SLAVE TRADE AND SENTIMENT IN ANTEBELLUM VIRGINIA

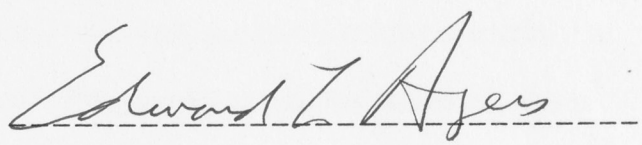
Phillip Davis Troutman
LaFollette, Tennessee

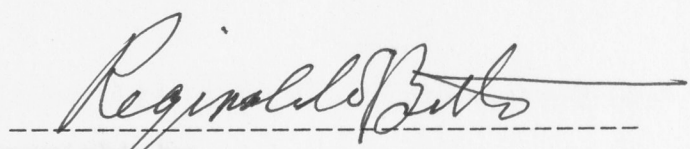
B.A., University of Tennessee, 1991
M.A., University of Virginia, 1993

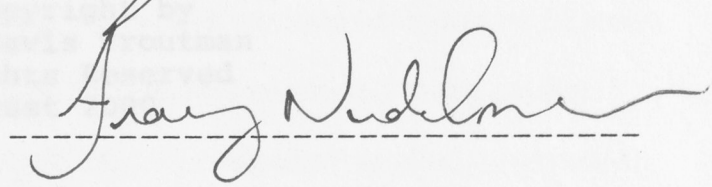
A Dissertation Presented to
the Graduate Faculty of the University of Virginia
in Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

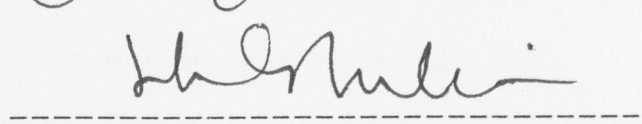
Department of History

University of Virginia
August 2000









© Copyright by
Phillip Davis Troutman
All Rights Reserved
August 2000

Slave Trade and Sentiment in Antebellum Virginia

Abstract

The slave market lay at the crossroads of antebellum southern thought and practice. It exposed the contradictory impulses arising from market-crop production, patriarchal labor relations, sentimental notions of family, and the designation of enslaved African-Americans as moveable property. Dislocating hundreds of thousands and breaking countless family bonds, it intersected two key trends of modernization in antebellum American history: mass migration and domestic sentimentality.

The domestic slave market comprised the geographic network across which traders and other slaveholders moved information, money, and enslaved people. It reenacted the "social death" of the African slave trade, this time breaking up the families on which American slavery had been built.

Sentimentality constituted a language of grief, of embarkation, of distance. As such, it found selective use among the many people working variously to understand, avoid, denounce, deny, or reconnect across the domestic slave market.

Paternalistic slaveholders articulated a sentimental ideal resonant with that of northern domestic reformers. Both envisioned households ruled by affection and moral suasion, yet both remained inextricably entangled in the market revolution they sought to evade or obscure. Slaveholders applied sentiment in coming to grips with their inability to master the market world they had embraced. They aimed their sentiment at slaves, but always turned it back on

themselves, validating their own self-image, whatever their participation in the slave market might be. Abolitionists' sentimental critique fixated on the auction block, which embodied the commodification they feared in American society. By portraying slaves as commodities, however, antislavery artists themselves commodified African Americans, rendering them sentimental icons rather than individuals.

Sold or carried away, the few literate people in slavery deployed sentiment selectively to implicate slaveholders in the grapevine by which they hoped to get word back to family. Paternalistic sentiment, far from representing the antithesis of the slave market, may have found its fullest use for slaves in negotiating the effects of masters' market decisions. For African Americans autobiographers, sentimental language seemed suitable, yet they struggled to make it relevant. Quite often, sentimentalism failed them, incapable as it was of fully suturing the emotional ruptures suffered in the slave market. Only in the twentieth century did aged African Americans reject sentimentalism, invoking in more brutal terms the inhumanities done in the days of the domestic slave market.

Slave Trade and Sentiment in Antebellum Virginia

Phillip Davis Troutman

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	vi
Introduction: 'Virginia is the Mother of Slavery'	1
1: The World the Slave Traders Made	18
2: Calculation, Sentiment, and Honor among Slaveholders	116
3: Enslaved Correspondence	196
4: Maps to the Self	244
5: Abolitionist Moral Geography	321
Epilogue: Storied Landscape	400
Appendices	
1: Maps	415
2: Graphs	419
3: Tables	420
4: Abolitionist Images	425
Bibliography	451

Acknowledgements

I have been the beneficiary of generous funding in the course of this study, including a doctoral fellowship from the Carter G. Woodson Institute for Afro-American and African Studies; fellowship and research funds from the University of Virginia's Southern History Program; a Kate B. and Hall J. Peterson fellowship at the American Antiquarian Society; and an Alfred D. Chandler Travel Award, Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration.

Archivists have proved enormously helpful in sharing their knowledge of collection materials. Research at the American Antiquarian Society is a particularly rewarding experience. I am also grateful to the helpful archivists at Alderman Library, University of Virginia; Baker Library and Houghton Library, Harvard University; the Chicago Historical Society; the Library of Virginia; the New York Historical Society; the New York Public Library and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture; Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; and the Virginia Historical Society.

My dissertation advisor, Edward Ayers, and readers Reginald Butler, Joseph Miller, and Franny Nudelman each provided stimulating criticism which continues to shape my revisions of the work. I am grateful to them and to members of the Southern Seminar and Woodson Institute Seminar who read my work with care.

My parents have always supported my studies. They will be happy to see this "paper" is finally completed. Finally, Wei Li has given me her support in more ways than she can know. Thank you.

Introduction

"Virginia was the mother of slavery," declared freedman Louis Hughes. In his 1897 autobiography, he described how a Mississippi buyer had picked him on the logic that "Virginia always produces good darkies." An aged ex-Confederate likewise understood Virginia's reproductive role in slavery's nineteenth-century expansion. He told historian Frederick Bancroft that the state had served as "a nursery of slavery." Picking up on slaveholders' own term for slave women of child-bearing age, antebellum abolitionists had labeled Virginia a "breeder" state.[1]

These evocative metaphors of Virginia's role in the domestic slave trade spoke to a quantifiable reality. Of the 1.1 million enslaved African Americans forced to quit the eastern seaboard and upper-south states between 1790 and 1860, over half a million (45 percent) came from Virginia. Many of these enslaved people traveled with moving planters, but at least half were carried south in the domestic slave trade.[2]

---

[1]Louis Hughes, Thirty Years a Slave: From Bondage to Freedom (1897; repr. in "Documenting the American South," http://metalab.unc.edu/docsouth/), 11. Bancroft does not date the conversation and identifies the man only as "a Confederate general of cavalry," in Slave Trading in the Old South (1931; repr., Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1996), 90.

[2]It is worth noting that the domestic slave trade equalled or even exceeded the African and Caribbean slave trade to British North America. Michael Tadman deploys three distinct methods to arrive at his estimate of traders' share of the enslaved migration at between 60 and 80 percent. Jonathan Pritchett's regression analysis placed the ratio at about 50 percent, with a wide margin of error. In any case, historians have soundly refuted Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman's low estimate of 17 percent. Michael Tadman, Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 22-41. Jonathan Pritchett, "Quantitative Estimates of the United States Interregional Slave Trade, 1820-1860," paper presented to the Social Science History Association annual meeting, 21 November 1998; my thanks to Jonathan Pritchett for a copy of this paper. Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery (1974; repr.,

That so many contemporaries would choose terms of motherhood to describe Virginia's role in the domestic slave trade was no coincidence. Virginia had already been dubbed the "mother of the nation" and the "mother of Presidents." As the mother of slavery, "she" also gave birth to a domestic slave population, born in America and enslaved at birth. Tellingly, this metaphor of mass migration as "motherhood" took its power, sometimes ironically, from the prevalent nineteenth-century language of sentimental domesticity, which venerated the affectionate bonds of motherhood. If Virginia mothered the nation's domestic slave population, then she also broke the domestic bonds of African American mothers themselves.

The domestic slave market lay at the crossroads of antebellum southern thought and practice. It exposed the contradictory impulses arising from market-crop production, patriarchal labor relations, sentimental notions of family, and the designation of enslaved African-Americans as chattel: moveable property. It embodied two key trends of modernization in antebellum American history: mass migration and sentimental domesticity. Yet in the historiography of North American slavery, the internal slave trade has remained outside the mainstream. General studies of slavery have illuminated master-slave relations and facets of slave community but frequently presuppose a bounded and somewhat static space in which these relations developed, a space

---

New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), 47-49.

the domestic slave market in fact permeated.[3] Quantitative historians have demonstrated the ubiquity and sheer enormity of the slave market but have not explored in similar depth the trade's impact on life in southern slave society.[4]

Moreover, historians frequently have assumed that the enslaved South was not a "modernizing" society. In a South variously (and not necessarily incorrectly) characterized as agrarian, patriarchal, paternalistic, preindustrial, noncapitalist, anti-bourgeois, hierarchical, oligarchical, and non-market-revolutionary, mass mobility and domestic sentimentality have seemed anathema. Both of these were key components of American "modernization" through the market revolution, and both of them were intersected by the

---

[3]U. B. Phillips minimized the importance of the slave trade and contained its discussion to one chapter of his 1918 book. In rebuttal, Frederick Bancroft dedicated an entire book to the subject in 1831. Kenneth Stampp, in his affirmation of Bancroft's view, still treated the slave trade in a self-contained chapter. Eugene Genovese revised and complicated Phillips's paternalism thesis, but discussed slave sale far less thoroughly than even Phillips had, dedicating only half a dozen pages to the subject. U. B. Phillips, American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime 1918 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1966), ch. 11. Bancroft, Slave Trading. Kenneth M. Stampp, The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South (1956; repr., New York: Vintage Books, n.d.). Eugene D. Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made (1972; repr., New York: Vintage Books, 1976); his references to the domestic slave trade are mostly limited to the following pages: 125, 332, 372, 416-417, 419, 452-453, 471, 485, 625. Other historians, however, have begun to integrate the slave market into their interpretations of slavery by focusing on families. Deborah Gray White, Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985). Brenda E. Stevenson, Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996). Ann Patton Malone, Sweet Chariot: Slave Family and Household Structure in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1992).

[4]Michael Tadman's Speculators and Slaves is the most sophisticated and extensive case in point. His ongoing quantitative work seriously undermines Eugene Genovese's theory of paternalistic hegemony, but it does not reexamine thoroughly the slave trade's implications for African American life. Walter Johnson delves far more deeply into the interpersonal complexities of the marketplace, reinterpreting "paternalism" and master-slave relations in the process. See "Masters and Slaves in the Market of Slavery and the New Orleans Trade, 1804-1864," Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1995; and Soul By Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

domestic slave trade.[5]

The rise of the domestic slave trade in the nineteenth century comprised a key engine of the market revolution, undergirding the massive expansion of cotton and sugar production, an economic transformation itself indissolubly linked to mechanization and middle-class consumption patterns in the northern United States and in Great Britain.[6] Adherents of the northern ideology of domesticity and the southern ideology of paternalism used sentimental language variously to criticize, deny, blunt, or obscure the market's impact on family life, both black and white. That same sentimentalism could even help some enslaved African Americans express the same sense of loss that migration imposed upon free Americans who had moved by choice.

The market revolution entailed geographic, social, and ideological dislocations across the country.[7] Some effects were obvious to those who would see them: market-driven migration threatened southern black families far more broadly and profoundly than did the industrializing forces feared by domestic

---

[5]Again, see Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll. See also Douglas R. Egerton, "Markets without a Market Revolution: Southern Planters and Capitalism," Journal of the Early Republic 16 (Summer 1996): 207-221.

[6]Harry L. Watson is one of the few to acknowledge the slave trade as a key component of market revolution. See "Slavery and Development in a Dual Economy: The South and the Market Revolution," in The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880, eds. Melvin Stokes and Stephen Conway, 43-73.

[7]Charles Sellers, The Market Revolution : Jacksonian America 1815-1846 (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992).

reformers in the North.[8] Slaveholding planters and slave traders dissolved up to a third of enslaved African Americans' marriages in the upper South. An enslaved child living in the upper South in 1820 would stand a 30 percent chance of being sold south by 1860.[9] The market revolution's impact was felt in more subtle and ironic ways as well. The elaboration and promulgation of agrarian paternalism, for example, depended in part upon transplanted proslavery evangelicals from the North and on an expanding commercial books and periodicals market both north and south.[10] Furthermore, paternalistic reformers in the South mirrored the sentiments of domestic reformers in the North, working to direct the impact their market had on their households.[11]

The domestic slave trade's "domestic" peculiarity held multiple connotations, encapsulating the themes of this dissertation: geography,

---

[8]Of course, white southern families also felt the stresses of market expansion and migration to the southwest. See Joan E. Cashin, A Family Venture: Men and Women on the Southern Frontier (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1994).

[9]Tadman, Speculators, 45, 147, 170-171, 296-302.

[10]On the key role of the book market in airing proslavery views, see Jeffrey Young, "Domesticating Slavery: The Ideological Formation of the Master Class in the Deep South from Colonization to 1837," Ph.D. diss., Emory Univ., 1996; and Domesticating Slavery : The Master Class in Georgia and South Carolina. 1670-1837 (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1999). Larry Tise exposes proslavery's northern evangelical roots in The Proslavery Argument: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701-1840 (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1987). No one has illuminated proslavery's biting critique of industrial capitalism more effectively than Eugene Genovese, in Slaveholders' Dilemma: Freedom and Progress in Southern Conservative Thought, 1820-1860 (Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1992).

[11]Marian Yeates calls this process the "justification"of slaveholder ideology with the new market world they participated in. Theirs was an effort to direct and control the market's impact, rather than to avoid the market world altogether. Marian Yeates, "Domesticating Slavery: Patterns of Cultural Rationalization in the Antebellum South, 1820-1860," Ph.D. diss., Indiana Univ., 1996.

mobility, and sentimentality. The slave market comprised the geographic network across which slaveholders rather efficiently moved information, money, and enslaved people within the United States. The qualifying adjective "domestic" distinguished the interstate trade from the Atlantic or "foreign" slave trade but also implied the connections and analogies between the two slave trades. The 1808 legal closing of the Atlantic trade helped spur the interstate trade.[12] Planters moving to the new western and southwestern states would thereafter have to purchase slaves from within the United States. The domestic slave trade resembled the Atlantic trade in its jails, chained coffles, slave ships, and auction blocks. But it departed somewhat from the Atlantic trade in its market-revolutionary appearance, as traders expanded their newspaper advertising, employed steam power, extended the cash economy, and profited from the conveniences of interstate banking. It also did away with the Atlantic trade's high death rates and preponderance of male transportees. Young women and men were the new stock in trade, as slaveholders sought to replicate in the new South something of the old, starting with the building blocks of slave family life.[13]

---

[12]Allan Kulikoff, "Uprooted Peoples: Black Migrants in the Age of the American Revolution, 1790-1820," in Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution, eds. Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1983), 143-171. Steven Deyle, "Irony of Liberty: The Origins of the Domestic Slave Trade," Journal of the Early Republic 12 (1992): 329-337. Adam Rothman, "The Domestication of the Slave Trade in the United States," paper delivered at the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery and Abolition at Yale University, October 1999. My thanks to Robert Forbes for providing me with a draft copy of this paper.

[13]On sex ratios, Louisiana sugar planters proved the exception by preferring more males than females. See Tadman, Speculators, 23-31; and Herman Freudenberger and Jonathan B. Pritchett, "The Domestic United States Slave Trade: New Evidence," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 21 (Winter 1991): 451-452. Traders even played to domestic or

Slavery in the United States had been sustained on slave families, in fact. Alone among New World slave societies to allow for the natural reproduction of the slave population, British North America had seen the rise of an enslaved African-American populace "domestic" in two ways. These enslaved people were Americans, not Africans, and in the eyes of buyers and dealers, they required no "seasoning" or "breaking in." Traders in New Orleans lauded their slaves' domestic, American quality, proudly advertising "Virginia negroes for sale."

More importantly, by the time the mass migrations of the domestic slave trade began, African Americans had built up familial relations of generational depth and geographic breadth. In the eighteenth century, sale, bequeathal, hire, and migration within Virginia had led Africans and African Americans to build extensive interplantation networks of kin and friends. By the late antebellum period, up to two thirds of slaves' marriages took place between spouses held on different plantations.[14] African Americans had always been forced to build into their family relations the notion of short-term and short-distance separations.

---

paternalistic interests of buyers; see Steven Deyle, "Competing Ideologies in the Old South: Capitalism, Paternalism, and the Domestic Slave Trade," paper presented to the American Historical Association Annual Meeting, 10 January 1999.

[14]On the origins and extension of African-American kinship patterns in Virginia, see Alan Kulikoff, Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800 (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1986), ch. 8. On interplantation marriages, see Herbert G. Gutman, Slavery and the Numbers Game: A Critique of *Time on the Cross* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1975), 104-107. Emily West, "Surviving Separation: Cross-Plantation Marriages and the Slave Trade in Antebellum South Carolina," Journal of Family History 24 (April 1999): 212-231; and "The Debate on the Strength of Slave Families: South Carolina and the Importance of Cross-Plantation Marriages," Journal of American Studies 33 (Aug. 1999): 221-241. For further discussion of the literature on African-American family, see below, ch. 3.

The new, domestic slave trade in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, however, threatened American-born slaves with social death, the permanent, long-distance removal from all previous ties of kinship and community.[15]

The term "domestic slave trade" also connoted that market's entwining with white southern domesticity, a trend in the sentimentalization of southern home life surprisingly resonant with that of the North. The slaveholding gentry in the late eighteenth century began reshaping notions of family, emphasizing love and affection over patriarchy and pecuniary interests.[16] This movement coincided significantly with a process Willie Lee Rose has christened the "domestication" of "the domestic institution." Slaveholders acted to ameliorate conditions, meanwhile reimagining the master-slave relationship as "family"--that is, as the newly sentimentalized family. In the nineteenth century, northern reformers fashioned an ideology of "domesticity," imagining the home as a feminized haven from the heartless market world changing all about them. By the late antebellum period, proslavery apologists asserted that slavery, too, rested on reciprocal bonds of affection and duty rather than patriarchal authority or the chattel principle, in short, on sentiment rather than the market.[17]

Adherents of this paternalistic domestic ideology drew their inspiration from the same source as their northern counterparts: a sense that mass

---

[15]Orlando Patterson, Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1990).

[16]Few historians have addressed southern domesticity as such; see ch. 3 below.

[17]Willie Lee Rose provides this fundamental insight in her 1973 lecture, "The Domestication of Domestic Slavery," published in Slavery and Freedom, ed. William W. Freehling (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), 18-36.

migration and commercialization were threatening an ideal way of life they had only begun to articulate. The influence of these domestic ideals was not pervasive, but it was widespread. The great expansion of the nineteenth-century American slave market may have heightened even African Americans' willingness to participate in the new language of domestic sentiment in describing their relations to each other and even to some slaveholders as well.

Sentiment constituted a language of grief. Its vocabulary gave voice to people's understandings of embarkation, of parting, of death. The sentimentalization of family rested on the fact that family members could be and frequently were in fact lost to death and migration.[18] It was no coincidence, therefore, that sentimental domesticity arose alongside the domestic slave trade.

In an age of mass migration, people employed sentimental language selectively to negotiate distance, especially geographic distance but also temporal and social distance.[19] The nostalgic image of the "old home place," for example,

---

[18]Nicholas Marshall, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of California, Davis, is currently writing a dissertation on the connection between sentimentalism, migration, and death in the antebellum North.

[19]Sentimentalism had its roots in what David Brion Davis calls "the ethic of benevolence," in which the "man of sensibility needed to objectify his virtue by relieving the sufferings of innocent victims." Since this feeling for others reflected inevitably back on the self, sentimental language frequently reified the social boundaries it aimed to cross, as in the case with abolitionists and other middle-class reformers. Davis, The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823 (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975), 45-46. For the most recent debate over this aspect of Davis's work, see Thomas L. Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility" in The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation, ed. Thomas Bender (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press), chs. 4, 5. For the most recent investigations into sentimental language's negotiation of social distance, see Laura Wexler, "Tender Violence: Literary Eavesdropping, Domestic Fiction, and Educational Reform," in The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America, ed. Shirley Samuels (New York: Oxford UP 1992), 9-17; and Karen Sanchez-Eppler, "Bodily Bonds: The Intersecting Rhetorics of Feminism and Abolition," in Culture of Sentiment, ed. Samuels, 107, 110. Philip Fisher, Hard Facts: Setting and Form in

found its power precisely in the fact that it had been abandoned as the new American nation moved west. White family members north and south sentimentalized their relationships in the face of losses to migration, social dislocation, and death.

Slaveholders turned selectively to sentimental paternalism, projecting onto slavery a sense of domestic order made impossible by the slave market in general and specifically by their own participation in it. Northern white abolitionists sentimentalized the African-American family in a different way, but they, too, were working to bridge the social and spacial gulf standing between themselves and people they sought to help. The few enslaved African Americans getting word back home after separation tended to sentimentalize not only their own lost kin, but their former masters and mistresses, as well. These white folks represented not only the old home place, but also critical access to living black family members still there.

This dissertation looks at the domestic slave trade through the lenses antebellum participants, observers, and survivors employed in perceiving it. People discussing slave sale outside the ledger books usually framed their analysis in the genres most thoroughly marked by sentimental language: personal letters and autobiographies. A woman or man taking the time and effort to record their personal reflections on slave sale was likely to employ the sentimental language emblematic of those expressive genres.

In that sense, the writers who populate this dissertation stood as tellingly exceptional individuals. Most slaveholders, wasting no sentiment on the

---

the American Novel (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985), ch. 2.

enslaved black laborers they worked, punished, bought, and sold, simply never felt the need to write about those people. Indeed, slaveholders only infrequently mentioned slaves outside account books and estate inventories.[20] A slaveholder who wrote anything of substance about African Americans was someone already participating in the sentimentalization of the black and white "family." These few verbose slaveholders were, however, drawing from and contributing to larger cultural trends. Their momentary run-ins with the emotional implications of the slave market illuminate the shifting and uncertain boundaries of slaveholder domesticity.

Similarly, the enslaved African Americans who managed to write letters or even autobiographies represented a decided minority. Not only did these people gain unique access to the skills of literacy, but those who wrote did so only because they had been forced to migrate recently, or in the case of autobiographers, rather frequently. Enslaved letter writers maintained emotional relations with current and former slaveholders, sentimentalizing those people in the process of passing the letter. The language of African Americans' correspondence owed much to their models: the white family's letters which they read or heard read aloud. Since many letter writers and autobiographers, white and black, took their cues from romantic and epistolary novels, sentimental language permeated their prose.

Yet, again, these African American exceptions illustrate far broader trends.

---

[20]Steven Stowe found very few references to slaves in slaveholders' private letters. Walter Johnson, by contrast, characterizes slaveholders' references to slave sales in New Orleans as abundant. Steven Stowe, Intimacy and Power in the Old South: Ritual in the Lives of Planters (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1987). Johnson, Soul by Soul, 13.

Letters which made it home and survive in archives today represent only the tip of the iceberg of the African American grapevine, a system of oral communications by which news could travel hundreds of miles by making the right connections. These connections included willing and unwilling white people, whose own networks of communication were tapped both overtly and surreptitiously by African Americans in slavery. This African-American geographic literacy helped some few people work to overcome the effects of forced migration in the slave market. But this geographic literacy was itself made necessary by the nature of chattel slavery in the United States. Property always implied mobility.

Thus, the domestic slave trade embodied the ironic thrust of American history: mass migration and sentimental domesticity. Sentimental approaches to family and to slavery arose together with the domestic slave trade, the continual destruction of family in slavery. Geography was key, since sentiment was a language aimed at negotiating distance. Each chapter that follows, therefore, is a sort of geography, an exploration of the ties of market and sentiment which bound Virginians to a larger world, one marked by continual separations in the domestic slave trade.

This dissertation studies the world those migrants were forced to leave and the means by which they described the process of forced embarkation. Taking cues from Ira Berlin's periodization of North American slavery, I see the people in this study representing the "market revolution generations."[21] As

---

[21]Berlin denotes the "charter generations" of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the "plantation generations" of the mid-eighteenth century, and the "revolutionary generations" of the late eighteenth century, distinguished by their experiences and

Herbert Gutman and others have shown, these American-born slaves were forced to participate in the endless cycle of family consolidation, dissolution, and separation. This process repeated itself over and again throughout the entire postrevolutionary and antebellum periods, as upper-south slaveholders' family fortunes rose, fell, and changed course, and as expanding numbers of cotton planters drew slaves inexorably south.[22]

I have organized the study thematically, following perspectives and experiences of the people involved in the domestic slave trade within and out of Virginia. Each chapter comprises a geography of the slave trade and sentiment, as seen through the expressive language of participants, both willful and unwilling. Chapters One lays out the world the slave traders made, the networks across which they transferred people, money, and information. It takes note of the ironic consequences of their market revolutionary behavior, embodied in slave traders' own sense of domesticity, which for at least two Richmond traders encompassed bi-racial families. Chapters Two and Three explore slaveholders' and enslaved people's affective worlds in the midst of the slave trade, focusing on letters written between and among them. Slaveholders'

---

expectations as slaves in North America. Ira Berlin, Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1998). Berlin has noted that the fourth cohort represents the generations of the cotton South and of Christianity; I would emphasize the forced migrations as central to their collective experience. Peter Wallenstein has picked out the fifth cohort as that of the emancipation generations: those raised with the expectation of never gaining freedom (as with the market revolution generations) but who did in fact experience this change in legal status and all it entailed. Ira Berlin, "American Slavery in Memory and History," Society of the Cincinnati Lecture, Virginia Tech, 26 April 2000; and personal conversations.

[22]Herbert G. Gutman, The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), 129-139; 138, table 19. Tadman, Speculators, 167-178. Malone, Sweet Chariot, esp. chs. 4, 5, 6.

letters embodied a confluence of honor, sentiment, and calculation. The issues surrounding slave sales were more important to slaveholders' own sense of self-esteem than to any concern for the enslaved families necessarily involved. For a tiny group of literate African Americans, however, letter writing provided a means to help form a sentimental bridge across the distances imposed on their families by their masters' market decisions. These letters represented the tip of the iceberg of communication, exemplifying how enslaved people could employ sentimental language to implicate slaveholders in the passage of information and emotion between enslaved family members.

Chapters Four and Five step away from the enslaved South to look at the slave trade from the perspectives of those outside it: freed African Americans and northern abolitionists. Chapter Four follows freed African Americans' reflective attempts to come to grips, through the means of autobiography, with the lives they had led amidst the slave trade through. These writers embraced the sentimental language of domesticity, stressing the fantasies and realities of family reunion. But they found sentimentality only imperfectly suited to their purposes, as they were trying to pull together family lives rent by the slave market. The forced dislocations made impossible any seamless piecing together in autobiography of family lives rent in the market. Chapter Five traces abolitionists' "moral geography." In graphic imagery, abolitionists' critique of slavery crystallized around the auction block because it represented so well the antithesis to their vision of domesticity, in which the home protected family members from the ravages of the market. They could not escape the market world in which they promulgated these sentimental images, however. In the

process of representing slaves as commodities, they tended towards their own commodification of African Americans as icons rather than as individuals.

Finally, the Epilogue provides a contrast to these nineteenth-century attempts to explain, denounce, or deny the slave market in sentimental language. In twentieth-century interviews, African Americans in Virginia approached the topic in terms quite unsentimental. Instead of waxing nostalgic on their emotional losses or masking them in Victorian obfuscation, these former slaves lashed out at the white men and women culpable for family separations in the slave market. In their own moral geography, the auction blocks stood not only in the past, but also in the present, their central locations inextricably linked to the Confederate monuments which had replaced them in every courthouse square.

Virginia is ripe for such a study of sentiment and the slave market, pregnant with associations of national and southern motherhood, with decadence and decay, and with a nostalgic sense of place. The agricultural decline which begot the domestic slave trade also prompted an exodus of white people from Virginia. This engendered a double sense of loss in those left behind. Virginia was being bypassed by national economic progress and forsaken by her sons and daughters, who scattered across the new republic.[23] Virginia had was being eclipsed in both time and space, and Virginians spoke to this reality through sentimental language.

