question by harnessing computational techniques to identify, collect and analyze the sermons that U.S. churches livestream or share on their websites each week" (Pew Research Center 4). The ability to effectively use computational techniques to convert orally recorded sermon material into mineable textual content is a fundamental component of both projects' objectives. The data derived from Pew's distant reading of its massive corpus collection of homilies demonstrated the potential for developing a solid theoretical framework for the sermonic fugue notion. For instance, The Pew study was able to identify and categorize patterns within the sermons' language from which both common as well as contrapuntal thematic voices could be distinguished. The study reported that "computational text analysis also found many words and phrases that are used more frequently in the sermons of some Christian groups than others" (Pew Research Center 6). It is through this type of interpretational analysis of the results of distant readings that sermonic fugues can be identified with the homiletic responses to 9/11. Visualizations of the derived patterns is yet

another feature of the Pew study that is significantly useful to this project. Figure 1 and Figure 2 are examples of how data visualizations and narratives are useful in displaying sermonic fugue information derived from an analysis. Particularly of interest is Figure 2 which highlights the Pew study's narrowed focus on the distinct language in 'historically Black Protestant sermons'. If nothing else, this is an acknowledgement that Black preaching has a uniqueness worthy of noting in contrast to other ethnic styles of preaching.

The most distinctively evangelical terms are not widely used in evangelical churches

% of churches where each term or series of words was used in a sermon at least once over the study period, sorted by distinctiveness (each term also includes its common variants; for example, "eternal hell" also includes phrases such as "eternity in hell")
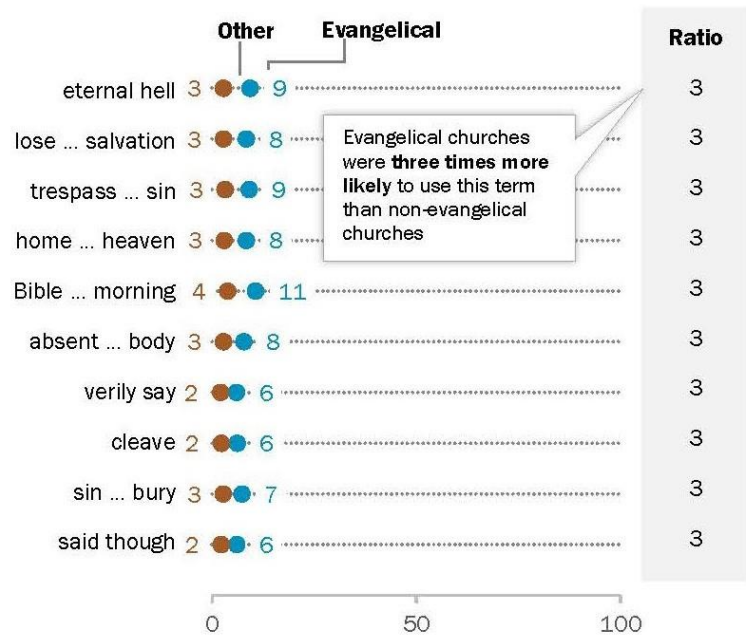
Term	Other	Evangelical	Ratio
eternal hell	3	9	3
lose ... salvation	3	8	3
trespass ... sin	3	9	3
home ... heaven	3	8	3
Bible ... morning	4	11	3
absent ... body	3	8	3
verily say	2	6	3
cleave	2	6	3
sin ... bury	3	7	3
said though	2	6	3

Evangelical churches were **three times more likely** to use this term than non-evangelical churches

Note: Percentages are rounded to the closest integer, but the ratios were calculated before rounding. Also, the words in this analysis were "stemmed" or converted to their roots, and common words (such as most prepositions) and words used by more than 95% or fewer than 250 (roughly 4%) of all churches were removed.
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of sermons delivered April 7-June 1, 2019, and available on church websites (N=49,719 sermons from 6,431 churches that posted sermons online).
"The Digital Pulpit: A Nationwide Analysis of Online Sermons"

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Figure 1: Pew Research 'Evangelical' Terms Visualization Graphic

Historically black Protestant sermons distinguished by words representing praise, celebration

% of churches where each term or series of words was used in a sermon at least once over the study period, sorted by distinctiveness (each term also includes its common variants; for example, "hand ... praise" also includes phrases like "raise your hands in praise")

	Other	Historically black Protestant	Ratio
powerful hand	4	34	8
hallelujah ... come	3	22	8
neighbor ... tell	3	22	8
hand ... praise	4	29	7
praise ... got	3	23	7
hallelujah ... God	4	30	7
tell ... neighbor	5	34	7
with ... somebody	3	19	7
praise ... amen	3	23	7
got ... praise	4	25	7

Historically black Protestant churches were **eight times more likely** to use this term than all other churches

Note: Percentages are rounded to the closest integer, but the ratios were calculated before rounding. Also, the words in this analysis were "stemmed" or converted to their roots, and common words (such as most prepositions) and words used by more than 95% or fewer than 250 (roughly 4%) of all churches were removed.
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of sermons delivered April 7-June 1, 2019, and available on church websites (N=49,719 sermons from 6,431 churches that posted sermons online).
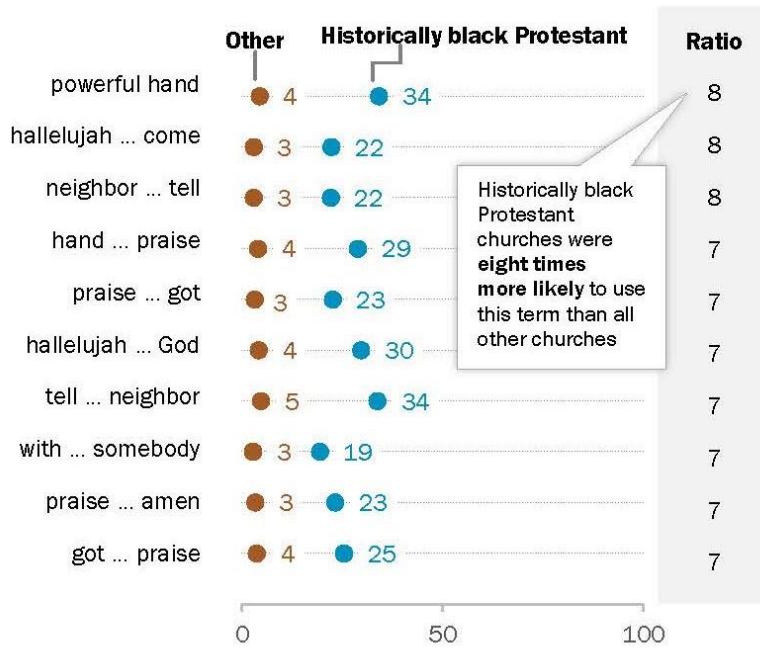"The Digital Pulpit: A Nationwide Analysis of Online Sermons"
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 2: Pew Research 'Historically Black Protestant' Terms Visualization Graphic

One final aspect of the Pew study that is germane to this review and project is its connection directly to the sermonic fugue notion. The study reports that

Researchers also conducted a basic exploration of sermons' vocabulary. Several words frequently appear in sermons at many different types of churches – for instance, words

such as "know," "God" and "Jesus" were used in sermons at 98% or more of churches in all four major Christian traditions included in this analysis. (Pew Research Center 6).

The charted results of this particular analysis in Figure 3 demonstrates the potential of sermonic fugue methodology application. Notice that through this computational text analysis, it is revealed that the word 'God' is among the most frequently used terms by all of the segmented Christian traditions with the only exception being the historically Black Protestant group. It is this kind of distant reading which will aide in spotlighting patterns and trends in Black preaching that can lead to additional and more in depth research and exploration.

Christian traditions share common language, but also possess their own distinctive phrases

Words and phrases that are most frequently used in sermons for each religious tradition

Evangelical	Catholic	Historically black Protestant	Mainline Protestant
say	say	want	know
people	know	know	like
life	God	look	God
God	people	make	day
come	life	say	come

Words or sequences of words that are most distinctive of sermons in each religious tradition during the study period (each term also includes common variants; for example, "eternal hell" also includes "eternity in hell")

Evangelical	Catholic	Historically black Protestant	Mainline Protestant
eternal hell	homily	powerful hand	United Methodist
lose … salvation	diocese	hallelujah … come	always … poor
trespass … sin	Eucharist	neighbor … tell	house … Thomas
home … heaven	paschal	hand … praise	gospel … lesson
Bible … morning	parishioner	praise … got	disciple … betray

Note: Words in this analysis were "stemmed" or converted to their roots, and common words (such as most prepositions) were removed. For the analysis of most distinctive terms, words used by more than 95% of all churches were also removed, as well as those used by fewer than 250 (roughly 4%).
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of sermons delivered April 7-June 1, 2019, and available on church websites (N=49,719 sermons from 6,431 churches that posted sermons online).
"The Digital Pulpit: A Nationwide Analysis of Online Sermons"

Figure 3: Pew Research Terms Categorized

Overall, the precedence and dynamics this Pew Research Center study provides is a great model and paradigm upon which this project can build its methodology and computational scope. The Pew study and this project are similar and parallel in some ways. The use of computational text methodology to identify patterns in vocabulary, for instance, does bolster the thrust of the sermonic fugue notion providing the concept a solid precedent for better refinement of the idea. However, one way in which they differ is the depth of ethnic specificity. This study is distinctive and intentional in its strong ethnographic emphasis on Black preaching as opposed to all preaching. An aspirational outcome of this project is to broaden the scope of African-American Evangelical Literature though the perpetual integration of digital homiletical oratories into its anthologies. Again, to their credit, the Pew study did accent the 'historically Black Protestant sermon' as its own unique category. In that aspect, this study is a scholarly advancement of that feature too.

2.3 *9/11 Thematic Literature & Rhetoric Projects*

So far, this review has considered both the wider scope of select twenty-first century literature on Black preaching and African-American sermonic anthologies, archival projects, collections, and digital analysis. These broader concentrations have now convened the conversation at the focal point of reviewing relative literature and projects involving homiletical and collective oratory influences of African Americans through the thematic emphasis on the 9/11 tragedy. There is one online collection and two literary texts that are particularly germane with regard to this project. The online collection at the AmericanRhetoric.com, is a notable mention in that although it has relevance due to its theme, oratory emphasis, and digital archival collection, it is very wide in its scope. According to the website, it hosts a "SPECIAL ISSUE of the Online Speech Bank which contains [114] active links to historic and recent speeches and

other rhetorical artifacts following the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York and Washington D.C." Most materials are captured in audio and streaming video formats (*American Rhetoric: Rhetoric of 9-11 Terrorist Attacks*). This digital collection has archived oratories about 9/11 delivered between September 11, 2001 and October 7, 2002. The significance of the speeches' content on the 9/11 tragedy aligns with key textual data sought after in the case study for this project. The ethnographic emphasis of this project adds an important difference from that of the American Rhetoric website. The orations of this project are restricted to African-American homilies—which correlates better with the 'historically Black Protestant sermon' designation of the Pew study.

An archived oration closest to a Black Protestant sermon within the American Rhetoric website's 9/11 speech collection, is an address by Louis Farrakhan—delivered on September 16, 2001 at the Mosque Maryam in Chicago, IL. A cursory glance of this speech indicates that it has many of the hallmarks of African-American Protestant homilies and therefore adds some interesting comparative or contrastive dynamics to this study. Based upon Simmons and Thomas' parameters for their *Preaching with Sacred Fire* collection, a 'preacher' is defined as "ordained and non-ordained persons regardless of the orientation of their faiths or their denominational affiliations or lack of denominational affiliation…[including] those who serve as imams" (M. Simmons and Thomas xxiii). Hence, Farrakhan would qualify for inclusion—even in this project—given that he is an African-American homilist and clerical influencer which undergirds his religious orations with passages from sacred texts. Although adding Farrakhan's message to the collection could present some outliers—such as references to the Quran and Allah—the central exploration of sermonic fugues in the areas of faith, ethnicity, and patriotism would deem it profitable to the analysis.

As to the online archival platform, it is worthy to note that there is key dissimilarity in the AmericanRhetoric.com hyperlink approach to information access. The methodological intention of this project is to formulate a process structure that will accommodate the perpetual in growth and expansion of homiletical thematic collections. This particular collection attribute is in many ways similar to the YouTube platform given that it would both house and perpetually accumulate massive amounts of new media content. It is although, difficult to effectively query and retrieve useful results for thematic parameters—such as a search for 'Black sermons on 9/11'—unless intentionally tagged with key terms. Furthermore, neither the AmericanRhetoric.com nor the YouTube platforms have any transcription functionalities available which would allow for distant reading or topic modeling analytics of natively audio material. Consequently, these obstacles provide great opportunity for original, substantial, and significant contributions that would occupy the niche made vacant by these gaps.

The first of the two closely relevant books reviewed is *The Sunday After Tuesday: College Pulpits Respond to 9/11* edited by William H. Willimon. This text—published in 2002—provides a compilation of sermons and homilies presented on college and university campuses by chaplains, ministers, pastors, and priests. These clergy ventured to address the many issues and concerns that emerged from September 11, 2001 act of terrorism on American soil. Because the timing of the event coincided with the beginning of the fall semester, many students were on the campus when this tragedy occurred. These factors required the institutions to not only respond quickly with uncommon safety measures but also with extraordinary emotional comfort and intellectual perspective for those under their care—most being millennials. Willimon—the dean of Chapel at Duke University at the time—compiled sermons preached in chapel services from several faith based or religiously affiliated institutions of higher learning, many being larger

renowned universities. There are 27 homilies published in this collection with representation from institutions such as Abilene Christian University, University of Notre Dame, Harvard University, Southern Methodist University, Tuskegee University, and the United States Naval Academy. The gathering of these sermons delivered from chapel platforms and pulpits underscores the importance and influence of clerical voices responding to the 9/11 tragedy for a variety of communities, not just African American.

Willimon recognized that sermonic responses on college and university campuses had a specific resonance with young adults primarily between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two year olds seeking to find answers through their faith and education. Wielding the influence of the pulpit on college campuses was seen as an opportunity for a seasoned generation of influencers to "help another [generation] make sense of a world that has shifted on its axis" (Willimon 21). Many of these sage orators undoubtedly had been through some culture shaking event of this magnitude in the past. This notion of historical cycle and experiential connections is frequently noted as a trait of Black preaching as there is often content that relates back not only to biblical precedent but also to historical plights within the African-American story in order to address present-day dilemmas. Willimon observes that the challenge of the homilist responding to the sensitivity of the September 11 event is that

> …in the week after Tuesday, we experienced two conflicting tendencies. One sees that
> twofold conflict in this collection of sermons. On the one hand, we were desperate for a
> word, answer to the question, Why?...On the other hand, while people seemed to
> desperately want a word, there were plenty of indications that the word we wanted would
> be carefully policed (Willimon 14).

Willimon goes on to note the scrutiny—at that time—of comments made about 9/11 by Bill Maher and Peter Jennings. Although, there had been no notable repercussions to any statements made by White clergy or on college campuses, there was much backlash to Wright's infamous "America's chickens are coming home to roost" soundbite—albeit seven years after 9/11. Interestingly, Willimon does share an experience of critical scrutiny from one of his students wherein they challenged homilists' sermonic negotiation between faith and patriotism. He writes,

> I received an email from a sophomore on Sunday evening, after what I thought had been a wonderful service in our chapel that morning. The sophomore was "deeply disappointed" that there was hardly any mention of support for "our president" in the service, and "even more disturbing, a total absence of our beloved flag." "You politically correct clergy have failed to help us during our crisis," he complained (Willimon 15).

Identifying sermonic fugues and revealing thematic patterns and voices of faith, ethnicity, and patriotism would help to evaluate whether this student's argument is supported and if so to what extent. Whether the challenge is made against the sermonic presentation of an African-American preacher such as Wright or a college chaplain like Willimon, having a collection infrastructure and computational analytics to evaluate and engage such claims certainly warrants further development. So then, Willimon's compilation of college chapel sermons into this collection is a literary contribution worthy—and expected—to be evaluated, analyzed, and challenged by both scholars and cultural critics. This therefore affirms that there is an opportunity and need to expand this project into an ongoing effort to build thematic collections of sermons and homilies for the purpose of advancing scholarship and engaging cultural dialogue.

The most significant text upon which this research builds is another collection of edited

orations by Martha Simmons and Frank A. Thomas which predates *Preaching with Sacred Fire.*

This anthology is actually themed on the September 11 event. The book *9.11.01: African*

American Leaders Respond to an American Tragedy was assembled, edited, and published in

2001—all within the 3 ½ month period between September 11 and December 31. The wisdom

and foresight to gather these sermons, prayers, and essays—as well as those homilies compiled

for *The Sunday After Tuesday* collection—so quickly after their delivery must not go unnoted or

appreciated. In fact, the editors not only intentionally sought to collectively present these

sermons—with minimal editing and condensing—but also wanted to capture and represent "the

context in which they were preached" (M. J. Simmons and Thomas xi). This objective to capture

the fleeting momentary experiences of orality and reflect it in some chirographic form

acknowledges the need to intersect the two for research, scholarship, archive, and now

experiential purposes. Simmons in her introduction furthers that claim by stating that "along with

the wisdom that can be gleaned from these writers, I trust that as you read, you will also

experience the emotions the contributors felt in the "moments" immediately following the

tragedy" (M. J. Simmons and Thomas xi).

The Afrocentricity and leadership attributes of the contributors also align closely with the

ethnographic and influencer emphasis of this project. Most of the nineteen contributors

represented are clergy in some capacity—or hold credentials as a religious authority—and their

response is from a pulpit or preaching platform. Many also operate in some bi-vocational role as

both a clergy and as a politician or academician—such as Jesse L. Jackson, Jr. and Michael Eric

Dyson. As mentioned earlier, the contributions were not only sermons delivered in the context of

the Black church, but this collection included impassioned prayers and essays as responses to the

national tragedy. Because the majority of the contributions are transcribed sermonic texts of Black preachers wielding the influence of the pulpit, this project has ideal opportunity to incorporate these African-American homiletical responses to the 9/11 tragedy as a part of its case study, thereby advancing this scholarship further.

The advancement of Simmons and Thomas' *9.11.01* thematic collection goes beyond its materiality. The text continues in the vein of the purpose to demonstrate the power of the African-American pulpit on both the broader community and cultural contexts. In the themed case of a national tragic event, Simmons and Thomas endeavors to highlight the unique brilliance and concerted voices of the Black preacher. They state that

> In times of terror, the African-American pulpit has spoken with its clearest voice. Its weighty and lengthy history with attacks is the genesis of its clarity. Perhaps the genesis of its eloquence and passion. Time and again, when evil has spoken, the African-American pulpit has also spoken (M. J. Simmons and Thomas x).

The resonance of many voices conveying common and at times contrapuntal messaging captures the essence of a cooperative alliance rather than singular divergent scout. For instance, gathering this collection of African-American homiletic voices—uttered within the same space of time as Wright's "America's chickens are coming home to roost" statement—proves that there were a plethora of African-American pulpits echoing similar sentiments and wielding a comparable influence over audiences across the nation. Although the primary audience may have been those of common faith and ethnicity, the message and messenger aimed to impact a global consciousness regardless of race or nationality. Therefore, the African-American homilist uses their preaching platform as a means "to help us negotiate the maze of terror and remain clothed

in our right minds" (M. J. Simmons and Thomas x). These editors make it emphatically clear in this text that "even during the most difficult and oppressive times, the delivery, creativity, charisma, expressivity, fervor, forcefulness, passion, persuasiveness, poise, power, rhetoric, spirit, style, and vision of black preaching gave and gives hope to a community under siege" (M. J. Simmons and Thomas xxiii). Continuing this kind of scholarly focus on the rhetorical potency of the African-American preaching tradition is paramount to promoting and preserving the profound influence of this genre.

Overall the reviewed literature and rhetorical projects provide a strong foundation upon which to build and advance the research and scholarship of this project. Together they demonstrate precedent and forethought into the importance of gathering and assembling collections of orations delivered in light of the 9/11 tragedy from various perspectives— specifically the political, collegiate, and African American. Moreover, they provide opportunities to not only expand their scholarships, but to also narrow the scope in order to explore the deeper nuances of the event as well as the surrounding genres and spaces. A statement of Philpot perhaps best summarizes the culminating impression of this literary review as a whole, especially in connection with the musico-literary notion of the sermonic fugue and thematic tragedy emphasis. He says that

> For a long time, the "joy-sorrow" quality of black music has been recognized as creative and classic. Strangely enough, only recently has the possibility been manifest that the black preacher, rising up out of heartbreak and hope, apostle at the same time of apocalyptic escape and determined protest, may have a "word of life" to speak to American society, now confused, frightened, insecure about its future, and uncertain about its basic assumptions (Philpot 6).