After emancipation, "Carry me back to Old Virginny" embodied white

---

[23]See Joan E. Cashin, "Landscape and Memory in Antebellum Virginia," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 102 (Oct. 1994): 478-500.

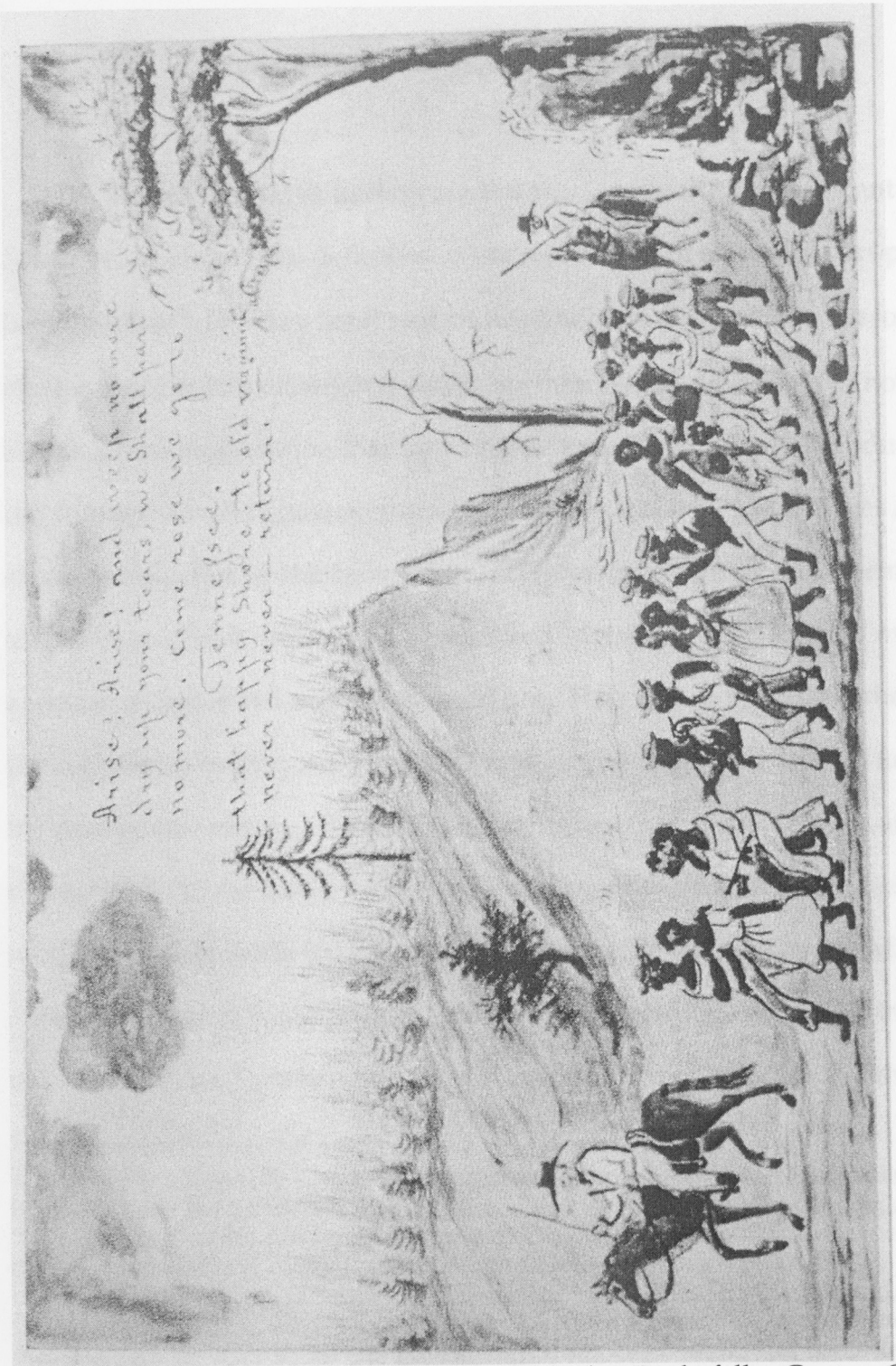
people's fantasies about northern black migrants' nostalgia for the old southern plantation, but antebellum usage twisted that sentiment perversely. Black migrants had not gone north, but south, and not by choice but by force. The African American men and women driven in a trader's march down the Shenandoah Valley in the 1850s surely invested their own meanings in the words the trader bade them to sing:

> Arise! Arise! and weep no more
>
> Dry your tears, we shall part no more,
>
> Come Rose we go to Tennessee, that happy shore,
>
> To old Virginia never, never return.[24]

Here African Americans' invocation of nostalgia spoke to their forced removal from their homeland, their masters' failure to live up to the dictates of paternalistic domesticity, and the trader's desire to mask the slave market with sentimentality. Only with sarcasm or deep irony could these people sing that they "shall part no more" or would "weep no more" or that Tennessee was indeed "that happy shore" to which they longed to go. They wept indeed for everything they left behind in "old Virginia."

---

[24]Lewis Miller, watercolor sketch, Abby Aldridge Rockefeller Center, Colonial Williamsburg, repr. in Robert L. Scribner, "Slave Gangs on the March," Virginia Cavalcade 3 (Autumn 1953), 11. Walter Johnson similarly notes the nostalgic geography through which African Americans interpreted the slave trade in such "coffle songs"; Soul by Soul, 43-44.



Lewis Miller, watercolor sketch, Abby Aldridge Rockefeller Center, Colonial Williamsburg, repr. In Robert L. Scribner, "Slave Gangs on the March," Virginia Cavalcade 3 (Fall 1953), 11.

Chapter One: The World the Slave Traders Made

Planters and slave traders made a market revolution in the antebellum South by seizing on the definition of slaves as chattel: moveable property and liquid capital.[1] This key legal tool allowed holders of that capital to force the elasticity of the labor market in ways northern wage-payers could not do. Slaveholders might argue that they invested more in slaves than industrialists did in wage laborers, promoting an interdependence between slaves and slaveholders. But by the same token, slaveholders could dictate the movement of and even divest themselves of enslaved laborers through forced migration and sale, as industrial capitalists could not. They did so frequently throughout the eighteenth century, and slave traders helped make that process far easier in the nineteenth century. By combing the upper South for purchases, establishing nodes of sale in the lower south, and building a network to link these regional markets, traders made their impact felt broadly: of the 1.1 million African Americans forced to move west and south between 1790 and 1860, traders moved about half, perhaps far more. In some areas, traders may have

---

[1]The mobiilty of slave labor was key in tobacco and cotton plantation regions; see Ira Berlin and Philip Morgan, introduction to Cultivation and Culture: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1993), 8-9. On slavery in the market revolution, see Watson, Harry L. "Slavery and Development in a Dual Economy: The South and the Market Revolution," in The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880, eds. Melvin Stokes and Stephen Conway, 43-73; and Steven H. Deyle, "Competing Ideologies in the Old South: Capitalism, Paternalism, and the Domestic Slave Trade," paper presented to the American Historical Association Annual Meeting, 10 Jan. 1999; and "The Domestic Slave Trade in America," Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1995, 81-83. Few others have recognized the slave market as a key component of the southern (and national) market revolution. Douglas R. Egerton, for example, sees nothing revolutionary in the south's antebellum market; see "Markets without a Market Revolution: Southern Planters and Capitalism," Journal of the Early Republic 16 (Summer 1996): 207-221.

transported up to 80 percent of migrating slaves.[2]

Slave traders constructed a market web across which to transfer people, money, and information. Their economic revolution was somewhat obscured by the fact that so much of their traffic took place on foot. Nonetheless, slave traders pioneered the use of every market-revolutionary means at their disposal: bank loans, cash payments, newspaper advertising, and innovations in communication and transportation. Slave traders' networks connected supply hinterlands in rural Virginia to intermediary hubs like Lynchburg and Winchester and to export depots and entrepôts of Richmond and Alexandria.

The term "slave trader" in fact stood for any of a rather heterogenous group of associated occupations, each filling some niche, providing some crucial link in the market network. Local auctioneers served a local clientele, facilitating the transfer of enslaved capital and taking a small commission. Itinerant buyers, working independently or as agents for better capitalized men, roamed the

---

[2]For recent reviews of the quantitative literature, see Deyle, "Domestic Slave Trade," 252-279; and Thomas D. Russell, "Sale Day in Antebellum South Carolina: Slavery, Law, Economy, and Court-Supervised Sales," Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1993, 56-76. Michael Tadman deploys three different methods to arrive at his estimate of traders' share of the enslaved migration at between 60 and 80 percent. Jonathan Pritchett cautions against overly precise estimates, however; his own regression analysis puts the traders' share at "approximately" 50 percent, stressing a rather large margin of error in his calculation. In any case, the all-time low figure of 17 percent, forwarded by Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman, now appears unquestionably low. Michael Tadman, Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 22-41. Jonathan Pritchett, "Quantitative Estimates of the United States Interregional Slave Trade, 1820-1860," paper presented to the Social Science History Association annual meeting, 21 November 1998; my thanks to Jonathan Pritchett for a copy of this paper. ogel, Robert W., and Stanley L. Engerman. Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery (1974; repr., New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), 47-49. For the first round of criticism of Fogel and Engerman's low estimate, see Herbert G. Gutman, Slavery and the Numbers Game: A Critique of *Time on the Cross* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1975), 102-112; and Herbert Gutman and Richard Sutch, "The Slave Family: Protected Agent of Capitalist Masters or Victims of the Slave Trade?" in Paul A. David, et al., Reckoning with Slavery: A Critical Study in the Quantitative History of American Negro Slavery (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978), 94-133.

countryside scouting these and other rural market opportunities, including sales ordered by the court. Some took up local residence for periods of weeks or months during their buying seasons. Others resided permanently in rural market or courthouse towns, building their reputations and pursuing other lines of business as well. Those working for long-distance traders transferred their gangs either directly out of the state or via their employers' shipping firms, the largest of which operated out of Alexandria. Most buyers, however, forwarded their chattels to larger entrepôt markets, mainly in Richmond. There auctioneers and private jailers served to facilitate trade between a wide array of buyers and sellers, including local planters, long-distance traders, and deep-south planters on slave-buying trips.

These men took part in and helped shape a commercial and cultural world that stretched from the Chesapeake to the Gulf of Mexico and beyond. Theirs was a problem of overcoming distance, and their networks put them at the frontiers of economic risk and gain in the growing republic. Their broader world included the banking centers of New York and Philadelphia, where they helped finance their operations, and the Caribbean and Canadian soil where enslaved African Americans on rare occasions escaped their grasp. As cosmopolitan southerners, they also felt the influence of cultural trends percolating throughout maritime North America.

They embraced aspects of this culture both "southern" and "northern," responding to the impulses and pressures of the countervailing values of patriarchy and domesticity. Some traders practiced the world's oldest oppression, selling sex. By purchasing "white" African Americans in Virginia

and selling them in New Orleans, traders linked the biracial south of the mid Atlantic with a triracial Caribbean South. By wreaking their own depredations on enslaved women, slave traders exhibited a patriarchal prerogative long sanctioned by slaveholders.

By contrast, in their creation of a sentimentalized domestic sphere at home, some traders participated in the distinctively "modern" nineteenth-century reforms in family relations. These two trends met paradoxically in the households of at least two prominent Virginia slave traders who recognized and protected their own enslaved wives and children. By carving out a multi-hued domestic niche in the midst of the slave market, these two men highlighted the cosmopolitan and complicated nature of the "domestic" slave trade in Virginia. More broadly, these men represented the contradictory ways men of the market behaved in their own domestic spheres.

Forced migration had been a key characteristic of slavery in Virginia from at least the beginning of the eighteenth century, when planters began to import large numbers of enslaved Africans. Planters directing labor on rich tidewater soils moved slaves from farm to farm, deeded them to neighbors, and divided them among heirs. As colonists gained control of Indian lands in the piedmont, planters and slave importers responded to the opportunities they helped create. After mid-century, the center of Virginia's import trade shifted from the York River, central to the Chesapeake tidewater, to Bermuda's Hundred on the James River and on the cusp of the expanding southside piedmont market. Tidewater planters running out of room removed to the piedmont as well in the 1750s, 1760s, and 1770s, forcing the removal of between 20 and 30 percent of the

enslaved tidewater population over the course of three decades.[3] The cumulative alienating effect of this series of migrations may be seen in a 1770 notice for a man and woman who escaped from slavery. The advertiser noted that the couple had "several children, who are sold and dispersed through Culpeper, Frederick, and Augusta counties, to one of which, if they are not in Lancaster, I suspect they are gone."[4] African Americans had always been forced to reckon with these distances within Virginia. Post-revolutionary changes, however, imposed longer distances on slave families, and in this new era of market revolution, it would be commercial slave traders and distant planters who shaped the landscape of forced migration.

By the 1770s, Virginia planters' demand for enslaved African immigrants had abated. In fact, the revolutionary legislature prohibited further slave imports in 1778, having tried since the late colonial years to impose restrictive tariffs on the trade. Living conditions improved throughout the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, allowing Afro-Virginian creoles to augment their own population through procreation. At the same time, tidewater planters were abandoning depleted tobacco lands and converting to more soil-conserving

---

[3]Philip D. Morgan puts the figure at 20 percent (for the period 1755 to 1782) in "Slave Life in Piedmont Virginia," in Colonial Chesapeake Society, eds. Lois Creen Carr, Philip D. Morgan, and Jean B. Russo (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina, 1998), 435-437, incl. table 2. Allan Kulikoff puts this figure at "a third" of adult slaves, in Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800 (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1986), 342, 362; on migration to, within and out of tidewater neighborhoods, 320-321, 339-340, 359-364; on eighteenth-century tidewater and piedmont frontiers and migration more generally, 141-148; on slave importers' shift to Bermuda Hundred, 336.

[4]Virginia Gazette, 8 Nov. 1770, quoted in Deyle, "Domestic Slave Trade," 60. Deyle has used such advertisements to track early slave migration from Virginia to other states.

crops such as wheat and other grains. These cereal crops coincidentally required fewer workers to cultivate, so tidewater planters found themselves with greater numbers of enslaved laborers than they could profitably employ. Some Virginia leaders worked to prohibit more imports and even to encourage exports to other states.[5]

Continuing mid-eighteenth century trends, piedmont planters, consolidating former frontier areas south of the James River, absorbed some of the tidewater's labor glut. In the 1790s, nearly five thousand slaves were moved west and south within the boundaries of Virginia. More than half of these wound up in the southern piedmont, with the rest moving to southwestern

---

[5]Allan Kulikoff, "A 'Prolifik' People: Black Population Growth in the Chesapeake Colonies, 1700-1790," Southern Studies 16 (1977): 391-428. Decreases in mortality in late seventeenth-century Virginia had in fact helped make slavery profitable there in the first place. See Edmund S. Morgan, American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia (New York: Norton, 1975), 180-184, 298-301, 309. On crop diversification in the eighteenth century, see Kulikoff, Tobacco and Slaves, 120, 121, fig. 16. On Virginia's slave importation statutes, see W. E. B. DuBois, The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1738-1870 (orig. 1896; New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 12-15; and Robert McColley, Slavery and Jeffersonian Virginia, 2nd ed. (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1973), 163-164. During the revolutionary crisis,Virginia legislators had also called for boycotts of the Atlantic slave trade in order to hurt British merchants and thus the Crown's profits. See Woody Holton, Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1999), 90, 105. Closing off imports worked to protect domestic slave prices and force lower-South planters to purchase slaves from Virginia slaveholders. Closing the African slave trade in 1808 helped encourage the domestic slave trade. Steven H. Deyle, "Irony of Liberty: Origins of the Domestic Slave Trade," Journal of the Early Republic 12 (1992): 329-337. Paul Finkelman, Slavery and the Founders: Race and Liberty in the Age of Jefferson (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), 24-25. Robert McColley, Slavery and Jeffersonian Virginia (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1964), 165-170. Adam Rothman, "The Domestication of the Slave Trade in the United States," paper delivered at the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery and Abolition at Yale University, October 1999; my thanks to Robert Forbes for a copy of this paper. Some Virginia leaders cast their rhetoric against the slave trade in such a way as to be misinterpreted as standing against slavery itself. See Peter Wallenstein, "Flawed Keepers of the Flame: The Interpreters of George Mason," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 102 (April 1994): 229-260.

Virginia and into the Shenandoah Valley.[6] Again, these sales and migrations from county to county could prove quite disruptive. A sixteen-year-old girl jailed in piedmont Powhatan County recited her terse life history: she had been "raised by Wm. Gathright, of the county of Henrico [at the fall line], who sold her to Mr. Fulcher, the butcher, of Richmond, and by him sold to one Williamson, who sold her to one Webster, of Buckingham [in the central piedmont], who sold her to a Mr. John Cambell, of King and Queen county [in the northern tidewater], who left her at Lewis Fortine's, a free negro of this county; from which last place she eloped."[7] Piedmont slaveholders planting tobacco on more fertile soils could only relieve tidewater planters of so many surplus laborers, however. Far more planters moved or sold their slaves into new country outside the state.

By the 1790s Virginia was already a net exporter of enslaved people. Between 1790 and 1810, nearly 64,000 African-Americans were forced to leave the state, most of them coming from the tidewater. Planters in these exporting counties forced the embarkation of 18 percent of their enslaved population in the decade between 1790 and 1800, raising that rate to 21 percent for the decade 1800-1810, and topping 25 percent for 1810-1820. In other words, one in four slaves either living in the tidewater in 1810 or born in the following decade had

---

[6]These figures represent total net movements of slaves into "importing" Virginia counties in the 1790s. See below, Appendices 1, 2, 3. See full color versions in Geography of Family and Market, http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/slavetrade/. See also Richard S. Dunn, "Black Society in the Chesapeake, 1776-1810," in Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution, eds. Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983), 49-82.

[7]Richmond Enquirer, 21 May 1805, quoted in Deyle, "Domestic Slave Trade," 61.

been forced to leave by 1820.[8] Two-thirds of these migrants were re-settled to the west—first to Kentucky and then also to Tennessee—while the rest were moved south down the eastern seaboard to Georgia and the Carolinas.[9] The majority of enslaved migrants in these decades--perhaps up to two-thirds of them--traveled with migrating planters, and thus with several of their own kinspeople present.[10]

Other slaveholders, however, expanded their interests to include speculating on this new mass migration, breaking more slave families in the process. Two sons of William Preston, among the largest landholders in southwest Virginia, appear to have pioneered the domestic slave trade in that part of the state in the 1790s. John bought slaves on several occasions for planters in the area. William Preston Jr. wrote in 1801 that "the negro business thing is profitable but the risque is great." William was at the time contemplating the purchase of fifty people about to be sold nearby.[11] Traders

---

[8]As numbers of net migrants, these estimates in fact undercount migrants. They do not count, for example, people who moved from one net exporting county to another, or from one net importing county to another. They also do not count immigrants to a county offset by the same number of emigrants from that county. These numbers are based on the growth-rate method of estimating net migration. Rates of migration represent number moved as a percentage of the number who should have been in the area had no migration taken place, given natural rates of population growth. See below, Appendices 1, 2, 3.

[9]See below, Appendices 1, 2, 3.

[10]Allan Kulikoff, "Uprooted Peoples: Black Migrants in the Age of the American Revolution, 1790-1820," in Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution, eds. Berlin and Hoffman, 143-171; estimate of traders' proportion of the migration, 152.

[11]For example, Thomas Floyd to John Preston, 16 Sept. 1791; Edwin Burwell to John Preston, 7 Feb. 1798; Preston Family Papers, VHS. William Preston [Jr.] to James McDowell, 5 Dec. 1801, in Smithfield-Preston Foundation Papers,VT; my thanks to Benjamin Bristow for a copy of this document.

began scouting Virginia for the export trade to other states as well. A traveling Delaware Quaker wrote President John Adams in 1798 complaining of "the abominable Trade" he found on the eastern shore of the Chesapeake. "Negroe-Drovers," he informed the President, were buying "Drove after Drove," and "carrying them into the Southern States for Speculation."[12] Four years later, an Alexandria grand jury complained of "the practice of persons coming from distant parts of the United States into this District for the purpose of purchasing slaves."[13] Others observed the growing traffic without judgement. Thomas Jefferson observed to his son-in-law in 1803 that "negro purchasers from Georgia" were to be seen "passing about the state," and a traveler in Virginia in 1808 noted that "the Carolina slave dealers get frequent supplies from this state."[14]

A few traders began taking out advertisements in Virginia newspapers announcing their intent to purchase, emphasizing their willingness to pay cash, a practice followed by traders whenever possible thereafter.[15] An exceptionally

---

[12]Quoted in Deyle, "Irony of Liberty," 37.

[13]The Alexandria grand jury's complaint was lodged in 1802; it was reprinted in the Alexandria Phenix Gazette, 22 June 1827; quoted in Frederic Bancroft, Slave Trading in the Old South (1931; repr., Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1996), 23-24. The area now comprising Alexandria and Arlington County had been ceded to the federal District of Columbia in 1789 and was retroceded to Virginia in 1846.

[14]Both are quoted in Deyle, "Irony of Liberty," 61. On the early domestic slave trade generally, in addition to Deyle, see Tadman, Speculators, 12-21; and Bancroft, Slave Trading, 19-24.

[15]Bancroft quotes several examples of newspaper advertising from as early as 1810; see Slave Trading, 22, 24-25. Most traders did not use newspaper advertising heavily until the 1840s and 1850s.

early example is Moses Austin's 1787 advertisement in the Virginia Independent Chronicle, in which he sought one hundred "Harty and well made" slaves for shipment out of state.[16] A handful of apparently professional buyers were advertising in the Fredericksburg Virginia Herald in 1810, offering cash for groups of up to eighty slaves. Crump wanted them all "in families," while Buck thought having "a few families" would be "desirable," a qualification most traders avoided in later advertisements.[17] The slave trade remained relatively small in these years; its boom came with the more rapid expansion of the nineteenth century.

The Creek cessions forced after the Red Stick War and the War of 1812 set off an epidemic of "Alabama fever" among planters and smallholders hoping to strike it rich on cotton.[18] In fact, the forced removal of African Americans from Virginia was always predicated on the forced removal of Native Americans from western lands. The Ohio River Valley, having been resettled by Shawnee and others in the eighteenth century after sustained seventeenth-century Iroquois raiding, was once again depopulated through decades of struggle against Anglo-

---

[16]Quoted in Deyle, "Irony of Liberty," 59.

[17]Virginia Herald advertisements quoted in Bancroft, Slave Trading, 24; on the newspapers' role in the slave trade, see 133, 139-140, 238, 379-80. Bancroft makes ample use of traders' advertising throughout his work.

[18]Gregory Evans Dowd, A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1992), 189-190. Steven F. Miller, "Plantation Labor Organization and Slave Life on the Cotton Frontier: The Alabama-Mississippi Black Belt, 1815-1840," in Cultivation and Culture, eds. Berlin and Morgan, 155-169. Daniel H. Usner Jr., "Frontier Exchange and Cotton Production: The Slave Economy in Mississippi, 1790-1836," Slavery and Abolition 20 (April 1999): 24-37. Charles Sellers, The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America 1815-1846 (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992), 90-91. See also J. B. Sellers, Slavery in Alabama (Tuscaloosa: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1950), chs. 2, 5.

American settlers.[19] Throughout the early nineteenth century, federal and state pressure mounted for the voluntary removal of Cherokees from northern Georgia and Alabama. The Georgia legislature and President Andrew Jackson brought that crisis to its deadly conclusion, forcing one hundred thousand Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Seminole people from their lands, and thereby opening a vast southwestern territory to plantation agriculture.[20] Virginia's rate of forced migration generally followed the booms and busts of this new south, the cotton south. As cotton prices rose in the late 1810s, so did cotton prices, deep-south slave prices, Virginia slave prices, and therefore Virginia exports. In the wake of the Panic of 1819, cotton prices dropped, and so did slave prices and Virginia slave exports.[21]

While the vast majority of early slave emigrants from Virginia came from

---

[19]Stephen Aron, How the West Was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1996), 6-13, 35-53. Todd H. Barnett, "Virginians Moving West: The Early Evolution of Slavery in the Bluegrass," Filson Club Historical Quarterly 73 (July 1999): 221-248.

[20]Dowd, Spirited Resistance, 161-166. Joseph P. Reidy, "Obligation and Right: Patterns of Labor, Subsistence, and Exchange in the Cotton Belt of Georgia, 1790-1860," in Cultivation and Culture, eds. Berlin and Morgan, 138-140, 145. Charles S. Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi (1933; repr., Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1966), 164.

[21]In the 1820s (and again in the 1840s), wheat, corn, tobacco, and other farm product prices remained in a relatively low trough. Intuitively, this would have driven more slaveholders to sell, increasing exports. But the deep south, slave-importing states suffered more acutely from the depressions, curtailing cotton and sugar planters' ability to buy slaves. The depression also restricted Virginia slaveholders' financial ability to move southwest themselves, further slowing the emigration of slaves. For Virginia farm prices, see Arthur G. Peterson, Historical Study of Prices Received by Producers of Farm Products in Virginia, 1801-1927 (n.p.: Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station & the Bureau of Agricultural Economics of the United States Department of Agriculture, [1929]), and "Wheat and Corn Prices Received by Producers in Virginia, 1801-1928," Journal of Economic and Business History 2 (Feb. 1930): 382-391. For slave and cotton prices, see U. B. Phillips, American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime (1918; repr., Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1966), table following 370.

the over-cultivated tidewater, piedmont planters, too, began exporting enslaved African-Americans between 1800 and 1810, and those in the Shenandoah Valley were on the verge of doing the same. Only the trans-Allegheny and southwestern counties continued to see any net immigration of African-Americans into the 1810s and 1820s, but this trend soon ended. During the speculative boom of the 1830s, when New Orleans slave prices reached an all-time high, virtually every county in Virginia saw a net export of enslaved migrants. More than 120,000 enslaved African Americans were forced to leave the state. While tidewater slaveholders persisted in exporting a larger percentage of their enslaved population overall than the slaveholders of any other region (ranging between 18 and 28 percent per decade over the entire period) piedmont planters overtook the tidewater in actual numbers of enslaved emigrants by the 1830s. Over 55,000 enslaved men, women, and children from the piedmont, representing nearly a quarter of the region's enslaved population, were forced from their homes in that peak decade.[22]

The most successful slave-trading firm in antebellum Virginia seized on planters' changing labor needs and outfitted themselves with the most modern of marketing means, notably shipping and banking. The partnership of Isaac Franklin and John Armfield grew into the most extensive trading partnership in the United States through their innovative creation of a steam shipping line dedicated solely to the slave trade. The men had begun by shipping on others' vessels, including the schooners Lafayette and James Monroe, as well as the brigs

---

[22]See below, Appendices 1, 2, 3. For color versions, see Geography of Family and Market, http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/slavetrade/.

Orion and Ariel, and they continued doing so into the 1830s. Ship owners and captains happily carried slaves for whomever paid, and their seamanship was at a premium. Robert H. Banks, sometime captain of the brig Ariel out of Norfolk, was known to John Armfield as "a damned rascall." But, Armfield conceded, Banks had "good vessels." Traders Paul Pascal and Bernard Raux, working the Norfolk-New Orleans corridor, agreed on this latter score at least; they employed him intermittently between 1833 and 1835.[23]

Franklin and Armfield were not satisfied paying others these fees when they could invest that capital in their own ships. So, in 1828, they purchased the United States, a "fast sailing packet brig," the hold of which they refitted to hold up to one hundred enslaved passengers. They soon added the brigs Tribune and Uncas to their fleet, refitting them in similar manner. By 1834 they had commissioned a Baltimore shipbuilder to construct a fourth brig explicitly for the purpose. Armfield owned this last vessel, but it unabashedly bore the name of the firm's entrepreneurial senior partner, Isaac Franklin. With their own ships and trusted captains in their employ, Franklin and Armfield routinized the often chaotic sea trade. Soliciting shipments from other slaveholders and traders, they proudly advertised in Alexandria newspapers that one of their vessels would "leave this port every thirty days throughout the shipping season." Not only that, but with the latest innovations in engine power at their command, the vessels "will at all times go up the Mississippi by steam." With the addition of the Isaac Franklin to their fleet by the next year, they increased their regular trips

---

[23]John Armfield to R. C. Ballard, 24 Jan. 1832, Rice C. Ballard Papers, UNC. Bills of lading, Bernard Raux and Paul Pascal Papers, HU.

to every two weeks, with departures on the first and fifteenth of every month during the winter slave shipping season.[24]

The ships were fast. Arriving in New Orleans in about nineteen days instead of the seven or eight weeks required of the overland routes, the brigs and steamers allowed traders to respond more readily to subtle changes in demand or to provide particular kinds of slaves to particular buyers. Basic shipping costs could be more expensive, however, than using the overland routes. Pascal and Raux of Norfolk paid various shippers between $17 and $20 for each enslaved passenger they sent to New Orleans between 1833 and 1835, though they usually received a 50-percent discount for children under age ten. By contrast, James Mitchell, marching his coffle of 51 overland in 1834, expended just over $400 in tolls and provisions, about $8 per transportee. He may have been exceptionally parsimonious, however, and a traders' decision could be a toss-up as jail fees and illness compounded overland transportation costs. Traders also had to weigh for themselves the relative value of the time savings provided by steam ships. Even Franklin and Armfield continued to march large gangs of slaves overland. British abolitionists reported the firm marching caravans of one hundred fifty at a time.[25]

---

[24]Deyle has pointed to the innovative nature of this successful marketing scheme in "Domestic Slave Trade," 102-103. Wendell Holmes Stephenson, Isaac Franklin: Slave Trader and Planter of the Old South; with Plantation Records (University, La.: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1938), 35-38.

[25]Herman Freudenberger and Jonathan Pritchett determined that overland caravans cost traders' an average of $44.40 per slave (including transportation, jail time, food, and clothing) versus $46.40 if shipping costs along the coastal routes. See "The Domestic United States Slave Trade: New Evidence," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 21 (Winter 1991), 470-474. Shipping manifests, 1832-1834, Raux & Pascal Papers, HU. "Expense of Travelin with negros from Va. to Miss and Returning home Commenced the 18 of October 1834," James A. Mitchell

Long-distance traders traveling or communicating between their Chesapeake source territory and their Delta outlets also drew on banks to transfer funds more easily across the expanding United States. Northern banks funded many slave traders' ventures. Pascal and Raux, for example, wrote checks totalling over $13,000, drawing against accounts with the Philadelphia Branch of the United States Bank, the Commercial Bank of Pennsylvania, and a privately chartered bank in Philadelphia.[26] Rice Ballard took out four successive loans of $5,000 each in the fall of 1833, again from the Bank of Virginia.[27] From their base in Natchez, Isaac and James R. Franklin also kept Ballard--as well as John Armfield--sufficiently flush with funds by forwarding amounts up to $20,000 at a time variously through the Bank of Orleans, the Union Bank of Louisiana, the New York branch of the Bank of the United States, the Merchants Bank of New York, the Phenix Bank of New York, the Farmers and Mechanics Bank of Philadelphia, the Merchants Bank of Alexandria, Virginia, and a Nashville exchange house known as Yeatman, Woods & Co.[28] The market revolution in banking helped facilitate the slave trade, just as slave traders

---

Papers, 1836-54, DU, RASP. George W. Featherstonhaugh, Excursion through the Slave States, from Washington on the Potomac to the Frontier of Mexico (New York: Harper and Bros., 1944), 36. Ethan A. Andrews, Slavery and the Domestic Slave Trade in the United States (Boston: Light and Stearns, 1836), 135-143, quoted in A Documentary History of Slavery in North America, ed. Willie Lee Rose (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976), 137-141.

[26]Pascal & Raux Papers, [Accounts], HU.

[27]Ballard Papers, UNC.

[28]Isaac Franklin and James R. Franklin to Rice Ballard, 3, 11, 20 Dec. 1832; Isaac Franklin to Rice Ballard, 23 Feb. 1832; John Armfield to Rice Ballard, 32[?] July 1831, 21 Dec. 1832; James R. Franklin to Rice Ballard, 19 Feb. 1833; Account sheets, 1834; Ballard Papers, UNC.

participated fully in expanding the reach of that network of cash and banking credit.[29]

Depending so heavily on financial institutions and the national economy, even the best capitalized and most cunning traders were left vulnerable to the vagaries of economic and political forces acting on banking policy. They occasionally found themselves buffeted by state and national political economies over which they wielded little power. Normally, slave traders experienced few jurisdictional checks on the interstate flow of money and people. Although abolitionists in the 1830s and 1840s pressed Congress to invoke the commerce clause of the Constitution as a means to regulate or prohibit the domestic slave trade, the federal government never asserted any authority over it, with the exception of abolishing commercial slave sales within the District of Columbia in 1850.[30] Traders acted mainly on their own economic interests, of course, and curtailed their own actions only when the law required, and it seldom did. Only one state enacted any legal protection for enslaved family members in the trade, and that only for children under age ten. When the legislature of Louisiana acted

---

[29]Sellers, Market Revolution, 45-46.

[30]Congress could have claimed a precedent for asserting jurisdiction over the interstate slave trade; in abolishing the African slave trade, it had explicitly forbade ships of under forty tons from transporting slaves in the coastwise trade. Abolitionists, however, tended to abandon the Constitutional attack on the slave trade after the 1840s, aiming at slavery more broadly. See David L. Lightner, "The Door to the Slave Bastille: the Abolitionist Assault upon the Interstate Slave Trade, 1833-1839," Civil War History 23 (Sept. 1988): 235-252; and "The Interstate Slave Trade in Antislavery Politics [1840-1860]," Civil War History 36 (June 1990): 119-136. "An Act to prohibit the importation of slaves into any port or place within the jurisdiction of the United States," statute II (2 March 1807), ch. 22, sect. 8, 9, in The Public Statutes at Large of the United States of America from the Organization of the Government in 1789 to March 3, 1845, v. 2., Richard Peters, ed. (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1861), repr. in Exploring Amistad at Mystic Seaport, http://amistad.mysticseaport.org/.

in 1829 to prohibit the importation and sale of these children without their mothers, Franklin and Armfield seem to have complied, in fact reorienting their buying habits somewhat toward parent-child groups.[31]

States did, however, seek to protect their slaveholders, their economies, and their social order, and occasionally threw up obstacles to the interstate speculators. In Louisiana, the massive influx of unknown traders and their unknown chattels in the 1810s and 1820s spurred fears among legislators that planters there were only getting the most "vicious slaves" from other states. The state government prohibited the commercial importation of slaves between 1826 and 1828, forcing law-abiding planters to purchase their enslaved laborers out of state and import them personally. In 1829, the state government replaced its total ban with a voucher system. Traders were to submit certificates of character for all enslaved African Americans over age twelve brought into the

---

[31]Donald Sweig has found that in 1828-1829, before the law took effect, children ten and under had constituted 13 percent of Franklin & Armfield's seafaring slave trade; the law forced them to drop that number to zero for the remainder 1829. Where the firm had once advertised in newspapers to buy slaves "between the ages of 8 and 25 years," after the law's passage, they changed the text to read "from 12 to 25 years of age." Over the longer term, Franklin and Armfield kept the percentage of these "orphaned" slave children under 4 percent of their total shipments, while those in family groups started at 3 percent of totals before the law, ranged between 6 percent and 16 percent between 1831 and 1835, and peaked at 29 percent of totals in 1836. These "family" children in fact represented over half of all slaves shipped in family fragments, which were usually comprised a woman and one or two children. Sweig concludes that Franklin and Armfield were most likely responding to public pressure, situated as they were in close proximity to the nation's capital and open to inspection by abolitionist critics. Freudenberger and Pritchett, however, suggest that changes in costs swayed the traders more fundamentally than abolitionist opinion. The sharp rise in slave prices, they argue, took the edge off the advantage of transporting only prime-aged workers. Since transportation costs remained the same, the difference in profit to be gained from field hands versus mothers with children had been reduced. Therefore, the traders simply acted less "selectively," transporting relatively more dependent children than they had before. Donald M. Sweig, "Reassessing the Human Dimension of the Interstate Slave Trade," Prologue: the Journal of the National Archives 12 (Spring 1980), 12-16; 13, table 5; 20, appx. 1. Freudenberger and Pritchett, "Domestic U. S. Slave Trade: New Evidence," 454-458.

state. Mississippi had enacted similar legislation much earlier, first as a territory in 1808, then as a state in 1822.[32]

The certificates were an attempt on the state's part to minimize the risk of fraud and social disorder stemming from the long-distance market interaction. In that sense, they were in line with other forms of character description promulgated by this mobile American society. On the one hand, slave certificates of character resembled runaway advertisements, listing "the name, age, sex, and near as possible, the size, marks and color of said slave." On the other hand, however, they mimicked the kinds of letters of introduction which had long facilitated the social and geographic mobility of white men and some free men of color. These various certificates were to certify that the enslaved individual was of "good moral character," had "not been guilty of or convicted of murder, burglary or arson," and was "not in the habit of running away." The vouchers were to be signed by two freeholders who testified to having known the slave for "several" years. By formalizing such practices for the enslaved immigrant population, Mississippi and Louisiana hoped to forestall the dangers of introducing an unknown element into slave society. Violation of Louisiana's law carried a substantial penalty: fines up to $2,000 and up to one year in jail.[33]

Traders, of course, sought to get around the bothersome requirement.

---

[32]On the certificates of character, see Donald M. Sweig, "Northern Virginia Slavery: A Statistical and Demographic Investigation," Ph.D. diss., College of William and Mary, 1982, p. 231 n. Freudenberger and Pritchett, "Domestic U. S. Slave Trade: New Evidence," 448. Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi, 162. See also Bancroft, Slave Trading, ch. 9.

[33]Freudenberger and Pritchett, "Domestic U. S. Slave Trade: New Evidence," 448. Bacon Tait to N. Courier, 4 Oct. 1832, Raux and Pascal Papers, HU, quoted in Tadman, Speculators, 88-89.

Bacon Tait of Richmond advised Nathaniel Currier on how to skirt Mississippi's law by finding two acquaintances to vouch for dozens of slaves.[34] Many others, however, seem to have accommodated the inconvenience, evidenced by the 2,289 such certificates which survive. The law was little enforced in any case and remained on the books for less than two years.[35] Other events conspired to provoke state action which would interfere more seriously with slave traders' free market.

The slave revolt in Southampton County, Virginia, in August 1831 sent shock waves across the white south.[36] Deep-south legislators redoubled their efforts to protect their new states' economy and social order. Louisiana revived its ban on the slave trade that year and kept it in place until 1834. Alabama's legislature acted similarly. Mississippi's 1817 constitution had permitted the legislature to impose such a ban, but only in 1832 did representatives explicitly prohibit commercial slave importation, revising the constitution to do so. Traders and legislators alike often saw the insurrection as an excuse to pass legislation protecting the states' economies. Louisiana legislators' real purpose, Paul Pascal wrote his partner Bernard Raux, was "pour chasser de leur etat les persons qu'il suppose qui emporte beaucoup de leur argent"--to chase off the

---

[34]Bacon Tait to N. Courier, 4 Oct. 1832, Raux and Pascal Papers, HU, quoted in Tadman, Speculators, 88-89.

[35]Freudenberger and Pritchett, "Domestic U. S. Slave Trade: New Evidence," 449-450; Tadman, Speculators, 86.

[36]Scot French, "Remembering Nat Turner: The Rebellious Slave in American Thought, 1831 to the Present," Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, May 2000, ch. 1. Herbert Aptheker, American Negro Slave Revolts (1943; repr., New York: International Publishers, 1983), 311-312.

traders who were exporting too much Louisiana money.[37]

Whatever the purpose, the legislation seemed to bode ill for Isaac Franklin's firm. Economy, politics, and even disease seemed to conspire against the brothers' enterprise. James Franklin wrote Ballard in January 1832 that "the game is nearly blocked on us" in Natchez. On March 4th, however, he was somewhat more optimistic. "I should open my fancy stock of wool and ivory early in the morning," he wrote, though he did expect to sell for less than in New Orleans. Isaac had gone to Tennessee to sell, but later returned to New Orleans. In the fall of 1833, he lamented, "The negroes are coming down the river very fast and I am afraid it will be hard to sustain former Prices unless the Louisiana Law should be repeal[ed]." Even then, he did not think prices would go up much, as an outbreak of cholera further dampened the market. He had lost nine adults and six or seven children to the disease, admitting to Ballard that "the way we send out dead negroes at night and keep dark is a sin to Crocket." To make matters worse, Ballard was sending unsatisfactory goods in this tight market. "Your little slim assed girls and boys are entirely out of the way and cannot be sold for a profit," he chastised.[38]

Their future depended on the stability of the money supply, something no

---

[37]Tadman, Speculators, 17, 19, 84-85. Paul Pascal to Bernard Raux, 21 Nov. 1832, Pascal and Raux Papers, HU, quoted in Tadman, Speculators, 86.

[38]James Franklin to Rice Ballard, 18 Jan. 1832, 4 March 1832; Isaac and James Franklin to Rice Ballard, 29 Oct. 1833; Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 3 Dec. 1832. The cholera continued to plague their business; Isaac and James Franklin variously to Ballard, 7 May 1833, 14 Nov. 1833; 9, 18, 29 Dec. 1833. Ballard expressed characteristic concern for their true interests: "if it please God that the negroes should get it I hope you will be carefull of yourselfs. We had better loose all and begin again than loos ourselves"; Ballard to Isaac Franklin, 2 Dec. 1832. All in Ballard Papers, UNC.

one at that point could guarantee. Virtually all of the money their deep-south customers had to spend consisted of loans issued in the form of bank notes. In June 1832, James R. Franklin observed that "nothing has kept the price [of slaves] up this season but the Branch USB"--the United States Bank. Along with "the Planters Bank and the Old State Bank," the Bank of the United States had liberally distributed twelve-month notes to deep-south borrowers. When those debts came due next year, however, Franklin feared they would "consume the Amt. of the present Growing crop," leaving planters with no money for buying slaves. The company held nearly a quarter million dollars in outstanding bills which likewise would have to be paid next year. Worse, Natchez and New Orleans banks had tightened the money supply, foregoing any new loans. Franklin floated Ballard and Armfield, sending them money to sustain their purchases and expenses. But he wrote that Alsop, Ballard's partner in Fredericksburg, would have to fend for himself by drawing on the Richmond and Fredericksburg banks. Finally, several months later, James's brother Isaac groused that President Andrew Jackson had vetoed the renewal of the United States Bank's charter, compounding the traders' uncertainty about the money supply.[39]

By the following year, however, Franklin's spirits were buoyed. "Notwithstanding all the bad luck," he crowed in December 1833, "I sold more negroes than all the traders put together," including more than one hundred fifty in the last two weeks. If not for the "damned cholera," he said, he could

---

[39]James R. Franklin to Rice Ballard, 8 June 1832; Isaac Franklin to Rice Ballard, 5 Oct. 1832; Ballard Papers, UNC.

"have made for the concerns at least $100,000." He seemed further encouraged by the repeal of Louisiana's slave-trade ban, though he recognized that the reversal would have little effect on prices.[40]

The legal action of Mississippians, it turned out, would cause greater problems for Franklin's partner Ballard and for other traders. Mississippi's constitutional revision of 1832 had prohibited commercial slave imports effective 1833, but the legislature had enacted no prohibitive legislation until 1837. In fact, it had taxed "transient merchants" of slaves since 1825. As Charles Sydnor encapsulates the situation, the trade into Mississippi between 1833 and 1837 was "unconstitutional but not illegal." In the wake of the Panic of 1837, Mississippi planters seized on the ambiguous validity of their promissory notes, reneging on debts to traders. State courts found for the delinquent slaveholders, citing the state constitution's ban, and as cases worked their way towards the United States Supreme Court, traders watched with trepidation. On New Year's Day 1840, Richmond trader Bacon Tait wrote to Thomas Boudar in New Orleans with gloomy news. A federal court had apparently agreed with the state courts, retroactively nullifying the slave sales. Since the Supreme Court justices were all "partisans," Tait feared they would uphold that decision on the grounds that since the slaves had been brought in against the law, that they were not property. Writing to Rice Ballard two days later, he predicted the worst: the dissolution of the Union. No one, he said, was selling or buying in Richmond.[41]

---

[40]Isaac Franklin to Rice Ballard, 25 Dec. 1833, 11 Jan. 1834, Ballard Papers, UNC.

[41]Bacon Tait to Thomas Boudar, 1 Jan. 1840; Bacon Tait to Rice Ballard, 3 Jan. 1840. Ballard Papers, UNC.

Tait need not have worried. In January 1841 the United States Supreme Court found for trader Robert Slaughter, citing Mississippi's then lack of enabling legislation to make the ban legal. The court did not comment on the constitutionality of Mississippi's actions, however, so state courts continued to hold jurisdiction over cases of trade within the state. Ironically, however, traders able to show dual or out-of-state residency--those in fact targeted by the prohibition--were entitled to sue in federal courts and thus could find relief.[42]

In 1841, Rice Ballard found himself mired in this interstate mess, not only straining his financial resources but also challenging his honor.[43] In February 1836, Ballard sold a Louisiana planter named Turner forty-three slaves from his Natchez base, accepting a one-year renewable note at 10 percent interest. Turner stopped payment in 1841, and Ballard sued for the balance, $200,000. Two of the four key issues in contention centered on geography and jurisdiction. The sale had taken place in Louisiana, where the ban had been dropped in 1834. Technically, then, Ballard was not in violation of Mississippi's continuing prohibition on imports. Secondly, Ballard claimed Virginia citizenship, and therefore the right to sue in the U. S. District Court, where the Supreme Court's precedent in Groves et al v. Slaughter would be followed. These issues went untested, however, as Ballard provoked a settlement, effected in part by strutting around town "armed up to the teeth" and threatening openly to

---

[42]Sydnor's account of these events remains the most lucid; see Slavery in Mississippi, 162-128.

[43]Ariela Gross eluminates the issues of honor at stake in this trial. See "Pandora's Box: Slavery, Character, and Southern Culture in the Courtroom, 1800-1860," Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1996, 238-246.

"assassinate" Turner, but also in part through the serious negotiating work of his dedicated legal team.[44]

These sorts of jurisdictional problems were unique to businessmen operating along far-flung networks spanning several states. Slave traders, indeed, were men on the make, pressing the frontiers of the nation's rapidly expanding market economy. They sought to integrate this market world by pressing into service any new and swifter means of communication and transportation. They were indeed weaving a web of commerce, helping created a new world of slavery in the nineteenth century.

That new world did nor rely only on efficiency, of course. The domestic slave trade had risen in tandem with the "domestication" of American slavery, a shift in slaveholder ideology and, to some degree, practice.[45] Appearances mattered as well. Operating as they did in the federal District of Columbia, at the crossroads of the fledgling national debate on slavery, Isaac Franklin and John Armfield worked to avoid criticism. Even abolitionist Joshua Leavitt was

---

[44]Ariela Gross, "Pandora's Box," quoting deposition against Rice Ballard, 242. Gross suggests that Ballard filed in federal rather than state court because he did not think he could win against a local jury; see 240 n. But Sydnor's explanation of the two opposing rulings, one set by the U. S. Supreme Court and one set by the Mississippi Supreme Court, would seem to suffice: state courts had invalidated traders' claims, but federal courts had not. Therefore Ballard insisted on Virginia residency so he could claim federal jurisdiction. Ballard had in his possession a copy of the Supreme Court ruling, probably sent to him by Henry Clay, who advised him precisely on this matter. See Henry Clay to Rice Ballard, 23 June, 6 July 1841; and Moses Groves and James Graham vs. Robert Slaughter, U.S. Supr. Ct. (Jan. 1841), copy in Ballard Papers, UNC. Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi, 167.

[45]Willie Lee Rose, "The Domestication of Domestic Slavery," in Slavery and Freedom, ed. William W. Freehling (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), 18-36. See ch. 3 below for discussion of these ideological shifts.

impressed with his visit to the firm's Alexandria jail in January 1834.[46] He found himself welcomed by "a very gentlemanly person," mostly likely Armfield, who ran the Alexandria operations while Franklin received shipments in New Orleans. Leavitt openly acknowledged he was from the free north and said he simply wanted to see the business for himself. Leavitt stressed the manners of the trader, who was "very happy to give us all the information in his power" and "politely invited us to go out and see the slaves." After the tour, Leavitt turned down Armfield's "polite offer of a glass of wine, or brandy and water."

Leavitt described the slave yard as equally in order, "whitewashed" and "perfectly clean." Armfield had fitted the yard with a pump, supplying "ample" water, and served his prisoners "bread and boiled meat, apparently wholesome in quality, and sufficient in quantity." All were "clothed decently in coarse, but apparently comfortable garments," and "having also shoes and stockings." The sleeping quarters and hospital were "clean, dry and well aired." And men and women, he emphasized, were "entirely separated, except at their meals." The trader's fleet of ships appeared equally commodious; in fact, as Armfield told Leavitt, they had made that investment to avoid the overcrowding slaves had experienced on the freight lines. Finally, Leavitt let pass Armfield's assertion that he "would never sell his slaves so as to separate husband and wife, or mother

---

[46]Leavitt first published his account on 1 Feb. 1834 in the New York Evangelist, of which he was editor. It was variously excerpted, and it is quoted here from the New Hampshire Anti-Slavery Convention Proceedings (Concord, N.H., 1834), 18-20, copy at AAS. On Franklin and Armfield's exposure to observation, see Sweig, "Reassessing the Human Dimension," 16. Leavitt's encounter with Armfield is echoed in that of Joseph Sturge with trader Hope Slatter. See Joseph Sturge, A Visit to the U. S. in 1841 (Boston, 1842), 45-48, as quoted in Bancroft, Slave Trading, 372-373, and in Deyle, "Competing Ideologies."

and child."[47]

Traders played up a genteel image, capitulating in some ways to the dictates of paternalism. They tried to present enslaved people for sale dressed in new clothing, suggesting good care, and sometimes advertised they were looking for "good homes" for their charges.[48] Leavitt's view was not uncritical; rather he sought to let Armfield's own words condemn his actions. For example, he observed iron staples in the barracks floor, but "did not ask what they were for." Instead, he related that Armfield, to enforce the slaves' personal cleanliness, would whip anyone who "came up on Monday morning without a clean shirt."[49]

Others were far less charitable in their assessment. Another abolitionist, visiting Franklin and Armfield's Alexandria jail only a year after Leavitt, found their business practices condemnable. In this anonymous account, Franklin and Armfield's agents were characterized as "unprincipled," buying individual slaves "without regard to parental ties" and separating children from parents. This visitor, unlike Leavitt, witnessed slaves with "heavy chains upon them," and

---

[47]Regarding children ten and under, Armfield's assertion had a basis in truth, as Sweig has found. But very few men and women in Armfield's shipments were grouped as husband and wife, indicating high rates of breakup. Sweig, "Reassessing the Human Dimension."

[48]Deyle, "Competing Ideologies."

[49]Leavitt's purpose may have been similar to Sturge's. By refusing to paint slave traders as monstrous individuals, abolitionists could emphasize the systematic, institutional nature of slavery's evil. This approach prefigured Harriet Beecher Stowe's portrayal of benevolent Kentucky slaveholders in Uncle Tom's Cabin: Life among the Lowly (1852; repr.,New York: Viking Penguin, 1986). She, too, sought to condemn slavery and not individual slaveholders. Indeed, this strategy headed off that of Daniel Hundley, who held that traders were anomalous pariahs in an otherwise benevolsent slaveholding South; see Social Relations in our Southern States (New York: Henry B. Price, 1860).

testified that the women had only "something called a blanket" to place between themselves and the brick floor.[50] British traveler G. W. Featherstonhaugh, who twice crossed paths with Armfield driving a coffle through Virginia and Tennessee, similarly condemned the trader's separation of families. He found Armfield a hypocrite, wearing black crepe to mourn the passing of the Marquis de Lafayette who, Featherstonhaugh reveled in pointing out, had "gloried in making all men free, without respect to colour." Moreover, the trader was a buffoon aping the manner of gentlemen. Armfield, he said, "attempted to cover a farrago of bad grammar with an affected pronunciation of his words; and at last got into such a strain of talking fine," the Briton ridiculed, "that my son and myself had great difficulty in suppressing our laughter."[51]

Leavitt may have revealed another of Armfield's practices which, in his estimation, did not speak well of the slave trader's character. In the jail's kitchen, he had taken note of "a little boy and girl, five or six years old, who were better dressed than the others"; their "complexions were quite light," he noted, and their "clothes had an air of neatness and taste, such as free mothers love to impart to their little ones." About half the slaves he had seen at Armfield's jail, he said, bore similar "traces of the white man's blood, and the white man's sin." Although Leavitt did not name Armfield as such a sinner, he seems to have implied it. "The mother of these had been with him some time," Armfield had confirmed. She was among those whom he had bought locally and trusted "to

---

[50]"Slavery in the District of Columbia," American Anti-Slavery Almanac for 1836 (1835), 26, copy at AAS.

[51]Featherstonhaugh, Excursion, 46.

go at large in the town"; these personal servants lived in their own separate quarters inside the jail compound and adjacent to Armfield's own residence. This woman's proximity to Armfield, her relative freedom to come and go, and the obvious favoritism bestowed upon her children probably left Leavitt's readers to guess her children's paternity as Armfield's.[52]

Whether or not Armfield had a sexual relationship with this woman--not to mention what degree of consensus and force may have been at play--must remain speculation. Armfield's business associates, however, left little doubt about their opinions on the use for the light-skinned women they held in slavery. The correspondence of Isaac Franklin and his brother James R. Franklin to their Richmond trading partner Rice Ballard reveals the depths of their depravity. Not only did they participate in the trade in "fancy girls" for the New Orleans market, but they openly cajoled each other about it.

James Franklin wrote in 1832 to Rice Ballard, Isaac's trading partner in Richmond, concerning a "fancy white maid" Ballard had sent to Natchez. She was, Franklin agreed, "a handsome Girl," kidding that she "would climb higher hills and go further to accomplish her designs than any girl to the North." Further, he joked, she was not about to "loose her gold and the reason is because she carried her funds in her lovers purse." "To my Certain knowledge," he intimated crudely, she "has been used and that smartly by a one eyed young man about my size and age." He finally interrupted himself, begging Ballard to "excuse my foolishness," and promised, "in short," that he would "do the best"

---

[52]Leavitt, repr. in New Hampshire Anti-Slavery Convention, 20.

he could on her selling price.[53]

Isaac was in on the joke. As he wrote to Ballard in January 1834, "the way your old one eyed friend licked the pirate was a sin to Crocket but he is brought up all standing."[54] He followed this immediately by reminding Ballard of his promise to ship him "the Fancy Girl from Charlottesville." "You send her out," he demanded, perhaps only half-seriously, "or shall I charge you $1100 for her"? "Say Quick." Franklin had been nagging Ballard to send the woman since November, telling Ballard also to ship immediately "all the first rate house servants" he could. The deep-south demand had driven prices up to $1,000 then, but now, two months later, the market was "dull." Franklin's lament was not only pecuniary, but prurient as well. "I fear the time for the 1100 Dollars prices

---

[53]James apparently had difficulty in selling her. "The fair maid Martha is still on hand," he wrote six weeks later; "I think the chance to sell her as well as our white Caroline is very bad." James R. Franklin to Rice Ballard, 27 March 1832, 13 May 1832, Ballard Papers, UNC. The other nephew working for Franklin was James Franklin Purvis, who operated out of Baltimore. Purvis seems to have shared his uncles' sense of humor; he advertised that his headquarters was located at "Sinner's Hotel," on "Gallows hill." See Bancroft, Slave Trading, 39, and Stephenson, Isaac Franklin, 27, 78.