It is from this amalgamation of ideas that expanded methodologies, further research, and new

thematic collection projects will emerge.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

3.1 *Symphony Motif in Literature and Preaching*

There has been a long standing intermingling of scholarship—and subsequently a well-established, clear, and distinguished relationship—between the genres of literature and music. The notion of corresponding and coordinating sound—whether verbal or musical—is in many ways a natural phenomenon of curiosity which has led to the emergence of countless theories, methodologies, and scholarship. Musicology—as defined by Alan Shockley—is "any writing about music that attempts to make analogies between language itself and what happens within the world of sound" (Shockley 1). Such attempts produce definable patterns and grids through which creativity and artistry within a piece of literature is revealed to be as brilliantly melodic as a musical score. The ability to articulate, as well as visualize, the melodic nuances woven into pieces of literature necessitates the development of common hermeneutical processes which not only exposes tessellations, but helps to identify historical threads as well. Joanna Barska says that "the history of reflecting on relations between literature and music is not only a history of searching for artistic manifestations of such a relationship, but also, or perhaps primarily, the history of a search for finding a way to adequately comment on them, a search for a methodological formula" (Barska 123). Therefore, the use of musical motif—including symphonic terminologies—in a literary context has historical precedence as well as scholarly significance. Shockley accredits early "connections between music and text and the nineteenth-century critic's application of narrative to instrumental music to have given way to hermeneutics, New Criticism, structuralism, post-structuralism, semiotics, the New Historicism, and so forth (Shockley 2). So then, deeper connections between music and literature can be more keenly

refined when greater focus is placed on specific musicological constructs while narrowing the literary scope to more precise aspects within the genre, such as Black preaching.

Beyond the historical and traditional intersection of music and literature, there has been a rise in interest and scholarly contribution in the field of musico-literary studies, however the increased attention has also ignited a greater concern over the methods and dynamics within this discipline (Barska 123). It is important that observations and determinations made about a literature piece's musicology be done both carefully and with some sense of consistency. Well-defined methodological parameters and precepts enables the musico-literary discipline to maintain its theoretical credibility. Such requires, as with any scholarly evaluation, questions to be asked and answered in order for the hermeneutical integrity to be preserved. Rodrigo Guijarro Lasheras suggests that "some fundamental questions that a formal and semiotic approach seeks to answer are the following: What mechanisms take part in musico-literary relationships? What different resources are utilized when music plays an important role in a novel? What general features does this phenomenon have and what are its different manifestations? By contrast, other approaches are more prone to questions such as: What role does music play in this specific novel? What insight into music does the text provide us with? How does a particular writer perceive music? How is music related to other issues inside and outside the text?" (Lasheras 2). So, with the increased interest and utilization of musical notions to describe and define literary relationships, comes more refined questions which must be answered with greater precision. A keen understanding of the musico-literary mechanisms and relationship is an important first step when considering the chronology of Lasheras' fundamental questions.

According to Barska, when considering mechanisms of a musico-literary study— particularly various patterns and phraseologies—"the elements that define the composition are

not individual descriptions or phrases, but every sentence, even every word has a well-thought-out special position within the piece. Therefore this story, like many others, has a certain musical form" (Barska 124). In essence, the harmonizing of melodies and the synchronizing of language both highlight commonalities that reveal patterns and other phenomenon within their respective genres. These patterns—whether intentional as Barska suggests, or unintentional—create spaces for interpretational expansion and application. It is the application of terms as interpreted from another genre or media that creates an 'interlink' or relational connection of ideas. When terms are borrowed, they are used at various levels along the spectrum. Barska explains that "some are used in their original sense, of course very generally, while others, having assimilated meanings, defined intuitively and ambiguously and often through remote associations. Although employing them carries a certain risk, it can at the same time be cognitively fruitful and open a broader interpretational perspective" (Barska 126).

A very strong caution is made to scholars who would delve into the waters of appropriating musicalities onto literary works. One caution is the impulse to 'metaphorize' or over-interpret parallels between the musical notion and literary incidence. The counterpoint is to find a balance between acclimating the musical affiliation and sound literary analysis (Barska 123). Barska is adamant in insisting that unless careful and thoughtful treatment is maintained as to avoid overemphasizing or misappropriating the linkages between the two genres representations, there will be an erosion of these studies due to the "thoughtless treatment of terms". This sentiment also appears to be the concern of Lasheras with regard to the musico-literary intermediality idea, "imaginary content analogy". In its simplest degree, this is merely a type of imitation of music in literature. Lasheras seeks to provide a more pronounced refinement of the notion which he therefore defines as

The imitation of music by means of the narration's content, by means of the signifeds of

words and sentences…That is, imitation is carried out neither through a signifier (as

when an accentual pattern is identified with a musical rhythm), nor literary structures and

techniques (for instance, imitating counterpoint, fugue or sonata form), but by attributing

an imaginary content to music, a musical work or a specific passage, and thus identifying

the one with the unfolding of the other (Lasheras 2).

Overall, Barska said well that "it is up to the scholars to decide where to draw the boundary

between the defining elements of adaptations of different musical genres" (Barska 125).

Consequently, as musico-literary analysis is applied to Black preaching, these cautions must not

only be noted but adhered to so that misappropriation and misapplication is not charged against

the homiletician's scholarship.

The fields of music and literature are inundated with a plethora of terms, precepts, and

methodologies which may be adapted within the evaluation of works of its sister-genre.

However, the musical notion of the 'fugue' is a common paradigm used in musico-literary

studies. Shockley admits that "literary authors are drawn again and again to the fugue or to the

multi-movement sonata or symphony" (Shockley 15). The rise of the literary use of the fugue is

considered to have been due to the increasing influence of humanism in the fifteenth century,

particularly visible in poetry (Butler 49). In fact Butler states that "music came to be viewed

more and more as a highly affective form of artful expression imbued with all the learned artifice

and persuasive qualities of its sister art, poetry". A notable aspect of poetry and poetic works is

that it is in this form where the rhythmic visualization of the literature is patently and

prominently illustrated. Shockley points out that "in some ways a fugue in text can be likened to

concrete poetry [which] attempts to be a poem and also to depict something visually" (Shockley

16). The visualization of patterns derived from a comparative analysis of a multiplicity of texts, presents a poetic visibility of fugues, subtly or subliminally embedded within the pieces.

Within the rhetorical canon, the fugue fits well as a figurative stylism within the elocution category. Musically, the fugue notion involves terminology such as the subject, exposition, and counterpoint—often referred to as *contrapuntal*—which in and of itself links the precept to literature. The contrapuntal idea is important in that it denotes not only the interdependence of themes and subjects, but an independence of contrasting voices. Butler identifies several other rhetorically connected attributes of the fugue. One is the *mimesis* which he notes that the "close identification of the [fugue] with mimesis remains the most common fugal-rhetorical application…right up to the present day" (Butler 51). Mimesis is a notable trait within Black preaching—not only employed in the monologue of the sermon itself by the preacher, but also commonly found in the 'call-and-response' dialogue with congregation. Hence, identifying, tracing, and visualizing these fugue-like patterns—such as interdependent themes, contrapuntal contrasts, and repetitive mimesis—emboldens the thesis that there is a symphonic elegance which can be elicited from a properly constructed contextual mass corpus of homilies. However, once again an admonition of caution is conveyed by Barska who "draws attention to the deficient argumentation of literary commentators and to the fact, that generalizations are being made, which are so broad that interpreting other works in the same way would greatly expand the group of potential literary "fugues"" (Barska 125).

Shockley provides a helpful example of literary fugues—as identified in a specific work—from the section of Douglas Hofstadter's book called the "Ant Fugue" (Hofstadter). Shockley states that "concrete or visual poetry sometimes attempts similar representations of multiple lines, and some printed libretti and dramatic texts also undertake this mode of

contrapuntal writing, using spacing, punctuation, and changes in typeface to imply a simultaneity in contradiction to our typical mode(s) of reading" (Shockley 25). Table 1 is Shockley's charting of various fugue subjects, countersubjects, and voices from Hofstadter's "Ant Fugue" (Shockley 30).

Diagram of the exposition of the "Ant Fugue" (Voices are numbered in the order of their entry.)

Voice 1	(Achilles) SUBJECT	I know the rest of you won't believe this … what an important one: "MU"!
Voice 2	(Crab) SUBJECT	I know the rest of you won't believe this … what an important one: HOLISM"!
Voice 1	COUNTERSUBJECT I	Now hold on a minute …
Voice 2	COUNTERSUBJECT II	I beg your pardon, but my eyesight …
Voice 3	(Anteater) SUBJECT	I know the rest of you won't believe this … what an important one: "REDUCTIONISM"!
Voice 2	COUNTERSUBJECT I	Now hold on a minute …
Voice 1	free accompanying material	Another deluded one! … Don't you see … I know what is going on here … I will be glad to indulge … Oh, no! …
Voice 3	COUNTERSUBJECT II	I beg your pardon, but my …
2-part imitation with free accompaniment		
Voice 2	new point of imitation	You are right about the two pieces … I now see the picture as you have … I reject …
Voice 3	new point of imitation	You are right about the two pieces … I now see the picture as you have … I reject …
Voice 1	free accompanying material	I know what is going on here. …
(Here the temporal imitative relationship between Voices 2 and 3 reverses)		
Voice 3	(2-part imitation continues)	Absurd! Your "MU" is as silly …
Voice 2	(2-part imitation continues)	Ridiculous! Your "MU" is as silly …
Voice 1	free accompanying material	O, dear! We're getting nowhere fast …
Entrance of Voice 4		
Voice 4	(Tortoise) SUBJECT	I know the rest of you won't believe this … what an important one: "MU"!
Voice 1	free accompanying material	Oh, Mr. T, for once you have let me …
Voice 4	COUNTERSUBJECT II	I beg your pardon, but my eyesight …

Table 1: Alan Shockley's Chart of voices from Hofstadter's "Ant Fugue"

The subject identifies a repetitive theme—which happens to be a phraseology—nearly grammatically exact. The countersubjects convey, in meaning, contrapuntal opposition to the subjective statement. He also presents 'new point(s) of imitation' which corresponds with Butler's mimesis attribute of the fugue. Perhaps the most notable observation with regard to the thesis of this discourse, is the involvement of multiple voices within the conversation. The 'conversation' provides the occasion for the thematic ideas, counter-notions, and various voices to engage. It is within this paradigm that the thematic conversation of the 9/11 tragedy gives circumstance to which various homiletical voices speak, subjective patterns form, and contrapuntal responses are remarked. Given the very nature of Black preaching, there also emerges aspects of mimesis either within the homiletical rhythm itself or as an emphasis and imitation of affirmation. The fugal-rhetorical application as a literary analytical apparatus opens wider the door to a better understanding of Black preaching and the advancement of rhetorical scholarship through thematic collections as it inevitably "gives hints as to what specific correspondence various points of the conversation share with the fugue on the record playing in the background" (Shockley 28).

Thus the term 'sermonic fugue' is coined in order to convey the notion of common and contrapuntal patterns which are identified within a solo sermon or amongst a collection of sermons tethered together in a thematic conversation. As argued at the outset of this chapter, the fugue—in general—within literary criticism as a whole has been deeply ingrained for many years now. However its application and development within preaching—and more specifically Black preaching—has tremendous potential. Therefore the use of this terminology sets forth a genesis of scholarship aimed towards defining, identifying, and visualizing sermonic fugues and patterns more succinctly within fields of literature, rhetoric, and homiletics. However, as the

concept of the sermonic fugue develops, there must be heed to the caution not to misappropriate or haphazardly ascribe the term to instances that do not adequately satisfy its evaluative function. To do so would diminish its significance and dilute its effectiveness as a literary analytical tool.

Although broad strokes of literary analysis has created strong cross-threads into music theory, the stitching is more pronounced within the narrowed category of preaching, and even more so in the sub-category of Black preaching. In many ways, it is the artistic nature of the preaching genre that necessitates a more cultural-based approach to understanding its aesthetics. Jon Michael Spencer suggests that given the lack of any widely agreed upon skillsets and paradigms of homiletics, the pedagogy of the vocation is often accomplished organically within the dynamics of a "secret guild's oral culture" (Spencer ix). Assessing preaching as a form of art rather than merely as a skillset not only validates the guild relationship but explains the rise of the concept of aesthetic homiletics (Vos 372). In her essay comparing the homiletical aesthetics of the Biblical prophet Hosea to that of the Jeremiah Wright, Carolyn Sharp says that

> Aesthetics is never "simply" representation. Every cultural act is a complex expression of power relations received by an interpretive community…It is also true of transient aural media such as musical and preaching performances. Because aesthetic acts mediate power, they are inevitably implicated in politics and ethics (Sharp 50).

This observation bolsters the premise of this discourse by recognizing the relevance of the musical aesthetics of Black preaching when evaluating its importance and impact on cultural concerns. Cas Vos succinctly conveys the significance of viewing and evaluating preaching in its artistic light in stating that "the concept of the sermon as an 'open work of art' offers a theoretical basis for preaching as a dynamic-communicative event. Relevant perspectives from a

variety of art forms are employed to argue that evoking a life-enhancing religious response is the ultimate objective of the homiletical process" (Vos 371). Hence, musico-literary theories are not only applicable to the general body of literature, but takes on a heighten significance and importance when it comes to preaching and more particularly Black preaching.

The musicality in preaching is strongly represented in Black preaching from the performative aspect, to the concert-like interactivity with the audience, to the actual rhythmic tonality and improvisation during the preaching event itself. Mike Graves expresses that "using music analogies in referring to the mood of a sermon or text seems to be common [in that] preachers in the African-American tradition have used it frequently" (Graves 12). The comparison of the preaching event to that of an artistic performance resonates in several directions. One of which is the similarity of how the interactive homiletical experience of preaching closely resembles that of musical concert. Eugene Lowry expresses that both are temporal events and that preparation of a thematic composition—whether musical or homiletical—involves imagining it as a future acoustical event (Lowry). It is the context of this event that vibrantly enhances the musicality in Black preaching that is evident in any mode whether presented or re-presented. This is captured in the very essence of the Black church. Dolan Hubbard states that "the black church represents a continuum of the cultural style of black people in its usage of language—modes of playing music, speaking, and writing" (Hubbard 9). The cultural signature of the Black church continues to be Black preaching which is a birthmark of the African diaspora and is a demarcation within the wider field of preaching clearly noticeable to those who know of it—whether they be the deliverer, recipient, or investigator of the preached message. This concerted experience between the artist and the audience is powerful in that "the preacher and the people, engaged in a dynamic exchange, transform language as they

empty language and fill it anew, that is, they impose through language their moral vision of the world" (Hubbard 6). Thus, the energetic and emotional interplay between the pulpiteer—powerfully performing from center stage—and the congregation—actively engaging from their VIP seats—reflect the cultural connection to that of a concert, where the sanctified instrumentalist homiletically performs their sermonic rendition of the biblical text.

In comparing the highly experiential nature of music, there has been a shifting in what Graves calls re-presentational preaching (Graves 11) across ethnic boundaries. He notes that "no musician would give a concert consisting of a lecture instead of music" (Graves 11) wherein Vos furthers the notion by insisting that Graves' observation "proves how absurd the old concept of preaching now seems to be, in light of the new one" (Vos 371). These notions attests that criticism of the literary as well as the rhetorical phenomenon of preaching may notice stylistic changes that reflect more the artistic traits in the language and tonality of the homiletical piece under investigation. However, the musicality and instrumentality of preaching has long been evident in African-American homiletic expression, therefore such observations in Black preaching is more of an acknowledgement than a discovery or adjustment into a 'new concept' of preaching. Hubbard traces early recognition of this artistic attribute of Black expression and speech to Alain Locke and his 1936 book, *Negro Art: Past and Present*. Hubbard writes that:

Alain Locke, one of the first scholars to study the aesthetic underpinnings of black America, believed African Americans retained some memory of beauty, "since by way of compensation, some obviously artistic urges flowed even with the peasant Negro toward the only channels of expression left open, those of song, graceful movements and poetic speech" (Locke 3). Stripped of all else, the African American's own body became his prime artistic instrument. So it was the new, oppressive environment that forced African

Americans away from their craft arts and their old ancestral skills and toward the

emotional arts of song and dance. (Hubbard 2)

A case and point is the early representation of ancestral inspired cadences and rhythms noted in

the evangelical sermonic essays of African slave preachers such as Jupiter Hammon's "A Winter

Piece" (May, *The Collected Works of Jupiter Hammon: Poems and Essays* 17–30). A later

acknowledgement of the musicality and artistry in the language and lingo of the African-

American preacher is conveyed by James Weldon Johnson in his 1927 book *God's Trombones*

where he states that:

Gross exaggeration of the use of big words by these preachers, in fact by Negroes in

general, has been commonly made; the laugh being at the exhibition of ignorance

involved. What is the basis of this fondness for big words? Is the predilection due, as is

supposed, to ignorance desiring to parade itself as knowledge? Not at all. The old-time

Negro preacher loved the sonorous, mouth-filling, ear-filling phrase because it gratified a

highly developed sense of sound and rhythm in himself and his hearers. (Johnson 9)

Both Hammon and Johnson demonstrated that the elegance and sophistication of Black

preaching is more than a trend, it is an artistic conveyance of faith, experience, and hope by a

skilled and gifted homiletical instrumentalist. Hubbard goes as far as to exalt the Black sermon

composition to height of genius saying that it "transforms the discrete aspects of black

expression from a system of signs, songs, and stories to an oral, expressive, unifying document

that conveys a shared value system" (Hubbard 15).

Graves' notion that the re-presentational preaching shift towards acknowledging the

musico-literary connections is an affirmation and testament to the strong pathos that has

traditionally been at the heart of Black preaching. However, I must push back a bit on his assertion that such preaching is driven more by the heart than the head. Graves suggests that the objective of re-presentational preaching is to change the way the audience experiences the biblical text through the preaching event expressing that "this kind of preaching, like a touching piece of music, comes through the gut more than through the mind. As Gustav Mahler put it, "What is best about music is not to be found in the notes" (Graves 10). This leads to the impression that in order to engage the audience in such an artistic encounter with the text of scripture, the preacher must in some ways abandon sound hermeneutical practices in order to heighten the homiletical performance. A better admonition is that it is unnecessary to sacrifice the head in order to satisfy the heart, nor is it required that one must surrender sound hermeneutic practice to soulful homiletic prowess. This tension is perhaps best compared to the dichotomies that exist between classical and jazz music.

The most relevant differentiation between these two genres is the improvisation. Classical music is very note driven with little divergence whereas jazz music, although noted, allows for variant expressions by the instrumentalist. However in jazz there is a common melody that connects all of the musicians to the same song which acts as the anchor or tether for the individual improvisations. Such is the case in Black preaching. The Norton Anthology of African-American Literature lays out well how the jazz-like component in Black preaching allows for the independent thought and expression of the homilist, yet retains an authentic commitment to both the text and congregation. The editors state that,

> Despite the relative rigidity of the black sermon's architecture, it is jazzlike in its
> insistence that preachers find their own voice and imprint on each sermon their own
> particular style. Jazzlike too is black preaching's emphasis on the improvisational mode.

For, like jazz players, preachers participate in a dynamic collaborative process in which

they listen with the greatest care while playing, as it were, with and against the

congregation (Gates Jr. et al. 56).

Lowery affirms the trichotomy between the sermon, the preacher, and the congregation as an

aggregated experience that includes the contrapuntal exchanges between the musician and the

audience. Positioning Black preaching as parental to jazz improvisation, he says that,

Every black preacher understands that for the sermon to happen, it must move to a final

celebrative event—a denouement. Again, there is no coincidence in all this, because, in

fact, jazz improvisation grew directly out of the black preaching experience. It was the

homiletical improvisation of the black preacher, together with the contrapuntal

participation of the congregation, which developed into jazz improvisation in the first

place. No coincidence is it either that in early jazz circles the trumpeter — the lead

instrument — often was called "the preacher" (Lowry).

The "jazz-connection" is exemplified in the fact that it is a common—and in many cases an

expectation—that at the "closing" of the sermon, the Black preacher would close their notes and

Bible, and enter into an extemporaneous cadence, improvising and hyper-emphasizing key

thematic phraseologies. This was evidenced at approximately the 32 minutes marker of CBS

News YouTube video of Al Sharpton's eulogy of George Floyd as he segued into an

improvisational tone, accompanied and supported by jazz-fully tinged organ chord progressions

and the congregational dialogic response (Sharpton CBS News 00:32:37). It was this familiar

type of homiletical improvisation that motivated the creation of jazz as a genre, influenced jazz

greats such as Duke Ellington, and inspired Ted Joans to connect Black preaching and jazz in the

somewhat antithetical poem "Jazz Is My Religion" (Joans 71). So then, although the sermonic

fugue is a derivative of classical music theory, its application in the literary evaluation of

African-American homilies relies in many ways on the jazz-like improvisation paradigm that is

very present in Black preaching. The improvisation, however, does not detract from the

exegetical integrity and hermeneutical consistencies which emerge when gathered around a

common biblical text or thematic context.

The contrapuntal characteristic of Black preaching is often referenced in the context of

congregational responsiveness and interaction with the sermon and the preacher. It weighs in on

the 'call-and-response' rhythm between the two interlocutors suggesting that there is a

contrasting or oppositional dynamic that exists. This feature is, of course, a historical normative

of Black preaching (Spencer 10), therefore is not as well noted in other traditional Protestant

preaching styles. Spencer ascribes to Mitchell's description of this contrapuntal exchange as a

"culturally choreographed counterpoint, with the preacher's intoned Gospel cast in a continuous

context of congregational chant" (Spencer 9) which suggests that the counteraction is more

complimentary than contradictory. The sermonic fugue's conditioning of the contrapuntal idea

leans toward demonstrating contrasting perspectives and oppositional tensions within a single

sermon or amongst a collection of sermons. It shows evidence of somewhat oxymoronic terms or

ideas within the same contextual thematic conversation. Noting a pattern wherein homilists

express either love or hate for a country or people group would be an example of a sermonic

fugue which highlights contrapuntal voices. Thus it is an important distinction between the

traditional use of counterpoints and contrapuntal notions as an indicator of the call/response

moments in the Black preaching event and the present application of the term with regard to

sermonic fugues being used to map conflicting ideas noted within the thematic collection.

Distinguishing between common and contrapuntal notions is a key and focused aspect of the sermonic fugue dynamics, but also important is the expanded usefulness of this analytical device when applied symphonically rather than merely against a soloist. The implications of this precept is different in evaluating a single or solo sermon than is its impact when utilized when considering multiple homilies. A great benefit is that when the sermonic fugue is appropriately employed against a collection or corpus of homilies, it will unveil attributes of the sermon genre which may not have otherwise been observed or noticed. With regard to Black preaching in particular, Hubbard points out that "essential characteristics of the black sermon cannot be revealed in a single sermon or sermonizer. A sermon by one minister may reveal a sermonic formula or mode that is quite different from a sermon by a different minister" (Hubbard 9). This goes beyond the familiar evaluation of the collective work of a single homilist, although sermonic fugues may be noted within that individual pulpiteer's own stylism. It, nevertheless, does not take into account the vantages and movements of other sermonic notions relative to the same thematic conversation.

The concepts of *movement* and *moods* are in fact two more musico-literary linkages of the sermonic fugue to its sister-theory in music. Both good music and good preaching enacts movements and distinctive moods which when coordinated and orchestrated symphonically reveals an elegance and brilliance of the genre. Graves explains that the importance of movement in orchestra music is demonstrative in that "it can refer to the complete divisions of a symphony and concerto, or it can refer to the suggestion of action" (Graves 14). The same is true for thematic preaching such as that of responses to the 9/11 tragedy. Although divided geographically, denominationally, and even ethnically, successively entering voices tensioned at times by contrapuntal counter-subjection, there emerges an identifiable concerted resonance for

action. It is this kind of symphonic scoring that the sermonic fugues offers assistance in visualizing. Worthy of noting in regard to variances in the geographical, denominational, and ethnical settings of the thematic presentation, is the acoustical effect the setting has on the observed patterns. Graves makes the insightful observation that "every text has its own mood and movement, and so does every congregation. Any approach to preaching that fails to account for the listeners generally fails to count. Acoustical theory states that the room determines the sound. In fact, the two work together" (Graves 32). Hence, observing the sermonic patterns based upon various categories and groupings will help to unpack some of the acoustical influences on the fugues. Although this particular project focuses on the African American tenor of response, evaluating this groups sectional categories—such as by denomination, gender, and demographics—will provide an even better appreciation for the commonalities and contrasting elements of the sermons.

3.2 *Background and Historical Evaluation of Black Preaching*

Further exploration of the concession that the historic homiletic influence of African-American pulpiteers calls attention to tensions, applications, and subsequent culminations resulting from the longevity of Black preaching evaluations. One tensive subject particularly relevant to African-American homiletical criticism, is the dominance of orally produced content over written materials. Oratory has historically been the steadfast primary means of affecting change through the Christian faith, albeit print and published material has exerted and perpetuated much evangelical influence as well. This however is not to infer that printed and published material is not an important utility for both Christianizing peoples into the faith or leveraging Christian influence upon historical, political, and cultural concerns. Thomas Coke— shortly after opening the first Methodist Book Concern in 1789 in Philadelphia—stated in his

journal, "We have now settled our Printing business…the people will thereby be amply supplied with Books of pure divinity for their reading, which is of the next importance to preaching" (Brown 46). An important note is that this particular publishing endeavor began at the time when the American printing industry was just starting to grow. Subsequently, white evangelical publishers were keenly positioned at the vanguard of this market with controlling influence once it began to thrive in the early nineteenth century (Brown 47). Unfortunately, this was not the trajectory of African-American evangelical literature and published material. Bishop Allen and the (A.M.E.) Church attempted to capture and preserve evangelical and homiletical material through its own Book Concern initiative—although the turn to periodicals was also in part to aid communication across a growing geographical range—the magazine struggled to publish two dozen issues before folding in 1847 (Gardner). This differential highlights the great challenge of accessing print texts to evaluate not only Black preaching but black contribution to evangelicalism, particularly those of clerical impact and especially as it is wielded through congregationalism and denominationalism. In contrast, the challenge of recovering published material for developing collections of white evangelical influence is not as daunting. Consequently, African-American evangelical scholarship and research cannot ignore the historical recourse of the black evangelical voice to rely more heavily on leveraging its influence through homiletical and rhetorical oration rather than that of written prose and manuscripts.

The tension posed by these dynamics has led to the disproportion—and in many ways the disadvantage—of Black preaching in the world of literature creating enormous voids in its canons and scholarship. Martha Simmons and Frank Thomas make this observation as they introduced their exhaustive anthology of African-American sermons by stating that "because black preaching culture has historically been oral and has had few scribes, many messages have

been lost or were not recorded. So, while history shows us the footprint of many outstanding black preachers, written indications of their presence in sermonic form have been lost" (M. Simmons and Thomas xxvi). This invaluable lost cache of rhetorical discourse—although will never be fully recovered—has perhaps caused the forging of a higher quality oral tradition which may have not refined itself as much had it been more deeply transected by chirography. White preaching—in part because of its close relationship with writing and the Aristotelian *logos* persuasive appeal—certainly has a stark contrast to Black preaching—which is more akin with orality and the classical *ethos* mode of persuasion. As the African-American preaching tradition developed overtime, its refining evolution created distinctions which metastasized as cultural traits—as in the case of the musicality embedded in the DNA of Black preaching. Hubbard affirms that "unlike the traditional Euro-American sermon, which is descended from a learned, literary tradition, the African-American sermon is part of an experiential, oral tradition. The black oral tradition utilizes the structure that has become associated with improvisation and jazz but that we know more appropriately can be attributed to the sermon" (Hubbard 7–8). Hence it is reasonable to suggest that the patterns, cadences, common and contrapuntal perspectives of the African-American preaching collective has a rooted connection to an ancestral heritage. Furthermore, they carry an evolutionary tie to the historical conditions which forged its maturity as predominantly oral in its tradition.

Both the historicity and oral tradition of Black preaching is within themselves important characteristics of the African-American story in that they bring a certain cultural authenticity to the narrative, while plotting scholarly insights into the present strains being faced by its community at any given time. The fundamental underpinnings—not of only Black preaching, but the overall Black oral expression—has given African-Americans the needed modality to interpret

their own history and convey their own experiences through speech acts (Hubbard 4). The Black church— particularly the African-American pulpit—has provided a perpetual and often a safe space for cultural conversations, exasperations, and strategizations which have proven to be an invaluable commodity of the community. This sacred space was in many ways shielded from secular influence which Mitchell says proved to be a positive insulation in that "the proclamation of the Black pulpit survives likewise because, in its isolation from the mainstream, it spoke and it speaks peculiarly to the needs of Blacks" (Mitchell 20). Even more so, Black preaching inventively renders the narrative of the African-American people with precise refinement and perspicacious alignment with biblical stories—which in itself is a considered a work of art (Mitchell 69). The historic interweaving of the biblical narrative and the African-American story is not merely artful but also scholarly. It is again warranted that the African-American homilist be accredited for their brilliance and giftedness in many cases balancing scholarship and artistry without compromising one for the other. The ability to demonstrate a scholarly exegesis of a faith text, then crafting it into a poetically aesthetic and culturally relevant oral rendition, all the while provoking an emotional call and response to action should never be overlooked or diminished in significance when critiquing African-American homilies and homilists. The ability to negotiate between various facets of the moment—such as faith, nationality, and ethnicity in the case of the 9/11 event—is alone a very notable acumen. Mitchell states that "the best of Black preaching today uses scholarly insights for more than solving imagined tensions between science and religion, or faith and reason. Black preachers often use the best of biblical scholarship to add living details that would not otherwise be evident to the laity. These fresh insights are used to enhance the gripping realism of a message" (Mitchell 60–61). Hence, the masterful use of the oral modality by the African-American homilist demonstrates their

unequitable skill and uncompromising commitment to balance tradition and scholarship while continuing to convey and connect the narrative of the Black experience in light of its historical and contemporary contexts.

The interpretive scholarship within the African-American homily has often been dwarfed in emphasis due to the large attention given to its stylistic features, thereby sacrificing appreciation for its theological insightfulness. As a result, most literature evaluating Black preaching gives primary attention to the unique and fascinating elements of the African-American orality and speech act as a tradition without exploring with any depth the theological discipline invested and evident in the sermon. Mitchell admits that "there is very little literature on Black biblical interpretation as a discipline, and all of it is necessarily concerned primarily with the Black preaching style and its interpretive tradition" (Mitchell 19). A foundational endeavor to evaluate African-American literary contributions—which included sermons—is Benjamin Mays' 1968 book *The Negro's God, as Reflected in His Literature*. This text delves into the task of extrapolating theological interpretations and synthesizing the history and trajectory of Blacks view of God through works of literature. Mays recognized that there existed a difference in the way God was viewed in secular literature pieces verses His portrayal in sacred literary works. Categorizing the literature allowed Mays to better interpret the material in light of its context and intended audience. He therefore established his interpretative premise on the bases that:

> Negro literature includes the chief productions of Negroes from 1760 up to the present time—slave narratives, biography, autobiography, addresses, novels, poetry, and the writings of social scientists [Classical Literature]…Negro literature also includes modern Sunday School productions, prayers, sermons, and Negro Spirituals [Mass

Literature]…They contain the ideas of God that reach the masses primarily through the church and through the minister in public utterances. (Mays 1)

The point is that Mays recognized the importance of mapping the theological trail within both African-American evangelical (classical) literature as well as within the oral tradition of Black preaching amongst the (mass) literature. A call for more attention to be given to the theological and interpretational insights of Black preaching continues to ring out given the more publically visible connections homilies have to culture and societal issues—especially through new media and social media platforms. Recall that John Thomas, as recently as 2018, articulated the need for greater focus on the scholarly insights embedded in African-American homilies. He says that "unfortunately, the strong emphasis on the style of black preaching has come at the expense of equal attention to and appreciation for it (*sic*) theological content. Words are seen as secondary" (Thomas, Jr. 2). Hence, although the stylism of Black preaching is a phenomenon and unique feature of the genre, interpretative mapping and attention to the theological posturing of African-American pulpiteer must not be overlooked or underappreciated in the evaluation process. Not only is seeking out fugue-like patterns within thematic collections important, tracing common philosophical and theological vantages is also a significant marker worthy of evaluation.

Analyzing the philosophical and theological bents of homilists and their sermons becomes more complicated—yet more identifiably patterned—once they are collectively gathered and observed categorically. The elegance and complexity of the African-American sermon is best observed when the various differences—across religions, denominations, eras, and even preachers—are well highlighted (Gates Jr. et al. 56). LaRue accentuates this sentiment by acknowledging that

Black preaching has been, and continues to be a very complex and convoluted system of

preaching. It involves many facets, perspectives, and outlooks from a cross-section of

denominational beliefs, educational levels, regional affiliations, and numerous other

considerations. There are, however, some formative influences central to its interpretive

process that cause this kind of preaching to sound forth with a note of conviction and

authority that many admire and seek to emulate (LaRue 126).

Once again we can highlight this notion in the case of Wright's use of the statement "God damn

America" and its being misinterpreted—having been taken out of context—and without

consideration of the complexities involved in critiquing Black preaching. Hence beyond the

central thematic focus, there are nuanced aspects of common and contrapuntal ideas amongst the

homilies which are often shared based upon certain demographics and in the case of the 9/11

tragedy, geographically and denominationally. The collective voices brings back the notion of

the sermonic fugue paradigm. When properly organized and categorized, a clearer visualization

of the linguistics presented by the orators and the cathartic signifying received by the audience

emerges better revealing how the flow of communicative influence results in community action.

The language and linguistics of homilies opens the window to the thoughts and

theologies of homilists who must correlate and articulate those notions with cultural concerns of

the community. Hubbard says that "the preacher taps into the linguistic spaces to bring the

community to the point of recognition—the collective catharsis" (Hubbard 7). The oratory

platform remains a critical factor in weighing a well representative sample of sermons given that

they are by design more for the listening ear than they are for the reading eye (Hubbard 8).

Consequently, sermonic collections provide deeper insights into the complicated patterns,

influences, and oratory aesthetics of Black preaching which would normatively be unavailable in

a close evaluation of a solo sermon. The symphonic sound of an orchestrated thematic collection of homilies—scored around the harmonized categorical sectionals through identified the fugal patterns—can only be appreciated when the common and contrasting thoughts and language are highlighted through intentional analytics.

There are many ways to section and categorize homiletic features, theologies, and notions that are useful in structuring Black preaching and sermons for evaluation. Although there have been many prolific paradigms developed over the years by scholarly and pragmatic homileticians, LaRue's model perhaps best fits this project. The architype he developed for evaluating Black preaching —categorically and characteristically—uses relatively traditional as well as newer lenses for analysis. The notable traits and attributes of Black preaching is useful in understanding a common profile which distinguishes Black preaching from other homiletic traditions. As mentioned previously, those identifying characteristics are features such as: strong in content, creative use of language, appeal to emotions, and ministerial authority. These characteristics not only create the phenomenon sought after in thematic collections of Black sermons, they also complicate it. For instance, creative use of language may make it more difficult to categorize common philosophical or theological ideas. Likewise, the appeal to emotions may be interpreted in various ways or not at all due to the ambiguity of its nature. LaRue also mentions scripture and life experiences, as well as communal interpretive strategy as interconnectors between the pulpit, pew, and the public square. The communal interpretive strategy is beneficial when considering the influence of homilies on cultural concerns. This strong characteristic of Black preaching endears the genre to such an evaluative process in that the shared strategy within the ethnographic community tends to produce common thematic

threads and often times mutual counterpoint reactions. Perhaps a bit more useful to this particular study, is LaRue's 'Domains of Experience'. He defines these domains as

> A sphere or realm that covers a broad but specified area of black experience and also provides a category for sermonic reflection, creation, and organization. Domains are based on and grow out of longstanding beliefs and experiences in black secular and religious life. An awareness of these broad areas is immensely important for understanding how the biblical hermeneutic works itself into the actual content of the sermon (LaRue 20).

These domains or sermon motifs connect homilies such as King's "I Have a Dream" homiletical speech and Wright's Sunday sermon "The Day of Jerusalem's Fall" as reflections of African American's convictions about social justice that were borne out of years of oppression and struggle in the country. In addition, they compartmentalize the plethora of similar sermonic enlightenments produced through the Black preaching tradition. Critiquing Black preaching through such domains allows the evaluator to better organize and map the sermons or parts of the sermon by content and nature which may then be further specified linguistically or emotively.

Of LaRue's five domains elaborated upon, three stand out as particularly significant to a thematic collection of African-American responses to the 9/11 tragedy. The first is *personal piety* which he says "emphasizes "heart religion," the centrality of the Bible for faith and life, the royal priesthood of the laity, and strict morality" (LaRue 21). This particular focus reflects faith language and calls to action with regard to one's spiritual journey of righteousness. LaRue links the roots of this domain of the black sermon to the rise or revival of evangelicalism among African Americans during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries. The significance of

such pietism with regard to the black sermon is so great, that many homileticians as well as laity would not consider even the most eloquent pulpiteered speech to be a genuine 'sermon' unless it is in some way tethered to this domain (LaRue 22). With regard to the sermonic responses to 9/11, categorical consideration is useful when scholarly evaluating the vantage points and variant degrees of terminology, phraseology, and content which assess the thematic density of the personal piety amongst the collection. Another domain beneficial to such an academic critique is that which emphasizes attention to *corporate concerns*. This domain spotlights the ethnic issues of the African-American community. This concentrated space within Black preaching "has at its center matters that pertain specifically to blacks, [and] it tends more toward exhortations of self-help, uplift, and racial solidarity" (LaRue 23) which is what this domain involves. Broad interests of Black life as a whole—particularly those which hold historical and cultural interests—are commonly noted within Black sermons. LaRue uses this category to place emphasis on areas of attention and improvement within the Black community which can and must be addressed by the community itself. Calls to action in this portion of the sermon is not about assigning outside blame or support, but rather intends to mobilize change fostered from the inside. The final domain to highlight as helpful in analyzing thematic African-American responses to cultural and societal matters is *social justice*. This purview can be widened to include emphasis on broader nationalism or patriotism as a categorical consideration within the thematic collection. LaRue defines this area as involving "matters pertaining to racism, sexism, ageism, and other forms of discrimination fall within the scope of this particular domain" (LaRue 22)—which for the purposes of the 9/11 theme must be made broader in order to encompass radicalism and terrorism. The domain of social justice is normatively affixed merely to the domestic and systemic marginalization and discrimination against certain people groups within

the United States—particular Black people. So then to extend the domain's parameter to include

external acts of hatred and violence against an entire nation—which then accommodates the

internal oppressors and perpetrators of domestic hate and violence—is beyond ironic, it's

complicated. It is this paradox which must be balanced and negotiated in Black preaching

creating a complicated interweaving of faith, ethnic interests, and nationality. All of these are

prominent dominion experiences, and all are embodied within both the singular and collection of

thematic sermons. Consequently, in order to appreciate the elegance of the symphonic score that

blends these sectional-like elements of sermonic fugues as well as their contrapuntal ideas, one

must have a keenly honed evaluative ear. These domains—as well as others—provide a literary

refinement that helps to bring out the brilliance of the collective body of work.

The distinctive elements of the sermon which capture—and subsequently determine—

where within the domain spectrum aspects of the oration fit is embedded within its vernacular.

The vernacular is an essential plane which must be explored when evaluating preaching—and

especially Black preaching. In the broader view of African-American literature the vernacular

identifies a unique tradition of Black expression which is often more noticeably present in an

oral modality than in a literate conveyance (Gates Jr. et al. 3). African-American vernacular

distinctions consist in both sacred and secular forms of expression. The sacred includes church

songs, prayers, and sermons, whereas the secular encapsulates various song and poetic genres

ranging from ballads and blues to spoken word and hip hop (Gates Jr. et al. 9). The artistry of

African-American vernacular is deeply rooted in its ancestry, however the editors of the Norton

Anthology of African-American Literature suggests that

From the first stirrings of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1940s through the first

decade of twenty-first century, the lived experience of black Americans creating freshly

innovated art has continued to be a fact of American cultural life. In particular, black

Americans have produced a tidal wave of innovative black vernacular expression: new

forms sacred and secular, across categories of art (Gates Jr. et al. 4).

Examples of Black vernacular expression derived from the sacred side of the spectrum would

certainly span from the commodifying of the preaching "whoop" propagated in large part by C.

L. Franklin to the unique cross-over blending of Gospel and R&B popularized by Kirk Franklin.

Hence, it is in the vernacular of the sacred sermon where information, instigation, and

sentimentality is homiletically amalgamated and deposited, awaiting excavation by a skilled

evaluator equipped to disaggregate it into scholarly insight.

Artistic features—and consequently domain categories—within a Black sermon or

thematic collection are accentuated when vernacular and phraseological relationships are

methodically isolated. Often these patterns are well blended into the traditional language and

stylisms common within the African-American pulpit. The visibility of these fugue-like thematic

and linguistic patterns is enhanced particularly when multiple messages are viewed collectively

and side-by-side. The musicality as well as the vernacular patterning is perhaps again best

exampled in the cadence infused style of Black preaching which is often most amplified in the

climax—or celebratory—portion of the sermon. This feature of the Black sermon was uniquely

approached in Spencer's *Sacred Symphony* book. His methodology was to musically score the

actual melody of select sermonic cadences, aligning the music with the vernacular and language

content being preached. The connection of Spencer's musical emphasis in Black preaching to the

notion of the sermonic fugue is well conveyed by Horace Clarence Boyer in his book review of

Sacred Symphony. Boyer writes that

Modern spirituals (sermonic chanting) are rarely spontaneously produced by a preacher

during sermonic discourse without congregational response, that the most cultivated

response is exact melodic, rhythmic, and textual imitation of the "call," and that the range

of contrapuntal texture runs the gamut from melody/counter- melody to overlapping

dialogue between preacher and congregation (Boyer 106).

Evidence of musico-literary patterns in Black preaching is not only proven to be present but

musically and rhetorically identifiable. More directly related to this particular discourse, is the

visual example of a sermonic fugue in a collection of sermons. Figure 4 displays a few of

Spencer's sermonic renditions which show a recurring theme not only within the individual

sermon, but across the collection itself. Sampled are three sermon scores 1) "He's Alright"; 2)

"Is He Alright"; and 3) "You Know He's Alright" (Spencer 37–40).

Figure 4: Michael Spencer's sermonic cadences as music scores

Notice the fugal pattern—or some derivative—of the phrase '*He's alright*' signifying the affirmation of God's goodness in the lives of the hearers. Admittedly, this is a common filler or celebratory phrase often used by Black preachers. Nevertheless, it is an example of a shared thematic and linguistic connectivity which, in this case, is perhaps best categorized within LaRue's *personal piety* domain. So then, vernacular plays a key role both in identifying and categorizing sermonic fugues within Black preaching and especially in thematic collections. Thus when developing anthologies and thematic collections, diversity consideration should not be limited to surficial levels such as genre or ethnicity, but must be delved deeper into the linguistic and rhetorical nuances of the content itself.