[54]The idiomatic phrase "it was a sin to Crockett" cropped up once or twice again in the Franklin-Ballard correspondence. It seems to stem from an oral tradition that Davy Crockett took an older wife, counting on the fact that she would die soon and leave him well-off. The implied "sin to Crockett," then, would be to marry young. The Franklins used it to joke about sex with their young "fancy girls," or even more loosely to refer to any shameful act. For one of the literary sources of the oral tradition, see Thomas B. Floyd to Esther (Berry House Floyd) Clark, 15 June 1855, in Ron Jackson, Alamo Legacy: Alamo Descendants Remember the Alamo (Austin, Tx.: Eakin Press, 1997), repr. in The DeWitt Colony Alamo Defenders. . . The Immortal 32 Gonzales Rangers, http://www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/dewitt.htm, under biography of Dolphin Ward Floyd. The phrase "sin to Davy Crockett" is found as early as 1841 in Tennessee, but the context is unclear; it referred to the selling of "goods," but the repeated emphasis given may indicate it was a euphemism for something else, or for a certain kind of "goods." See W. Anderson Walker to Mr. J. H. Johnson, 4 April 1841, in private collection of Frederick Smoot, publ. in Blount County, Tennessee: Letters from Forgotten Ancestors, http://www.tngenweb.org/tnletters/blou1.htm. My sincere thanks to Jill M. Myers for sharing her knowledge and these citations; email query on H-Slavery listserv, 1 June 1999.

are over," he said, adding his other fear, "that I will not get to see the fancy maid."[55]

Perhaps even more disturbing was Franklin's solution for a particular group of slaves he could not sell. Franklin scolded Ballard lightly for sending down an enslaved family group. "I do not approve of vesting funds on such stock," he wrote, since they were unlikely to turn a profit. He had another idea about recouping their loss on them, however. "Had they not better be sent back," he proposed; "The old Lady and Susan Could soon pay for themselves by keeping a whore house," either in Richmond, Alexandria, or Baltimore. "Let it be kept for the comfort of the concern," he suggested, meaning himself and his business partners, naming explicitly his inlaw John Armfield, nephew James Franklin Purvis, brother James.[56]

The interests of these businessmen were never quite purely economic. They understood the sexual and racial mores of their patrons, and themselves partook in what they certainly looked upon as fringe benefits of their power and proximity to such women. Isaac Franklin clearly embodied the patriarchal values of southern slaveholders' society. As a slaveholding white man, he was

---

[55]Isaac Franklin to Rice Ballard, 1 Nov. 1833, 11 Jan. 1834, Ballard Papers, UNC.

[56]Isaac Franklin to Rice Ballard, 1 Nov. 1833, 11 Jan. 1834, Ballard Papers, UNC. On kin relations of the firm's associates, see Stephenson, Isaac Franklin, 15, 23, 26-27, 76, 78, 89. The Franklins were not alone in taking advantage of their easy access to and positions of power over enslaved women. According to ex-slave John Brown, Virginia-Georgia trader Sterling Finney kidnapped a white female traveler's young slave girl and "forced" the girl "to get up in the wagon" with him where, for "several days," he "brutally ill-used her, and permitted his companions to treat her in the same manner." He sold her in Augusta, Georgia, and went on to serve in the Georgia legislature before his death in 1831. See Slave Life in Georgia: A Narrative of the Life, Sufferings, and Escape of John Brown, A Fugitive Slave, ed. I. A. Chamerovzow (1855; repr. Savannah: Beehive Press, 1991), ed. F. N. Boney, 18-19; 15 n.

free to take liberties with enslaved African-American women and he feared no reproach for his actions. Before his marriage in 1839, in fact, Isaac Franklin was rumored to have kept enslaved, light-skinned concubines at his plantation in Sumner County, Tennessee.

As he married and fathered a family, however, Franklin seems to have softened a bit. As a husband and a father, he appears to have striven for something akin to the domestic ideal. After his death in 1846, a neighbor described his and his wife's relationship as having "much harmony and good feeling." "He seemed to be as much devoted to her, and she to him," the man declared, "as I ever saw between man and wife." Isaac doted on his daughters, apparently, building "a small play-house" for them, and he set aside a cask of wedding wine for his eldest daughter, the aptly named Victoria. In 1845, he even moved the entire family briefly to New Orleans so Victoria could go to school.[57]

Franklin, Armfield, and Ballard simultaneously pressed the boundaries of the expanding market world, participated in firmly established patriarchal mores, and, in the case of Franklin, at least, perhaps even imbibed new notions of a more sentimentalized domesticity in their own families. Other traders betrayed those same trends, some in less muted fashion than others.

The slave trade's market revolution was obscured by traders' primary means of transporting enslaved people to the deep South and by traders' own household economies. Although Franklin and Armfield's steam ships had helped revolutionize the migration of slaves to the southwestern frontiers, most

---

[57]Stephenson, Isaac Franklin, 18, 19-21; 19 n.

transportees simply walked. Traders' ventures also did not appear exclusively as speculative buying and selling projects. Instead, a slave-trading trip might originate out of household economics. The profits from the trip, too, might find their use in familial rather than entrepreneurial investments. James A. Mitchell's case illustrates these trends. On October 18th, 1834, Mitchell set out from Pittsylvania County, Virginia, with 51 enslaved African Americans in tow. Some were "girls" from his own household, and others were people he had purchased locally before departing. He planned to sell all of them in Mississippi. To chronicle his trip, he kept a small log-book he titled "the Expenses of Travelin with negros from Va to Miss and Returning home." He apparently rode in his carryall while the 51 walked.[58]

They seem to have gotten off to a slow start; they did not cross the New River until their seventh day on the road. Mitchell's chosen route most likely followed the Valley road through Abingdon, then turned southwest into Tennessee. His party was making fairly good time by this point, having crossed the Clinch River and reached Crab Orchard, on Tennessee's Cumberland Plateau, by November 6th. Rather than continuing west towards Nashville or Memphis, he directed his caravan southwest again, carefully noting the tolls he paid at river crossings: the Cany Fork in Tennessee on November tenth, the Tennessee in Alabama on the seventeenth, the Tombigbee in Mississippi on the

---

[58]Another James Mitchell, of unknown relation to James A. Mitchell, captained the steamer Columbia. In 1837 he carried two small shipments of slaves out of Alexandria for trader James H. Birch. See "Manifests of negroes, mulattoes, and persons of color," Slavery Collection, NYHS.

twenty-fourth, the "Purl" River on the twenty-ninth.[59]

They arrived in Natchez by December 10th, when he wrote home to his wife, Sarah. Mitchell indicated something of the business hardships he faced in Natchez, complaining that he had "only sold two negros yet." The market seemed good, but no one had cash to pay. "All want on a credit," he groused, "and that dont suit me for I want cash." He could have sold on credit back home in Virginia, had he been so disposed.

The trip had been "wet and moody," but he reassured her that "we are all injoyen good health." His "we" was inclusive; it meant to allay her concerns, both sentimental and economic. She would of course be happy to hear that her husband was well, but he knew she was also interested in the health of the slaves, on whose health the success of the venture rested in no small part.[60] He seemed to recognize that Sarah's interest in some of his enslaved party was more than financial, and he sent news of them. "Mary Carter," he said, "is got well and harty a gain and all the guirls that com from our house is doin very well and well satisfyd." Mariah Finney, an enslaved woman who was cooking for Mitchell, seemed less sanguine about the reason for her being taken to Mississippi. "She is uncertain and mulish at times," Mitchell complained. Yet for the most part, "all behaves well," he said, inserting the qualification, "so far." His ultimate concern with their apparent happiness, however, rested in his desire to market them in Natchez, and he promised Sarah he would sell them off as

---

[59]James A. Mitchell, "Expenses of Traveling," 18 Oct. 1834 to 15 Feb. 1835, Mitchell Papers, DU.

[60]James A. Mitchell to Sarah Mitchell, 10 Dec. 1834, in Southside Virginia Collection, UVA (RASP).

soon as he could get his price.[61]

He set his slaves to making themselves more marketable, purchasing new hats and some clothing for them, along with shirt cloth, calico, needles, and thread, so the slaves could make the rest of their new market clothing. Buyers, he knew, would want to envision slaves as domestic servants, as field hands, as strong, healthy workers. Buyers in the market wanted to imagine slaves as they would appear in their own homes and in their fields. The market, after all, served their own domestic economies just as it served Mitchell's.[62] The expense of new clothes, he speculated, would be recouped, if not necessarily in price, then in the increased ease in marketing their wearers. Mitchell also bought a little whisky, whether for himself or his slaves he did not record.

It is difficult to say with certainty whether Mitchell found success in this endeavor. He did not record his buying costs in Virginia. He sold nineteen of his slaves individually at an average of $664 each, before finding a single buyer to take thirty-one of those remaining at an average price of $582, a 12 percent discount. If these had all been considered "prime field hands," then Mitchell profited little, since he reaped on average only about 10 percent more than what he would have paid in Virginia, not taking expenses into account. But most of his gang were probably not "prime" hands; several were "girls" (of

---

[61]James A. Mitchell to Sarah Mitchell, 10 Dec. 1834, in Southside Virginia Collection, UVA.

[62]On slave buyers' expectations and fantasies about slaves they purchased, see Walter Johnson, Soul by Soul: Inside the Antebellum Slave Market (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1999), chs. 3, 5.

indeterminate age) from his own household.[63]

Mitchell's spending habits indicate he may have done fairly well for himself. He had kept his caravan's expenditures low, totaling only $570.68, including all tolls, food, and new clothing. Counting the $115.31 he spent in getting himself back to Virginia, Mitchell's transportation costs came to only $13.45 per slave, cheaper than sending them by ship. Mitchell also apparently avoided paying the jail fees, both in Virginia and in Natchez, which would have tripled his expenses.[64] Just before leaving, he disposed of the last of his entourage: one gray horse, one carryall, and one man named Washington, his personal servant, who brought Mitchell a windfall of over $1,000.

The most telling evidence of Mitchell's profits and, importantly, of the meaning he gave this slaving venture, were the items he purchased on the return trip. As he returned to Virginia, he carried home with him a pocket knife, a music box, a pair of gloves, a pin, three rings, and a watch--gifts and mementos for himself and his family, little presents he could distribute as the caring husband and father.[65] These and other acts of domestic benevolence apparently had their desired effect. James Mitchell's personal and business correspondence hints at his family's adherence of a domestic ideal of home and hearth, enabled by his sacrificing of enslaved families. Mitchell's position on the speculative

---

63"Prime field hands" in 1834 sold for around $1,100 in New Orleans, $600 in Virginia. Phillips, American Negro Slavery, table following 370.

64Counting jail fees, shipping, and "upkeep" costs in 1830, traders did slightly better by land transportation than by sea. Freudenberger and Pritchett, "The Domestic U. S. Slave Trade: New Evidence," 472-475.

65James A. Mitchell, "Expenses of Traveling," 18 Oct. 1834 to 15 Feb. 1835, Mitchell Papers, DU.

frontier in the southwest, investing variously in slaves, land, cotton, and sugar from the 1830s through the 1850s, did not preclude his family from cleaving to a nostalgic vision of the domestic homeplace.[66] In fact, his frequent absences may in fact have heightened his wife and children's sentimental attachment to him and helped encourage a sense of longing for a static, stable, and idealized homeplace.

Mitchell's one extant letter home from a slave-selling venture demonstrated clearly his sentimental ties and moral sway with his wife, children, and even his slaves. He addressed Sarah as his "Dear Companion" and pledged his intention to write her once or twice a week. "I want to he[a]r from home very mutch," he insisted, for "this Country is said to be" more "heathen than common." He encouraged her to "bair with good faith duren my absence and try to enjoy your self as well as possable." He also reached out to his children, holding moral sway through his letter, across the miles between them. "Tell the children to be good boys and guirls," he told Sarah. "Pair will come home," he promised, and he expected them "to go to school and learn th[ei]r Books . . . like purty children and sho[w] Pair how smart they love him in his absence." He included a note for the Mitchell slaves in Virginia as well, instructing them, like

---

[66]By the 1840s and 1850s, Mitchell's interests had expanded to include speculation in all manner of commodity and he had taken in associates or assistants Jabez Smith and W. W. Grigg. As Smith advised Grigg on one debt owed to Mitchell, he was to "Take any kind of payment that he will make," to "first prefer cash, then sugar and cotton, then negroes and lastly land." If land was all he could get, Grigg was to look for tracts with "water, timber, soil," or proximity to a road or town. "If you take negroes," he continued, "hire them out or sell as you may please." Jabez Smith to W. W. Grigg, 15 Nov. 1849; Jabez Smith to Mitchell, 1 Sep. 1854, in Mitchell Papers, DU.

his children, "to do smart and to behave purty in my absence."[67]

Whether Mitchell himself traveled frequently to the deep South thereafter or not is unclear, but his absences seem not to have prevented him from cultivating something of the ideal domestic life at home in Virginia. The Mitchell children had apparently succumbed to their father's moral sway, and his prosperity allowed him to provide for their proper educations. His sons James W. and John A. Mitchell went to the Ready Spring Academy in Campbell County. William T. attended th e Floyd Academy, while Callie V. Mitchell attended Pleasant Union Seminary.[68]

Callie especially adored her parents and idealized the domestic sanctuary they had built for their children. A letter she wrote her brother indicates her full-blown participation in the cult of sentimental domesticity, in which mothers were the family's spiritual guardians, fathers were to effect their influence through moral rather than corporal discipline, and the entire home was enshrouded in a nostalgic aura. Sitting alone in her room away at school, she said, "my thoughts were turned homeward," to her old "Mountain home."[69]

---

[67]James A. Mitchell to Sarah Mitchell, 10 Dec. 1834, in Southside Virginia Collection, UVA. For other letters illustrating traders' "double standard" when it came to family ties, see Tadman, Speculators, 200-204.

[68]Sarah H. Mitchell to James W. Mitchell and John A. Mitchell, 29 Aug. 1842; Wm. T. Mitchell to Capt. John A. Mitchell, 5 Feb. 1854; Callie V. Mitchell to John Mitchell, 30 April 1854; Mitchell Papers, DU.

[69]Callie Mitchell's use of the term "Mountain home" is interesting, considering that Callands was located in hilly--not mountainous--Pittsylvania County. The nostalgic trope proved too alluring for Callie not to appropriate. Callie V. Mitchell to John Mitchell, 30 April 1854, Mitchell Papers, DU.

> I thought of our dear Pa, how kind and affectionate he had been to me, and of the many many times we have been seated by that dear old fireside, listening with an attentive ear, to the kind and affectionate word which he spoke, and with the tenderest care of a father did he make plain those ways which were most pleasing in his sight for us, as his Children to pursue.

She then thought on their mother,

> who watched over us in children with tender care of a dear and affectionate mother, she endeavored to bring us upon the fear of God, she taught us how to love His blessed truths, to read His Word, and to live in His fear.

"Oh what a blessing it is," she rejoiced in summary, "to have such parents as ours," her emphatic affection leading her to into quadruple negative: "There cannot be none more kind and affectionate to their children no not one."

Yet Callie's letter also revealed cracks in the domestic ideal. After her parents, she said, she reflected back on "dear old Duck," a girlhood playmate. She could still picture Duck's image, and "Oh! yes the merry laugh of childhood seem to play on her countinence, as in former days when we were making our plays." As she hinted at startlingly, this domestic bliss masked some deeper uncertainty. "We looked then as if we were in a world of happiness," she reflected, "instead of wretchedness and misery." What sort of misery she had in

mind she did not say, but Callie revealed more explicitly the tensions within the slaveholding household, telling John that "we did not have a very good dinner to day because it is sunday and all the darkeys are gone to church."[70]

Still, her father's status as a sometime slave trader did not mar her image of him or of his loving family. If anything, his absences from home augmented her sentimental sense of loss. Perhaps in her nostalgic language she sought to recoup a happy domestic event which was in reality a rarity. Perhaps the slave traders' absence from home left her more willing to sentimentalize his moments within the domestic sphere.

Other traders, of course, were family men, and they too felt the tension between their own ramblings in the market and the value they placed on home life. A friend of Richard Dickinson wrote from Baltimore in 1848, conveying envy at Dickinson's settled family and social life. "A Bachelor's life I dislike very much and will get out of it soon as possible I think." He sent regrets he could not join Dickinson at "the Springs," and gave his "complements to Mrs. Dickinson" and "Howdy to the children."[71] An associate of Joseph Dickinson named Weston wrote from Marion, Alabama, expressing his own sense of longing for the comforts of home. "I am about through with my stock of darkies," he informed his friend, and he aimed to arrive at Dickinson's by early June or earlier, he stressed, "for I am bound to see that little angel as soon as possible." He asked Dickinson to let this female friend know of Weston's plans

---

[70]Callie V. Mitchell to John Mitchell, 30 April 1854, Mitchell Papers, DU.

[71]Wm. R. Stuart, Jr., to R. H. Dickinson, 2 Aug. 1848, R. H. Dickinson and Brother Correspondence, [1846-1865], Slavery in the United States Collection, AAS.

to "spend the summer in the mountain[s]." He closed by reminding his friend to "give my love to my littel Darling."[72]

However traders' "little darlings" may have felt about their absences doing the trade, family members understood that these ventures served the larger family interests. Floyd Whitehead's speculation carried emotional implications even for his extended family. In April 1836, his nephew Robert, a student at the University of Virginia, wrote him a heart-felt letter of support. "I hope your expectations concerning your negroes have been fulfilled," he wrote. "In your prosperity, I could but as an acquaintance feel interests," but, he emphasized, as "a friend and relation, I feel the warmest concern."[73] Robert recognized that while others may look to Whitehead's success with their own pecuniary "interests" at heart, his own "warmest concern" was for the well-being of the family. Robert knew that any economic enterprise on the southwestern frontier represented a family venture. Economic risk-taking was part and parcel of the plantation frontier which Virginia's slave traders served. And like planters, traders' economic actions were meant ultimately to reflect back both financially and socially on their family's standing. Following brother John's advice of over fifteen years before, Floyd was striving for the family's revival, both "in purse and character."[74]

---

[72]Weston[?] to "Friend Dickenson," 3 May 1854, Joseph Dickinson Papers, DU (RASP).

[73]Robert Whitehead to Floyd L. Whitehead,1 April 1836, Floyd Whitehead Papers, UVA.

[74]I steal this phrase from Joan E. Cashin, A Family Venture: Men and Women on the Southern Frontier (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1994). John Whitehead to Floyd Whitehead, 14 Oct. 1821, Whitehead Papers, UVA.

Where Mitchell appears to have succeeded, however, Floyd Whitehead and his business partners decidedly did not. Their speculative journey in 1836 and 1837 demonstrated both their willingness to press at the frontiers of the market economy and the risks inherent in doing so. They employed several means of the new market economy to float their venture, taking bank loans, shopping broadly for slaves, buying and selling marketable individuals rather than family groups, and paying sellers in cash. By the same token, their speculation put them at risk, and when the Panic of 1837 hit they felt its lasting effects. Whitehead's spotty career path illustrates how serendipity and luck, good and bad, might lead one into and out of the slave trade, how the economic opportunities might help or hinder a man in his bid to build an income, reputation, and family legacy.

In 1821, John Whitehead wrote his brother Floyd with cautionary advice. Floyd was a young man seeking an economic opening in the wake of the Panic of 1819, but John warned him to be cautious. John told him not to go out west, to look around locally for some opportunity, but not to take on any responsibilities without consulting John first. He scolded Floyd to tighten his purse strings, to better his handwriting, to eschew "bad company," and "above all things to avoid debt." He held up their kinsman William as a negative example. Going around "dressed fine" would get Floyd nowhere: "you see what Wm. has brought himself to." Their family, John lamented, was coming to ruin, both "in purse and character."[75] Little other early correspondence

---

[75]John Whitehead to Floyd Whitehead, 14 Oct. 1821, Whitehead Papers, UVA.

survived, so whether Floyd minded John's instructions remains unknown. In the 1820s, he was dealing in significant quantities of whiskey, along with various dry goods and grocery items like calico, pepper, and sugar.[76]

By 1830, however, Floyd Whitehead had been appointed as a deputy sheriff and may have begun dabbling in the slave trade--or at least the prospect of doing so. He still considered traveling west. His nephew Robert, who then lived in Kentucky, hoped his Uncle Floyd would pass through if he decided to come west, and mentioned meeting an acquaintance of Whitehead's from Virginia. The man's name was Harris, he wrote, and had "been engaged in Negro trading," apparently supplying the New Orleans market, before moving to Kentucky.[77] Whitehead remained in Nelson County, however, and by the mid-1830s, he and John had embarked on dual careers as petty speculators and officers of the law. They expected their duties as sheriff's deputies to prove fairly remunerative, apparently, but they had also begun their other line of work. [78] "I

---

[76]Unnamed account book [1828], in Whitehead, DU. The book may have in fact been John Whitehead's, or perhaps the men worked together in this as in other ventures. In 1830, John was reimbursed by the county court for providing brandy to the road crew. Nelson County Court, June 1830, levies, in Whitehead Papers, DU.

[77]Nelson County Court levies paid, June 1830, Whitehead Papers, DU. Robert Whitehead to Floyd Whitehead, 1 Oct. 1830, Whitehead Papers, UVA. Robert perhaps was refering to William B. Harris, who had been sheriff of Nelson County; see Militia Fines List [n.d.], Whitehead papers, DU.

[78]In 1835, they each agreed to pay Sheriff Nelson Anderson $1,350 over the following two years for the privilege of ollecting commissions on summonses, appraisals, and other acts of office. Anderson reserved one part of the county for himself, assigning the rest for his deputies to divide. The deputy job appeared lucrative indeed, judging by these men's willingness to pay for the "perquisets of office." In addition to the $1,350, they agreed to pay three-quarters of Anderson's taxes, plus $225 each for the privilege of collecting one half the fines and fees accruing in Anderson's district. "Memorandum of an agreement entered into . . . between Nelson Anderson sheriff of Nelson County . . . and John Whitehead, Beverly Hargrove, Floyd L.

suppose you and John are still buying negroes," a friend wrote to Floyd from Richmond in May 1836. "They are high here," he continued, "very high. I saw two men, second rate, sold today at auction, one for $1145 the other for $1125." Other investments were less profitable; tobacco, by contrast, was still down, at least in the Liverpool market, owing to "the great scarcity of money."[79] If the Whiteheads were to venture forth, better in slaves than in tobacco.

They must have been drawn by the prospects. The prices they were quoted were extremely high, even for the speculative bubble expanding in the mid-1830s. Virginia prices for "prime field hands" rose only to an average of $800. Such a differential meant that if the Whiteheads could buy slaves for less than that in Nelson County, they could easily make a profit simply by sending them down the river to Richmond. They might make even more if they could get them to Mississippi, where brisk speculation in former Chickasaw land had driven slave prices as high as $1,200 in 1835.[80] One of the Whiteheads had already started buying and selling locally, evidenced by an 1835 note, but it appears John may have backed out of Floyd's more risky plans, and Floyd soon went into business with Nathan and Ralph W. Loftus.[81]

Whitehead, and John J. Hargrove, deputies of the said Nelson Anderson," 1835 March 23, Whitehead Papers, DU.

79P. Edmunds to Floyd Whitehead, 3 May 1836, Whitehead, DU

80Phillips, American Negro Slavery, table following 370.

81Thomas Hail, receipt, 8 Jan. 1835, Whitehead Papers, DU. Hail had bought from Whitehead and Hargrove four "negro girls" named Aggy, Betsy, Martha, and Mina. Hail did not name either seller by first name, but note that Beverly and John J. Hargrove served as deputy sheriffs along with Floyd and John Whitehead in 1835-1837; see above.

The same inflated prices which had spurred Whitehead and the Loftuses to action had the same effect on hundreds of other speculators as well. The fall of 1836, one contemporary remarked, was "a time to be long remembered. All the public highways to Mississippi had become lined--yea literally crowded with slaves." Sales were slow at first, but picked up as traders came to settle for secured banknotes and mortgages on land as payment instead of cash. Prices continued to soar, reaching an unprecedented $1,800.[82]

In the spring and early summer of 1836, Floyd Whitehead and Nathaniel Loftus amassed the cash they would need, borrowing $11,000 from the Bank of Virginia and $15,000 from the partnership of Rives and Harris. These investors sought to reap the profits from these speculative times, and Whitehead kicked in about $7,000 of his own.[83] With this $33,000 in hand, they went about procuring their chattels from May through August. The impact of their purchases was felt rather widely. They traveled to three or four other counties besides Nelson, including Amherst, Bedford, and Albemarle. The 50 people they bought came from as many as 22 different slaveholdings. Of the 29 people whose sellers can be identified, 14 were bought individually. The others came in groups of various

---

82"Mississippi,--Her Pecuniary Embarrassments," in Philadelphia United States Gazette, repr. in the Woodville Republican [Mississippi], 14 March 1840, quoted in Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi, 165.

83"Cash Accounts," and miscellaneous accounts, in Whitehead-Loftus Account Book [1836-1837], Whitehead Papers, DU. The partnership of Rives and Harris may have been involved more directly in slave trading as well. As Whitehead's nephew had acknowledged, Whitehead knew a Harris from Nelson County who had worked as a trader, and Francis Everod Rives, a prominent Virginia politician, had operated a large slaving operation from at least 1817 to 1820. I do not know, however, if this "Rives and Harris" represented those two traders or not. Robert Whitehead to Floyd Whitehead, 1 Oct. 1830, Whitehead Papers, UVA. Tadman, Speculators, 21, 196; and F. E. Rives Papers, DU.

numbers, perhaps representing family fragments: one couple, one group of five, and three groups of three, including one group identified explicitly as a mother with two children. Of the 21 slaves not linked to a specific buyer, only 2 shared a surname.[84]

Whitehead and Loftus appear to have worked with other traders as well. One seller, Henry Larner, sold Whitehead and Loftus at least seven slaves, with only two of them sharing a surname. Since Whitehead and Loftus seem to have followed the practice of assigning slaves the surnames of the seller, Larner himself appears to have picked up these people from different slaveholders. What's more, his being paid by Whitehead and Loftus on three different occasions, unlike other of their sellers, indicates that he may have been second-tier trader, buying where he could and passing slaves along to bigger speculators such as Whitehead and Loftus.[85]

84"A List of Negroes purchased by Whitehead and Lofftus 1836," and "Negro account," in Whitehead-Loftus Account Book, Whitehead Paperd, DU. I collated these two lists, based on prices and the surnames of slaveholders and slaves. Sellers' locations determined from index to heads of households for 1830 U. S. Census; all sellers' identities and locations were not clear, but they seem to have come mainly from these four counties. Since Whitehead and Loftus seem to have assigned slaves' their sellers' surnames in most cases, I cannot assume even these couples and groups are necessarily kin. Likewise, I cannot assume those on the list with different surnames are not kin. It is unclear whether Whitehead and Loftus's practice here seem was out of line for most southern slaveholders. Gutman says slaveholders generally did not recognize slaves' own surnames, and that those surnames often did not correspond to current owners. Donald Sweig, however, uses the surnames traders Franklin and Armfield assigned slaves in shipping manifests as an indication of family ties. Gutman, Herbert G. The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), 230-256. Sweig, "Reassessing the Human Dimension," 8. For examples of several enslaved Virginians keeping different surnames after marriage, see Charles B. Dew, Bond of Iron: Master and Slaver at Buffalo Forge (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994), 353.

85In 1836, Whitehead and Loftus paid Larner on several occasions: $1850 on May 11, $3370 on July 22, $430 on August 1, for undisclosed numbers of slaves. The order of the slaves in the "List of Negroes purchased" suggests that Larner brought in between two and five at a time. "Negro Account," and "List of Negroes Purchased" in Whitehead Papers, DU.

Another list in Whitehead's records details other kinds of information about the slaves he sought, including age and family grouping.[86] The traders understood southwestern planters' desire for strong young men and women who would not only be able to work hard but who would also start families of their own once in the new lands. Like most long-distance traders, they favored young men and women of laboring and reproducing age. They were likely willing to buy and sell small family groupings when profitable, but tended towards individuals easier to market. In this particular group, the average age of adult slaves (those over 12) was 24 years. Seven of the 25 were children under age 12, all but perhaps one of them apparently bought along with one or both parents. Two family fragments may have been transplanted relatively intact. None on this list were bought singly, each being accompanied by one or two from the same seller. Of the 25 total, 16 (nearly two-thirds) were bracketed off in larger groups: one with 7 members, one with 5 members, one couple in their late twenties, and one woman and infant. None were explicitly recognized as families, however, and may simply have represented "lots" bought together. Nine people listed were not bracketed with anyone else, though none had been bought singly.

In the end, of course, careful notation of slaves' surnames or inked brackets setting off family groups may have served for nothing. Traders could easily buy and transport African Americans in groups of relatives, only to split them up upon arrival in the selling markets of the deep south. Whitehead and

---

[86]Undated list of slaves, with prices paid, Whitehead Papers, DU. The prices indicated place this list between 1833 and 1842 or in the 1850s. All other evidence for Whitehead's slave-trading activity is limited to 1835 to 1837, therefore the list seems to correspond to those years.

Loftus did so just as often as they sold family members together. In Natchez, the men kept a running log of slaves sold. The list, for some reason, was not updated after a certain point, when they had sold only twenty-two of their fifty original transportees. Thus the list reveals some of the groups which the traders had already split up at this point. Andrew Pukin [Perkin] had been sold, but Kay Pukin--approximately the same age and health as Andrew, based on her price--remained unsold. Of the five men and women whom Whitehead and Loftus had purchased from Henry Shelton, only Tom and Harry remained, while Jacob, Phebe, and Isabella had been disposed of. All three Loving slaves had been sold, as had the three that N. C. Clarkson had sold to the traders. But there is no way of knowing whether the members of these two groups had gone to the same buyer or not. Polly Fulcher, with her two children, remained unsold, waiting to find out whether she would be able to stay with her children or not.[87]

Whitehead and Loftus were fairly typical in their methods of obtaining credit, paying in cash, selecting young men and women, transporting their coffle overland, and dividing kin. They were atypical, however, in the way they selected the sex ratio of the men and women they bought for resale. In the list from 1836, males represented 58 percent of transportees, while in the undated list, of those over twelve, males outnumbered females more than two to one.

---

[87]If Polly Fulcher's children were infants, they would probably stay with her. Based on the very low prices Whitehead and Loftus paid for some of their slaves, however, they appear to have purchased several young girls and boys singly, without any parent or kin. It is highly unlikely they would have purchased elderly or infirm men and women, another possible explanation for low prices. "List of Negroes Purchased" and "Negro Account" in Whitehead Papers, DU. Whitehead and Loftus's separation rates were typical of the slave trade as a whole. See Tadman, Speculators, 147.

Overall, the interregional traders moved approximately equal ratios of men to women to the southwestern frontier states, and Virginians actually exported more women proportionally than men. Perhaps Whitehead and Loftus aimed for the sugar plantation market, where planters did pick men over women more frequently.[88] Regardless, the impact of their selectivity for men doubtless was felt in the enslaved communities from which they drew.

Whitehead and Loftus, together with their slaveholding sellers, had clearly wrecked the family lives of a number of enslaved people. Their own fortunes, too, were wrecked, however, as they reaped the whirlwind they had sewn in the market. Milo Morris, Whitehead's enslaved steward, bore tidings of both these disastrous aspects of their venture, whether Whitehead and Loftus realized it at the time or not. Whitehead had sent Morris along with Loftus, and in March of 1837, Morris reported from Natchez, Mississippi. "My dear master, I write these few lines to you," he started, "informing our situation." Theirs was only a mixed success. At first, they had obtained adequate prices on favorable terms, "as good as any That was made This season," but then sales suddenly stalled. Nineteen "pupils" from the first coffle remained unsold, along with all the others in the second group Whitehead had sent down. The problem, Morris understood, was that Whitehead and Loftus "want cash for Them and Cant be had." "The Times

---

[88]Only New Orleans markets showed a disproportionate presence of slave men; the slave trade to the southwest generally moved women and men in equal proportions. See Tadman, Speculators, 26, fig. 2.1; 29, fig. 2.3; 30, fig. 2.4; 66-69. Virginia's overall enslaved outmigration in the 1820s, for example, was even more disproportionately female then the state's enslaved population. See graphs, Geography of Family and Market, http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/slavetrade/. Whitehead's reluctance to buy more women is especially puzzling, given the lower prices Virginia planters were willing to take for women. For example, Whitehead and Loftus paid an average price of $647 for women and $860 for men in 1837. "List of Negroes Purchased [1836]" and undated list of slaves, Whitehead Papers, DU.

Is very hard Indeed In This country," he summarized.[89]

To make matters much worse, Whitehead had sent down a second group, members of which had proved unruly. "Everything was going on very well," Morris wrote, "until The last lot Came and they made A heap of difference." They apparently refused to let Morris "have any Thing To do with any of Them." Likely they resented Morris's privileged if paradoxical position. Apparently he played his role well, acting like the slave trader's assistant that he in fact was. In any case, a fight ensued. Morris downplayed the results modestly: "We are all well at present. I have been Stab[b]ed which made me confined for A few Days." He sought, however, to make clear to Whitehead where his loyalties lay and what his value to Whitehead was. He bragged that "Mr Loftus has said That he would not give Me for any two whyte men."[90] What Milo Morris had to be hoping was that his master would not take any amout of money for him in Natchez, Mississippi.

In closing, Morris revealed his own most important reason for writing, implicitly making Whitehead aware of the venture's implications for the black family members involved. Morris had already sent one letter, he said, and now he told Whitehead again, "I wish you would write To me That I could get To you onced more." He couched his request in business terms, encouraging Whitehead that once back together in Virginia, they "may Take A new Start and do better

---

[89]Milo Morris to Floyd L. Whitehead, 14 March 1837, Whitehead Papers, UVA.

[90]Milo Morris to Floyd L. Whitehead, 14 March 1837, Whitehead Papers, UVA.

Than ever we yet done."[91] With his inclusive "we," he meant to implicate himself in Whitehead's life and business, but he seems to have had his own family in mind. He did not mention it, but Whitehead knew well that Morris's wife Mary and his mother Clara lived on the plantation neighboring Whitehead's.[92]

How Whitehead responded at the time to Morris's news and his plea are not known. Certainly he would not have remarked on any association he might have made between Morris's desire to be with family and the desires of those many whom Whitehead and Loftus had separated in the trade. Whitehead himself appears to have done terribly by the venture. He could not have picked a worse time for this revival. In March came the Panic of 1837, bursting the speculative bubble and wrecking the slave market. Morris and Loftus were at the epicenter of the crash, which began in Natchez. Banks called in their loans, leaving few buyers with cash. Whitehead doubtless felt the pinch. As Morris had written, he and Loftus were already having a difficult time finding cash buyers. They could not afford to extend long credit, having their own personal and bank debts to pay back in Virginia. Even if they did resort to selling on credit, they probably never collected after Mississippi legislators and jurists made it difficult to do so.[93]

---

[91]Milo Morris to Floyd L. Whitehead, 14 March 1837, Whitehead Papers, UVA.

[92]Robert Rives to Floyd Whitehead, 5 May 1839, Whitehead Papers, UVA.

[93]Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi, 160-170. If this were the case with Whitehead, however, he could have sued in federal court by claiming Virginia citizenship, as Rice Ballard did.

Neither Whitehead nor the Loftuses apparently recovered economically from this venture. They did continue to pay discounts on their drafts and interest on their notes in Richmond and in Lynchburg, and on April 10th, 1837, they managed to pay creditors Rives and Harris almost $11,000 of their $15,000 debt. But by that date, the last record of their slave trading, they had not yet paid off any of their debt to the Bank of Virginia.[94] It is unclear whether the Loftuses remained in the area. Nathaniel may have had some business in Augusta County, for in 1844, he advertised in the Staunton Spectator a $50 reward for the return of Sam and Charles, both "bright mulattos" who had taken their leave of him.[95] If either Ralph or Nathaniel Loftus was the partner of Perkins as reported in the R. G. Dun and Co. credit reports in 1845, he was not doing well. Dun's agent in Lovingston reported that this partnership was "in bad repute"; Loftus and Perkins were "bad men," and "unsafe." Two years later, another agent begged to differ, reporting that they were safe for their debts, but by the end of 1847, they were out of business.[96]

Whitehead fared better, mostly by extending and playing on his local political connections. Active in the Democratic party organization, by 1845, he had served local government as magistrate and as sheriff, and had been elected

---

[94]"Cash Accounts," in Whitehead-Loftus account book, Whitehead Papers, DU.

[95]Staunton Spectator, 22 Feb., 29 Feb. 1844. The men may have been in his employ, or hired out. In any case, they were resourceful; Loftus thought they may be carrying forged free papers.

[96]Virginia, Vol. 29 [Nelson County], p. 30, R. G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS.

to the Virginia General Assembly.[97] He canvassed for James K. Polk, who, as Whitehead's friend O. Loving implied in a letter to Whitehead, shared their desire to annex Texas and to derail the abolitionist "fanaticism" threatening to tear apart the Union.[98] Whitehead gained the respect of his legislative colleagues and even the likes of Thomas Jefferson Randolph, who in the 1830s had famously lamented Virginia's prominent role in the domestic slave trade. Randolph signed an affidavit in 1845 attesting to Whitehead's "uniform and unbending integrity of character."[99] Whitehead's party and public service paid off, winning him an appointment as Sergeant of Arms of the U. S. Senate.[100]

Whitehead's rise in political status, however, did not alleviate his financial woes. Clearly, Whitehead's slave trading did not hinder his prominence in public affairs, but his failure in that venture did handicap his financial status. R. G. Dun and Co. of New York followed his lackluster career as a merchant from 1850 to 1853. Dun's agents described him in their abbreviated notation as "A bold

---

[97]O. Loving to Floyd Whitehead, 26 Feb 1845; see also Richard Pollard to Floyd L. Whitehead, Esq., 16 April 1843, Whitehead papers, UVA.

[98]O. Loving to Floyd Whitehead, 26 Feb. 1845, Whitehead papers, UVA.

[99]Shelton F. Leake and Thomas Jefferson Randolph, Affidavit for Floyd L. Whitehead, 20 Feb. 1845, Whitehead Papers, UVA. Leake probably wrote the affidavit, and it is unclear how well Randolph knew Whitehead. See also Petition from Democratic members of Virginia General Assembly to James K. Polk, n. d. [1845], recommending Floyd Whitehead, signed by 44 members, Whitehead Papers, UVA.

[100]O. Loving to Floyd Whitehead, 26 feb 1845, Whitehead Papers, UVA. Michael Tadman uses Whitehead as an example of a prominent public official acting as slave trader. In fact, however, he gained political stature in spite of his failure in the slave trade. Tadman is correct, though, that Whitehead's slave-trading background did not handicap him. See Tadman, Speculators, 196-197.

specr." who had "failed for a lar amt once," likely referring to the 1837 fiasco.[101] He was still dealing in dry goods throughout the 1840s and 1850s, but since he had no real estate or personal property of his own, he worked technically as an agent of his wife. Travelling to Baltimore and Richmond, he bought quantities of hardware, spices, and sundries.[102] In doing so, however, he had indebted himself for "thousands," as Dun's agent reported in 1851. Without property of his own and unable legally to mortgage his wife's $3,500 in slaves and household items, he finally "swapt off his store house and dwelling for a poor piece of mountain land." In January 1853 he failed completely and Dun's agents lost interest in reporting his activities thereafter.[103]

Only Milo Morris returned relatively unscathed by the 1837 venture. As a slave, he had no financial loss to worry about, of course, and his proven trustworthiness on the trip meant that Whitehead permitted him relatively broad latitude once home. Morris had been anxious to escape the dangers of Natchez and the slave trade generally, but on returning home his renewed sense of autonomy clearly disturbed Whitehead's neighbor. Robert Rives complained of Morris's "corrupting influence" on his own slaves and expressly forbade Morris from seeing any of them except his wife Mary and mother Clara, whom Rives owned. Perhaps Morris told too many stories of his escapades on the

---

[101]Virginia, Vol. 29 [Nelson County], p. 30, R. G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS.

[102]Floyd L. Whitehead, "agent," bills dated 15 May 1845, 25 Sept. 1850, Whitehead Papers, DU. By 1850 he was in partnership with his son.

[103]Virginia, Vol. 29 [Nelson County], pp. 30, 39, R. G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS.

southwestern frontier, or perhaps his bearing spoke to plainly, in Rives's opinion, to the African Americans on Rives's plantation.[104] Milo Morris, despite his legal status, clearly gained greater sense of independence than most slaves could by working for Whitehead. On the other hand, Morris also must have understood better than most the omnipresent implicit threat his master held over him and his family, having worked so intimately with the slave trader and seen the trade first-hand.[105]

The decade-long economic depression following the Panic of 1837 dampened traders' and planters' forced migrations from every part of the state. While enslaved emigration from tidewater and piedmont counties continued to dip in the 1850s, valley and western counties saw a sharp rise in export rates. Natural reproduction and traditionally low rates of export had finally led to a glutted supply of enslaved laborers in those areas. The steep decline of the Kanawha River salt industry, where slaves from surrounding western counties had frequently been hired to work, doubtless contributed to the rise in western Virginia's slave export rates in the 1850s.[106]

---

[104]Robert Rives to Floyd Whitehead, 5 May 1839, Whitehead Papers, UVA.

[105]Accordingly, Morris had worked to gain the Whiteheads' implicit trust and was allowed to travel alone, at least on one occasion. In 1839, he took a short trip with Floyd's brother John Whitehead and was sent back to deliver two trunks, a letter, and five dollars in cash to Floyd. John Whitehead to Floyd L. Whitehead, "by Milo," 25 July 1839, Whitehead papers, UVA.

[106]The Kanawha salt industry's decline is clear; as companies shut down, total annual salt production dropped by two-thirds during the 1850s. John E. Stealey III, The Antebellum Kanawha Salt Business and Western Markets (Lexington: Univ. of Kentucky Press, 1993), 133-134, 153. On slavery on the small farms of Appalachia, see Wilma A. Dunaway, "Diaspora, Death, and Sexual Exploitation: Slave Families at Risk in the Mountain South," Appalachian Journal 26 (Winter 1999): 128-149. In addition to agriculture and industry, many enslaved people worked as hired servants in Virginia's fashionable mineral springs resorts. See

An agricultural revival kept piedmont and tidewater exports in the 1850s lower than in the two previous decades, but booming piedmont tobacco-belt counties saw large numbers of slaves leave, with export rates ranging from a quarter to over a third of their enslaved populations for the decade. Agricultural reformers had been calling for "scientific" farming methods for years, urging planters to diversify their crop mix, rotate fields, aerate and fertilize their soils. John Hartwell Cocke even recommended abandoning tobacco altogether. All these methods required more labor and thus probably led planters to sell or move fewer slaves out of the state. For some farmers, experimentation had the opposite effect. A disgruntled planter named J. B. McClelland chided that Cocke could afford to abandon tobacco in Virginia only because his slaves grew cotton in Alabama. McClelland attested that he had given Cocke's scientific reform "a fair and honest trial" for five or six years. To his dismay, he discovered that he had gained "no Alabama adjunct to my Virginia estate, but that several of my slaves had taken up their permanent residence in that State, having been sold to meet deficiencies."[107] Others, however, apparently succeeded at improving their soils and thus their yields. Virginia tobacco, corn, and wheat production were all

---

Charlene Marie Lewis, "Ladies and Gentlemen on Display: Planter Society at the Virginia Springs, 1790-1860," Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Virginia, 1997, 145-146, 152-154.

[107]J. B. McClelland, "Tobacco Culture--Not Necessarily Exhausting or Demoralizing," Southern Planter 19 (1859), 146-148, quoted in Joseph C. Robert, Tobacco Kingdom: Plantation, Market, and Factory in Virginia and North Carolina, 1800-1860 (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1938), 29. Cocke's Alabama plantation did not actually turn a great profit; in fact it served as a staging ground for his scheme to colonize his enslaved workers to Liberia. See Randall Miller, ed., Dear Master: Letters of a Slave Family 1978 (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1990), 161 n.

at all-time high in 1860.[108]

Slavery's final frontier in North America had opened in the 1830s, when American cotton planters wrested Texas from Mexico. By 1845, Texans had succeeded in creating the fifteenth slaveholding state.[109] Virginia was no longer the largest slave exporting state by the 1850s, however. States once seeing large numbers of enslaved immigrants--North and South Carolina, Kentucky, and Tennessee--now were experiencing the labor glut Virginia slaveholders had for decades. Virginia's share of the interstate slave "export" thus dropped from more than 60 percent between 1800 and 1820, to between 40 and 50 percent in the 1820s through 1840s, and finally to a third in the 1850s.[110]

The 1830s, however, had seen the vast expansion of the slave export market in Virginia, encompassing almost every county of the commonwealth. While the numbers and rates of forced slave migration dipped in the 1840s and 1850s, slave traders had now familiarized themselves with the venues and avenues of the slave market across the state. They worked to make the trade more regular and predictable, using every means at their disposal: banks, telegraph lines, canals, turnpikes, and railroads, pricing circular sheets, slave jails

---

[108]On efforts at agricultural reform, see Avery O. Craven, Soil Exhaustion as a Factor in the Agricultural History of Virginia 1926 (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965), 138-147. On the piedmont tobacco renaissance, see Lynda Morgan, Emancipation in Virginia's Tobacco Belt, 1850-1870 (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1992), chs. 1, 2.

[109]William Dean Carrigan, "Slavery on the Frontier: The Peculiar Institution in Central Texas," Slavery and Abolition 20 (Aug. 1999): 63-96. Randolph B. Campbell, An Empire for slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821-1865 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989).

[110]See below, Appendix 3, table 3.

and trader boardinghouses. In these latter decades, especially, slave traders turned to newspapers to make their presence known to potential sellers all over Virginia.

Itinerant traders increasingly turned to the newspapers to announce their arrival and to mention the names of local men, often hotel or tavern owners, through whom they might be reached. In February 1831, Daniel F. Grigsby was scoping Charlottesville, testing the market there for willing sellers. He placed a notice in the local Virginia Advocate announcing that he "has stationed himself" in town "for a few weeks for the purpose of buying NEGROES." Like virtually all traders advertising in the newspapers, he offered the best cash prices, and carefully instructed readers how to find him. He would be staying at the Central Hotel, and if he was out, "Mr. David Fowler will attend to persons that may call." He warned potential sellers to come quick, since he would "not stay any longer than may be necessary to ascertain whether he can buy or no."[111]

Entrepreneurs working the slave market could cover broad territory with their advertising. S. H. Owens and G. Z. Miles of Richmond, commission merchants who acted also as slave-hiring agents, recognized the wide readership of local newspapers. Advertising in the Fredericksburg Weekly Advertiser, they listed personal references not only from Richmond and Fredericksburg, but also from Spotsylvania, Caroline, Culpeper, Stafford, Goochland, and Fluvanna

---

[111]Charlottesville Virginia Advocate, 4 Feb. 1831. Daniel Grigsby's relation to Alexander Grigsby of Fairfax County, whose practice of selling children to traders looks suspicious, is unknown. See Donald M. Sweig, "Alexander Grigsby: A Slavebreeder of Old Centerville?," Fairfax Chronicles 7 (July 1983): 1-3.

Counties.[112] Advertisers knew their readers understood the geography of Virginia's slave trade. Alexandria traders Bruin and Hill advertised they were always paying "the highest cash prices"--Richmond prices, they said, playing on public knowledge of Richmond as the bustling entrepôt of Virginia's trade. Meanwhile, Robert Brashear of Fauquier County advertised in an Alexandria paper that he was giving "CASH FOR NEGROES" every court day in Front Royal, eighty miles away.[113]

Richmond slave auctioneers Albert C. Pulliam and William H. Betts fully expected to see customers from all over the state. They took out ads in the Williamsburg Virginia Gazette, the Charlottesville Virginian Advocate, the Staunton Spectator, the Warrenton Weekly Whig, and the Bristol Virginia-Tennessee News. Hector Davis of Richmond likewise advertised in two Charlottesville papers his "safe and commodious Jail," on Franklin Street in Richmond, "where he will board all Negroes intended for his sales, at 30 cents per day."[114]

Northern Virginia seemed inundated with traders in the 1850s. Elijah McDowel, agent for B. M. and W. G. Campbell of Baltimore, advertised in the Martinsburg Gazette from his base in Winchester throughout the early 1850s. "I

---

[112]Fredericksburg Weekly Advertiser, 3 December 1859.

[113]Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser, 21 September 1850.

[114]Pulliam and Betts dissolved their firm in August 1860; A. C. Pulliam was then joined by R. P. Pulliam and D. K. Weisiger, his former clerk. Betts teamed up with E. J. Gregory and Bushrod W. Elmore "as clerk, who has an interest in the business." Staunton Spectator, 7 Aug. 1860; Williamsburg Virginia Gazette, Charlottesville Virginia Advocate, 16 Mar. 1860; Warrenton Weekly Whig, 26 May 1860; Bristol Virginia-Tennessee News, 13 July 1860; Charlottesville Review,18 May 1860.

shall be in Martinsburg every week," he noted, "and at the setting of all the Courts in Berkeley County." William Crow, likewise advertising in Martinsburg during this period, announced he was "anxious to purchase a large number" of slaves at the "highest cash prices," and indicated his full rotating itinerary: "He can be seen at the Berkeley Courts, at Martinsburg, on the second Monday, and at Berryville on the fourth Monday in each month, and usually [at] his residence in Charlestown." A third trader buying "for the New Orleans Market," A. P. Strayer, lived in Martinsburg.[115]

Leesburg saw a variety of Chesapeake traders working the environs. W. F. Kephart could be reached at his home in nearby Belmont. Alternately, he noted, sellers could "leave word with Alfred Wright, at the Loudon Hotel, Leesburg." J. Hendley Simpson similarly used Osborn's Hotel as a base, having taken up residence there. Apparently not a local buyer, he solicited the aid of his local readers. "Any information will be thankfully received," he said, "and liberal commissions paid." James Spinks, acting as an agent of Joseph Bruin of Alexandria, also paid for leads on good sales. He lived in Alexandria, but informants or sellers could reach him through his contact, Leesburg jailor Thomas Littleton.[116]

---

[115]Martinsburg Gazette 11, 18 Jan. 1854. Notations at the bottom of many ads indicated the original purchase date of ad, and length it was to run. Many were renewed yearly.

[116] Charles P. McCabe of Leesburg advertised himself as in two newspapers an "agent," but he did not say for whom. Leesburg Democratic Mirror, 15 Sept. 1858. Leesburg Washingtonian, 24 Sept. 1858, 11 May 1860. More than a dozen traders sought purchases in Loudon County over the years. Stevenson finds these men dominating the slave market, outbidding local buyers and representing the vast majority of all slave migration out of the area. Over a quarter of the slave population emigrated out of the county between 1820 and 1830, an amazing 98 percent of them with slave traders, not migrating planters. Brenda E. Stevenson, Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996), 176

Warrenton newspapers carried ads for their own locally based traders. Jeremiah Darnell advertised "Cash for Negroes" in 1828; Thomas W. Hunt did the same in 1851. By 1860, the competition had become stiff, as W. B. Brawner, Richard Cooper, and J. R. Shirley all offered cash prices for large numbers of slaves for the southern trade. Big-time Baltimore traders B. M. and W. L. Campbell also had a local agent, D. M. Pattie, working Warrenton for them. Locals seem to have felt the pinch of competition, and started specializing somewhat in their purchasing preferences. Shirley wanted especially 12 to 20-year-olds, while Brawner sought those aged 20 to 25. Brawner offered as special pitch to local potential sellers, stressing, "I will pay (as I always have been doing for a number of years past) the highest cash prices."[117]

In the Shenandoah Valley, locally based traders seem to have prevailed. John W. Smith of Waynesboro bragged he had "$100,000 IN CASH FOR NEGROES" and was paying the "VERY HIGHEST PRICES." He was a long-time trader, he said, and now sought to expand. "I wish to employ some good AGENTS to buy Negroes," he said, seeking "business men of good moral habits." Other locals, J. E. Carson of Middlebrook and Staunton, William Taylor of Brownsburg, twenty-five miles to the south in Rockbridge County, also

---

178; 387 n. See also Donald Sweig, "Northern Virginia Slaery: A Statistical and Demographic Investigation," Ph.D. diss., College of William and Mary, 1982.

[117]By 1860, the Campbells had developed an extensive and innovative system, incorporating not only the shipping and sales depots, but also a plantation each in the hinterlands of Baltimore and New Orleans, where slaves could work or convalesce, as deemed necessary, before sale. See Bancroft, Slave Trading, 316-317. Warrenton Virginia Gazette, 21[?] June 1828; Warrenton Republican, 3 May 1851; Warrenton Weekly Whig, 26 May 1860; Warrenton Flag of '98, 16 Feb. 1860. Some of these ads had run for a year or more before the date cited.

advertised in the Spectator.[118] Meanwhile in Lexington, some forty miles to the southwest, J. F. Tompkins faced little local competition, apparently, but Taylor and Carson both sought to horn in on his market. All three offered "the highest market prices in cash," each escalating in optimism, with Tompkins seeking "ONE HUNDRED likely NEGROES," Carson seeking "500 LIKELY YOUNG NEGROES," and Taylor topping them both: "1000 NEGROES WANTED."[119]

One Abingdon trader trumped them all. "Jos. M. Crockett wants all the Negroes that are for sale in this part of the country," he swaggered in an 1859 advertisement. "The highest prices," he promised, "will be paid in cash" for slaves between ten and thirty-five years old. As "the only licensed auctioneer in the town of Abingdon," he also offered his services to those wanting to sell locally. He wanted to make sure his business was noticed, placing different ads on pages two and three of the same issue of the Abingdon Democrat.[120]

Unlike northern Virginia and the Valley, where slavery might be said to be just holding its own, in southwestern Virginia railroad development was helping encourage an expansion of commercial agriculture built on enslaved labor.[121] Still, traders saw southwestern Virginia's expanding farming frontier as a fit place to solicit slaves for export, and they advertised with relish. "READ!

---

[118]Staunton Spectator, 10 Jan. 1860; 7 Aug., 14 Aug. 1860; see also March 21, 1844. Carson bought slaves in the area and traveled to New Orleans himself to sell them; see Dew, Bond of Iron, 254-256, 279-280.

[119]Lexington Valley Star, 26 Jan. 1860; 2 Aug., 9 Aug. 1860.

[120]Abingdon Democrat, 11 June 1859.

[121]Stevenson, Life in Black and White, 25, 27. Noe, Southwest Virginia's Railroad, 37-43.

READ!! READ!!! 500 Negroes Wanted," shouted the ambitious headline of James W. Morgan's 1859 ad in the Virginia-Tennessee News, a paper published in the newly incorporated railroad town of Bristol. Like all others, he offered the highest cash prices. James Fields of F. B. Hurt and Co. in Abingdon advertized both in his home town and in Bristol, twenty miles down the valley. F. B. Hurt and Co., conveniently next to the depot, advertised as an importer of "southern" goods and offered cash for local produce and meat. Fields's headline advertised loudly, "NEGROES WANTED!", but his aims were more modest, seeking only about fifteen to twenty at a time, ages ten to thirty, and offering "fair prices," in cash of course. Other Abingdon advertisers did not live there. Henry Rosenheim lived in Goodson, as Bristol was often still known. Dr. H. Clark of Rural Retreat, fifty miles to the northwest, worked in partnership with Gordon H. Hardy, of Abingdon. Like Fields, Hardy and Clark found support from F. B. Hurt and Co., noting that "Messrs Hurt, near Abingdon Depot, will attend to all applications in the absence of Mr. Hardy." A year later, Dr. Clark advertised alone, apparently making periodic trips to Abingdon and relying on "Messrs. McCarty and Benham, at the Virginia House, Abingdon," to "give any desired information in my absence."[122]

Other advertisements were intended for traders, rather than sellers, to see. Court sales and other local sales--such as the division of estates--were often on terms of long credit, with interest, more friendly to local buyers than to traders. Occasionally, however, sellers advertised that they explicitly wanted

---

[122]Bristol Virginia-Tennessee News, 13 July 1860, 3 June 1859. Abingdon Democrat. 11 June 59, 4 May 1860.

cash, inviting traders to the sale. For example, in 1845, the executors of Henry Waring's estate at Tappahannock advertised in the Richmond Enquirer their forty "very valuable" slaves, of both sexes, all ages. They wanted "CASH" and emphasized that "Distant purchasers are assured there will be no disappointment."[123] Other businesses catering to the slave trade also advertised, especially in the Richmond papers. These included the Lynchburg Hose and Fire Insurance Co. and the Richmond Fire Association, both which offered to insure slaves, and Ashe Levy, who sold clothing for the slave market and listed several traders as references. Traders frequented each others' sales, so Dickinson, Hill, and Co., Hector Davis and Co., and Pulliam and Betts probably intended their ads for traders as well as planters or local buyers. Finally, in a "NOTICE To Traders and Slave Owners," C. F. Hatcher announced that he had "demolished the old and re-built a New and Commodious Show-Room," on his lot in Gravier Street, New Orleans. He could now "accommodate over 200 Negroes for sale" at any given time and offered "good comfortable rooms and board" to the traders.[124]

While some of these traders sent their slave purchases directly to export firms in Baltimore and Alexandria, other men gathered up their own coffles and accompanied them to southern markets, as Mitchell and Loftus each had done. Many others, however, took them to Richmond, the hub of Virginia's slave

---

[123]Tadman, Speculators, 52-53,140. Bancroft, Slave Trading, 25. Richmond Enquirer, 17 Jan. 1845. For other examples, see Staunton Spectator, 7 Jan. 1847; Leesburg Democratic Mirror, 14 dec 59; Leesburg Washingtonian, 24 sep 1858; Warrenton Weekly Whig, 26 May 1860; Warrenton Flag of '98, 6 Dec. 1860.