In tandem—and equally important—to the vernacular/linguistic view of specific language patterns within a homily is the distant anthological view of a collection. A thematic anthological perspective, in particular, allows for temporal vantages of historical trends and/or historical moments. Anthologies and collections are designed to provide the examiner the opportunity to visualize the trajectory of fugal voices over a span of time. However, they can also unveil the common and contrapuntal expressions specific to a particular moment in time. Thematic scholars and anthologists have acknowledged both of these motives with regard to their intention for assembling their collection. Mays articulated his intention for gathering a collection from sacred and secular writers which conveyed ideas of God for the purpose of identifying "certain trends revealed in contemporary Negro literature" (Mays 14). The chronological criteria employed led him to identify temporal patterns which he "divided into three epochs. The first epoch embraced the period from 1760 through the Civil War. The second epoch ran from the Civil War to 1914. The third period covered time from the beginning of the World War to the then present [1938]" (Mays 1). Simmons and Thomas noted that one of the

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qualifications for inclusion in their anthology of African-American sermons was the homilists' "oratory spoke decisively to a historical moment and often was coupled with action" (M. Simmons and Thomas xxiv–xxvi). This approach is more applicable to the project at hand as it seeks homiletical responses to the 9/11 historical moment. Although the scope of this research was limited to sermons that were preached specifically on the Sunday after the tragedy, it can reasonably be expanded to include any sermon delivered at any time addressing the historical event. Collecting works produced at or around the time of the tragedy as well as those preached on or around the tenth anniversary of the event, would then allow for Mays' epoch approach to be applied where attitudinal trends and shifts within the vernacular and language could be highlighted and visualized. Therefore, recognizing the significance of anthological collections to such research is not only important, but also provides a temporal lens as well as a spotlight on historical trends and moments.

Devising a clear and precise intent for assembling an anthology or thematic collection will give editors, researchers, and readers a strong premise for its scholarly usefulness and benefit. For the editor, it allows for distinct qualifiers to refine the contributions to that particular collection. Good qualifiers will establish some common threads among the contributors without sacrificing diversity. Clear intentions benefits the researcher in that it sets reasonable expectations given the scope of the collection. Researchers will undoubtedly uncover unexpected finds—which is what research is supposed to do—however, approaching to the collection judiciously would diminish frustrations. The reader's understanding of the anthology's intended purpose would provide context which would aide in focusing their mind towards content enlightenment. A thoughtful and well communicated anthological intention is laid out in the

Preface of Simmons and Thomas' text *Preaching with Sacred Fire*. These editors provided four specific intentions and results they hoped the collection would produce.

> First, we wanted to place a record of several hundred years of black preaching in one volume, to preserve and maintain for posterity a reader of black preaching. Second, we wished to document the richness and variety of preaching that has been produced by black Americans…Third, we wanted to expand the world's understanding of black preaching and show how it has provided orators whose words and lives have so enhanced the human landscape that they deserve much further study. And finally, we wanted to extend a clarion call to African-American universities, colleges, seminaries, and libraries, urging them to establish permanent facilities to collect, house, analyze, interpret, and preserve the preaching legacy of our faith community so that future generations of preachers, students, scholars, congregants, and all others so interested will have access to this supreme treasure (M. Simmons and Thomas xxvii).

Overall, this is a great template for articulating purpose and intentions for assembling such a thematic collection. The conversation starter between the editor and their interlocutor ignites and enhances the critical thoughts surrounding the material. More specifically to this statement, is the wonderful call-to-action stated at the end of the list. This motivating statement is a direct encouragement to the work of this project as well as for future work that will advance the scholarship and produce more scholars in Black preaching. Conclusively, the tools and methodologies derived and developed over time, has produced a strong foundation upon which this project is undergirded and hopefully will further build upon through scholarly the advancement of rhetoric, homiletics, and specifically, Black preaching.

3.3 *Social Influences of Black Preaching*

The influence of the African-American sermon on Black life is an ingrained attribute of the genre, particularly as a bonding agent of the Black community as well as its culture. Hubbard suggests that the structure, language, and uniqueness of the Black sermon leverages motifs and archetypes familiar to Black Americans and Black life (Hubbard 18). He further contends that

> The grammar of the sermon is a submerged presence in African American discourse. It repeats the rhythms of plot, complication, climax, and resolution. Its end point is, as Spillers reminds us, "cathartic release . . . an instrument of a collective catharsis, binding once again the isolated members of community" (Hubbard 146).

The very notion of a 'church congregation' brings about the sense of community and common catharsis through religious experiences. Sitting together in close proximity, singing together in harmony, greeting one another before, during, and after the service are all key elements of the shared journey. But it is the synergistic conversation between the pulpit and the pews that sets the sermon apart from the other elements as the primary connective tissue that weaves together not only the parishioners to each other but to the extended community as well. The Black sermon is the communal asset that connects persons who may be feeling emotionally isolated with a community who share in similar—if not the same—ethnic experiences. The pulpiteer constructs this bond by masterfully tapping into the essences of those Black lives through the lens of faith. Thomas affirms that "Black preaching in the African American context has functioned not only as a source for religious guidance, but also a necessary ingredient for the survival of the African American community" (Thomas, Jr. 3). Hence, there is a mutual importance and intrinsic relationship between Black preaching and the Black community as they both influence and significantly contributes to the strength of the other. Historically, the strength of Black

preaching has been transactional in that it was an uplifting source for an oppressed community of people, but also transformational in its ability to raise personal self-esteem in spite of the oppressor's description and in light of the Creator's depiction. Oneal Sandidge remarked that Black preaching accomplishes this "first, by preaching a message to oppressed persons to engage in social/community transformation in the context of the contemporary problems that beset the black community; second, by enhancing self-esteem through appreciation of rich history; third, by enhancing self-esteem through the very culture of black preachers" (Sandidge 90–91). This third enhancement of self-esteem conveys the deeper cultural connection that exists among Black preachers as an ethnographic group in and of itself which helps to explain certain thematic and stylistic commonalities in sermons and preaching. The themes—in particular—tend to cross-thread "sacred and secular forms of religious orientation is the degree to which black people judged not only themselves and the white man, but also God" (Hubbard 23). So then, the transformative influence of Black preaching on individuals as well as the community as a whole, is undeniably strong especially given the depressive emotionalism that results from oppressive racism imposed upon the African-American community as a whole.

Black preaching is designed to help listeners deal with present day realities in that it is designed to reach beyond the walls of the church and personal lives of its parishioners, into community development and influence (Sandidge 93). The synergy harnessed between the institutions of the Black church and the Black community is fueled and fostered by the rhetorical giftedness of clergy who must carefully balance the influence and power of the pulpit within both arenas. Hubbard states that "the Black church as the "invisible institution" served as a forum for the preacher and the community to perfect in unison the rhetorical modes inherent in the expressive power of black religion" (Hubbard 8). The combined power of these two entities has

from the earliest days of their existence leveraged its societal positioning to argue cases and advance causes most germane to the people of color who embodied them. Simmons and Thomas asserts that "these institutions have been led by some of the most imaginative and skilled leaders, orators, and preachers in history" (M. Simmons and Thomas 8). The Black preacher—the divinely appointed head of the church and an ex officio leader of the community—was endued with authority and influence, armed primarily with the skill of oratory. Nevertheless through quick development and creative use of that skillset—often without formal education or training—there was forged an unexpected—and in many ways an unparalleled—type of leader. W. E. B. Du Bois wrote of these leaders in his book *The Souls of Black Folk* that "the bishops who preside over these organizations throughout the land are among the most powerful Negro rulers in the world" (Du Bois 140).

Some would suggest that although the power of the pulpit is demonstrative in both the church and the community, the two are inseparable as faith is lived out in the context of community. Hubbard credits Mitchell's early work on Black preaching for pointing out that it is merely a matter of semantics to try and distinguish the difference between faith and practice when considering its theological precept in relation to its racial or cultural context (Hubbard 12). The subtext of faith and reality is an intimate exchange between the one in the pulpit and the one in the pew which therefore makes the sermon an integrated—even expected—part of communal thought and life. Vos comments that

> The regular churchgoer knows what will take place in the sermon. But he/she returns in
> the hope of being able to participate in the re-enactment of the tragedy of his/her own
> existence, within the context of the tension between immanence and transcendence. The
> churchgoer knows that the homiletician will be able to provide a hermeneutic exposition

of a text that is more or less successful, whether it is a synchronic or a diachronic exposition, or even a combination of the two. There remains, however, one expectation: the sermon should provide the lens through which the homiletician looks at life (Vos 373).

A revisit to Al Sharpton's eulogy of George Floyd demonstrates these ideas in that the reality of one's faith is tried against the theology of that faith. This tension played out as the life of another African-American man was publically choked out at the hand—or more accurately, under the knee—of another police officer in America. In his eulogistic homiletical response, Sharpton had the arduous task of first exposing the diachronic implications of this event over the spectrum of time. He then had to balance that with the present synchronic impact of the occurrence on the life and communities of people of color in the United States. All the while hermeneutically reconciling these tensions with the rule and practice of faith and scripture. In a real sense, the faithful mourners came to the preaching moment with the pronounced expectation that the good Rev. Al would comfort them in their grief. However, there was the unspoken expectancy that he would also negotiate the conviction of their faith, the outrage of their ethnicity, and commitment of their patriotism—and do it all, preferably, in less than 30 minutes. Vos further expounds that the concept of *aesthetics of reception* is within the mastery of homiletics in that the sermon should rhetorically re-present the text in such a way that each congregant "is able to apply it to its own views and experiences" (Vos 371). Hence, the two sidedness of faith and practice is the linchpin through which the church and community, sermon and experience, theology and sociology interlock and thus creating a clear passage for the influence to flow.

Although the flow of cultural influence from the pulpit may seem at times to have been diverted and in some ways perhaps diminished, the historicity and ingraining of the preaching

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prowess continues to be impactful on contemporary conditions. Black preaching encapsulates a worldview that was developed over time as an accumulation of "all the wisdom and methods of a given cultural group, for the purpose of ensuring its survival" (Mitchell 11). LaRue says that

> Historically the African-American sociocultural context of marginalization and struggle has required the enunciation of a God and a gospel that spoke to their plight in a meaningful, practical, and concrete way. Consequently, the whole of the African American religious interpretive schema has centered on the specifics of their marginalized experience along with the implementation of some adequate hermeneutic to address it (LaRue 19).

In essence LaRue is suggesting that there is a sense of ancestry weigh-in and involvement in modern affairs, even as the preaching reaches back beyond slavery into the biblical times. Yet because of the influence of Black preaching in the days of slavery, reconstruction, and the civil rights movement, this modality of cultural influence tends to speak from those eras when addressing similar matters in the present. Philpot writes that,

> [Since slavery] Not much has changed in the black pulpit…[The black preacher] still stand on the Sabbath mount surrounded by a perplexed multitude waiting for him to make sense out of injustice, racism, ecology, poverty. It is the black preacher who must be spiritually proficient and profoundly prophetic to assure the yearning crowd, week after week and year after year, that all of God's children are able to transcend the vicissitudes of human life (Philpot 95).

The task of the African-American preacher and responsibility of the Black church to their respective congregations and communities has remained relatively unchanged from the time and

pulpit of Bishop Allen and his encouragement to and defense of Blacks in the difficult days of

the Yellow Fever epidemic, to the present day difficulties of the Black pulpiteer to calm,

comfort, and call into compliance disassembled congregants during the 2020 COVID-19

pandemic crisis. This, however, is not to say that historical presence in Black preaching does not

allow for contemporary responses to make adjustments for the modernity of the concerns. The

African-American community is very much "transitional with each period calling for a particular

theological response to the present *Sitz im Leben*" (Thomas, Jr. 5). The modern Black preacher

must pivot in style and content in order to effectively assert pulpit influence on a new generation,

facing old problems that are still plaguing the community.

The Black pulpiteer is challenged in the contemporary context given the cacophony of

voices within and outside of the community vying for its ear. These voices—in essence—also

have oratory and rhetorical influence be it through music, celebrity, political/community

position, or even social media. A slight advantage that the pulpit seems to have is the longevity

of its historical positioning within the community. Hubbard notes that,

> It is within this world of "authoritative discourse" that the black preacher must struggle to
>
> win his voice and, equally important, an audience that will give assent to his testimony.
>
> From an epistemological perspective, the preacher's recovery of the community's voice
>
> dictates that he must bind the present to the past while he projects a benevolent
>
> cosmology and teleology. Thus, the people see themselves as an extension of history, as
>
> both actors and reactors (Hubbard 5).

Hubbard points out that it is not only a difficult aptitude but a necessary skillset that the

homiletician—especially the Black preacher—has the ability to sermonically build a bridge

between *then* and *now*, and walking the listener across that bridge in the context of life and community. Sermonically identifying and tapping into the systemic cycles and "vestiges of slavery—substandard housing, chronic unemployment and underemployment, and inferior education—[as] quotidian reminders that for African Americans history is not linear" (Hubbard 3), allows the Black preacher to remind and encourage their community that a key ingredient in surviving past cycles was the faith of their ancestors. Therefore, the ability to then deliver a dose of the faith/practice medication for the present ill of the African-American community, postures the clergy as a cultural authority and influential practitioner. Like Mary Poppins, the Black preacher has had to master the balance between administering medicines that are difficult to swallow, with just the right amount of sweetener to help that medicine go down. Thus, it is the content and musicality of Black preaching that sways hearers (Spencer x) between history and reality, biblical times and present time, inaction and pro-action, from victimized to victory. Simmons and Thomas—in the preface of their thematic collection of African-American 9/11 responses—asks and answers the question of how does the African-American pulpit administer such medication to a community facing unfathomable ills and terror? They submit that,

> [The Black sermon] speaks through four strands that underlie African American
> preaching. The first is the strand of liberation…The second is the strand of
> providence…The third is a two-edged strand that focuses us on the "sweet by and by"
> while bringing us to grips with the sometimes "nasty here and now". The fourth strand
> embraces and critiques, reflecting the tension with which persons of African descent who
> also are Americans daily live (M. J. Simmons and Thomas x).

This same paradigm is evident in Negro Spirituals—such as "Wade in the Water" or "Hush, Somebody's Calling my Name"—as they too blended the strands of hope for freedom, divine

investment, anticipation of a better day, and coded messaging for the present condition. So it is then that the voice and influence of the African-American pulpiteer—particularly in a contemporary setting—must leverage its historical capital while speaking with relevance and timeliness to present issues, all together with the correct measure faith infusion thus energizing and mobilizing the head, heart, and hands of the community.

The sociopolitical space has been the most consistent realm in which faith, practice, and influence has found its strongest intersection outside of sacred and familial circles. Arguably, no other category of influencers can reach beyond their designated space into the African-American community in the way the Black pulpiteer has or does (Thomas, Jr. 4). The editors of the *Norton Anthology of African-American Literature* make the keen observation that the black sermon's resolute intertwining of spiritual lessons to issues of the here and the now is a "vehicle not only for conversion and worship but also for sociopolitical exposition and analysis" (Gates Jr. et al. 57). Sound hermeneutics as well as a deep investment in the community afford the Black preacher just the right vantage to engage the religious, social, and political currents in such a way that lifts the faithful into critical thought and action. This weekly rhetorical exchange between the orating pulpiteer and their congregant/citizen interlocutor, only adds to the iterative impact of influence. However, such frequency requires a constant monitoring of the moving message as to assure that the fugal resonance is attuned to the cultural melodic. Thomas suggests that "black preaching as it has evolved though various social and political movements in the United States [and] as with any distinctive cultural expression, preaching in the African American religious community is dynamic, dialogical, and dialectical" (Thomas, Jr. 5). That evolution may also be viewed as a reappropriation of faith values to the present sociopolitical themes within the African-American community. Although the history and plight of African Americans certainly

demonstrates cyclical elements, there remains the need to address the measure of progress and inches of advancement which calls for a realigning—or better yet retuning of emphasis—within the sermonic message. Table 2 is Thomas' devised "Dialectical Model" which highlights "the correlating theological themes prevalent in Black preaching within a specific historical context" (Thomas, Jr. 8–9).

Historical Context	Theological Theme
Slavery	Other Worldly
Emancipation	Liberation
Reconstruction	Education as freedom
Urbanization	The Commercial Gospel
Civil Rights Movement	Black Social Gospel
Black Power Movement	I am Somebody
Emerging Black Middle Class	Co-Participation in God's Liberation
Modern-Contemporary	Entitled to God's Blessing [*Prosperity Gospel*]

Table 2: John Thomas' "Dialectical Model" Chart

All of these nuances speak to the breadth and width to which the African-American homilist must expand his or her scope beyond the religious in order to wield its influence in the realm of the social and political. Nevertheless, the pulpiteer must continue to cultivate sermonic prowess as to maintain the "homiletician's ability to gauge the exegetical, hermeneutic and socio-cultural richness of texts. [For] it means little, if these texts are not used within the framework of a sermon, which communicates effectively to the listeners and moves them" (Vos 371).

As for the pragmatism and evidentiary examples where the power of the pulpit has exerted its great influence in the social and political affairs of the country, many notable occasions have been chronicled throughout the story of America—especially with regard to the African-American clergy. A reverse tracking—from recent social and political conditions to those of early America—affirms the importance of continued scholarly consideration of homiletical influence given the prominent pulpiteers who have historically influenced persons and events of political and cultural affairs as well as affected the flow of social 'follow-ship'. This is true in the case of both black and white evangelicalism, wherein political influence from behind the sacred desk of the Christian pulpit remains as potent today as it has always been. The most recently notable appearance of such influence by preachers and their preaching on social shifts and political leadership is the seemingly overwhelming evangelical support and defense of President Donald J. Trump from a copious number of primarily white pulpits across the country. Particularly during times of heighted political and social tension, it would appear that sermons are delicately crafted and passionately delivered to hundreds of thousands of Christians in an effort to guide them in the reconciling of their faith with a political figure or issue. An antithesis to this claim is a 2017 article of the Washington Post, where Lydia Bean challenges the conclusion that the majority white evangelical preaching is intentionally tailored to influence parishioners' political convictions. She contends that "theologically trained clergy and elites have so little authority over their laypeople's politics. Very few churches hear explicit political preaching from their pastors; instead, churches are almost entirely focused on discipleship, personal challenges and family life" (Bean). Access to a proper corpus of information would yield sermon fugues and thematic patterns needed to affirm or refute the claims. Such a resource

is just as valuable for researchers and anthologists evaluating Caucasian (or any other ethnicity's) homiletic influence as it is for African-American evangelical impact.

Similar observations can be applied to the presidential ascension of former President Barack Obama—particularly given the proliferation of propaganda which suggested that the then presidential candidate had been ill-influenced by the preaching of his then pastor, the Rev. Dr. Jeremiah Wright. It was in fact, the very sermons which Wright preached during the tenure of his pastorate of Obama that caused such a ruckus—and eventually the rift—with the Obamas and their campaign. The idea that sermons can and do influence the thoughts and deeds of those inundated by their content, resulted in what some would consider a gross mishandling of the sermons—as well as this particular sermonizer—in question. Bernard Bell attempted to provide a scholarly critique and defense of the substance of Wright's messages as well as the rhetorical nuances—perhaps even sermonic fugues—common within the Black preaching tradition. Bell addresses the exploitation of the select pieces of sermons, and in essence advocated the need for a fuller anthological evaluation of Wright's preaching. He states that such ill-treatment,

> Reduced the complex identity of the unashamedly black and unapologetically Christian Rev. Dr. Jeremiah to spliced controversial sound bites from his sermons[.] Quoted repeatedly out of context during the presidential campaign by the news media from sermons he preached in 2001 and 2003, the sensational sound bites, as in yellow journalism, fostered the false impression that he is an unpatriotic, radical black separatist and racist bigot who deserves vilification and crucifixion (Bell 332–43).

A more thorough critique of a wider selection of Wright's sermons—or if it were possible, the entirety of his sermonic repertoire—would valuably contribute to a clearer evaluation of Wright

and his impact on the one parishioner in the pew who unknowingly would become the 44th President of the United States of America.

Perhaps the most famous historical figure to evidence the important link between African-American homilies and its sociopolitical influence, is the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He brilliantly used the power of the local church pulpit to first develop a personal reconciliation between his theological, sociological, and ethnographic intersections. From there, King began to homiletically broadcast and refine his message in pulpits and platforms throughout the country. Finally mounting, in essence, the national pulpit with what would become King's crowning signifier, he concretized his homiletical and rhetorical genius with the now iconic "I Have a Dream Speech". Although that single speech tremendously affected the Civil Rights movement and America as a whole—and is worthy of in depth and infinite analysis and anthological inclusion—it remains only a small part of this homiletical giant's larger body of work. The impact that Dr. King's preaching has had on the Civil Rights movement and the advancement of African-American freedoms is undeniable, however, there are only a select few of his sermons that are attributed to his sociopolitical influence. There are collections available and projects underway through which more of Dr. King's sermonic material may be explored. This will be explored further in the next section of this discourse. Traveling even further back towards the beginning of American history is perhaps the earliest affirmation that the voice of the African-American homilist has had importance and influence on political and social concerns for centuries. This far back in history also highlights the reality that recovering sermonic material for anthology and collection inclusion becomes more problematic the further back in time one journeys. The best figure to unpack these elements from that early era is Bishop Richard Allen. Allen is considered a foremost leader and influencer during the late 18th and 19th centuries.

However only a very few of his writings, and no self-identified homilies, are preserved/available to glean a deeper and clearer understanding of how he reconciled and thus influenced through his theology, the social and political trajectory of slavery and other social conditions of his day. As a result, early African-American evangelical anthologies often include Richard Allen because of his noted social influence during that period. It was because of his clerical prominence and homiletic acuity that he became a premier African-American figure for social change. It was not his writings or published works wherein his ideologies were refined and his influence exerted, rather it was through years of delivering oral sermons that Allen provided wise guidance for both the spiritual and social betterment of his community. Roberts affirms this notion in the statement that,

> Preachers like Richard Allen committed themselves to uniting newly freed northern blacks and bringing order to the developing communities through Christianization… Black preachers refined Christianity to meet the spiritual, social, and political interests and exigencies of a distinct and oppressed population in and out of slavery. Black spirituality was integral to black identity: who and what they were, their individual self and collective sense of worth, purpose, and mission became part of the preachers' evangelizing programs (Roberts 39).

Thus, the African-American influence—as far back as America's early Republic and as recently as present-day political and social scenes—has had (and continues to have) an undercurrent of cultural sway generated by the ecumenical pulpiteering of influential African-American clergy. One final point to highlight is the challenge Black preaching endures due to the philosophical tensions between political and theological conservatism and liberalism. The

semantics of these terms creates a blurred—and often contentious—imbalance for the African-American sociopolitical homilist. Hubbard states well that,

> The very idea of examining the sermon and the African-American literary imagination means that one must acknowledge the political conservatism of black religion—its tendency to promote a submission to authority in the face of subversive impulses of the will…This tension over how best to achieve racial equality in America generates pressures that often call into question the moral integrity of the preacher's leadership. Some black religious leaders have allied themselves too closely with white benefactors and patrons. They advocate a sociopolitical conservatism and thereby run the risk of having their loyalty to the community's call for social justice questioned. Others have identified themselves with the anger of the black community and have communicated their anger in their rhetoric and action (Hubbard 21).

This kind of the tension often looks different for White preachers deeply engaged in political discourse verses Black preachers who are seen more as politicians than pulpiteers. For example, the Reverends Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton both found that their civil rights advocacy was better positioned through a "non-ecumenical" entity—such as Jackson's Rainbow/PUSH Coalition and Sharpton's National Action Network. Although still revered as clergy, they—as well as others—sought to distinguish their activist message from their faith preaching as much as possible, perhaps to avoid the misapplication of their sacred conservatism with their more secular liberalism. Having the tools, methodologies, and analytics to navigate, evaluate, and provide visualizations of the delicate lines of theological and political conservatism as well as biblical and social liberalism will assist relieving this tension and perhaps strengthen the social and political influence of the African-American pulpit within and outside of the community.

3.4 Qualitative Ethnography Research Methodology

The research employed is perhaps best classified as a *qualitative ethnography* research methodology, given that the primary objective is to identify and examine sermonic fugues. More directly, this project seeks to elicit rhetorical patterns and themes that exposes both religious as well as sociocultural behaviors and beliefs within the context of African-American homilists' responses to the 9/11 tragedy. It was assumed that this specific cultural group will reveal both shared and contrapuntal attitudes, values, and phenomenology with regard to faith, ethnicity, and patriotism as they are carefully negotiated within the narrative responses in their preaching. Qualitative ethnography fits this project well in several ways, one of which is the contribution of a *key informant*. Ethnography involves the researcher's immersion in the social group in order to observe the behaviors and dynamics of the community first-hand (Caulfield). Therefore it is worthy to note that this project's ethnographer has been an African-American homilist for nearly thirty years, and has a 9/11 sermonic response included in the select sermon collection. This uniquely positions this researcher not only as an ethnographer but also as a key informant from within the community having insight and experience perhaps otherwise not as readily assessable. Furthermore, in many ways this qualifies this ethnographer as an 'ideal' key informant. This title role is qualified in part by his position in the community—as both clergy and academician—and knowledge of the subject—as a professor of homiletics. Furthermore is his demonstrated willingness, communicability, and impartiality as there are no pertinent biases with respect to the handling or interpretation of the select sermons or homilists (Marshal 92). The ethnography research method, hence, allows the researcher to "gain a deep understanding of a group's shared culture, conventions, and social dynamics" (Caulfield). Such was the case and expected result of evaluating collections of thematic sermons by African-American pulpiteers.

The methodological process for this case study is outlined in the following five phases:

3.5   Phase 1 – Collect & convert select sermons

In order to contain the project's scope in a manageable sample size, this phase sought to acquire 20 - 25 sermons from select clergy which were delivered as an oratory response to the 9/11 tragedy at some point during the month of September 2001. These sermons may have been natively captured in various forms—such as manuscript, audio, or video recorded—but were to be transcribed to digital text in order to be assessable for data mining and distant reading. One criteria for selection was that all contributions must be a complete sermon, even if edited for production or publishing. Hence, no sermon outlines were included in the sample collection.

Extensive efforts were made to collect a maximum of 25 sermons in order to assemble a sample thematic collection of African American homiletic responses to the 9/11 tragedy. As a result, 22 sermons were selected all of which met the criteria noted for Phase 1. These homilies were ultimately obtained from individual clergy or ecumenical archives, internet searches and websites, or published anthology collections. These select sermons were acquired primarily in three formats. One of the select sermons was a transcription of the oral message that had been posted onto a public website. Hence it was merely copied then pasted into a document file and subsequently saved as a plain text (.txt) file. No editing was necessary as it was already publish proofed. Two of the select sermons were provided as manuscripts in a portable document format (.pdf) or a Word document (.doc) file. These sermons were acquired directly from the preachers' archives and required only minor grammar/spelling corrections. The documents were then saved as .txt files and ready for the next phase.

Most of the select sermons were obtained as print copies—published in one of two paperbound books. Only one of published sermons was from the Willimon edited book, *The Sunday After Tuesday*. The remaining print copied sermons—and the majority of all of the select sermons (seventeen to be exact)—were taken from Simmons and Thomas' published anthology collection, *9.11.01: African American Leaders Respond to an American Tragedy*. This collection's thematic focus and authorial profiles so closely aligned with this project, it may be considered that this research is in essence an expansion of the precedent's collection and an advancement of its scholarship. Obtaining these sermons in print form required a much more lengthy preparation process. The first step was to convert the print/paper text into minable digital text. This was done by using a Knowledge Imaging Center (KIC) Scanner to scan each text as rich text file (.rtf). KIC tools are products designed to "create digital information technology for the advancement of study, research and scholarly productivity" ("Knowledge Imaging Center") according to its website. The OCR (Optical Character Recognition) feature of the scanner expedited the conversion process, however its marginal accuracy required quite a bit of human editing and correcting. Nevertheless, the avoidance of having to retype each sermon manually is undoubtedly the greatest benefit of using scanning technology with OCR capability—even with need for meticulous edits. Once the sight editing was complete, each document was saved as .txt files in preparation for the distant reading.

Of all of the sermons selected for this project, only one was available in video format. This sermon was discovered through an online search and acquired from a YouTube channel. It was then downloaded for conversion and use. Although the video version of the sermon is useful for evaluating delivery, mannerisms, and non-verbal aspects of the message, it is the audio component that is most important for transcription. Using the Movavi Video Converter 18

Premium software, the audio was extracted into a separate MPEG Audio Layer-3 (.mp3) file. The next step then was to transcribe the audio file into a usable text file. After researching several audio-to-text transcription options, an online service called ("Amberscript") was selected—primarily because it offered a free trial for up to 30 minutes of audio. Any time beyond the 30 minutes would be at a cost. This particular sermon was approximately 23 minutes long, therefore fit well within the timeframe of the trial option. The Amberscript process was relatively simple. The .mp3 file was uploaded to the website and was processed by the software. It took approximately one hour before the results were made available. The audio and transcribed text were aligned so that the user could make edits to the text on the site. The accuracy of the transcription was moderate, however, there were many areas that required manual correction. It is noteworthy that this site did offer an option to "Request perfect transcript" which promised 99% accuracy. Needless to say this would require additional cost for manual transcription support by their "language experts". Overall, this is a viable option as a first pass at transcribing audio sermons. Consequently, video/audio sermons are more time consuming and will require manual and monetary investment in order to produce accurate and minable digital text files. Undoubtedly, if resources are available for purchase or access to highly accurate audio-to-text transcription software or outsourcing the manual transcription servicing, acquisition of a greater volume of video/audio sermons will be far more manageable.

It is necessary to mention a great challenge met in the attempt to acquire sermons which met the criteria set within this Phase 1. Several efforts were made to reach African-American preachers—both renowned and personally known through ministerial relationships—to request copies of sermons initially preached in response to the 9/11 tragedy during the month of September 2001. These efforts included direct calls, emails, and conversations—as well as many

follow-ups. All in all, these efforts resulted in adding only one usable sermon to the collection. There were a few interesting reasons given as to the unavailability of the 9/11 sermon. One particularly interesting explanation was that the master recording of the sermon was destroyed in 2005, during Hurricane Katrina, when the church facility was flooded. Observantly, however, there were two timing factors which contributed most to the low return. One was the *present time*—that is national lockdowns due to the coronavirus pandemic. Several persons acknowledged that they (or their staff) could not access their archives due to the 'stay-at-home' mandates in their areas. This is significant because many of the sermons from 2001 were archived solely on cassettes or compact discs and had to be physically located and retrieved. The inability and time required to access these items prior to the deadline for this project to move forward from Phase 1, eliminated some prospective sermons from inclusion.

The other timing hurdle, was *the passage of time*. Quite a few preachers contacted noted that they could not remember or they did not retain the sermon they preached about 9/11 in September 2001. They cited that too much time had passed for them to be able to contribute to this particular project. Hence, it was a saving grace that Simmons and Thomas—as well as Willimon—had the foresight to capture those 9/11 sermons soon after the occurrence of the event. This, therefore, identifies an important practice of acquiring and preserving sermonic responses to relative events as soon as possible after its occurrence.

3.6   *Phase 2 – Conduct topic modeling and distant reading analytics/interpretations*

In this phase, the actual distant reading[3] and topic modeling analysis of the sermon collections' big data content is conducted with the aim of identifying evidence of topical

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[3] Due to the fact that distant reading is becoming widely popular in the "intellectual shift" that's taking place in the social sciences (Underwood 1), it is important that this paradigm is applied and developed in the area of black

patterns, thematic consistencies—in essence, sermonic fugues. Particularly of interest were

patterns related to faith, ethnicity, and patriotism. This developing paradigm for "studying,

teaching, and [the] public presentation of cultural artifacts, dynamics, and flows" (Manovich 6)

of African-American sermonic responses is where this project plugs into the *cultural analytics*

phenomenon. This phase is where text mining and topic modeling were used to derive data

distantly read from the sermons. Exegeting these sermons using CLS techniques and Latent

Dirichlet Allocation (LDA)[4] algorithms, equips the researcher in creating customized datasets

which align both the thematic notions and sermonic fugues pursued within this project. Close

observations were made as to whether or not conventional algorithms and text mining tools

adequately account for vernacular nuances in the language, cadences, and phraseologies

associated with Black preaching styles.

Phase 2 began by uploading the twenty-two sermon .txt files into the Topic Modeling

Tool by Google[5]. The interface tool must be downloaded and executed as a standalone Java

ARchive (.jar) file. Once .txt files were uploaded, a set of conditional parameters were entered

which included the number of topics and the directory to which all output files are written. Five

topics were chosen for this project. The complete processing of the data—from the "Learn

Topics" click point to the generating of the results files—took only 1.424 seconds to complete.

The results were provided in three comma-separated values (.csv) files: 1) Topics_Words, 2)

TopicsInDocs, and 3) DocsInTopics.

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religious studies—particularly digital religious rhetoric. Developing the sermonic fugue model will undoubtedly rely heavily on both distant reading and topic modeling as demonstrated in this project.

[4] "LDA is a form of unsupervised learning that views documents as bags of words (i.e. order does not matter)" (Doll).

[5] Topic Modeling Tool by Google is a "graphical user interface tool for LDA topic modeling" which was developed in 2011 (Google Code Archive -Topic Modeling Tool).

The Topics_Words file captures the primary LDA algorithm results. This file displayed five separate strings of top terms which the algorithm determined were most closely related topically within the sermon collective.
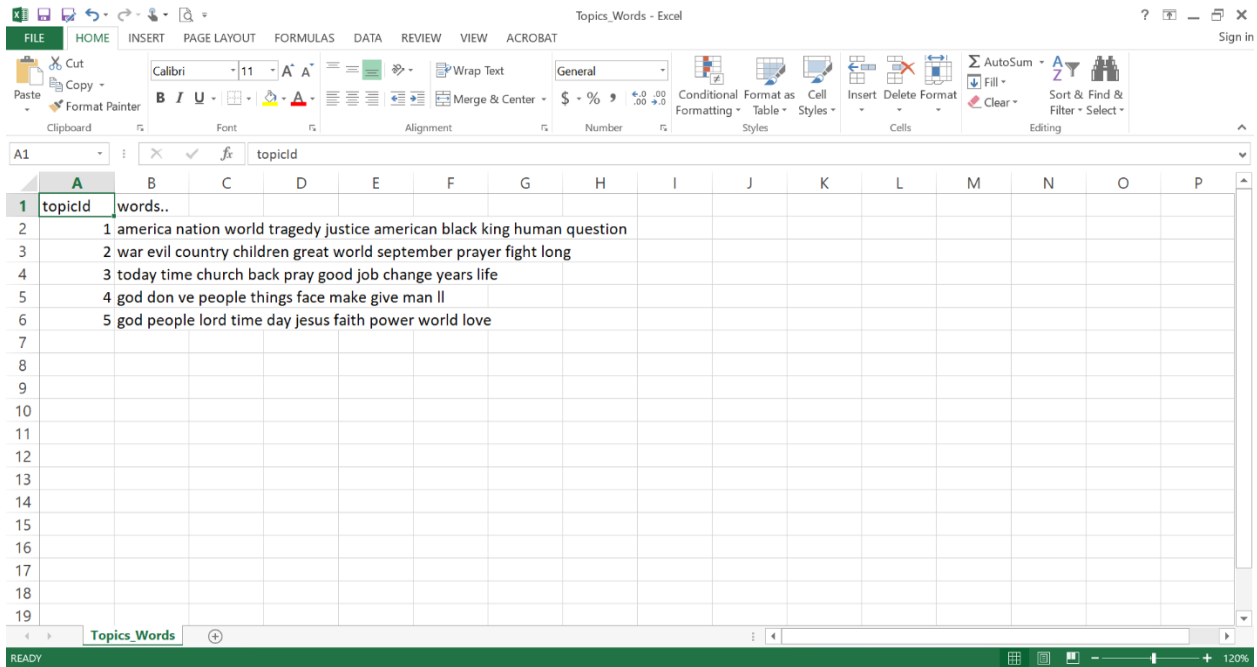
Figure 5: Topic Modeling "Topic_Words" Results File

Figure 5 caption shows the actual results generated from Topic Modeling tool for the select sermons. Notice that each string of words were given a *topicid*. This identifier was important when comparing to the other two documents produced from the computational analysis. This critical file will be expounded upon later in this section.

The TopicsInDocs results file shown in Figure 6 correlates the topics—arranged in descending order—based upon their importance relative to each document.

docId	filename	top topics and contribution to doc ...									
1	/Users/r	2	0.586	1	0.139	5	0.119	3	0.09	4	0.066
2	/Users/r	4	0.806	5	0.098						
3	/Users/r	2	0.306	3	0.302	4	0.21	5	0.128	1	0.053
4	/Users/r	3	0.287	1	0.279	5	0.188	4	0.145	2	0.101
5	/Users/r	2	0.5	1	0.5						
6	/Users/r	2	0.372	4	0.233	5	0.209	1	0.132	3	0.053
7	/Users/r	4	0.42	1	0.344	5	0.096	3	0.085	2	0.055
8	/Users/r	3	0.38	2	0.206	5	0.195	4	0.133	1	0.086
9	/Users/r	5	0.475	2	0.175	4	0.129	1	0.129	3	0.092
10	/Users/r	5	0.658	3	0.123	4	0.089	2	0.067	1	0.064
11	/Users/r	1	0.589	2	0.263	5	0.054	3	0.051		
12	/Users/r	1	0.549	5	0.164	2	0.121	3	0.084	4	0.082
13	/Users/r	1	0.257	5	0.234	2	0.183	4	0.178	3	0.149
14	/Users/r	3	0.314	4	0.24	1	0.194	5	0.15	2	0.103
15	/Users/r	3	0.312	4	0.237	5	0.223	2	0.139	1	0.089
16	/Users/r	5	0.414	4	0.267	1	0.116	3	0.108	2	0.095
17	/Users/r	4	0.304	1	0.246	3	0.21	5	0.145	2	0.095
18	/Users/r	3	0.244	1	0.211	4	0.206	5	0.188	2	0.152
19	/Users/r	2	0.349	4	0.247	3	0.224	1	0.104	5	0.076
20	/Users/r	4	0.563	5	0.214	3	0.13	2	0.077		
21	/Users/r	5	0.52	4	0.182	3	0.111	1	0.108	2	0.078
22	/Users/r	1	0.464	2	0.195	3	0.144	5	0.117	4	0.08

Figure 6: Topic Modeling "TopicsInDocs" Results File

Each of the twenty-two select sermons were given an identification number alongside the filename of the .txt document location. The indexed score of each document for each topic is listed beginning with the topics in which the document has the greatest influence and ending with the topic that the sermon has the least impact. This result file provided interesting information but was not particularly useful to this analysis. In the case where a closer read of certain sermons is required, these results would certainly prove to be more beneficial.

Figure 7: Topic Modeling "DocsInTopics" Results File

The third .csv results document was the DocsInTopics file—captured in Figure 7. Similar

to the TopicsInDocs file, this results file lists the top documents and where they fall in rank

within each of the topics. This results format is useful when dealing with an extremely large

corpora of documents as to assisting in limiting each topic to only the higher ranked documents

for better data management. The sample size of twenty-two select sermons, was reasonably

manageable being relatively small in volume. Therefore these particular results were not as

advantageous for this scale of project as it would have been if much larger. Hence, the most

valuable results product of the Topic Modeling Tool by Google—with regard to this research—is

by far the Topic_Words file. This results file—through the distant reading analytics—provided a

string of terms that together revealed key topics embedded within the literary texts assembled.

Now that the five topic strings have been generated, the next task was to decipher and

make sense of what appeared to be at first glance, merely a group of random words. Nan Z. Da

makes it quite clear that "there will always be patterns and trends [and that] the promise of patterns alone is meaningless" (Da B18). Therefore, the first step was to rearrange the words in each string into a smaller cluster of terms which seemed similar or related in some way. The rearrangement worked best in an Excel spreadsheet—having each word placed in its own cell, yet keeping it in the same row as it was in the generated .csv file. Some terms were easy to connect, others not so much. For instance in the first string of words, 'America', 'nation', and 'world' seemed logical together. Initially it seemed prudent to add 'American' to that group until it was looked at in its contexts. Such was the case with many other terms which appeared to be uneasily matched. This highlights the importance of recognizing that *context is STILL king*, even when it comes to distant reading analytics.

At this point the Voyant[6] tool became quite useful in the analysis. Unlike the Topic Modeling Tool, Voyant provides visualization results as well as many other computational analytics through its default and adjustable configuration skins—which includes word clouds and links, trend graphics, document and data summarizations, and contextual and text mining layouts. The context layout, for instance, generates a scalable number of proceeding words to the left of the syntax term and successive words to its right. Using this feature exposed the fact that the term 'American' was often adjectivally connected to modifiers like 'African American', 'white/Euro American' and the like. These kind of observations made it more logical to associate 'American' with 'black' and 'king' rather than 'America'. Incidentally, it was also revealed through context analysis that a high frequency use of the word 'king' was in reference to 'Martin

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[6] Voyant is another open-source, web-based application useful for performing corpora text analysis.

Luther King'. Thus repeating this system of analysis for other words and strings of words helped hone in a more succinct topic for each string.

The first string resulted in four subgroups of connected terms.

topicid

| 1 | america | nation | world | tragedy | human | american | black | king | justice | question |

Figure 8: Word String (1) w/Subgroups

The subgroups were color coded for easier distinguishability and readability as displayed in Figure 8. Words with a high word count were further emblazoned with shaded background. The quantitative word count results were derived through Voyant. Hence, this step of the process moved the analysis closer towards the readiness for interpretation. Interpretation was necessary not only of the seemingly disarrayed set of related terms generated by the Topic Modeling tool, but also the sermonic fugues noised within the clamoring voices of the homiletical texts.