[124]Richmond Enquirer, 3 Jan. 1860. On Levy, see also Bancroft, Slave Trading, 105-106.

market, and an entrepôt for buyers from the deep South as well. There traders sold slaves not only to visiting planters but also to other traders, often relying on commission merchants and auctioneers to perform the deed. Slaves might change hands once or twice before leaving Richmond, boarded in one of the slave jails owned by yet another trader.

The jails, like the one Hatcher built in New Orleans, served the export end of the trade, helping to make the trade more predictable by giving both buyers and sellers a place to hold slaves who might otherwise elude them when faced with sale. The best-known of these slave jails was Robert Lumpkin's. Lumpkin had worked as an itinerant trader for a time, but by the mid-1840s, he settled down and established a new business which would serve as a cornerstone of the Richmond slave market. He bought a lot in Shockoe Bottom that became known as Lumpkin's Alley. There he built a compound which by the 1850s comprised a jail, barracks, kitchen and bar-room, and boarding house, as well as his own home and office.[125]

Otis Bigelow, visiting Richmond from New York in the early 1850s, stopped in at Robert Lumpkin's jail to satisfy his curiosity. Lumpkin "received me courteously," Bigelow recalled, and "showed me over his jail," which appeared to him really as "a kind of hotel or boardinghouse for negro-traders

---

[125]Corey, 47, 76. According to fire insurance records, Lumpkin's house was substantial, brick, two stories high. Those records also testify to the gradual elaboration of the compound and the growth of the area immediately surrounding it, where Silas Omohundro's compound also lay. In 1844, before Lumpkin acquired the property, insurance agents noted that there were four wooden houses and two brick houses within thirty feet of the insured house. In 1852, there were seven wooden houses and five of brick; in 1858, there were nine of wood and six of brick. Mutual Assurance Society Against Fire on Buildings in the State of Virginia, Declarations (Silver Spring, Md.: National Micrographics Assoc., 1980), microfilm copy at UVA.

and their slaves. I was invited to dine at a large table with perhaps twenty traders, and there was little conversation." He described the place in tidy prose, emphasizing the "open court," the "large tank for washing," and the "long, two-story brick house" which had been appropriately "fitted up for men" below and for women above.[126] This description echoed Leavitt's account of Armfield's jail in Alexandria. Indeed, it appears that Lumpkin sought to render his compound as orderly as possible, dividing men from women and providing a wash space. Lumpkin's jail itself seized on a niche in the market, the need of traders and other slave buyers and sellers to be able to keep their own purchases in order in preparation for embarkation to the deep south. That the place held to certain proprieties was a bonus for its slaveholding customers.

Traders both expanded the market and sought to make it more predictable in several other key ways, employing pricing circulars, checking and deposit services at banks, and railroad freight lines. The problem of the market was one of distance, of getting to the sellers, discovering and distributing information from markets hundreds of miles away, and finally, getting the slaves to those markets in a timely and profitable manner.

To keep tabs on distant markets and to inform their own potential sellers of the state of the market, traders employed circular sheets, pricing slaves by various combinations of gender, category, age, height, or weight. This quasi-commodification was imperfect, they knew, but it did convey roughly the

---

[126]Bancroft, Slave Trading, 103, quoting from "MS. recollections of Otis Bigelow [d. 1919]," apparently in Bancroft's possession at the time. Bigelow guessed that these traders "were probably strangers to one another," but he was probably wrong. Traders' correspondence with each other frequently referred to other traders, and since many firms had upper-South and Gulf-coast offices, the fraternity of traders was indeed broad.

information they needed. For the planter actively looking for the best possible price, or for the petty speculator wanting to keep tabs on the market, Richmond trading houses provided handwritten circulars quoting the latest prices. Traders used these price quotes to communicate with each other, as well. In the interests of providing relatively specific price information while accounting for the obvious variety of human individuality involved in their chattels, traders devised a short-hand which seemed to suit them well enough. "No 1 men 700 to 725. No 1 Women 575 to 600," Benjamin Davis wrote Joseph Dickinson in December 1848; "If you have any on hand, you had better send them in." Ten years later, Dickinson was still watching the Richmond markets, still sending in slaves to the

auctioneers there, some of them likely his kin. In December 1858, Dickinson, Hill, and Co., sent him a circular with a more detailed breakdown of prices, adding the superior category of "Extra" men and women, those ostensibly more desirable than the standard "No. 1" slaves:

Extra no. 1 men,	1500
No. 1 men,	1400-1475
Extra no. 1 field girls,	1300-1350
No. 1 field girls,	1200-1275
Likely plough boys [ages:]	
17 and 18,	1200-1350
15 and 16,	1050-1175
12 and 14,	850-1050
[Likely plough] girls [ages:]	
14 and 15,	100-1150
12 and 13,	850-1000
10 and 11,	700-825
No. 1 woman and child	1250-1350

"Families rather dull and hard to sell," he added.

Not everyone gave their estimates by age. Some used weight. Pulliam and Slade used size. In 1850, they sent quotes to James Brady, a saddler in

Scottsville who periodically sent slaves down the James to Richmond. "Negroes are selling a shade better than when you were here," they told him, attaching the following list:

No. 1 boys	4′	375.
	4′3	450
	4′6	550-575 if heavy set
	4′9	675
	5′	750
	5′3	800 if Extra men
No. 1 Girls	4′	375
	4′3	450-475
	4′ 4 1/2″	500
	4′6	525
	4′ 7 1/2″	550
	4′9	600
	5′	650 -675
	5′2	700-720
	5′3 to 5′6	750.

Betts and Gregory, an auction house in Richmond, even had their own blank-form circular printed up. The traders simply filled in current market prices for each category printed on the form: "Extra Men," "No. 1," and "Second rate or Ordinary," with identical categories for the adult "Girls." Younger boys were

divided by height: 4 feet, 4'3", 4'6", 4'9", and 5 feet, with the notation printed at the bottom, "Girls of same height of boys about the same price." Clearly "Number One," or "A-Number One" men and women were good sellers, along with "extra men," "good shipping men," "breeding women," "wenches," and "woman with first child." Traders used other shorthand to describe those less desirable: "fair," "No. 2," "3rd rate," "scrubs," and "boys too small to plough."[127]

These served to convey quickly to potential buyers and sellers a vague idea of what the traders sought or had to offer. While this generic language did fully obscure enslaved people's individuality on paper, traders and clients were not able simply to act on these abstractions in practice. Unlike cattle or grain in the northwest, for example, enslaved people could never be fully commodified, even by--or perhaps especially by--commercial slave traders.

The effect of all this categorization was to allow sellers and buyers to gauge the prices they might pay or receive for slaves, sight unseen. It worked to facilitate the dissemination of market knowledge across space. Auctioneers could advise sellers when and what kind of slaves to bring in, or whether to hold onto certain kinds or try to sell locally rather than in the Richmond market. With this information, sellers could make market decisions without having to lay out the

---

[127]Benjamin Davis to Joseph Dickinson, 7 Dec. 1848; Dickinson Hill and Co. to Joseph Dickinson, 20 Dec. 1858; Joseph Dickinson Papers, DU. Pulliam and Slade to Brady, 30 Oct. 1850, Harris-Brady Papers, UVA. The printed blank circular of Betts and Gregory, along with a transcription of one from Dickinson, Hill, and Co., is reprinted in Tadman, Speculators, 58, 61. Tadman has compiled a Richmond price index based on the price information from over a dozen such circulars dating from 1846 to 1861; see 289-291, table A6.3. For two other examples of age-scale price lists, see those of Tyre Glen and Richard R. Reid, both reproduced in Tadman, Speculators, 287-288.

expense of traveling to Richmond themselves. The price guides were not perfect, of course, but they conveyed the needed information, and helped establish commonly held assumptions about what an "A-No. 1" man or a "scrub woman" looked like. In this way, they contributed to the partial commodification of enslaved African Americans. Every slaveholder or manager knew that each individual person they bought or sold was different, with different skills, character, and intellect. But every slave, in the minds of white buyers and sellers, could be placed in some category by which his or her value could be rightly gauged, at least in the abstract.[128]

Virginia banks provided another service traders and their customers found exceedingly convenient: accounts of draft and deposit. On March 1st, 1858, for example, D. K. Weisiger of Pulliam's auction house wrote to planter-doctor Iverson L. Twyman of Amherst County to notify him that the company had finally sold George but had overpaid Twyman's bank account by $35; they asked him to send a check for that amount.[129] Silas Omohundro kept an account with the Farmer's Bank of Virginia in the 1840s and 1850s, depositing checks in the amount of several hundred to several thousand dollars from fellow traders, among them Lumpkin, Pulliam, Tabb, Templeman, Tait, and Dickinson.[130]

R. H. Dickinson's agents and associates found these accounts effective

---

[128]Johnson, Soul By Soul, 58-59, 118-119.

[129]D. K. Weisiger to Iverson L. Twyman, 1 March 1858, Austin-Twyman Papers, WandM (RASP).

[130]Farmer's Bank of Virginia, account with Silas Omohundro, 1847-1859, Omohundro Papers, LVA.

ways to transfer money quickly from one city to another. Samuel Reese, for example, wrote Dickinson in June 1847 that he had depleted his cash resources and asked Dickinson to forward $4,000 more in Farmville Bank notes. Another agent of Dickinson similarly wrote from near Fredericksburg to request that Dickinson put his commission fees on deposit in the Farmer's Bank where he could access it. These traders, as well as private sellers, communicated from Buckingham, Tappahannock, King George, Gloucester, and Spotsylvania counties, as well as from Washington, D.C., and Lynchburg, and did business with Dickinson variously through accounts at the Bank of Virginia, most likely including its branches; the Farmers Bank of Virginia, including the mother bank at Richmond as well as the Norfolk and Alexandria branches; the Farmville Bank; the Exchange Bank at Norfolk; and others.[131]

Bankers were not only willing but anxious to have the slave traders' business. An officer with the Fredericksburg Branch of the Bank of Virginia wrote Rice Ballard in 1832 to confirm he had received Ballard's check for $10,000 from Richmond, and that he had credited it to the account of William Samuel Alsop, Ballard's buying partner in Fredericksburg. The banker communicated his desire to see more such transactions, adding "I should like to get a part of your northern checks if convenient."[132] Philip Thomas wrote his partner William A. J. Finney in 1859 to relate that Mr. Southerland of the Danville Bank

---

[131]Samuel Reese to Dickinson, 3 June 1847; L.[?] H. Dix to Dickinson, 5 Sept. 1860; see also John Puller to Dickinson, 18 Feb 1847; R. V. Tiffey to Dickinson, 7 Feb. 1847; John Tabb Callett[?] to Dickinson, 17 Aug. 1847; H. D. Hatton[?] to Dickinson, 1 March 1855; and Ben Temple to Dickinson, 7 March 1855; all in Dickinson Correspondence, AAS.

[132]William J. Roberts to Ballard, 31 Dec. 1832, Ballard Papers, UNC.

was well pleased with the hundreds of thousands of dollars the traders ran through that establishment every year. The Danville Bank, Southerland told him, was prepared to forward Thomas and Finney another $30,000 at once.[133]

This relatively easy access to cash gave professional slave traders an advantage over all other slave buyers. Traders could pay in cash, still a scarce commodity in many localities. Slaveholders selling in their local market normally sold on long credit, receiving annual payments of interest on the note they were given. Selling to traders, however, gave them the full price of the slave in cash. Even principled or reluctant sellers could scarce avoid this attraction. "I hate to sell negroes to traders," an indebted Lynchburg man wrote his friend in 1847, "but law and necessity you know force a man to do what his soul abhors." "I must get the highest prices," he knew, "and none but traders will give them."[134]

To better exploit this advantage, traders continued to develop their means of getting slaves to market hubs in Virginia and to the deep South markets. While the majority of people moved by the slave trade still walked to their deep South destinations, traders continued to use steam ships and finally railroads to

---

[133]Philip Thomas to William A. J. Finney, 6 Oct. 1859, William A. J. Finney Papers, DU. My thanks to Henry Wiencek for providing me with this citation.

[134]B. M. DeWitt to Iverson L. Twyman, 27 March 1847, Austin-Twyman Papers, WandM. For South Carolina, Thomas Russell finds the value of a court sale (usually on credit terms) about three-quarters the value of an average commercial sale (many of which would have been in cash). Thomas D. Russell, "Sale Day in Antebellum South Carolina: Slavery, Law, Economy, and Court-Supervised Sales," Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1993, 229, fig. 12; 242. On cash versus credit purchases and the price differential, see Deyle, "Domestic Slave Trade," 83-84; and Tadman, Speculators, 52-55, 104-105, 137.

augment the foot traffic.[135] After Franklin and Armfield shut down their operation in 1836, other traders worked to capitalize on the network of trade they had built.[136] William H. Williams of Washington, D. C., bought the Tribune and the Uncas, while George Kephart, a trader from Maryland whom Franklin and Armfield had cultivated as an agent, took over their Duke Street offices and jail. Kephart also purchased the brig Isaac Franklin, underscoring his identification as their true legatee in trade. He may not have not have been immediately successfully in dominating the area as had his predecessors, however, and he sometimes sold space on his ship to his ostensible competitors. The Isaac Franklin could hold as many as one hundred fifty slaves, but when it sailed on November 20th, 1837, for example --after the economic panic of that year--it carried only 73 slaves: 26 shipped by Robert N. Windsor of Washington to his consignee George Lane, and the remaining 47 by the agents of Bunk, Watt, and Co. of New Orleans.[137]

Nor were all coastal ships built to carry such large numbers. James H. Birch employed the steamer Columbia in 1837, sending only a dozen or so slaves at a time. From 1845 through 1849, John Rogers of Aquia Creek piloted several steamers registered in Washington, including the Powhatan, the Augusta, and

---

[135]Tadman, Speculators, 47, 71, 77. Deyle agrees; comments at panel presentation, American Historical Association Meeting, 10 Jan. 1999. I have no reason to doubt this, but no one has tried to estimate proportions of traded slaves traveling on foot, by ship, or by train. No work has treated the issue more thoroughly than Bancroft, Slave Trading.

[136]Isaac Franklin pulled out of the business just in time, retiring as a millionaire to his estate in middle Tennessee before the speculative bubble burst in 1837. Stephenson, Isaac Franklin, xx.

[137]"Manifests of negroes, mulattoes, and persons of color," Slavery Collection, NYHS.

the Baltimore. He carried small groups of enslaved passengers, anywhere from half a dozen to two dozen at a time, for various Alexandria and Washington traders, including Joseph Bruin, Robert Winsor, Henry P. Hill, Robert Brashear, James H. Simpson, and J. W. Starke. Captain Rogers even served as consignee on at least one occasion, taking liability for Nathaniel Winsor's slave shipment in May 1847.[138]

Traders also increasingly employed railroads in the late 1840s, continuing through the 1850s, and even into the Civil War. Railroad companies in the 1850s oversaw the construction or upgrading of nearly one thousand miles of track in Virginia.[139] As Virginia extended and connected its network to that of North Carolina, Maryland, and Tennessee, traders put these interstate rail lines to good use. Writing to his business associate in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1859, trader Phillip Thomas estimated he could get his coffle by rail from Richmond to Mobile--a distance of some seven hundred miles--in only eight days. Remarkably, he made the return trip in only fifty-five hours.[140] Some rail companies explicitly solicited slave traders' long-distance business. The Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, linking Lynchburg to Bristol along the old trading routes, thence to the southwestern markets, offered free passage to enslaved

---

138"Manifests of negroes, mulattoes, and persons of color," Slavery Collection, NYHS.

139For a brief overview of each company's rail construction, see Conrad Wright, "The Development of Railroad Transportation in Virginia," Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1930, 19-60. See also Hunter, Claudius Crozet, chs. 6-8.

140Thomas to Finney, 5 Oct. 1859, 8 Nov. 1859, Finney Papers, DU, quoted in Deyle, "Domestic Slave Trade," 106-107.

children sent by traders.[141]

Virginia newspaper editors especially took an interest in traders' use of the modern railway, attracted by the slave traffic it facilitated in a highly visible way. The Petersburg Express in 1859 remarked on the "almost endless outgoing of slaves," while the Portsmouth Transcript noted that the Seaboard and Roanoke Railroad carried "heavy shipments" of slaves "almost every day." Portsmouth had become an entrepôt for the Chesapeake leg of the trade. "Yesterday," the editor continued, "about a hundred arrived from the eastern shore of Maryland and passed through, and this morning another carload from Delaware was sent on." Deep-south readers looked to Virginia for news of this mass-market migration, and Texas and Alabama papers dutifully reprinted the Virginia reports.[142]

The distances to be covered, the changing terrain, and varying availability of transportation all meant that several forms of transportation were often used in succession. Lorenzo L. Ivy, who had endured slavery in Pittsylvania County, remembered that long coffle lines of slaves were marched to the railroad depot in Danville, where traders would put them on the cars bound for deep-south markets.[143] Danville's southern connection at the time was via North Carolina.

---

[141]Charles W. Turner, "Railroad Service to Virginia Farmers, 1828-1860," Agricultural History 22 (Oct. 1948), 242, cited in Noe, Southwest Virginia Railroad, 83.

[142]Petersburg [Virginia] Express quoted by the Austin [Texas] State Gazette, 12 Feb. 1859; Portsmouth [Virginia] Transcript quoted by the Montgomery [Alabama] Confederation, 13 Jan. 1859; both quoted in Bancroft, Slave Trading, 291.

[143]Lorenzo L. Ivy interview, 28 April 1937, in Weevils in the Wheat, eds. Charles L. Perdue Jr., Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Phillips (1976; repr., Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1994), 153.

Another formerly enslaved man suggested how the journey might have continued from there. Kade Collins of Louisiana remembered that a trader had brought him in a gang from North Carolina in the late 1850s. They had traveled by rail to Mobile, thence by ship to New Orleans.[144]

Lines extending out into Richmond's hinterlands served that hub's local traders and sellers as well, providing local transportation to market. By 1847, a Richmond man could write his brother that "Not a Carr, boat, or stage scarcely comes to this place that does not bring negroes for sale."[145] Riding along the established rail corridor between Fredericksburg and Petersburg, prominent travelers Charles Dickens and Frederick Law Olmstead each found they shared their trains with African Americans being shipped to southern markets. Similarly, an attorney heading through Virginia on business in 1856 was surprised to find that "every train going south" carried twenty or more enslaved passengers. He noted they were always "consigned to the 'nigger car', which is very generally also the smoking-car, and sometimes the baggage-car."[146]

The traffic was both local and long-distance, flowing both ways, though mainly towards Richmond and then out of the state. Alexander Fitzhugh, acting on the behalf of several other slaveholders, sent four slaves from Falmouth to Richmond auctioneer R. H. Dickinson of Richmond by "car" in 1846. Another

---

144Bancroft, Bancroft, Slave Trading, 292.

145W. H. Dennis to John E. Dennis, 14 Feb. 1847, John E. Denniss Papers, DU, quoted in Deyle, "Domestic Slave Trade," 74.

146Charles Dickens, Frederick Law Olmsted, and Lyman Abbot, all cited in Bancroft, Slave Trading, 289-90.

slaveholder instructed Dickinson to send his "girl" back home by the "cars" if he could not get more than $500 for her in Richmond. In 1855, N. B. Whitlock of Tappahannock sent Dickinson a slave by rail from Fredericksburg to be checked at the infirmary, most likely to be examined and appraised for sale.[147] Railroad officials were happy to comply with traders' and buyers' interests, even serving personally as transport agents. When Isaac C. Carrington of Charlotte County found himself in need of a "first rate cooper" to make flour barrels in 1863, he instructed S. R. Fondren to procure him such a slave, and to "send him up by Conductor Taylor" of the Richmond and Danville Railroad, who would then "deliver him to Mr. Gaines, agent at Mossingford Station," where Carrington lived.[148]

Traders and their customers called in all these resources in facilitating the transfer of slaves and money. For example, Thomas Robinson of Aylett's, about thirty miles from Richmond, wrote to auctioneers Dickinson, Hill, and Co., in March of 1855, on the return of an enslaved woman he had purchased from them. "She does not answer the purposes I purchased her for," and was "not suitable for the fields," he wrote. He was therefore sending her "over by the Tappahannock Stage of to day," and wanted them to sell her again. He had "no use for her" and was willing to take "whatever she will bring." He instructed them to sell her, "deduct expenses and send me a draft on Richmond for the balance." By taking advantage of the mails, the stage line, and banking services,

---

[147]Alexander Fitzhugh to Dickinson, 9 Feb. 1846; James M. Delly[?] to Dickinson, 23 Feb. 1846; N. B. Whitlock to Dickinson and Hill, 2 March 1855; Dickinson Correspondence, AAS.

[148]Isaac C. Carrington to S. R. Fondren, 26 May 1863, in Slavery MSS Collection, CHS.

Robinson could take care of this unpleasant business without spending any time away from home, not to mention the expenses of travel, food, and lodging involved in getting to Richmond himself. The convenience to sellers obviously suited the traders, who in this case stood to make commission, plus food, lodging, and perhaps clothing, on the same enslaved woman for the second time.[149] In 1860, R. G. M. Dix wrote from his home near Fredericksburg to auctioneers Betts and Gregory in Richmond. He had found a prospective seller who had traveled quite "a distance," and he needed $1,300 cash immediately. He instructed the auctioneers to forward him the money via "the conductor of the Fredbg Railroad to the care of Mr. Chandler the ticket agent in Fredericksburg." Dix would then "have Doct. J. R. Dansy the cl[her]k of the Steamer Virginia" to pick it up and deliver it to him.[150]

The breadth and complexity of these market connection was met by the diversity of men willing to stake a claim in the slave trade. As a group, they were neither social pariahs nor prominent gentry.[151] Like all businessmen of the era, their fortunes and business ethics varied greatly. The range of traders' other activities, wealth, practices, and reputations was broad, as reflected in the credit

---

[149]Thos. Robinson to Dickinson, Hill and Co., 10 Mar. 1855, Dickinson Correspondence, AAS.

[150]R. G. M. Dix to Betts and Gregory, 28 July 1860. Dickinson Correspondence, AAS.

[151]For the epitome of proslavery scapegoating of slave traders, see Daniel R. Hundley, Social Relations in Our Southern States (New York: Henry B. Price, 1860). Tadman dismantles this myth in Speculators, ch. 7.

ratings reports of R. G. Dun and Co. of New York.[152] Through Dun andS Co.'s reports, these men found themselves integrated into the larger national market revolution. With credit relations expanding far beyond personal acquaintances, with the commercialization of credit and debt, Dun and Co. sought to expand the network of information available to creditors. Slave traders, as men of capital moving across the nations ever-broadening market networks, were as likely targets for Dun's probing eye as any merchant.[153]

Joseph M. Crockett of Abingdon, for example, while boasting his intent to control southwest Virginia's slave trade, burned his candle at both ends and could barely fulfil his obligations. Dun's local agent reported in 1859 that Crockett had "led since his marriage a fast life" and had thereby "disposed of

---

[152]The firm of R. G. Dun and Co., first known as the Mercantile Company, was founded in 1841 by New York financier and moderate abolitionist Lewis Tappan. By the 1850s, over 2,000 agents were stationed throughout the United States and Canada. These local businessmen reported biannually to Dun and Co. on any information they could dig up on the finances, business practices, and local opinion of merchants and others likely to buy wholesale goods on credit, especially in New York. Dun and Co. would then digest the anecdotal reports, create a numerical rating for each merchant, and supply these ratings to creditors on a subscription basis. The R. G. Dun and Co. Collection, comprising the original manuscript volumes of agents' report, is on deposit at Baker Library, Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration (HBS). See James H. Madison, "The Credit Reports of R. G. Dun and Co. As Historical Sources," Historical Methods Newsletter 8 (Sept. 1975): 128-131; and "The Evolution of Commercial Credit Reporting Agencies in Nineteenth-Century America," Business History Review 48 (1974): 164-186.

[153]Lisa C. Brawley dubs Dun and Co.'s credit ratings system "a new form of travel writing" meant to keep pace with the expanding migrations of merchants across the country. She also compares one of the agents' reports to a runaway slave advertisement, but the credit report example she chooses was rather anomalous in its detailing a merchant's scars and lost tooth. Her analogy is nonetheless perceptive. In the expanding geography of the nineteenth-century market world, credit reports, runaway advertisements, and letters of reference resonated with the slaves' certificates of character Louisiana briefly required of traders bringing in large numbers of unknown enslaved people from the upper South (see below). With all these forms of identification, free men attempted to mediate the perceived dangers of anonymity in this expansive world. Lisa C. Brawley, "Fugitive Nation: Slavery, Travel, and Technologies of American Identity, 1830-1860," Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1995, 2-4.

most of his visible prop[ert]y."[154] James Brady was a saddler as well as a slave trader from 1849 to at least 1857. Dun's agents considered him a good risk.[155] Two young men named Dabney and Cawthorn, aged 25 and 23 respectively, opened a slave auctioneering stand in Richmond around 1840 and did a modest business, continuing in partnership until 1851, at which time they owned around $15,000 in property between them.[156] By contrast, in 1845, Dun's Lynchburg reporter noted that Michael Hart, age 45, had gone into partnership with Alfred Moses, running a dry goods, grocery, and clothing store. The agent resorted to contradictory ethnic stereotyping in characterizing their business practices: "Jews in name and nature," the two made "not less than the Irishmans profit 'buy a coat for $1. and sell for $2.'" Hart had bigger fish to fry, however. "His principal bus[iness]," the agent noted, "is his trade in Neg[roe]s." He was rumored to be in partnership with one of the Davises of Petersburg, to whom he most likely would have forwarded slaves for the Richmond market. Hart and his wife were worth over $100,000, and he was known as a "man of gd. standing, firm bus[iness]. qualities, sober, indus[trious]. and energetic." Moses, his understudy, was young, single, and propertyless, but, importantly, "sober." The two continued in excellent standing, with Hart amassing another $100,000 over the next six years in slave trading, while Moses gained only about $2,000 or

---

154Interestingly, the agent did not mention Crockett's attempted entry into the slave trade. Virginia, Vol. 52 [Washington Co.], p. 31, R. G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS.

155Virginia, Vol. 2, [Albemarle Co.], p. 74, R. G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS.

156Virginia, Vol. 34 [Richmond city], p. 60, R. G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS.

$3,000 in property through the dry goods store. In 1851, Hart moved to Richmond, leaving Moses without a bankrolling partner and therefore out of business.[157]

Wilson C. Hewett of Bedford County backed his slave trading with a dry goods store and confectionery from around 1846 to 1853. He was worth about $4,000 and paid his debts in cash. Seeing greener pastures, he "removed to Ky." in 1853, but returned four years later and bought the Hopkins House in Liberty, which he continued to run successfully until at least 1860; Dun did not mention whether he had abandoned his previous speculative occupation or not.[158] J. Stein and J. Rosenheim of Bristol, Tennessee, just over the Virginia state line, were brothers-in-law who sold "ready made clothing." They had just started in 1858. Stein lived in Richmond and was designated a "Negro buyer," though they were both involved in the trading. They held only about $15,000 in property, including their $2,000 trading house in Bristol.[159]

Reputations changed, as well, and Dun's reporting agents sought to keep

---

[157]Virginia, Vol. 9 [Lynchburg/Campbell Co.], p. 23, R. G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS. Despite the presence of a few Jewish families in the Virginia domestic slave trade--notably members of the Davis family of Petersburg and Richmond--Jewish traders were not disproportionately represented in the trader. Dun's agents were careful to note merchants' ethnicity, especially when Jewish; it is unclear, however, whether a Jewish merchant's ethnicity prejudiced Dun's agents for him or against him; both "negative" and "positive" attributes of stereotypical Jewish mercantile practices were noted in Dun's ledgers. For Dun's reports on Benjamin A. Davis and George A. Davis, see Virginia, Vol. 11 [Petersburg/Dinwiddie Co.], pp. 380, 406, R. G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS. Saul S. Friedman, Jews and the American Slave Trade (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1998).