The next depth of exegesis beyond the word subgroups, was to capture in a single term or phrase—the string's *theme*—in preparation to further identifying its complementary *thrust*. Ramesh Richard explains that when seeking the central proposition of a text or sermon, at its heart is the 'theme' and the 'thrust'. He describes the theme as "what the author is talking about" and the thrust is "what the author is saying about what [s/he] is talking about" (Richard 67). When considering both the string and the subgroup of words, it was helpful to also view their grammatical functions as nouns, adjectives, or verbs.

topicid

| 4 | god | face | people | man | make | give | things | don | ve | ll |

Figure 9: Word String (4) w/Subgroups

An example is the topic string 4—captioned in Figure 9. This particular string has nouns, verbs, non/generic words, and one Roman numeral. It is most important that the verb is reviewed in its context as to ascertain its subject(s) and/or the direct object(s). This is vital in identifying the nominal theme of those verbal thrusts. In this case, it was notable that in many instances the verbs 'make' and 'give' used a divine noun as the subject or direct object. For instance, "*Only the Lord can make*…", "*God can make...*", "*God wants to give...*" "*Ask God to make...*", and "*Ask God to give*…" where a noun—referring to the divine—performs or receives the verb action. Therefore, the subsequent interpretative thematic idea derived—having considered the theme, thrust, context, and grammatical functions—should be easily validated as reasonable when viewed alongside the string of words generated from the Topic Modeling tool. The interpreted theme of the topic 4 string—as noted in Figure 10—is set as "Sacred: Faith Response". This resolve weighs in the 'not-so-obvious' contextual nuanced implication of the scripture passage of II Chronicles 7:14—from which it was deduced that the Roman numeral 'II' was included in the string.

topicid										Faith Response
4	god	face	people	man	make	give	*things*	*don*	*ve*	II	*Sacred*

Figure 10: Word String (4) w/Subgroups and Interpreted Topic

At this step of phase 2, an aerial view of the strings of words and their thematic topics was taken, in an effort to arch the entire topic model under a central theme. Although it may not always be possible to umbrella the strings at this height of central theme, in this instance the five strings fit neatly—and nearly equally—under the familiar phraseme: *God & Country* (see Figure 11).

topicid

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Topic	Theme
1	america	nation	world	tragedy	human	american	black	king	justice	question	**Americanism**	COUNTRY
2	war	evil	fight	country	world	children	great	prayer	long	*september*	**Terrorism**	COUNTRY
3	today	time	years	change	back	pray	church	good	job	life	*Pragmatic*	
4	god	face	people	man	make	give	*things*	*don*	*ve*	ll	*Sacred*	GOD
5	god	lord	jesus	time	day	faith	power	love	people	world	**Faith In God**	GOD

(Theme for rows 3 & 4: **Faith Response** / *Sacred*)

Figure 11: All Five Word Strings w/Interpreted Topics and Themes

Undeniably, it is a formidable task to derive an encompassing topic for the multi-strings of words generated by the Topic Modeling Tool. However, these topics—once carefully refined—unveiled to some degree a thematic thread between the strings. In this case, acknowledging that the collection was assembled under the pursuit for African-American homiletical responses to the 9/11 tragedy, narrowed the overarching thematic scope tremendously. Viewing the strings and devising their subsequent topics in that light, led to the rational thematic supposition of 'God & Country'. In instances where the collection phase is not influenced by a theme-motivated intent, forcing a central theme where it reasonably does not fit will undoubtedly be unprofitable. Hence it would be prudent to heed Da's caution to avoid unhealthy distant reading methodological missteps (Da), often due to advancing forced conclusions that do not adequately support the adopted topics and themes.

As a practice to avoid proceeding under illegitimate topics and themes, a short synopsis for each topic and theme was written highlighting data evidence and examples from the distant reading analysis. Figure 12 is an example of the synopsis for topic 3.

today	**time**	years	change	back	pray	church	good	job	life	*Pragmatic*
										Faith Response

3. **PRAGMATIC: FAITH RESPONSE** – There are temporal landmarks throughout the collection which references the urgency of present faith responses and the historical precedents of faith responses. Seventy-seven percent of the preachers in the collection used the term "today" in their sermon. The call to action centers heavily around the inevitability of and need for change as one homilist rhetorically stressed to the congregation "*We got to change…*" This call within the collection also vacillated between past references to "*back in…*" and future urging to get "*back to…*" The strong insistence to pray is frequently admonished by several pulpiteers. However even more noteworthy is the high reference to the scripture passage of II Chronicles 7:14 where the instruction is given to the people of God to "*…humble themselves and pray…*" This verse is also relevant in the next group of topic related words. Finally, this series of terms infer particularly to the church body as a whole and its smaller parts given several contextual queues. There is homiletic commentary within the collection which references the ideals of separation between "Church and State". However, there are also remarks highlighting the differences and segregations between the "Euro-American church" and the "Black church". These conditions combined points to pragmatic faith responses of Christian Americans to the terroristic tragedy of the 9/11.

Figure 12: Word String (3) w/Interpreted Topic and Synopsis

These synopses were the foundational interpretations of the data that has been—until this point—only articulated in terms and phrases. These interpretations validated the rationale for the topic decision as well as served to guide the construction of the datasets, the flow of storyboard, and ultimately the development of the narrative. Hence it was important that specific evidence was cited and clear explanations were given as to why and how these computationally derived strings of words had now become driving topics and themes.

3.7   *Phase 3 – Construct storyboard outline, datasets, and story point visualizations*

Now that the topics and themes had been established through the topic modeling and distant reading analytics, the methodological process moved into Phase 3. This phase involved building the storyboard, datasets, and visualizations. From the derived topics, themes, and synopses, the development of a storyboard outline commenced. Cole Nussbaumer Knaflicin—in the digital book *Storytelling with Data*—explains that "the storyboard establishes a structure for your communication. It is a visual outline of the content you plan to create…and establishing a

structure early on will set you up for success" (Knaflic 31–32). The storyboard does not have to be sophisticated or complicated, however it should be practical and easy to make adjustments, add content, and highlight key information. The storyboard for this project was a simple bulleted outline managed in a Word document.

The storyboard outline was launched through the development of a "Big Idea" statement. Interestingly, Knaflicin's model placed the Big Idea at the end, however it was noted that "leading with [the Big Idea] ensure[s] that [the] audience doesn't miss the main point and help[s] set up why we are communicating to them and why they should care in the first place" (Knaflic 32). Starting the storyboard with the Big Idea was a natural developmental transition from topic to theme to thesis. The similarities between the notions of a 'big idea' and a 'thesis sentence' are so close that they are used synonymously with regard to storyboard outline. It is important that the leading idea of the narrative is driven by a sentence rather than a word or phrase. This connects back to Richard's theme/thrust complements of the central proposition. Thus, the evolutionary process of synthesizing the computational string of words, determined string topics, overarching themes, and evidentiary synopses culminated as the carefully crafted thesis sentence. This sentence was foundational to the construction of the storyboard outline and ultimately the data narrative which would convey the findings and observations of the thematic collection of African American homiletical responses to the 9/11 tragedy.

The storyboarding exercise also guided the gathering and organizing of specific data elements from the select sermons into a collective "thematic framework allowing for coherent aggregation of [the] content. [Thus] all the materials included assisting in research and study on the theme" (Palmer 351). In addition to the collected sermons themselves, a heterogeneous mix of pertinent information datasets extracted from the Voyant tool as well as directly from the

sermon files were compiled and stored. These datasets were managed in Excel worksheets with each set of data elements being captured on its own spreadsheet tab. The information for the various datasets were determined by the storyboard outline. This project's initial dataset compiled metadata information about the homilists and their 9/11 homilies. The data fields including geographic, demographic, and biographic information pertaining to the homilists and their sermons. Most of this information was documented during the collection Phase 1. The majority of the tabular data was more text mining than metadata related. Each tabular set comprised specific data germane to the topics and themes derived from the analytics. However more importantly, they were constructed as substantiation to the areas of emphasis as outlined in in the storyboard.

As mentioned earlier, much of the data was extracted using the Voyant tool. However, pulling direct quotes data required a far more manual, yet efficient, effort. For instance, building the tabular data for the section on 'Americanism' required pulling the direct quotes from the edited sermon files (*see Appendix A*). In order to locate and extract the full quotes—having already exported the Voyant contextual layout results for specific terms and phrases—the search features for the Widows File Explorer application and the Microsoft Word software proved to be highly effective and invaluable. Windows File Explorer search function scanned all twenty-two of the sermons in the file folder to locate which sermons had the word or phrase being sought. It was through this process that it was uncovered that Wright was not the only homilist to reference "chickens coming home to roost". Once the File Explorer located the relevant documents, the search feature in Word precisely located where the word or phrase was positioned in the sermon document allowing for the entire sentence to be extracted and added to the dataset. Although this was indeed a manual and very meticulous process, it proved to be quite efficient yet not overly

time consuming. Fittingly, the assembled information from the collection provided the project with quality and detailed datasets which would profoundly assist in telling the story of the data with great vividity.

The adage "a picture is worth a thousand words" is never more apropos than in the case where data has a story to tell and mere words are simply not enough. Having adequately constructed the storyboard outline and assembled sufficient datasets, this phase advanced into the creation of visualizations to depict aspects of the data's narrative. According to Knaflicin "an effective data visualization can mean the difference between success and failure when it comes to communicating the findings of your study…or simply getting your point across to your audience" (Knaflic 8). The visualizations in this project are a strategic part of the sharing the findings and observations of this research project. The visualization graphics provide an abstract and revealing look at both the broader and detailed textual content in light of the single homily as well as the collective thematic sermons (Jänicke et al. 227–28). Visualizations were intended to be intimate—as in cases wherein the dynamics of the individual homilist are displayed—and communal—such as when the collective results are aggregated and observed as a whole. An example of a visualization that accomplishes both phenomenon is the God & Country graphic where it is easy to see the collective ebbs and flows between the use of God terms and country related words, while simultaneously displaying each individual homilist's personal usages of these particular vocabularies. In essence, the visualization of data is most powerful when it conveys both a clear aerial view of the thematic collection and as well as a sharp peripheral vantage of the individual texts.

The visualization tool of choice for this project was Tableau Public[7]. The Tableau visualizations—also referred to as a "viz" or "vizzes" by Tableau and their users—are relatively sophisticated and easy to develop, once the user gets past the learning curve. The data visualization strategy took advantage of several Tableau viz taxonomies. For this project, the primary driving taxonomy was *linguistic patterns* where observations of phraseologies and repetitive statements among the homilists and across the homilies were key. This project incorporated several of Tableau design features to create a variety of vizzes. Specifically utilized were: text and highlighted tables, horizontal bars, packed bubbles, symbol maps, and heat maps. These various representations of the data, not only added variety but established nuanced moods for the narrative as it was told. It was also important to maintain a common color pallet as to visually convey a continuity between the multiple vizzes. Overall, visualizations brought a tremendous amount of character and engagement into the data narrative, providing the data a visible background voice and the sermonic fugues a powerful stage presence.

3.8   *Phase 4 – Convey results & observations through a data narrative*

The final phase called for the interweaving of the products evolved from the previous phases into a well-crafted rhetorical data narrative. This involved addressing at the outset the "so what" question and introducing of the selection of homilists through the metadata as well as their own words. Following would be the presentation of the sermonic fugue conceptual idea and a brief exposition of this fugue's presence as encapsulated by a thesis sentence that represented the concerted sound of this assembled ensemble of voices. From there was the magnifying and fleshing out of several key sermonic fugues that had been thematically identified through the

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[7] Tableau Public is "a free platform to publicly share and explore data visualizations online" ("Tableau Public")

distant reading and topic modeling analytics. The artifact of this phase is Chapter 4 of this

dissertation as it is solely dedicated to presenting the results and observations as just noted.

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS & OBSERVATIONS

4.1 Introduction to Project Findings

It happened on September 11, 2001—twenty years ago:

> I got a call [from] one of our members, tears running down her eyes. She had just put on the plane a friend, or she had just talked to a friend, who had just put her husband on one of those planes. "Goodbye, honey, talk to you when you get there." Everybody had plans that went beyond that plane ride (Evans).

> I had flown from Chicago on a Monday evening and was called by my friend Vernon Jordan at ten o'clock in the morning and told to turn on the television and look and see. And after that viewing I am convinced that we have entered now a new era of our lives (Taylor 33).

> One of the children in our youth center was on one of those planes, an eleven-year-old on her way to a field trip with a teacher to California. Think of the people in California who were trying to get home, and never got home (Carpenter 61).

> On Tuesday afternoon, September 11, the day of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and the downing of the plane in Pennsylvania, we saw thousands here in the Yard in an ecumenical witness, and on Friday of that same week we saw almost as many here at a service of prayer and remembrance, on a day especially designated as a national day of prayer and remembrance (Gomes 155–56).

Memories such as these are not uncommon to those of us who will never forget that fateful day. However these particular voices and sentiments are among a special chorus of homilists who had to both shoulder the personal burdens of that day's life changing impact while carrying the added responsibility of finding for their parishioners the right words and striking just the right tone for the moment. Words and tones that would comfort, instruct, and encourage not only the religious faithful but also a deeply wounded nation. Carolyn Knight captured well the weight of the moment on the preacher in her essay "Preaching While the World is at War". She says of the time,

> On Monday many preachers in this nation were just thinking about what we would like to preach on Sunday. On Tuesday we all had our sermon subject, if not our Scripture for the sermon. Preachers who were in the middle of a sermon series were forced to put the series aside and focus on the situation that had changed the world forever. During the week I received many phone calls from colleagues, friends, and students wondering what they should preach or if a particular Scripture would be suitable for the occasion (Knight).

All across the United States—and undoubtedly the world—this collaborative, or at least contemplative buzz resounded among clergy regardless of denomination affiliation, congregation size, or ethnic demography. The obligation to collectively speak to millions of people about this experience through the lens of faith rested personally upon each of these men and women of the cloth.

Particularly of interest is the African-American homiletical response to this 9/11 tragedy. Although there are many reasons that fuel this interest, the one through which these findings and

observations are laid out is the presence of sermonic fugues within this select group of sermons compiled into a thematic collection. These recurring—common or contrasting—rhetorical patterns created a type of harmonized sound which echoed concerted sentiments and reverberating choruses emanating from the Black church. This unified resonance reflects the power and influence that the African-American pulpit possessed in that moment of 2001. An influence that was welded to soothe those in pain while speaking truth to those in power. These findings indicate no evidence that there were any deliberate attempts of collaboration or formalized coordination among these homilists. Yet there emerged fugue-like voicing within this sermon collection which affirmed the enduring historical influences of heritage and faith. The underlying observation is that there is in fact multiple evidence of sermonic fugues in this thematic collection of African-American homiletical responses to the 9/11 tragedy. The following data narrative is a presentation of the sermonic fugue findings and other observations derived from the select sermon texts through story point visualizations.
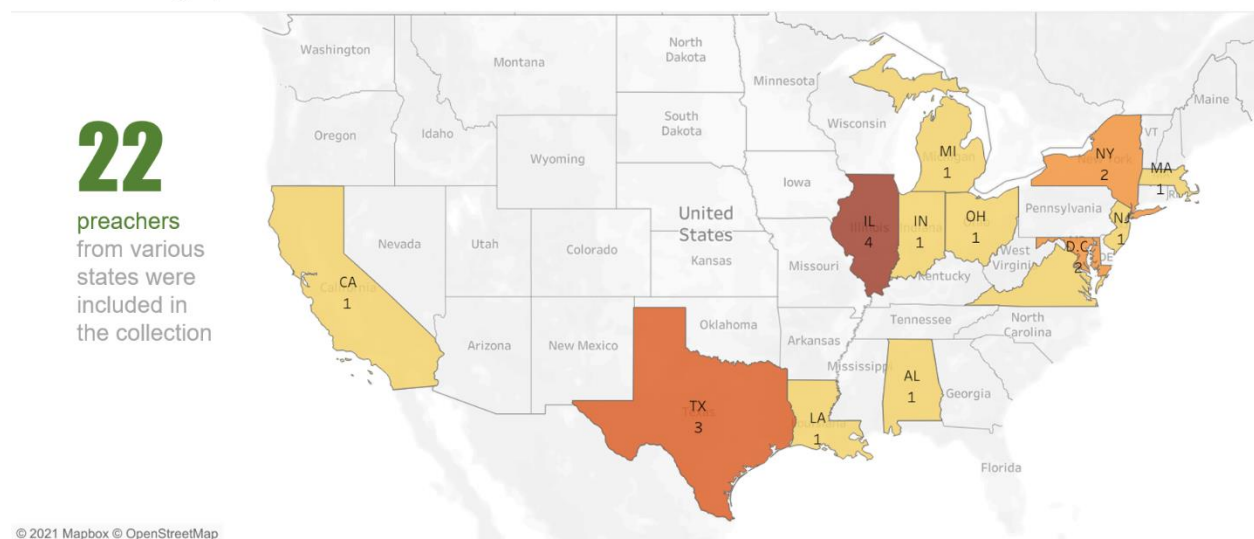
4.2 Meet the Homilists

Figure 13: Homilists Geographic Locations. (To view online: <u>Click Here</u>)

There is diversity among the homilists included in this thematic collection and study. Although they all are African American, this group of preachers represent: 18 males and 4 females; 14 states (including the District of Columbia); and 7 denominational affiliations.

Homilists: Demographic Information — **Denomination (Group) Affiliation**

Gender: Female (orange); Male (green). In the table below, denominational affiliation is marked with the homilist's gender (M = Male/green, F = Female/orange).

F. Name	L. Name	State	Message Title	Baptist	Church of Christ	Disciples of Christ	Evangelical (Bible Church)	Methodist	Muslim	Non-Denominational
Charles	Adams	MI	Meeting God Again, the First Time	M						
Charles	Booth	OH	What's Going On?	M						
Gail	Bowman	LA	After the Cistern			F				
Calvin	Butts	NY	Manage Your Fear	M						
Delores	Carpenter	D.C.	Alert When He Comes			F				
Michael	Dyson	IL	What Have I Left?	M						
Tony	Evans	TX	Attack on America				M			
Louis	Farrakhan	IL	The Nation of Islam Responds to Attacks on America						M	
Cain	Felder	D.C.	An African American Pastoral on Recent Acts of Terrorism in America					M		
Terrance	Ford	TX	It Brought Us to Our Knees	M						
Renee	Franklin	AL	Power to Rise Again					F		
Peter	Gomes	MA	Outer Turmoil, Inner Strength							M
Jesse	Jackson	IL	No Test, No Testimony	M						
T. D.	Jakes	TX	The Gathering of America							M
Vashti	McKenzie	MD	It Is Time to Move Forward					F		
Cecil	Murray	CA	Above the Madness					M		
Gardner	Taylor	NY	Reconciliation: Beyond Retaliation	M						
Frank	Thomas	IN	In Times Like These, Deliver Us from Evil		M					
Walter	Thomas	MD	That's Enough	M						
William	Watley	NJ	Seeking God's Face					M		
Richard	Wills	VA	Annihilation, Retaliation, Reconciliation, and the Pursuit of Justice: An Ethical Re..	M						
Jeremiah	Wright	IL	The Day of Jerusalem's Fall		M					

Figure 14: Homilists Demographic Information (To view online: Click Here)

4.3 Collective Thesis Statement

The sermon titles reflect the wide scope of rhetorical invention in which the individual homilists anchored their messages. Most of the sermons either launched, expounded, or referenced scripture text from the Bible, although some more than others. The message by Louis Farrakhan used passages from both the Bible and the Qur'an. Peter Gomes anchored his homily from the Book of Ecclesiasticus of the Apocrypha. Richard Wills' oration made no scripture references of any kind.

Collectively a central theme emerged and was fleshed out into the thesis sentence:

The American people—and particularly its people of faith—are urged to respond to and rely on their faith in God as part of their reflection and contemplation of retaliation in the aftermath of the 9/11 tragedy.

This thesis unfurls the various topical and thematic ideas as well as notable thrusts which were identified as coalesced connectors between the homilies. These connections syncopate the homiletical voices of the pulpiteers into the sermonic fugues of interest.

4.4 God & Country

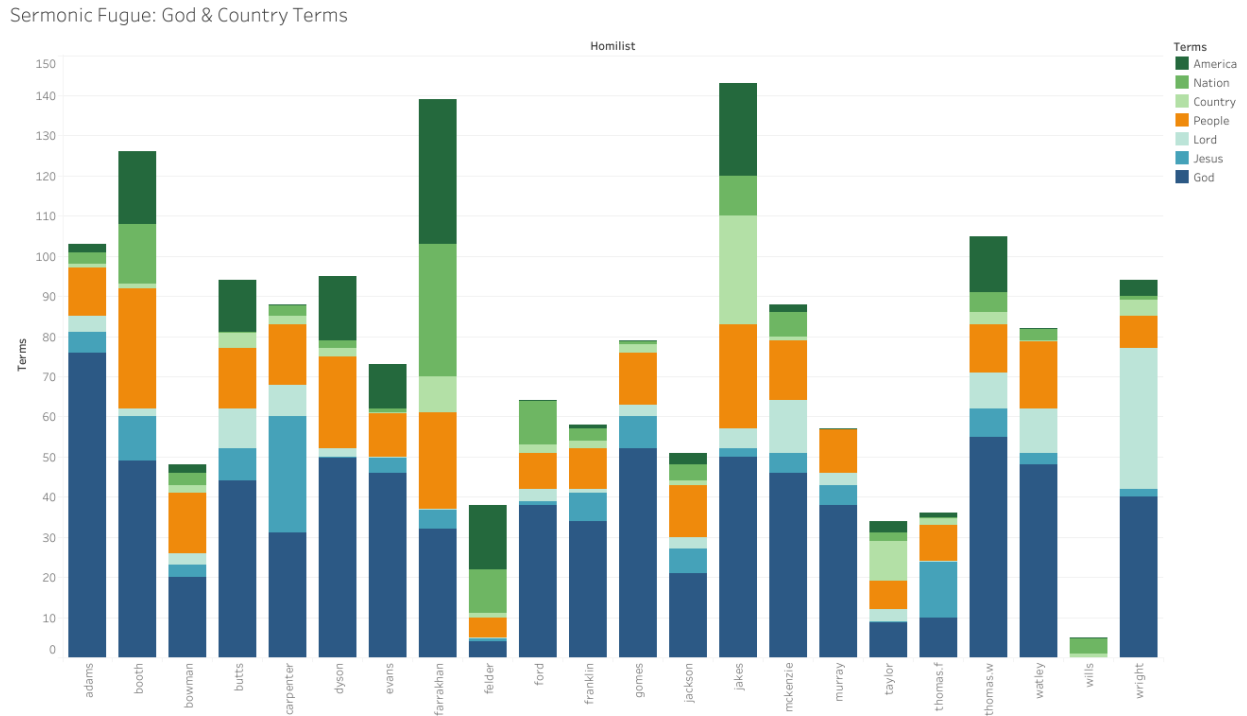*Figure 15: Sermonic Fugue – God & Country* (To view online: Click Here)

The overarching sermonic fugue of this collection of African-American homilies is the capsulated phraseme: "God and Country". The overwhelming high percentage of references to the divine proper nouns: "God", "Lord", or "Jesus" clearly affirms the faith context in which they were delivered. Wills is the only homilist who did not reference "God", "Lord", or "Jesus" in a nominal sense—however he did use "God" adjectivally twice—first as "God's love" and secondly as "God's truth". By way of an observation, this side of the double theme is consistent with LaRue's notation of Black preaching that sees God as an advocate for troubled people. In many sense, this tragedy thrust the faithful in position for such Divine advocacy.

The event element of 9/11 (a national tragedy) provides for the repetitive emphasis on "America", "nation", and "country". All of the homilists made mention of at least one of these terms. The high usage of the term "people", effectively bridges the notions of God and Country as there are many correlations to "people of God" and "people of America". The frequency and interweaving of this multi-word expression "God and Country" presents a strong validation that this resonating refrain is a key sermonic fugue within this thematic collection.

4.5 Pragmatic/Sacred Faith Responses
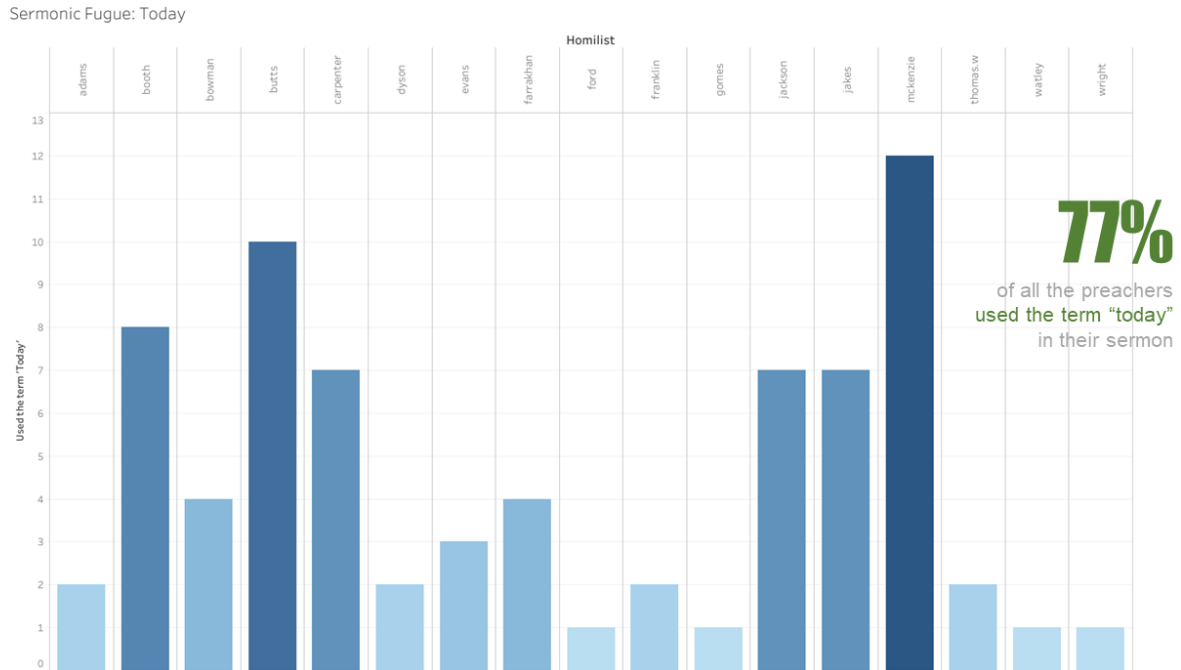
Figure 16: Sermonic Fugue – Today (To view online: Click Here)

The theocentric thread that runs throughout all but one of the sermons is laced with an unmistakable confidence that the faith, power, and love in and of God is deemed to be crucial for not only "this time" but for "every day". There are temporal landmarks throughout the collection which references the urgency of present faith responses and the historical precedents of faith responses. Seventy-seven percent of the preachers in the collection used the term "today" in their sermon. The call to action centers heavily around the inevitability of and need for change as one homilist rhetorically stressed to the congregation "We got to change…" This call within the collection also vacillated between past references to "back in…" and future urging to get "back to…" The strong insistence to pray is frequently admonished by several pulpiteers.

Sermonic Fugue: Humble-Pray-Seek-Turn

77%

referenced at least one of the key passive verbs of II Chronicles 7:14

14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall **humble** themselves, and **pray**, and **seek** my face, and **turn** from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. II Chronicles 7:14
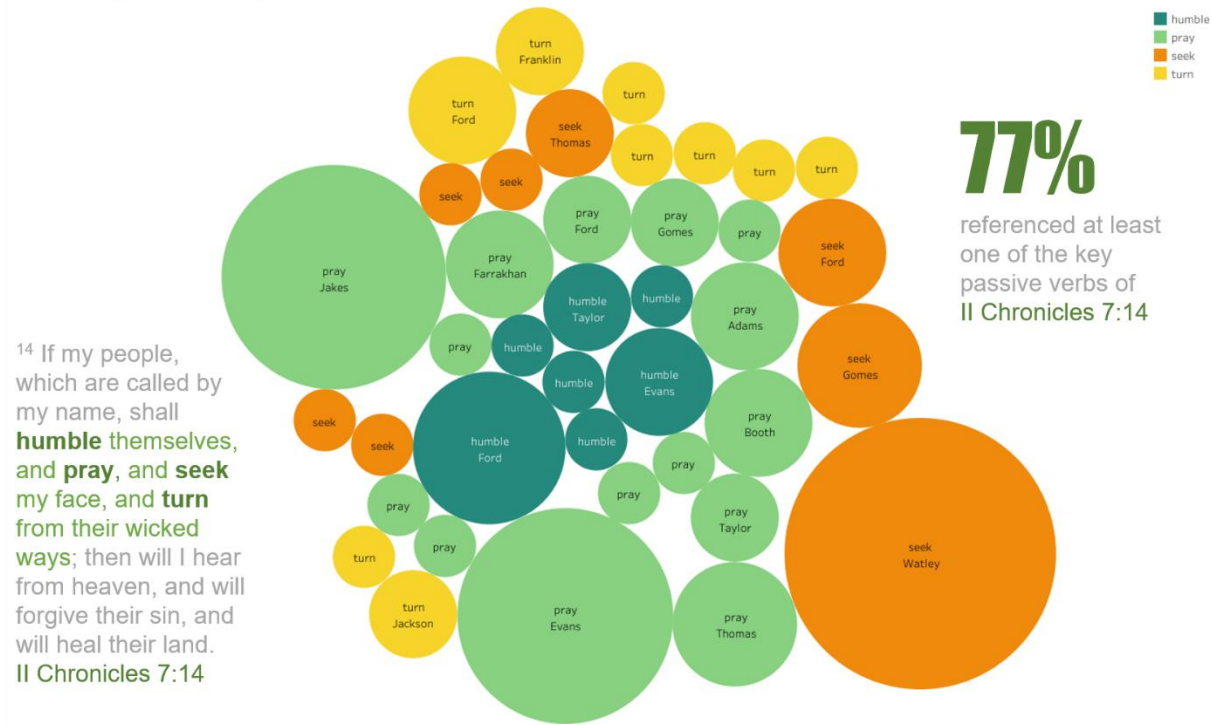
Figure 17: Sermonic Fugue – Humble-Pray (To view online: Click Here)

Even more noteworthy is the high reference to the scripture passage of II Chronicles 7:14 where the instruction is given to the people of God to "…*humble* themselves and *pray*, *seek* [God's] face, and *turn* from [wickedness]…" The theme of faith response involves thrusts of both a secular bent as well as a sacred impulse. The direct connection to God is key to the weight of sacrality this series of terms bring. The II Chronicles 7:14 passage is the primary text for only two of the sermons, but it is referenced by several. The key passive verbs in this text—"humble", "pray", "seek", and "turn"—are referenced and quoted in various contexts throughout the collection. "Seek…face" is given additional weight as Psalm 27:8 is the central text of William Watley's homily.

This sermonic fugue series points both to the church body as a whole as well as its smaller parts by way of several contextual queues. There is homiletic commentary within the

collection which references the ideals of separation between "Church and State". However, there are also remarks highlighting distinctions and segregations between the "Euro-American church" and the "Black church". These combined conditions point to both pragmatic and sacred faith responses of Christian Americans in light of the terroristic tragedy of the 9/11.

4.6 Americanism & Terrorism

Americanism[8] and the intensity of this ideal as reflected in the event of 9/11 is loudly interpreted and conveyed as a primary sermonic fugue of this collection. Contextually, the United States of America as a nation is referred to as "the greatest nation" and the World Trade Center is posed as a symbol of its influential standing in the world among nations. There were several poignant statements that highlighted how two of the most pronounced symbols of America's power and wealth were the targets of the terrorist attacks.

Preacher	Statement
Jackson	We mourn the wreckage of monuments, the Twin Towers symbolizing our money, the Pentagon symbolizing our might. Symbols of economic prosperity and military prowess
McKenzie	What happened on Tuesday-three airplanes used as cruise missiles, destroying two symbols of financial power and tarnishing the symbol of American military might…
Thomas, W	In a matter of minutes, the security we enjoy was snatched from us as we saw the symbols of the economy and the military struck by commercial jets hijacked and turned into weapons of mass destruction.

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[8] "Americanism in all its complexity—as an ideology, an articulation of the nation's rightful place in the world, a set of traditions, a political language, and a cultural style imbued with political meaning" (Kazin and McCartin). This term has had a notable rise in its usage since 9/11 particularly by those who are "devoted to furthering values associated with Americanism" (*After 9/11* 96).

Wright	…why it is we are feeling what we feel after the trauma and the tragedy of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, symbols of what America is money and the military

Table 3: References to America's Symbols of Power & Money

This collection provides a juxtaposition of the passion of Americanism within its borders against the distain of America's patriotic values outside of its homeland. The magnitude and impact of anti-Americanism are profoundly pronounced as the span of this tragedy is described as a "horrific tragedy", a "national tragedy", and an "international tragedy" which has impacted "human beings", the "human spirit", and "human dignity". Consistent with American values is the call for and pursuit of justice and an answer to what Tony Evans considers to be the "sine qua non" question of why (Evans)?

Figure 18: Sermonic Fugue – Terror~ (To view online: Click Here)

Terrorism is a sermonic fugue which is explicitly apparent and apropos. The high inclusion of "war" and "evil" terminology along with "fight" and "country" reveals a strong context of terrorism. Furthermore, there is a high usage within the collection of derivatives of the term "terror" (including terrorism, terrorist(s), and terrorized). War is adjectivally described as a "just war" (with regard to America's response) or a "holy war" (as the terrorists' perceived motive). The collocation level of the term "evil" to "God/Jesus" is a strong nod towards the often associated connection between religion and terrorism.

Figure 19: Sermonic Fugue – Americanism (To view online: Click Here)

The most melodic sermonic fugue of this collection is remarkably the Americanism fugue. There is an elegance to the intertwining voices that are at times common and in some ways, contrapuntal. The chorded range surrounding the Americanism sermonic fugue scales into the areas where Americanism is *Celebrated*—wherein are sentiments favoring Americanism; *Censured*—which d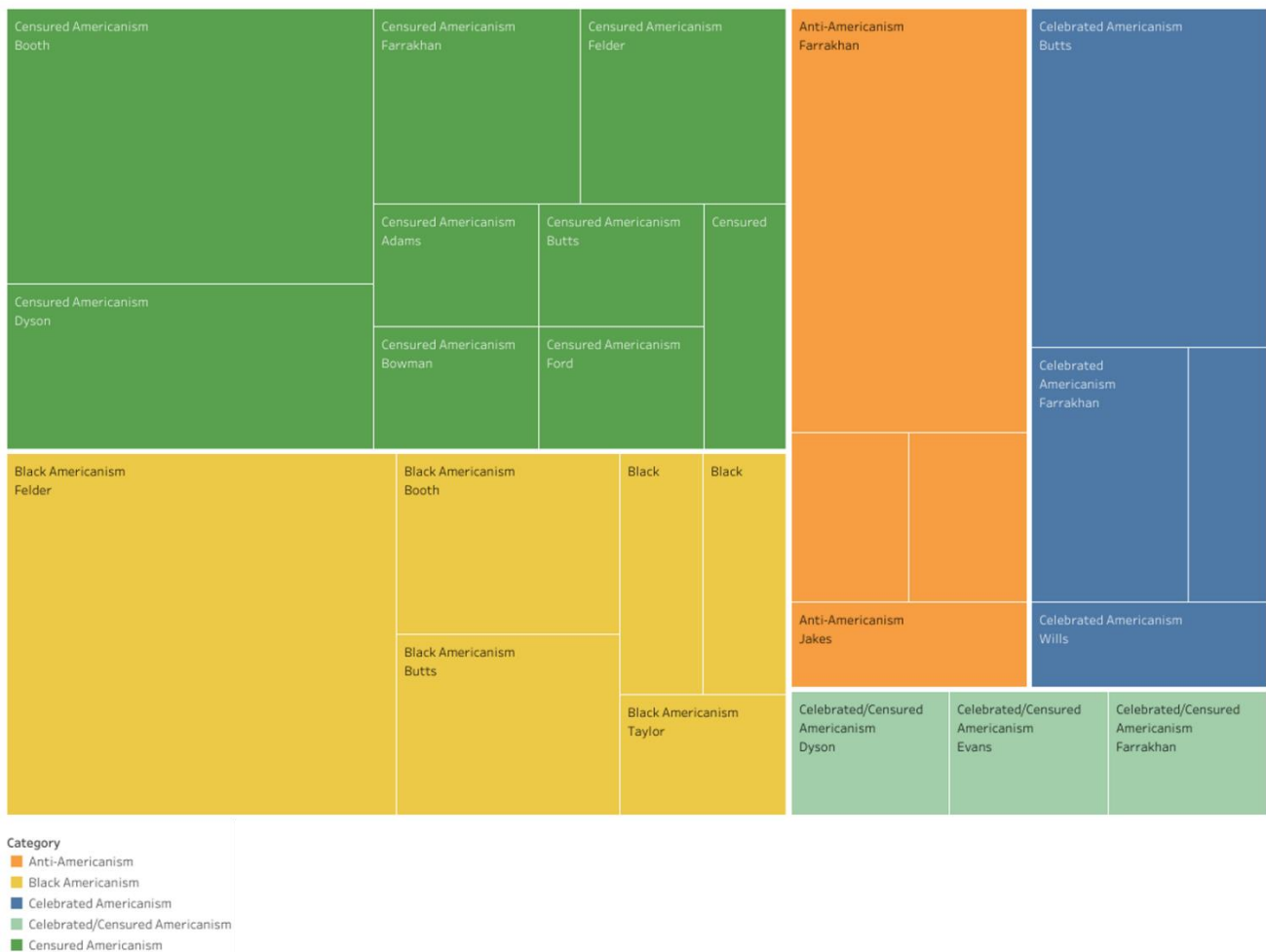enotes statements that are critical of aspects of Americanism; *Celebrated/Censured*—where assertions both praise and scorns Americanism. Two more distinct themed views in relation to this particular sermonic fugue is *Anti-Americanism*—which are comments attempting to articulate the hatred against America; and *Black-Americanism*—which endeavors to expose the misalignments of Americanism with Black-ism in light of the tragedy. Given the African American criteria of the select sermons, there are quite a few reckonings of Americanism's historicity with "Black folks" who have been long-standing patriots of the United States. These *vantages*—as they will be called henceforth—of Americanism reveal that there was a larger quantity of homiletic voices speaking to the vulnerabilities and deficiencies of Americanism in their response to 9/11 than were lauding its impact inside and outside America's borders.

Appendix A is a table of the actual statements tagged with its associated vantage of Americanism. This table allows for a closer reading of the sermon sentiments as well as the homilists' bents with regard to Americanism and its relation to this tragedy. For example, although Farrakhan has comments in each vantage of Americanism, he weighed in more on Anti-Americanism and distinctly less about Black Americanism. Additionally, it is important to note the similarities between the statements within the vantages themselves. It is these kind of linguistic resemblances within common thematic contexts which best defines these patterns as sermonic fugues. There are many reasons for such shades of commonality in voice and tone. In

some cases it is because the homilists are citing a common source or engaging the same familiar idiom. One example is the duet of Charles Booth & Cain Felder who both cited Cornel West as they interjected into their messages his rather jarring statement contending that 9/11 "niggerized" America. Although their separate quotes were not verbatim, such divergences did not diminish its capacity as a sermonic fugue nor the overall harmony of the quote.

Preacher	Statement
Booth	[Cornel West] said that maybe for the first time the world understands what it means to be a nigger in America.
Felder	In a sense, white America has been "niggerized," as Cornel West aptly put the matter on the Tom Joyner Morning Show.

Table 4: Cornel West's Quoted Statement

In the same light is the most notorious 9/11 African American homiletical quote. The ill-famed quote of Jeremiah Wright—from his 9/11 sermon "The Day of Jerusalem's Fall"—was not the only homily to resound that sentiment or parrot that aphorism. The full context of the sermon revealed Wright asserting that he was merely agreeing with Ambassador Edward Peck whom Wright claims made the statement in a Fox News interview the day before. However, the significance of this research is that it uncovered that along with Wright, Booth also used that quote in his message and T. D. Jakes made an inference that the tragedies of America's foreign involvement had now "come home to roost".

Preacher	Statement
Booth	How can God forgive us if there is not a willingness on our part to repent? And it might be that chickens have come home to roost in America. What's done in the dark will one day come to the light. The

	Bible puts it this way: "Whatsoever a man soweth." Let me rephrase that: Whatever a nation soweth that shall the nation also reap.
Jakes	So here we are—in America, from which we have often gone to rescue other countries from these tragedies. It has come home to roost.
Wright	[Ambassador Peck] pointed out that what Malcolm X said when he got silenced by Elijah Mohammed was in fact true, "America's chickens are coming home to roost."… We have supported state terrorism against the Palestinians and black South Africans, and now we are indignant because the stuff we have done overseas is now brought right back into our own front yards. "America's chickens are coming home to roost."

Table 5: "Come Home to Roost" Statements

These examples validate that identifying sermonic fugues are beneficial to lifting the stigma of lone preacher gone rogue or isolating certain statements as an indictment of a single pulpiteer's wayward thinking. Thematic collections, particularly, allows for accompanying voices—inside the same song—to be heard in concert with others who's solo track is deemed to be out of tune.

The final finding to report is the notable nods to Martin Luther King, Jr. Nearly half of all of the homilists evoked the memory or messages of King. These homilists either quoted, referenced, or remarked about King, or in some way superimposed him and his views onto this tragedy—mainly in connection to the African American's plight within it. Appendix B lists all of the

45% of the preachers referenced or remarked about Martin Luther King, Jr.

52% of those references were made by Richard Wills

Figure 20: MLK References Stats

references within this collection. Note that five of the allusions are in relation to King's death.

As previously mentioned, Wills—the one orator whose message is nearly void of any deific verbiage—heavily builds his homiletical case around King and his ideology. This is understandable given that he formerly pastored the same Dexter Avenue Baptist Church as did King, and undoubtedly became a King scholar in the process. Having overwhelmingly based his rhetorical invention upon Kingisms, and in great contrast to all of the others being primarily grounded or at least tethered to sacred texts, opens the question of whether this oration was delivered from a preacher's pulpit or a lecturer's lectern. Further investigation may be warranted to ascertain a better understanding of this outlier. This grand contrast may however be deemed as of a sermonic fugue contrapuntal marking.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS & FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

This project has yielded several conclusive elements and areas for future consideration. Confidently, this research has answered the questions articulated in the introduction pertaining to the evaluative benefits of digital thematic collections—with regard to distant readings of homiletical responses to 9/11, the effectiveness of topic modeling tools for critiquing homiletical works, the efficacy of transcription methodologies and linguistic algorithms for converting audio to text. In addition, there have emerged further considerations for the refinement of the sermonic fugue notion. Particularly are developmental opportunities regarding its usefulness in homiletical analytics; the development of broader projects to archive and preserve oratory homilies for research, scholarship, and pedagogical purposes; and the advantages of stronger cross-threading between computational literary studies and religious studies.