[158]Virginia, Vol. 6 [Bedford Co.], p. 438, R. G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS.

[159]Tennessee, Vol. 27 [Sullivan Co.], p. 175, R. G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS.

up with entrepreneurs' shifting investments and changing credit-worthiness. In 1850, Dun's Richmond agent reported that Richard H. Dickinson "has always been consid. gd for mod[erate] amt tho' like most men in his occupation his own char[acter]. is not pfy [perfectly] irreproachable." The agent's early opinion of Dickinson's solvency was dubious, but by July 1851, he had changed his mind. Dickinson was now deemed to be good for his debts, "altho this class of persons are never absolutly reliable." "Their bus[iness] is speculation and their means being in money and not prop[erty]," the report continued, Dickinson's finances "are at all times uncertain." Richard's brother had joined him by that time, and though they were "not vy high toned," they were solvent.[160] In 1857 another Dickinson entered the business of "buying and selling negroes," having formerly employed his own slaves in a tobacco factory he had financed. Two years before that, Dickinson, Hill, and Co. picked up a new trading agent when flour mill partnership of H. T. and E. S. Taliaferro split up, one of them joining R. H. Dickinson's new company.[161]

The career of John Smith illustrated the difficulties Dun's agents had in keeping tabs on some traders. In 1851, Smith ran a country store in Burke's Mill, at the head of Naked Creek in Augusta County. He was a Dutchman, the brother-in-law of a known merchant in Shenandoah County. Worth only $600 in 1851 (that the agent could discover, anyway), he held over $10,000 in 1853, had moved to Mt. Crawford in Rockingham County, and was rumored to be

---

[160]Virginia, Vol. 34 [Richmond city], p. 109, R. G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS.

[161]Virginia, Vol. 34 [Richmond city], pp. 85, 229, R. G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS.

"deeply eng[age]d. in injudicious speculations." Local opinion had it that "his career will be of short duration." Three years later, Dun's agent thought Smith was indeed involved in slave trading, but had no more details about his success or failure. Dun's agents caught up with Smith only in 1865, when he was selling clothing in Staunton.[162]

Dun's agents also revealed that they were in fact not much interested in keeping tabs on slave traders, not out of any moral compunction but rather out of business interest. Dun and Co. were interested only in merchants likely to buy goods on credit in New York, which men working exclusively as slave traders were unlikely to do. In 1853, Dickinson and Bro. were operating exclusively as slave auctioneers, and the agency lost interest in reporting on them.[163]

Successful traders gained the respect of their community by adhering to standards other slaveholders found acceptable. Some were deemed unscrupulous and others fair businessmen. Many sought to adhere to certain standards of behavior, both towards their own families and towards the African-American families they so frequently destroyed. Publicly, they played themselves up as gentleman traders. Privately, they often behaved as the moral, loving fathers held as a standard in domestic literature, especially in the North. They demonstrated tendencies towards both patriarchal and paternalistic visions of what it meant to be a public man, a husband, and a father. Their unique

---

[162]Virginia, Vol. 5 [Staunton/Augusta Co.], pp. 35, 117, R. G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS.

[163]Virginia, Vol. 34 [Richmond city], pp. 85, 229, R. G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS.

position--rooted in Virginia's slaveholding culture, and linked to the larger market networks of the burgeoning nation--meant that they were at once provincial and cosmopolitan. Their public and domestic lives demonstrated these tensions. Slave traders' rather unique position, as part of Virginia's patriarchal elite, and also as part of a larger, national mercantile class, put them squarely in both worlds. Virginia traders' familiarity with the triracial codes of the deep South may also have contributed to the practice of two Richmond traders who recognized and even left all their property to their enslaved families.

These trends met most paradoxically in the lives of two slave traders and their families. Each of these men, Robert Lumpkin and Silas Omohundro, worked from a stationary Richmond base in the 1850s. Each directed or witnessed the sale of hundreds of men, women, and children to traders and planters in both local and deep-south markets. And each man had a wife and children they kept in legal slavery until his death.

Their careers bore remarkable similarities. Both men operated jails and boarding houses, standing as way stations and entrepôts for the Chesapeake-Cotton South slave trade. Lumpkin kept a jail as early as 1846, and by the early 1850s his compound, including a boarding house, had become a Richmond institution. The small street it occupied, off Wall (now Fifteenth) between Franklin and Broad, lay in the midst of the slave-trading district that was known by many as Lumpkin's Alley. With his central location, Lumpkin catered to long-distance traders. A visitor in the early 1850s recalled taking a meal with as many

as twenty traders there at one long table.[164] Omohundro kept a similar establishment from at least 1851, selling to or providing lodging for over one hundred regular traders and "transient" planters, the majority of whom came from the deep South states.[165]

Both Lumpkin and Omohundro, most strikingly, married enslaved women. Although neither marriage had legal standing, both men acknowledged their enslaved children and bequeathed their estates to the mothers of these children. The evidence for these relationships is relatively clear, as evidence for such relationships goes, but the nature and meanings of them proves somewhat more elusive.

Silas Omohundro, like other money-minded businessmen, kept not only a list of his sales and boarding house customers, but also a personal account book detailing expenditures on his household; these records survive for the period 1855 through his death in 1864. Therein he documented the affection he lavished

---

[164]Lumpkin's jail appeared in correspondence with traders by 1848; [?] L. Campbell to [R. H.] Dickinson, 15 Aug.1848, Dicksinson Correspondence, AAS. For a description of Lumpkin's and Omohundro's environs, see Bancroft, Slave Trading, 95-104. On both these men and their families, see below.s

[165]Silas and R. H. Omohundro Ledger, 1857-1863, UVA (RASP); and Silas Omohundro Papers, LVA. I count at least 118 different buyers in the Ledger 1857-1863; Gregg Kimball has tallied the fifty-four larger buyers (including both traders and traveling planters) whose locations were recorded. Twenty (thirty-seven percent) came from upper-south states (half from Tennessee); thirty-four (sixty-three percent) came from the lower south, almost evenly divided between Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi; curiously only three buyers came from Louisiana, despite the prevalence of the Chesapeake-New Orleans trade generally. My thanks to Kimball for sharing his notes with me. Kimball found more exaggerated division between deep- and upper-south destinations of enslaved members of Richmond's First African Baptist Church, who requested transfers of membership after resettling. Between 1841 and 1859, thirty-five out of fifty (seventy percent) had been forced to move to the deep south; ten (twenty percent) went to upper-south states or border cities. See Gregg Kimball, "Place and Perception: Richmond in Late Antebellum America," Ph.D. diss., UVA, 1997, 197-198, 228, 231-232.

on his enslaved wife and children, expressed, of course, in material goods and money. On March 1, 1855, he noted, "Cash to son Colon in gold," $20.00. Six weeks later he wrote, "Give to Daughter Alice 1 Locket," $7.50. He listed cash spent to buy the children hats, bonnets, shoes, undershirts, cloaks, clothing, and other necessities and niceties. Twice in July he gave them money "to go see the Balloon." Twice he sent them on a short trips to Petersburg. On September 24, he deducted "Cash to Children Silas, Alice, Colon and Lucy $5. each." He bought Silas a $2.50 wheel barrow. In all that year, Silas spent over one hundred fifty dollars on these four children.

As the children grew older, Silas bestowed on them goods befitting of young southern ladies and gentlemen; in 1859, he bought a parasol for Alice and "leghorn or Panama" hats for the boys, plus boots for Silas and a gun for Colon. Silas and his children partook in technology's latest aids to domestic sentimentalism, paying to have eight "likenesses" made for Colon and Lucy. Moreover, like other doting southern parents, he sent them north for a proper education. The younger Silas had begun his schooling locally in 1855, but by 1859, he and his sister Alice were taking music lessons in the North. Their father had provided them with an arithmetic book, a grammar, a dictionary, and other unnamed volumes, provided them with music and dancing lessons, and sent them gifts of candy and cash while they were away.[166]

Silas lavished more extravagant gifts on Corinna. Like her children, she

---

[166]On 19 Sept. 1859, Omohundro listed "Cash sent to buy Silas 2 pr Boots," "Candy sent to Silas and Alice 2 lbs.," and "Freight on box to Silas"; he did not name the destination. On 28 December 1859, he listed "Cash Advanced for teaching Children Music," $50.00, and "Expenses North Dancing lessons Books andc," $88.32; most likely this last entry was for the children. Omonhudro Papers, LVA.

received an education along with Silas's intermittent gifts of cash and gold, ranging from $5 to $100 in value. In July 1858, after returning from a trip west, he gave her two presents: a jewelled breast pin and a diamond ring. Together, he had spent $265 on them. That fall, he gave her one thousand fifty dollars cash in one lump sum, and before he died in 1864, he had presented her with a second diamond ring, a diamond cross pendant, and a gold watch and chain. On November 7th, 1863, despite the shortages and inflation of the wartime blockade, he spent $44 for "1 gallon Jamaker Rum for Corinna." Clearly, he had found in her a suitable life partner. As he testified in his will, she had "always been a kind, faithful and dutiful woman to me, and an affectionate mother."[167]

His language here may perhaps have betrayed that the relationship was something other from the sentimentalized ideal. He balked at referring to Corinna as his wife, of course, saying instead she had been a faithful woman to him. She was kind and faithful to him, but her affection, in his construction, was bestowed not on explicitly on himself, but rather on their children. She was an affectionate mother, he said, not wife, or even woman. He obviously admired all these qualities in her, however, and perhaps his language hints at a certain independence he recognized in her.

Whatever the nature of their relationship during his lifetime, he sought to provide her, along with their children, with a home and an income after his death. By March 1864, he knew he was dying. That spring, he bought an unprecedented three gallons of whiskey, despite the exorbitant prices stimulated

---

[167]For the 1855 to 1859 gifts, see "Market and General Account Book, 1858 [i.e., 1855]-1864," Omohundro Papers, LVA. Will Book 2, Richmond City, Circuit Court, 228. My thanks to Josh Rothman for providing me with a copy of the will.

by the war. He remained lucid, however, as he made out his last will.[168] His first act of will constituted an open acknowledgement of his enslaved family, and a desire to have them set on free footing. "In the first place," he began,

> I do absolutely emancipate and forever set free from all manner of servitude my woman Corinna Omohundro, and her five children, Allice Morton Omohundro, Colan Omohundro, Riley Crosby Omohundro, William Rainey Omohundro, and George Nelson Omohundro, and who are also my children.[169]

He left virtually the entire estate to Corinna and the children. She was to take possession of the house, while the executor was to sell the other property, to divide the proceeds evenly into trust funds for the children, and to pay the interest on those investments to Corinna for the family's support.[170]

Omohundro clearly had a desire to provide for his family after emancipation. Just as clearly, he understood profoundly the economic dangers which might befall them. As an expert in the manipulation of property, he knew how men used the common law principle of coverture to gain control of a wife's estate. He acted to remove that economic threat to Corinna, explicitly providing that if she were to take a husband, her inheritance could not fall "subject to his

---

168Will Book 2, Richmond City, Circuit Court, 228.

169All these were mentioned in the account book. Two other children acknowledged in the account book--Silas and Lucy--were not mentioned at all in the will. Omohundro Papers, LVA.

170"Market and General Account Book," Omohundro Papers, LVA. Will Book 2, Richmond City, Circuit Court, 228-230.

debts, contracts, or control."[171]

Omohundro further understood, especially in the uncertain time in which he wrote, that Corinna might want to quit Richmond and raise the children elsewhere. He left her their home on Seventeenth Street in Richmond, including his slave jail, but he had also provided her with an alternative home in Philadelphia, a double lot with "tenements" on Poplar Street.

Robert Lumpkin's family situation mirrored closely that of Omohundro. Like Silas, Robert kept house with an enslaved woman, Mary F. Lumpkin, whom he treated as his wife and who bore him several children, including Martha Dabney, Annie E., Robert, Richard C., and John L., all bearing the surname Lumpkin. Like Omohundro, Lumpkin apparently sent at least two of his daughters north for their education. Since he did not compose his last will until 1866, the emancipation of his wife and children was a fait accompli, but in almost every other way, Lumpkin's will resembled Omohundro's. He gave Mary the choice of residences, either the property in Shockoe Bottom which included the jail, or a lot he had bought in Philadelphia, on South Eleventh Street. He left the entire estate to Mary--unless she married, in which case it was to be divided among the children. He went even further along these lines than Omohundro had, setting up trusts for his daughters so their inheritances could never fall prey to any husbands' debts. Lumpkin also established Mary as the sole executrix of

---

[171]On common law restrictions of married women's property-holding, and on the foothold women gained through separate estates, see Suzanne Lebsock, Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860 (New York: W. W. Norton, 1984), 23-24, 77-79.

the will, furthering her autonomy in the management of his estate.[172]

Like Omohundro, too, Lumpkin found some difficulty describing his actual relationship to Mary and to their children in the legal language of the will. He first named her as "Mary F. Lumpkin, who resides with me." He introduced his other heirs as "her children," though he acknowledged his paternity not only through their surnames but also by appending to the list of Mary's children, "and any other child she may hereafter have by me."[173]

Apart from Lumpkin's will, evidence for the tenor of his domestic relations is less direct, though more suggestive, than for Omohundro. Anthony Burns, the Virginia fugitive recaptured and returned from Boston in 1854, found himself locked in a garret room of Lumpkin's jail awaiting sale. As Burns apparently told his biographer, Charles Stevens, he had met not only Lumpkin's "yellow wife" but also his "black concubine." Both these women seem to have taken an interest in the famous fugitive. Lumpkin's wife looked after Burns's spiritual welfare--delivering him a testament and a hymnal--while the concubine, Stevens insinuated, seized on other aspects of the man. She had, in his words, "manifested a friendly spirit toward the prisoner" and "contrived to hold conversations" with him across the space separating his garret window with her upper-story apartment in Lumpkin's house across the yard. This open-air "intercourse" between Lumpkin's prisoner and his concubine "roused his

---

[172]Charles H. Corey, A History of the Richmond Theological Seminary (Richmond, Va.: J. W. Randolph Co., 1895), 48, 75. Richmond City, Hustings Court, Will Book 24, pp. 419-422. My thanks to Josh Rothman for providing me with a copy of the will.

[173]Richmond City, Hustings Court, Will Book 24, pp. 419-422.

[Lumpkin's] jealousy," Stevens said, and the trader put an immediate stop to it.[174] This is the only tantalizing shred of evidence we have for Lumpkin's relationship with the concubine. We are left only to speculate what this second woman might have meant in the Lumpkin household.

It is conceivable that Omohundro kept a mistress as well. He stressed in his will that everything he owned was to be left to Corinna and the children, making only one crucial exception. "My woman Agness," he said, "and her two children, Virginia and Waverly," were to be set free. These three did not received any property and he made no other comment about them in the will, but in December 1863, he had given Waverly a gift of $2, a Christmas gift he also gave to several other servants. There is no other reason to believe Agness was a concubine, but perhaps the parallel way Silas referred to "my woman Corinna Omohundro, and her five children" and to "my woman Agness and her two children" reflected more than a perfunctory use of language. If Agness did in fact live as Omohundro's concubine, then both women were, legally and sexually, "his." But Agness's subordinate domestic status--and therefore, that of her children--might be implied from the language of his will: not only did fail to leave them any property, he failed to honor them with any surname, quite unlike Corinna Omohundro and her children, all recognized individually as

---

[174]Stevens claims to have interviewed Burns extensively before writing the biography. As an abolitionist, he would have little to gain from a strictly polemical point of view by including this description of events in Lumpkin's compound; the story was likely Burns's, who could have had his own self-serving reasons for telling or embellishing upon the story of Lumpkin's black concubine, perhaps even inventing the story. Charles E. Stevens, Anthony Burns: A History (Boston: J. P. Jewett, 1854), 192-193.

Omohundros.[175] As with the Lumpkins, we can only speculate what the dynamic of sexual and domestic relations may have been within the Omohundro compound.

It is equally difficult to say how these two enslaved wives--Mary F. Lumpkin and Corinna Omohundro--fitted themselves and their children into their households, the local community, and the larger, predominantly "biracial," society of Virginia. These questions of identity are difficult. No clear line separated Corinna Omohundro's home from the work of her husband. He, for example, recorded the expenses of doting on her and the children in the same book in which he occasionally recorded minor business expenses. A week after he recorded giving Alice her locket, for example, he noted a payment to R. B. Crane "for Repairing Jail Steps." He rarely recorded any slave-selling business in this book, for he kept a separate ledger for that, but on August 3, 1855, ten days after sending his children to see "the Balloon," he entered that he had paid ten dollars "Commission on Little Girl Lucinda to Poindexter." His account book suggests also that Corinna helped manage the slave-trading household. Silas paid her at least once for some unnamed work she had performed, and on other occasions he gave her money for market or to buy "negro cloth."[176]

We catch barely a fleeting, but again, tantalizing glimpse of Mary

---

[175]A third woman, listed in the Account Book only as "C. H.," appears to have acted as a sort of nanny for the children, escorting them to Petersburg and buying their clothing on occasion. Since Corrina was named separately in that book, I doubt "C. H." is Corrina. "Market and General Account Book," Omohundro Papers, LVA. Will Book 2, Richmond City, Circuit Court, 228-230.

[176]"Market and General Account Book," Omohundro Papers, LVA.

Lumpkins' interactions with other African Americans in the slave-trading compound she called home. Mary Lumpkin surely felt divided about the business of her master and de facto husband, as the remembrances of the Rev. A. M. Newman indicate. He related in 1888 that sometime around 1862 he had been sent to Robert Lumpkin's jail to be whipped. On entering the yard, he recalled, "I saw Mrs. Mary Jane [sic] Lumpkin, his colored wife, and noticed that she looked at me rather piteously." On leaving, she again regarded the boy with sadness; "it seemed to me," he recalled, "that she was saying, 'poor child.'" On a chance meeting with her eleven years later, she recognized him, asking "Are you not the little one that came one morning down to the jail . . . ?" To his affirmative response, she could only give a weary sigh.

Mary Lumpkin's identification with other African Americans seems to have run deeper than pity. Newman's serendipitous second encounter with her had taken place as she sought to transfer her membership to the church he pastored in New Orleans. She presented him with her certificate of transfer stating she had been a "member in good and regular standing in the First African Baptist church" in Richmond.[177] First African Baptist had long stood as a remarkably independent and crucially central institution to black Richmonders, enslaved and free. If Mary Lumpkin had worshipped with that congregation before the war, it would have opened to her a broad world of black religion,

---

[177]Newman recounted this anecdote in an address to the Special Meeting of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, Nashville, Tennessee, 1888. Baptist Home Mission Monthly (Nov. 1888), 295, quoted in Corey, History of the Richmond Theological Seminary, 48-50.

philanthropy, and society.[178]

What of that world she brought to the Lumpkin household we will never known. If she had felt the need to evangelize Anthony Burns, a prisoner in her husband's jail, then she certainly would have tried to provide a Christia home for her children. The education that she and their father had given their children seems to have had lasting effect. Two of the daughters, at least, attended a female seminary in Ipswich, Massachusetts, where a woman from Maine remembered having met them in 1856. Charles H. Corey remarked upon his own meeting with these two many years later in Philadelphia, describing them as "cultivated and refined, and contented and happy with families of their own." Corey's description stressed the terrible irony of the children's parentage and upbringing, as well as a sense of racial progress--the attainment of refinement in emancipation--but it also hinted at the Lumpkins' success at protecting their children from the impact of their father's work. How--or even whether--Mary Lumpkin managed to shelter them from the business of the jail, to maintain any separation between the sphere of the slave trade and that of her own domestic life, especially when both occupied the same enclosed space in Shockoe Bottom, remains doubtful.

We are left, too, wondering how the traders themselves lived with this seeming contradiction of selling people as chattel on the one hand while keeping family members enslaved on the other. The key, it seems, is to understand that

---

[178]See Charles F. Irons, "And All These Things Shall Be Added Unto You: The First African Baptist Church, Richmond, 1841-1865," Virginia Cavalcade 47 (Winter 1998): 26-35.; Gregg Kimball, "Place and Perception," 192-235; and Marie Tyler-McGraw and Gregg Kimball, In Bondage and Freedom: Antebellum Black Life in Richmond, Virginia (Richmond: Valentine Museum, 1988).

the African-American Omohundros and Lumpkins were not "black." First, Mary Lumpkin was designated "yellow" by Anthony Burns and Charles Stevens. James B. Simmons of the Baptist Home Missions Society met her and described her as "fair-faced, . . . nearly white." Simmons speculated that the Lumpkin daughters could have passed "as colored or whites," and according to Charles Corey, the Lumpkin daughters "were so white," that while in the north, "they passed in the community as white ladies."[179] We do not have any physical description of Corinna Omohundro, and can only guess that her skin and features were similarly "light."

In creating social identities, however, skin tones and facial features were complemented by wealth, social standing, and behavior. "Money whitens," as the saying goes in Brazil. Silas Omohundro and Robert Lumpkin had amassed a respectable amount of wealth and had distributed it to their enslaved families during their life as well as after their deaths. The women each had access to large amounts of cash at the time of their husbands' deaths. Mary Lumpkin, in claiming Robert's inheritance, posted $40,000 bond to the court, while Corinna Omohundro acted as security for a portion of the $100,000 bond Silas's executor had posted. Behavior strengthened their claim to the white men's property and social standing. Mary Lumpkin and her daughters behaved as perfect ladies, according to the white and African-American people who met them. If Corinna Omohundro similarly taught little Alice how to wear her bonnet and how to hold her parasol, then she and her children, too, partook in a somewhat elevated

---

[179]Corey, History of the Richmond Theological Seminary, 48, 74-75.

plane of southern social life.[180]

Like the Ellison family of South Carolina, whose lives have been skillfully reconstructed in Michael Johnson and James Roark's book, Black Masters, the African-American Lumpkins and Omohundros probably drew clear distinctions between themselves and the other enslaved "negroes" passing through their yards and jails, whatever pity or sympathy they might have felt towards these less fortunate people. In fact, the racial and sexual makeup of these two traders' families seems to comport less with the predominantly biracial social world of the Chesapeake and more closely with that of the coastal deep south, where a three-tiered color scheme prevailed. This more Caribbean south, stretching from Charleston to New Orleans was linked closely by shipping lanes not only to the Caribbean world, but also, of course, to the more northerly ports of Richmond and Philadelphia.[181]

Through their commercial connections, Silas Omohundro and Robert Lumpkin had easy access to that larger social world, which embraced both the

---

[180][Lumpkin's will], Richmond City, Hustings Court, Will Book 24, pp. 419-422. [Omohundro's will], Will Book 2, Richmond City, Circuit Court, 228-230. "Market and General Account Book," Omohundro Papers, LVA.

[181]My thinking on the connections between the bi-racial Chesapeake and the triracial coastal deep South and Caribbean has been enriched by my conversations with Watson Jennison. Wheras Jennison is exploring the upper-South's imposition of bi-racial norms on the lower South by the late nineteenth century, Omohundro and Lumpkin demonstrated the occasional reversal of this flow of cultural practices. On the different racial hierarchies in slaveholding British America--Caribbean, low-country, and mid-Atlantic--see esp. Winthrop D. Jordan, White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812 (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1968), 140-150, 167-178; Joel Williamson, New People: Miscegenation and Mulattoes in the United States (New York: Free Press, 1980), ch. 1; Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South (New York: Norton, 1984), 204-218; and James Hugo Johnston, Race Relations in Virginia and Miscegenation in the South (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1970), chs. 7, 8, 9, 12.

triracial deep South and the free north. The roles their businesses played as brokerages and way-stations for the interstate slave trade kept them in perennial contact with buyers moving between the deep South and the Chesapeake, as well as to the financial and commercial centers up the coast. As suppliers to that trade, Omohundro and Lumpkin kept abreast of demand in the deep south, including that for "fancy girls."[182] They participated in this larger, more cosmopolitan world, in which enslaved mistresses and lifelong partners had a longer history and was acknowledged more publicly than in the Chesapeake. In this sense, Lumpkin and Omohundro were as much a part of the New Orleans and scoastal world as they were of local Virginia society. Their domestic spheres remained embedded in the dense market network they had helped to construct.

In April 1865, Virginia slave traders' market world came crashing down around them. The transformations were symbolically clear in the case of Robert Lumpkin. As Confederate troops evacuated Richmond Lumpkin marched fifty handcuffed people, his last slave coffle, to the Danville rail platform, hoping desperately to send out one last shipment before Ulysses Grant's imminent invasion. Confederate guards spoiled Lumpkin's plan, however, reserving the cars for officials toting the documents of the fugitive government. The members of Lumpkin's last coffle trampled the worthless and abandoned banknotes of the

---

182"Yellow" women were not always "fancy girls," but "fancy girls" did sell at a premium price, as Omohundro knew. He quoted lower prices for some "yellow" women, but also sold several females he called "fancy." Silas and R. F. Omohundro Slave Sale Book, UVA. See Tadman, Speculators, 125-126 n. Swiss author Fredricka Bremer visited a Richmond slave jail, where she found several "handsome fair mulattoes, some of them almost white girls"; she later witnessed such white-featured Virginia females being sold at auction in the St. Louis Hotel in New Orleans; as quoted in Williamson, New People, 69-70. There does not appear to have been much of local "fancy girl" trade in Richmond itself; traders seem to have culled Virginia's "almost white girls" explicitly with the deep-South markets in mind.

Confederacy beneath their feet. As the abolitionist journalist Charles Coffin astutely noted, the collapse of the currency represented "a sudden eclipse of faith, a collapse of confidence" in the government which had sanctioned the trade, first in the Union and then in the Confederacy.[183] That faith in currency, in banknotes, and in the other market infrastructure had sustained the domestic slave trade, impossible otherwise across such a vast space.

Lumpkin's last coffle went free in the Confederate crisis of confidence, and he died soon after. As for Lumpkin's jail, it held an ironic legacy for Richmond African Americans. With the consent of the widowed Mary Lumpkin, evangelical freedmen's aid workers and black Richmonders converted the compound into a school. Thus they effected a sentimental transformation, converting that site of confinement into one of liberation, implementing moral rather than corporal discipline. Reformers stressed that the "regime of the lash had gone; the regime of the spelling book had come." Mary Lumpkin, having created her own sentimental domestic space and raised her own children within the confines of this slave-trading compound, likely understood too well the contradictions and contrasts inherent in that transformation.[184]

---

[183]Charles Carleton Coffin, The Boys of '61; or, Four Years of Fighting (Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1881), 501-502.

[184]Mary Lumpkin leased the entire jail compound to the American Baptist Home Mission Society for the establishment of Richmond Theological Seminary. Charles H. Corey, A History of the Richmond Theological Seminary, 42-50, 54-58, 69-84; quote, 72. See also ch. 6 below.

Chapter Two: Calculation, Sentiment, and Honor among Slaveholders

"The life of a negro is uncertain." With this simple affirmation, Dr. Iverson Twyman might have been recognizing the anxiety African Americans endured by never knowing who might be selected next for sale or removal from the community. But Twyman, who did on occasion express sympathy for the people he held in slavery, was not doing so in this case. Rather, he was trying to explain to his brother-in-law John Austin the risks slaveholders took in making decisions about slave sale and hire. An enslaved woman named Aggy, he explain, had not only robbed "an old negro's house in the neighborhood," but had bragged openly about making off with "a heap of money." There was no question in Twyman's mind that, for the security of the black and white community, Aggy had to be removed. The question was how to do so without losing their capital investment in her. Twyman walked through the logical options for John's benefit. "The interest on the money at a low [selling] price for her will be equivalent to her hire," he noted, "& as she is a girl of such disposition . . . that she will not raise any children, we have thought it best to sell even at a moderately low price."[1] Had Aggy been likely to produce children, in other words, she would have remained a worthwhile investment, and Twyman might have hired her out instead. All other things being equal, then, sale made more sense than hire.