Viewing multiple homilies as a collections revealed a plethora of harmonies among the sermons which would have been easily missed or unobservable if viewed only as singularities or individually. This thematic collection, although extremely small in the grand scheme of things, made clear the benefits and potential of such collections. Evidence confirmed that "double consciousness" is absolutely required of the African-American clergy when negotiating a myriad of interests important to their audience and community. The counter-weighted themes of 'God & Country'—exegeted from the collection—suggests that balancing between multiple concerns is a prominent characteristic of Black preaching. The event driven thematic context of 9/11 also proved to be a relevant and revealing premise. Its timeliness is significant as well given that this is the twentieth year anniversary since its occurrence. This shows that these same sermons could

be preached today in an effort to address and influence the social and racial tensions which have attacked from within. The censures as well as the admonitions of anti-Americanism and Black Americanism exposes that many leaders have not heeded the warnings nor has the faithful perhaps the urges made by these pulpiteers. This could be an indication that the influence of the clergy has either shifted or has been diminished inside and outside of the faith community.

Conducting such a research without any funding budget, obligated reliance upon free or low cost analytical tools and software. The open source Topic Modeling Tool by Google and Voyant tool, were surprisingly powerful and effective in meeting the analytical rigor of this project. As free evaluative tools go—with some notable limitations—these applications were not only capable but also extremely user friendly and easy to navigate. For larger and weightier scholarly projects, 'for-purchase' level software and tools will most likely be necessary in order to mitigate much of the manual processes and subsequently time consumption. There was no noticeable inadequacies as it relates to these tools proficiencies in critiquing homiletic influence on sociocultural experiences as wielded through orality. This particular research subject matter— and those in this field of study—should have no concerns about these tools evaluative processes beyond its application's capacity. It is worth an honorable mention that the Tableau Public application—although more germane to data visualization—falls within this category of free yet effective. The learning curve was bit steeper than the others, and it too has its limitations. Nevertheless, overall it is an efficient tool advantageous for scholarly work of this ilk.

The review of transcription methodologies and linguistic algorithms for converting audio to text is not as glowing as it was previously for the analytical tools. The extremely high labor intensity for transcribing only twenty-two sermon texts, leads to the extrapolated conclusion that a more voluminous collection would be overwhelming for single researcher—and perhaps even a

small team. The open source and trial version transcription software is quite inaccurate and furthermore, the editing and correction time would be better spent manually transcribing from the outset. Hiring a transcriptionist to convert the audio-to-text or edit a computer generated transcription, would be costly as well. Another problematic aspect of transcription is the high inaccuracy of scanning a print copy—such as from a book—into a digital file using OCR software. Again, the inefficiencies of these tools, software, and machines reduces the level of manual labor negligibly, if at all. The insufficiency of these tools to transcribe words accurately—whether ethic, slang, or proper English—appeared to be equal across the board. These factors raises the need for further consideration with regard to converting a massive number of sermons from audio-to-text or print-to digital. Along with considering the purchased software option, it would be worth exploring the potential of using crowd sourcing for transcription work. Additionally when calling for sermons, offer some kind of incentive for including a digital text transcription along with the audio/video file when submitting for archive and research.

This project have conclusively validated that sermonic fugues are present in this thematic collection of African-American homiletical responses to the 9/11 tragedy. Given its musico-literary linage and viability in evaluating homilies, further development of the sermonic fugue idea is merited in order to refine its scope and potential usefulness in homiletical analytics. Cultivating the notion of the sermonic fugue will be well partnered with the development of a manageable system for collecting, archiving, and preserving oratory sermons as this remains an unattended gap in African-American literature and homiletical studies. A collection of thematic sermons would be a considerable asset for any educational institution or organization that are invested in academic fields such as: rhetoric, homiletics, communications, and digital studies. An

important consideration for such an undertaking—particularly for era or event based themes—is that curators and managers of these projects adamantly seek to acquire the desired subject matter as close to the time of the event as possible. This current project revealed that the further away from that time the call for sermons occur, the more difficult it will be to retrieve or locate the requested homilies.

Finally, there is great opportunity for stronger cross-threading between DH and religious studies—especially African-American religious studies. These two fields of study are at a point where new territory can be explored and new terrains may be cultivated. The opportunity to expose DH in faith based institutions of higher learning will broaden interests in the field. Similarly, engaging DH with PBIs and HBCUs would undoubtedly help fill the need to set more African Americans down the STEM path. Overall, this project has accomplished the intent to move forward engagement in constructing thematic collections, conducting computational analytics, championing archival preservation, and continuing the accessibility to oratory homilies thus enabling further research, broader scholarship, and enriched pedagogy.

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Table 6: Vantages of the Americanism Sermonic Fugue

Category	Preacher	Statement
Anti-Americanism	Farrakhan	The wise of this world know that there is a law of cause and effect…Why is America in the spirit that she's in today? This is the effect, but the cause was on the 11th of September. But what is it that caused 19 so-called human beings to run planes into buildings, killing themselves and others, without a care for who they were killing—men, women, and children. Why do they hate America as they do? This is a valid question that demands from our president and our leaders a better answer.
Anti-Americanism	Farrakhan	These persons, so depraved, only wanted to bring death and destruction because of their hatred for the United States of America.
Anti-Americanism	Farrakhan	Some Palestinians danced in the streets, not because they have no feeling for American life. They danced because they wanted America to feel what they feel, what they have lived with.
Anti-Americanism	Farrakhan	If it is our foreign policy that has produced this danger and hatred toward America, as you go into such a war, we have to ask ourselves, what have we done to produce this? Not the American people, not the soldiers that are in the armed forces of America, but what have the policy makers of this country done to produce this?
Anti-Americanism	Farrakhan	I have gone all over this world preaching atonement, reconciliation, and responsibility, and into every nation into which I have gone, I have not found people hating the people of America. Whenever they speak disparagingly of this country, they speak of America's foreign policy, policies that are made that the American people know nothing about.

Anti-Americanism	Felder	"Why would terrorists want to do such things to America?" It is impossible to answer this question if the participants to the public discussion table are restricted to the majority racial group in America. The answers lie in the foreign policy of the United States, usually perceived in terms of the narrow self-interest of the majority culture.
Anti-Americanism	Jackson	I've gone to the Great 8 Nations Summit meetings where the industrial, powerful nations meet. And they leave on one accord and they take the big picture, the big eight. But you go to the nonaligned conference meeting where the majority of poor people in the world are and there's this angst toward our nation.
Anti-Americanism	Jakes	When Osama bin Laden, or whoever it was behind this treacherous act, sent those planes toward the World Trade Center, he didn't send them after black folks, he didn't send them after white folks, he didn't send them after Hispanics or Jews. He sent them after America.
Black Americanism	Booth	[Cornel West] said that maybe for the first time the world understands what it means to be a nigger in America. I believe him, but I didn't say it.
Black Americanism	Booth	Can I tell you why I believe America still lives and why God still has mercy on America? I believe God still has mercy on America because of black people. We know what it is to go through hell. We know what it is to go through a holocaust and survive. We know what it is to have jumbo jets hit us in our economic pockets, in our political pockets, and in every other pocket and still rise like a phoenix out of the ashes. I believe America is still alive because there are black people who know how to call on the name of God.

Black Americanism	Butts	I'm talking to a predominantly African American congregation. Don't tell us about terror! We know terror, Oh, yes, we know terror. And don't allow people to go off on some tangent about Islamic terrorism or militant terrorism from Islam. Oh, religion is not the cause of this! Let me tell you about the terror we know. We know the terror that was called the Christian Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.
Black Americanism	Butts	There's too much hate between blacks and whites. Too much hate between Christians and Jews. Too much hate right here in America between those who are different. There's pain, I tell you!
Black Americanism	Dyson	Don't get it twisted, see, because Negroes were clapping when O.J. got off. White America thought we had lost our minds. We ain't thought O.J. was innocent; we just didn't believe he was guilty. Because we have been trying to tell America for years: you can't mistreat people in an unjust system and expect us to celebrate the way in which you've hurt us.
Black Americanism	Farrakhan	I was born in this country in New York City, and though the pain that Black people have suffered in America has caused me to be angry with the country of my birth, however, in my maturation, I know that, with all of America's problems, she's the greatest nation on this earth.
Black Americanism	Felder	But, "Black and Blue Tuesday," September eleventh (9-11), changed all of the false security, and our nation suddenly found itself in a bona fide emergency of frightening proportions…In a sense, white America has been "niggerized," as Cornel West aptly put the matter on the Tom Joyner Morning Show.

Black Americanism	Felder	He [Cornel West], of course, was alluding to fact that the black masses in America live on a daily basis with the fear and existential angst that comes from being sociopolitical victims of the oppressive racial preference networks in America. "My country 'tis of thee…" Many of us African Americans are often rather intimidated, bullied, and made afraid' Yet, more than this, some of us are frightened for our native land that has so much potential for good and for becoming a stronger beacon of freedom in this unredeemed and merciless world!
Black Americanism	Felder	African Americans are, for example, the most frequent "scapegoat" (Leviticus 16) for the pain of other groups, even certain Arab communities. Despite this, the peculiar status of blacks in America as virtually "native aliens" (Genesis 15:13-14), this may well be the credential necessary for taking the New Testament and Christianity more seriously.
Black Americanism	Felder	Even the church struggled to clarify whether or not its ministry had any stomach for advocating social justice. Indeed, more often than not, the Euro-American church tended to participate in the backlash, domestic accommodations, and co-optations of the 1980s and 1990s. These became effective strategies to calm jitters within the majority culture while the nation returned to a mode of profitability.
Black Americanism	Felder	Instead of seeing its salvation or significance in televangelism, the black church must dust off the tradition of prophetic praxis on behalf of the masses of its people who still languish at the margins or beyond-in prisons, detention centers, and mental hospitals or as the homeless on the streets of America. Some black ministers talk/preach liberation, bur most preach and witness in the old narrow vein of Protestant evangelicalism.

Black Americanism	Felder	What better condition is there for understanding the power of God, the Holy Spirit, and the renouncing of bitterness over the shabby treatment that blacks have received in America for the larger good of establishing a reconciled, "beloved community"?
Black Americanism	Felder	Yet the deep pain and resentment from groups who routinely see themselves scapegoated, caricaturized, and disenfranchised cannot so easily be dismissed. Experience like the acquittals of police and hate groups who seem instinctively prone to shoot, brutalize, and intimidate blacks with impunity (as in the recent police acquittal in Cincinnati) highlight pervasive and subtle Western racial and cultural "preference networks." Our white brothers and sisters in America can ill afford to ignore or deny the deep injustices that persist in their relations with African Americans, Latinos, and people of color around the globe.
Black Americanism	Taylor	And people on the margins of this society-minority people-will be a part of helping this happen. W. E. B. Du Bois said back in the early part of the last century that there is "a two-ness" in being black in America, being in it and yet not quite of it, reaping its benefits yet feeling some of its stings of injustice. Minority people are now peculiarly and, I believe, providentially endowed by God to speak to the nation and say that pride brings ruin and that this country must look to reconciliation.
Celebrated Americanism	Butts	Oh, beloved, but now we realize, more than ever, how great it is to live in America.
Celebrated Americanism	Butts	Thank God for our Constitution and the resolve of all Americans to pull together for the sake of our nation.
Celebrated Americanism	Butts	What counts now is that we are all one in the greatest country in all the world, the United States of America. We appreciate it.

Celebrated Americanism	Butts	We've been through this before, America, and we'll get through it again. We're strong, we're smart…
Celebrated Americanism	Farrakhan	I know that, with all of America's problems, she's the greatest nation on this earth. And in spite of America's problems, America has the potential to become the greatest nation ever.
Celebrated Americanism	Farrakhan	Most of these immigrant Muslims came to serve America, and you can find them in hospitals, in colleges, in universities, in research laboratories, and they are aiding in all aspects of American technology and scientific progress. Surely they love the countries of their birth, but they greatly love their adopted country, the United States of America.
Celebrated Americanism	Jackson	I love America, and I have traveled this world telling the story about our great country.
Celebrated Americanism	Wills	The marvelous reality is that within the context of a just democracy this kind of open discourse in which ethical, theological, and political ideas are debated with hopes of creating an overlapping consensus, is encouraged. At our best, this is the kind of discourse that has set our nation apart from other less tolerable regimes, a dialogical process through which the public and its officials arrive at an understanding of what is in the best interest.
Celebrated/Censured Americanism	Dyson	So my point is, yes, we are American, but we've being telling America we've been American from the beginning. And if you're really American, you ought to tell the truth about America. Loving America doesn't mean uncritically celebrating everything she does.
Celebrated/Censured Americanism	Evans	You ought to be proud you are an American. You ought to feel good about being an American. Not good about everything America does, but you ought to feel good about being an American.

Celebrated/Censured Americanism	Farrakhan	As a citizen of this nation, I do not wish to see harm come to her, so, I must lift up my voice and cry out, not just as one crying in the wilderness, but as one out of love who wants to see this nation avoid the pitfalls that have destroyed the great nations of the past.
Censured Americanism	Adams	Somebody has shaken us up. Somebody has shaken up America. Somebody has awakened the world. Somebody has gotten our attention. Somebody has shattered our delusions of invincibility, invulnerability, and indestructibility.
Censured Americanism	Booth	There's something broken about the nation. We have lived with an arrogance that has given us a false sense of superiority. And we honestly believe-yes, we do, black and white, red and yellow-we believe here in America that we are better than other people. We believe that we are better than Africa, better than Europe, and better than Asia. We believe that there never has been and never will be again a nation like the United States of America.
Censured Americanism	Booth	No, America is not the cat's meow. America is not a bag of chips and a bowl of dip. We are a nation like anybody else with a history of faith. And every now and then, when you get too big for your britches, God has strange ways of humbling us.
Censured Americanism	Booth	How can God forgive us if there is not a willingness on our part to repent? And it might be that chickens have come home to roost in America. What's done in the dark will one day come to the light. The Bible puts it this way: "Whatsoever a man soweth." Let me rephrase that: Whatever a nation soweth that shall the nation also reap.

Censured Americanism	Booth	How many times have we heard folks singing "God Bless America" That must be a strange song to the ears of God. These people are asking me to bless them, and in their Constitution they wrote back in 1787 on the separation of church and state. Strange music to God's ear. They want me, God, to bless America and back in the '50s they decided that they wanted to take prayer out of the schools. God bless America! They don't even want their football players to call on my name before they play ball. They want God to bless America. Yes, we always want God to bless us in tragedy. But we don't care about God in prosperity, when everything is going well. When peace is within our walls, to hell with God!
Censured Americanism	Booth	Let me tell you the fundamental mistake that America has made. The height and epitome of her arrogance got to her, and we have made the erroneous assumption that, because we are great, we will always be great.
Censured Americanism	Bowman	The United States of America seldom suffers from being too quiet. Usually, the opposite is true. We can be loud not only in what we say but what we do. And loud folks are often not the best listeners, either to others or themselves.
Censured Americanism	Butts	And beloved, I'm telling you there's something wrong in the body of America. And the pain that we feel came as a result of the tragedy, and on that day the pain was so great that somebody had to call 911. It was an emergency, I tell you! There's something awry in our spirit. There's something wrong with us. You can't keep going without getting a wake-up call sometimes. And that wake-up call is telling us that if we're going to be an example to the world, we've got to learn first to start with ourselves. You can't point a finger at some other country or some other person, until we have first learned to love each other right here in America.

Censured Americanism	Dyson	American imperialism and colonialism is an old tradition. In fact, America trained bin Laden as part of the Afghanistan movement against the Soviet Union. The CIA, the Central Intelligence of America, trained him to do battle. Now he turns that weaponry on America. Don't hate the player, hate the game.
Censured Americanism	Dyson	And so, yes, we need to respond to terrorism, but we have to be responsible for the way in which we are a part of a nation that has hurt other people in the name of democracy. And we know we've been mad at America, too. And still be mad. Right?
Censured Americanism	Dyson	And maybe God is telling America that you've been worshiping your power too long. You've been worshiping your nuclear capability too long.
Censured Americanism	Farrakhan	Whenever a nation becomes great and powerful by God's Permission, as America has; whenever a nation becomes the undisputed ruler of the world, as America has, by Allah's Permission; when a nation becomes the only remaining superpower, having the power to destroy other nations and people by the tens of thousands and millions, as Allah has permitted America the power to do, and that nation then has a spiritual lapse and begins to sink into moral decline…
Censured Americanism	Farrakhan	A better foreign policy of America would defeat terrorism forever in the world.
Censured Americanism	Felder	Completely lacking was any real sense of national identity as more and more Americans fused their religiosity with the ideology of capitalism and nationalism. We became far less conscious of our identity as members in the global community than as members of a nation relying more and more on economic indicators, technology, and the police than on God.

Censured Americanism	Felder	Americans all are guilty or all are innocent, when perceptions of injustice and violence proceed as matters of national policy.
Censured Americanism	Ford	Proverbs 16:18 says that "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling." This prideful nation felt that no one could touch us. But then God lifted His hand of protection this week long enough to humble us.
Censured Americanism	Thomas. W	A columnist some years ago, James Kilpatrick, spoke it best, "America does not have friends; it has interests." America does not have friends, just interests.

Table 7: References to Martin Luther King, Jr.

Preacher	Statement
Booth	Now we know what Martin King felt when out of nowhere comes an element of destruction and turns our world upside down.
Dyson	If Martin Luther King Jr. said "I love America enough to tell her the truth," and the truth is we've been wrong, then we've got to deal with that as well.
Dyson	That's why when you listen to most of these preachers, if you wake up and turn on the TV, Martin Luther King couldn't get up in their church.
Dyson	Martin Luther King with his prophetic gospel saying what thus said the Lord.
Dyson	Now King wasn't perfect, but King was powerful and prophetic and said the truth and bore witness to the truth of God.
Felder	This is precisely what made the public prophetic witness of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. so singular.
Felder	Are we not making a mockery out of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday that celebrates the power of nonviolence?
McKenzie	We remember what we were doing the day the news came from Tennessee that Martin Luther King Jr. was shot and killed on the balcony of the Lorraine Hotel.
Taylor	I used to argue with Dr. King about this.
Thomas. F	Martin Luther King Jr. died in Memphis from an assassin's bullet.
Thomas. W	When Martin King died, we noted.
Watley	Martin Luther King said it right in 1967, one year to the date before his death, when he stood up in the Riverside Church in his "Time to Break Silence" speech and came out against the war in Vietnam.
Wills	Recognizing the brevity of this essay and the length to which we could compare and contrast concepts of justice, I shall narrow my definition of justice to that of Martin Luther King Jr.'s because of his universal acclaim as an advocate of justice and peace and the experiential similarities that exist between the context out of which he wrote and that out of which we currently write and reflect.

Wills	King, as in the case of Paul Tillich, essentially affirmed that, "creative justice is the form of reuniting love," the instrument that love assumes in reuniting that which is separated and estranged.
Wills	In this regard, King saw the affirmation of justice as that which was wholly compatible and entirely in harmony with the principles of God's love.
Wills	In this sense King's concept of justice represented love's (agape) attempt to reunite the disconnected elements of life into a harmonious whole and thus hasten the realization of a Beloved Community.
Wills	As did King, I say that there is a reality beyond annihilation and retaliation that merits our serious consideration, namely the way of reconciliation!
Wills	Short of this mutual regard, dialogue is reduced to provincial monologue so that ideas such as those put forth by King in the public square begin to sound foreign, is ignored by removing it from the circles of serious discourse and relegating it to the fringe, or worse yet is severely criticized and threatened for failing to comply with the larger populace.
Wills	Despite the militant call to retaliation during his day, King insisted upon reconciliation as the normative road toward justice.
Wills	Much more than the eloquent theorist, King became a practitioner of peace and an ambassador of nonviolence.
Wills	One can scarcely imagine how King and other Americans of African descent, along with others of good will from every race and creed, lived with the daily dread and fear that must have exceeded that of our current experience.
Wills	And it was in this confidence that King's ethical conviction remained intact and undeterred.
Wills	Martin Luther King Jr. conceived an ethic that pursued justice via the ways of reconciliation, not revenge.
Wills	On December 10, 1964 Martin Luther King Jr. traveled with family and close associates to Oslo, Norway, to accept the Nobel Peace Prize.
Wills	Beyond whining bullets, mortar bursts, and blood-stained streets, King envisioned the ushering in of a day that would be safeguarded by an equitable distribution of food, the provision of cultural and educational excellence, and a far greater realization of global freedom and human dignity.
Wills	Resolute in his conviction, King stated his refusal to accept the idea of thermonuclear destruction as an inevitable reality.

Wright	To quote Dr, Martin Luther King Jr., "The African in exile took Jeremiah's question mark and streamed it out into an exclamation point.