---

[1]Iverson Twyman to John Austin, 4 Oct. 1848, Austin-Twyman Family Papers, Swem Library, College of William and Mary, repr. in Records of the Ante-Bellum Southern Plantations from the Revolution through the Civil War (Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, 1985-), microfilm [Hereafter, RASP]. [Hereafter, Austin-Twyman Papers, W&M.]

Twyman had made that decision with shrewd calculation of his profits and losses. But he knew well that his action carried powerful sentimental ramifications. He likely knew Aggy's family ties to the rest of the enslaved men and women on the Austin estate, and he also knew the sentimental approach John's mother would probably take. "Keep this letter to yourself," he warned sternly. "Do not let your Mama see it. She will tell the negros and set them to crying & howling."[2]

Given the pervasive effects of the domestic slave trade on African-American families, it is no wonder that white Virginians in the twentieth century would have a difficult time believing that their ancestors, their own families, had participated in these kinds of practices. In his 1909 apologia, Beverly M. Munford asserted that the "debasing effects of 'slave breeding' had not corrupted the great body of the people"--meaning slaveholding Virginians. "If so," he challenged, "how can we account for the bearing of Virginians at Gettysburg, and on other fields of test only less heroic? . . . Were those young heroes the sons of 'slave breeders' and nurtured in homes darkened by such a debasing practice?"[3] Of course, he meant the question rhetorically. No (white) reader could possibly answer in the affirmative, he assumed. (White) Virginia children, he implied, were reared in nurturing homes, taught the value of familial

---

[2]Twyman to Austin, 4 Oct. 1848, Austin-Twyman Papers.

[3]Munford was referring to the extreme accusation of slave "breeding"--the raising of slaves explicitly for the market. Other twentieth-century descendants of slaveholders often had (and have) an equally difficult time believing their ancestors could have ever sold any slaves at all. Beverly M. Munford, Virginia's Attitude Toward Slavery and Secession (1909; 2nd rev. ed., New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1910), XXX.

sentiments, and taught their proper roles as honorable ladies and gentlemen. Munford wanted to know how these good people could have grown up to participate in the wanton destruction of enslaved families, the marketing of people they considered part of the larger "black and white family."

Given historians' heated debate about slave "breeding" and the proportion of enslaved migrants driven by slave traders versus those migrating with planters, it is worth noting that antebellum Virginia's leading lights conceded an abolitionist point on both scores. Significantly, Virginia's leaders in 1832 did not seize on the arguments post-bellum apologists like Munford would later use: that breeding was mere abolitionist slander, that slaveholders protected slave families and did not sell to traders, and therefore that migrating planters, not slave traders, carried the bulk of enslaved migrants to the southwest.[4]

These antebellum slaveholding political leaders understood what historical research has clearly shown: not only that traders accounted for the majority of the enslaved migration but that migrating planters also separated many enslaved family members as well. Traders, who tended to buy and sell more individuals than family groups, carried probably half to three-quarters of the

---

[4]The proslavery interpretation of slavery in Virginia probably did not hold full sway with white Virginians until after the Civil War and emancipation (indeed, given what antebellum slaveholders actually knew about slavery, perhaps it could not have). See John David Smith, An Old Creed for the New South: Proslavery Ideology and Historiography, 1865-1918 (1985; repr., Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1991).

enslaved migrants from the upper South.[5] Moreover, planters separated family members even when they migrated with large groups of slaves. The practice of African Americans marrying "abroad" proved increasingly common; by the late 1850s, two thirds to three quarters of enslaved marriages in the Chesapeake united spouses from two different plantations.[6] Even when masters bought or sold spouses to keep them together, they still divided people from other members of their families and communities. Planters could prove selective in whom they chose to take with them to new territories. Some migrating slaveholders were themselves just starting out, taking with them the young men and women they had just inherited or purchased. They might leave unwanted slaves at the plantations of their own kin. Larger, more established planters

---

[5]Michael Tadman, Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 22-41. Jonathan Pritchett, "Quantitative Estimates of the United States Interregional Slave Trade, 1820-1860," paper presented to the Social Science History Association annual meeting, 21 November 1998. Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman argued that only 17 percent of enslaved people forced into the interstate migration were carried by professional slave traders versus 83 percent who migrated with masters moving entire plantation communities, presumably in family groups; this proved to be their least enduring statistical discovery. Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery (1974; repr. New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), 44-58,126-144.

[6]My thanks to Richard Steckel for reminding me of these figures, Social Science History Association Annual Meeting, 21 November 1998. Richard H. Steckel, The Economics of U. S. Slave and Southern White Fertility (New York: Garland Press, 1985), 227-228, tables 62, 63. Herbert Gutman, Slavery and the Numbers Game: A Critique of *Time on the Cross* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1975), 105; and The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), 141, table 20; and examples,130-137, charts 5, 6, 7. Herbert Gutman and Richard Sutch, "The Slave Family: Protected Agent of Capitalist Masters or Victim of the Slave Trade?" in Reckoning with Slavery: A Critical Study in the Quantitative History of American Negro Slavery, eds. Paul A. David, et al. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976), ch. 3, esp. 103-105. West, "Surviving Separation: Cross-Plantation Marriages and the Slave Trade in Antebellum South Carolina," Journal of Family History 24 (April 1999): 212-231; and "The Debate on the Strength of Slave Families: South Carolina and the Importance of Cross-Plantation Marriages," Journal of American Studies 33 (1999): 221-241.

might sell slaves before departing, shedding poor workers, the elderly, and infants. They might then, on their arrival, buy more men and women of working age and reproductive capacity. Some sent "advance parties" to clear land first, before sending down children and older men and women. A few maintained dual residences, sending the working aged slaves to the cotton fields while keeping older people home in Virginia. The statistical significance of these scenarios is impossible to gauge; no one has yet attempted a systematic study of the patterns of family among slaves migrating with masters. Whatever the statistical impact, however, planters' actions were felt deeply among the enslaved family members separated in these ways.[7]

Historians have demolished other key aspects of apologist argument about slavery, notably the notion that slaveholders kept slaves "in the family" and sold only when forced to by debt. Even in estate divisions, very few planters designated that heirs keep slave family members together and even then qualified their desires with economic "necessities."[8] Slaveholders clearly

---

[7]For his statistical purposes, Tadman raises and dismisses five similar scenarios. He counts sales before of after migration as part of the slave trade. Balanced sex ratios suggest, he says, that planters did not send advance parties or hold dual residences with disproportionately young men in the frontier plantations. But planters could have been age-selective either in sending advance parties or in holding second plantations in the deep south. Women worked in fields as well, and migrating planters would have valued their capacity to start reproducing the new slave families and communities. My point--and Tadman's larger one--is that the actual practices of planter migration were never divorced from market-based decisions or from the slave market. These market decisions interfered with slave family life even when large groups of family members did migrate together. Tadman, Speculators, 22-31, 154-159, 228-236. Ann Patton Malone, Sweet Chariot: Slave Family and Household Structure in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1992), 54-57.

[8]In one study of slaveholders' wills, only eight of the ninety-two (nine percent) requested from heirs and executors any protection for enslaved families, and then often only for small groups: a husband and wife or a mother and very young children. Jane Turner Censer, North Carolina Planters and Their Children, 1800-1860 (Baton Rogue: Louisiana State University Press, 1984),

understood and recognized family ties and occasionally made purchases or hiring agreements in order to unite spouses. But in slaveholders' calculations, slave "family" might include only mothers with very young children, or sometimes husbands.[9]

If conscientious, slaveholders excused their actions by blaming the economy or their creditors for forcing them to sell when in debt. But Thomas D. Russell has exposed the kernel of truth behind this justification: slaveholders routinely put enslaved families at risk, whenever they made new investments or when consolidating older debts. In antebellum South Carolina, slave sales ordered by local courts--most often in debtor suits--constituted between one third and one half of all slave sales in South Carolina for any given year. Thus, every courthouse square constituted a venue of the domestic slave market sanctioned by governmental authority. Slave purchases also represented a key capital investment for any free man on the make. Slaveholders could not only liquidate their chattel property at will, they could leverage that capital to fund other speculative ventures.[10]

140.

[9]Cheryl Ann Cody, "Naming, Kinship, and Estate Dispersal: Notes on Slave Family Life on a South Carolina Plantation, 1786 to 1833," William And Mary Quarterly 39 (Jan. 1982): 192-211; and "Sale and Separation: Four Crises for Enslaved Women on the Ball Plantations 1764-1854," in Working Toward Freedom: Slave Society and Domestic Economy in the American South, ed. Larry e. Hudson Jr. (Rochester: Univ. of Rochester Press, 1994), 119-142.

[10]For the debunking of the "myth of the reluctant planter," see Tadman, Speculators, ch. 5. Thomas Russell documents the frequency of slave sales resulting from debtor and probate suits; such court sales, he estimates, constituted one half of all slave sales in any given year; see Russell, "South Carolina's Largest Slave Auctioneering Firm," Chicago-Kent Law Review 68 (1993): 1161-1209; and "Sale Day in Antebellum South Carolina: Slavery, Law, Economy, and Court-Supervised Sales," Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1993, pp. 51, 73. In his commentary

Historians agree with apologists on at least one score. Historians agree that systematic "breeding"--forced coupling and the rearing of children explicitly for the market--did not represent a significant portion of the slave trade or of upper-south plantation income.[11] But some slaveholders did enforce mating patterns and sell off young children (sometimes their own). One Virginia slaveholder, Alexander Grigsby of Fairfax County, carried on a long relationship with slave traders, getting rid of slave children on a fairly regular basis.[12] While few slaveholders ran "stud farms," all of them calculated reproductive power

---

at the Social Science History Association Annual Meeting, 20 Nov. 1998, Russell said he would concede a lower estimate of thirty percent to make the larger point that sales by court order remained a significant proportion and signalled the crucial role of state and local judicial authority in facilitating the slave trade. According to one study, the liquidity of capital in the slave market "dwarfed" that in the land market and therefore planters risked slaves for "most of the collateral for both short-term and long-term credit arrangements" in his area of study; see Richard Holcombe Kilbourne Jr., Debt, Investment, Slaves: Credit Relations in East Feliciana Parish, Louisiana, 1825-1885 (Tuscaloosa: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1995), 49-50. See also Thomas D. Morris, "'Society is Not Market by Punctuality in the Payment of Debts': The Chattel Mortgages of Slaves," in Ambivalent Legacy: A Legal History of the South, eds. David J. Bodenhamer and James W. Ely (Jackson: Univ. of Mississippi, 1984), 147-170; and Morris, Southern Slavery and the Law, 1619-1860 (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1996), ch. 5.

[11]Only Richard Sutch has put forward any significant statistical evidence of the breeding thesis, but it has been effectively challenged. Richard Sutch, "The Breeding of Slaves for Sale and the Westward Expansion of Slavery, 1850-1860," in Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere: Quantitative Studies, eds. Stanley Engerman and Eugene Genovese (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1975), 173-210. Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, "The Slave Breeding Thesis," in Without Consent or Contract: the Rise and Fall of American Slavery: Technical Papers, eds. Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman (New York: Norton, 1992), v. 2, 455-472. For the economic restraints on potential slave "breeders," see U. B. Philips, American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime 1918 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1966), 360-364; and Fogel & Engerman, Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery (1974; repr., New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), 78-86.

[12]Donald Sweig, "Alexander Grigsby: A Slavebreeder of Old Centerville?" Fairfax Chronicle, published by the Office of Comprehensive Planning, Fairfax, Va. (July 1983): 1-3.

into the overall value of women they would call.[13] All of them referred to women of child-bearing age as "breeding wenches." All of them considered the birth of slave children a long-term economic boon.[14] They recognized "breeding wenches" as important not only for the reproduction of the household, but also for the augmentation of invested capital.

And yet most of these planters did not think of themselves as mere speculators in slave capital, and certainly not as slave "breeders." The key to answering Munford's question--how slaveholders could market black members of their "family"--is to understand slaveholder paternalism as a brand of sentimental domesticity, a reform ideal linked to the very market networks it sought to evade. Honor was an older ideal, but it too proved useful in negotiating relations among white people in a market world. Slaveholders refused to commodify slaves completely, dependent as they were on knowing the particular skills and deficiencies of individual enslaved laborers. Further evading apparent market imperatives, slaveholders continually discussed slave transactions in cultural terms, whether referring to patriarchal systems of honor or more feminized sentimental ideals of slaveholding. These idioms helped

---

[13]This reproductive value is clearly seen by contrasting women's hiring price versus selling prices. In Virginia in 1860, for example, a slave woman's average annual hiring rate ($46) was about 44 percent that of a man's ($105). By contrast, a woman's average 1859 selling price ($1275-$1325) was almost 94 percent that of a man's ($1350-1425). The hiring rate would represent a woman's productive labor power only, while selling price would comprise a woman's labor and reproductive labor power. Alfred H. Conrad and John R. Meyer, "Economics of Slavery in the Antebellum South," orig. in Conrad and Meyer, Economics of Slavery (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1964), repr. in Hugh G. J. Aitken, Did Slavery Pay?: Readings in Economics of Black Slavery in the United States (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.,1971), 164-165, tables 14 , 15.

[14]Frederic Bancroft, Slave Trading in the Old South (1931; repr., Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1996) ch. 4.

slaveholders negotiate situations in which they sought to impose mastery over events and to affirm their own sense of goodness at moments when they felt they had in fact lost control over their world. Slaveholders, in other words, participated selectively in the language of sentiment or in the language of honor because the market so intruded on their lives and those of enslaved African Americans dependent on their decisions.

I

The debate over slaveholders' participation in the domestic slave trade has stemmed in large part from historians' arguments over whether planters were capitalists or not. Historians stressing the noncapitalist, paternalistic nature of labor relations under slavery have underestimated masters' willingness to divide enslaved families and to sell to professional slave traders.[15] Historians emphasizing slaveholding producers' capitalistic profit motive have underestimated the power of a racialized, paternalistic ideology in shaping an

---

[15]U. B. Phillips asserted in 1819 that planters would often forego profit rather than let slaves fall into the hands of traders, and he suggested that the slave trade actual tended to transfer slaves from negligent masters to more attentive ones. On much firmer ground, he argued that few planters could afford to "breed" slaves speculating on prices ten years down the road. U. B. Phillips, American Negro Slavery, 187-204, 360-362. Eugene Genovese mentions sale and family separation only a handful of times in his 665-page tome. He recognizes that no other punishment "carried such force" as the threat to sell off children or spouses. Yet he follows that observation by asserting that masters "did feel guilty about their inability to live up to their own paternalistic justification for slavery in the face of market pressure." Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made (1974; repr., New York: Vintage, 1976), 3-7, 26-27, 48-57, quotation 452-453.

aversion to the crass marketing and division of enslaved laboring families.[16] Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman found a third path, arguing that slaveholders' profit-maximizing impulses actually worked towards the preservation of slave families and mitigated against sale to slave traders.[17] Clearly, planters did not carry on capitalistic wage relations with their unfree laborers but, just as clearly, they did not see themselves as standing outside the capitalist market for which they drove their unfree laborers to produce.[18] Recent essays have moved beyond the capitalist-paternalist dichotomy, beginning to see planters as participating in capitalistic and paternalistic practices with little sense of contradiction between those tendencies.[19] Moreover,

---

[16]Tadman, Speculators, 183-184, and ch. 5. Tadman's book represents a sophisticated amplification of Frederick Bancroft's classic, Slave Trading in the Old South. Just as Bancroft was responding to Phillips, so is Tadman responding directly to Genovese. Michael Tadman has modified his attack on Genovese's paternalism thesis, allowing that planters regarded "key" slaves as "family" members, while completely ignoring the humanity of all others. See his introduction to the paperback edition of Speculators and Slaves (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1996), xix-xxxvii.

[17]Fogel and Engerman, Time on the Cross, 52, 127-128.

[18]For accounts of this debate, see Steven Hahn, "Capitalists All!" Reviews in American History 11 (June 1983): 219-225; and Edward L. Ayers, "The World the Liberal Capitalists Made," Reviews in American History 19 (June 1991): 194-199. Both essays chronicle James Oakes's evolving emphasis on capitalism in, respectively, The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders (New York: Knopf, 1982) and Slavery and Freedom: An Interpretation of the Old South (New York: Knopf, 1990). See also Peter J. Parish, Slavery: History and Historians (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 50-55; and Mark M. Smith, Debating Slavery: Economy and Society in the Antebellum American South (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), 12-30.

[19]Steven Deyle, "Competing Ideologies in the Old South: Capitalism, Paternalism, and the Domestic Slave Trade," paper presented to the American Historical Association Annual Meeting, 10 Jan. 1999. Robert Olwell, "'A Reckoning of Accounts': Patriarchy, Market Relations, and Control on Henry Laurens's Lowcountry Plantations, 1762-1785," in Larry E. Hudson Jr., ed., Working Toward Freedom: Slave Society and Domestic Economy in the American South (Rochester: Univ. of Rochester Press, XXXX), 33-52. Christopher Morris, "The

historians have now emphasized paternalism as an ideal, rather than an effective reality.[20]

What none of these important studies recognizes is that planter paternalism and the domestic slave trade were both manifestations of a modernizing southern slaveholding system. The key to understanding this duality is to see paternalistic ideology as a brand of sentimental domesticity and therefore as part and parcel of the expanding market world it so criticized. Willie Lee Rose laid the foundation for this insight in her 1973 essay, "The Domestication of Domestic Slavery." Legal and evangelical reformers in the nineteenth century, spurred in part by the 1808 prohibition of the African slave trade, encouraged slaveholders to refrain from the most brutal punishments and to provide for the Christianization of their slaves. Slaveholders consequently were to re-envision their extended households as an idealized Victorian family. On the one hand, slaveholders rendered slavery less unbearable for the enslaved; on the other hand, they rendered it more secure.[21] Bertram Wyatt-

---

Articulation of Two Worlds: The Master-Slave Relationship Reconsidered," Journal of American History 85 (Dec. 1998): 982-1007.

[20]Kenneth S. Greenberg, Masters and Statesmen: The Political Culture of American Slavery (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1985). Drew Gilpin Faust, A Sacred Circle: The Dilemma of the Intellectual in the Old South, 1840-1860 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1977). William W. Freehling, The Reintegration of American History: Slavery and the Civil War (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994), esp. ch. 3, "Denmark Vesey's Antipaternalistic Reality," and ch. 4, "Defective Paternalism: James Henly Thornwell's Mysterious Antislavery Moment." Genovese himself revisits paternalism as a failed ideal in the eyes of southern evangelical reformers in A Consuming Fire: The Fall of the Confederacy in the Mind of the White Christian South (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1998).

[21]Willie Lee Rose, "The Domestication of Domestic Slavery," in Slavery and Freedom, ed. William W. Freehling (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), 18-36. Rose originally presented this seminal essay as the Cardozo Memorial Lecture at Yale University in 1973.

Brown similarly sees the rise of a coherent proslavery ideology tied to the nineteenth-century process of "modernizing" slavery for the expanding American political economy.[22]

On the surface, bourgeois domesticity seems to have had little to do with either "capitalistic" or "paternalistic" slaveholders. In response to the dislocations of the market revolution, members of an emergent northern middle class embraced the idealization of home as a feminized "domestic sphere," a haven from the market world. Bonds of affection rather than patriarchy or economy were to rule the domestic circle.[23] At the heart of northern domestic reform in the nineteenth century lay the internalization of children's respect for

---

[22]Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "Modernizing Southern Slavery: The Proslavery Argument Reinterpreted," in J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson, eds., Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), 27-49. Two recent dissertations link the dissemination of paternalism explicitly to the expanding southern market and explore how slaveholders sought not to shun the market but rather to direct the its influence on their domestic lives. Jeffrey Young, "Domesticating Slavery: The Ideological Formation of the Master Class in the Deep South from Colonization to 1837," Ph.D. diss., Emory Univ., 1996. Marian Yeates, "Domesticating Slavery: Patterns of Cultural Rationalization in the Antebellum South, 1820-1860," Ph.D. diss., Indiana Univ., 1996.

[23]This literature is enormous and varied; for an introduction, see Linda Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," Journal of American History 75 (1988): 9-39. The most important works remain Mary Ryan, Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865 (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981); Nancy F. Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835 (New Haven: 1977); and Kathryn Kish Sklar, Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976). See also Joseph F. Kett, Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present (New York: Basic Books, 1977), esp. ch. 5; and Steven Mintz, A Prison of Expectations: The Family in Victorian Culture (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1983), who gives a transatlantic Anglo-American perspective. A parallel debate on sentimentalism's role in empowering or disempowering women has taken place among literary critics. See Ann Douglas, The Feminization of American Culture (New York: Knopf, 1977); Jane Tompkins, Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860 (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985); and the collection of essays in Shirley Samuels, ed., The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992).

parental authority. Richard Brodhead's work is lucid on this point: New England reformers sought to convince parents and schoolmasters to abandon overt corporal punishment in favor of inculcating "love," a far more surreptitious and therefore more powerful vehicle of discipline.[24]

Antebellum proponents of northern domesticity explicitly contrasted their model of domestic tranquility with southern plantations, where patriarchs ruled with the whip and separated black family members in the slave market, where home and market remained hopelessly entangled.[25] Since home-based market-crop production prevented the divorce of home from work, and since management of enslaved laborers always rested on implied and actual violence, domesticity indeed would seem to have been absent.

Yet a closer look at recent scholarship on northern and southern sentiment and reform reveals striking analogies and commonalities. First, we must recognized that northern homes in the nineteenth century did not uniformly experience the separation of spheres, the waning of patriarchy, or the sheltering of the home from the market economy. Northern homes, as the sites both of production and of consumption, continued to hold more in common with southern households than reformers would have liked to admit.

---

[24]Richard Brodhead, "Sparing the Rod: Discipline and Fiction in Antebellum America," Representations 21 (Winter 1988), repr. in Culture of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America, (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993), ch. 1.

[25]Gillian Brown, Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1990), ch. 1.

Sentimental domesticity was as much an ideal as slaveholding paternalism.[26]

More importantly here, white southerners in the late eighteenth century had already participated in the sentimentalization of the family, working to reshape their values even before the northern domestic reformers did. Marriage decisions among the Chesapeake gentry began to turn on romance and affection rather than on parental arrangements and pecuniary interests. Similarly, across the southern seaboard, white parents reoriented their domestic life around their children, working to inculcate discipline through moral suasion and affection. White southerners may have cast this disciplinary force in terms of "duty" as often as "love," but the internalization of discipline remained key.[27] As Rhys

---

[26]Amy Dru Stanley, "Home Life and the Morality of the Market," in Melvin Stokes and Stephen Conway, The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880 (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1996), 74-96. Stanley draws on much recent scholarship in this field.

[27]Jan Lewis focuses on "love" in binding parental and marriage relations, while Steven Stowe emphasizes "duty" as the prime means of internalizing parental discipline. Peter Bardaglio cautions that internalized affection of domesticity did not eclipse patriarchal standards of male authority and economic focus of households. Jan Lewis, The Pursuit of Happiness: Family and Values in Jefferson's Virginia (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), esp. ch. 5. Steven M. Stowe, Intimacy and Power in the Old South: Ritual in the Lives of the Planters (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1987), esp. 88-106, 123-132, 153-154. Peter Bardaglio, Reconstructing the Household: Families, Sex, and the Law in the Nineteenth-Century South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995). While few historians have compared or contrasted northern and southern domestic ideals, they have detailed the ways wealthy white southerners increasingly cast their family lives in terms of sentiment and affection, even before northerners did. Daniel Blake Smith, Inside the Great House: Planter Family Life in Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Society (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1980), esp. 135-150, 154-159, 285-299. Censer, North Carolina Planters, esp. 22-26, 29-33, 54-64, 70-74. Sarah Woolfolk Wiggins, "A Victorian Father: Josiah Gorgas and His Family," in In Joy and In Sorrow: Women, Family and Marriage in the Victorian South, 1830-1900, ed. Carol Bleser (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991)233-252. Wylma Wates, "Precursor to the Victorian Age: The Concept of Marriage and Family as Revealed in the Correspondence of the Izard Family of South Carolina," in In Joy and In Sorrow, ed. Bleser, 3-14. Marli F. Weiner, Mistresses and Slaves: Plantation Women in South Carolina, 1830-1880 (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1998). Carol Bleser, ed., Tokens of Affection: the Letters of a Planter's Daughter in the Old South (Athens: Univ. of Georgia press, 1996).

Isaac has put it, in "the age of 'sensibility' patriarchy was being sentimentalized into paternalism."[28]

Architectural evidence suggest that slaveholding southerners embraced their own version of separate spheres even within the productive household. Archaeologists and architectural historians have begun to delineate the ways slaveholders separated domestic space from work space in productive households through hallways, separate slave quarters, and work yards. In the eighteenth century, shared black and white domestic space gave way to separate group barracks for slaves, which in turn gave way to family cabins. These separate family cabins suggested not only a separation of slaves' work space from masters' but an extension or recognition of limited domestic spheres for enslaved families as well. Even within homes, the wealthiest slaveholders worked to segregate family from work space and, whenever possible, from enslaved workers. Thomas Jefferson's Monticello provided the eccentric early model, with its hidden passages, dumbwaiter, and revolving doors which screened most enslaved laborers from the white family's domestic space. By the 1850s, other Virginia planters had begun to install back stairs and service bells to further ritualize and to regulate enslaved servants' access to white families' domestic space.[29] Even Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, who holds that patriarchal

---

[28]Rhys Isaac, "Myth and Story in the Old Virginia Landscape," presentation at symposium on "Rediscovering Old Virginia," University of Virginia School of Architecture, 15 Oct. 1998. Quotation from Rhys Isaac, Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790 (New York: Norton, 1988; orig. 1982), 309.

[29]On seventeenth-century changes in work and domestic space, see Fraser D. Neiman, "Domestic Architecture at the Clifts Plantation: The Social Context of Early Virginia Building," in Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture (Athens: Univ. of

slaveholders kept capitalism at bay despite the fact that the home remained the site of market production, recognizes that southerners "participated in the unfolding bourgeois culture, including the ideologies of spheres, motherhood, and domesticity."[30]

It was precisely sentimental domesticity's hegemonic power--discipline through affection and moral suasion rather than overt force--which slaveholders

---

Georgia Press, 1986), eds. Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach, 292-314; and The "Manner House" Before Stratford (Discovering Clifts Plantation); a Stratford Handbook (Stratford, Va.: n. p., 1980), 30-36, 48-49. On the spatial segregation of slaves' from masters' residences and the creation of "nuclear" households in slave quarters, see Robert Vlach, "Snug Little Houses," in Gender, Class, and Shelter, Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, vol. 5, eds. Elizabeth C. Cromley and Carter L. Hudgins (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1995), 118; Dell Upton, "White and Black Landscapes in Eighteenth-Century Virginia," in Material Life in America, 1600-1860, ed. Robert Blair St. George, (1988) 357-369; Larry McKee, "The Ideals and Realities Behind the Design and Use of 19th Century Virginia Slave Cabins," in The Art and Mystery of Historical Archaeology: Essays in Honor of James Deetz, eds. Anne Elizabeth Yentsch and Mary C. Beaudry (Ann Arbor: CRC Press, 1992), p 195-213; and John Michael Vlach, Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1993), chs. 2, 10, 11. Ann Patton Malone's statistical research on slave household structure in Louisiana supports the notion that planters and slaves alike favored "nuclear" families among the enslaved; almost half of the slaves in her study lived in households comprising two parents and one or more children. Malone, Sweet Chariot, 15, table 1.1; 17, fig. 1.2; 23, fig. 2.2; 27, fig. 2.4; 31, fig. 2.6; 35, fig. 2.8; 41, fig. 2.10; 44, fig. 2.12. On Jefferson's Monticello as model of independence (whether bourgeois or yeoman remains debatable), see Alexander O. Boulton, "The Architecture of Slavery: Art, Language, and Society in Early Virginia," Ph.D. diss., College of William and Mary, 1991, 269, 273-284; and William Freehling, The Road to Disunion: Vol. I, Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854 (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990), 167. Clifton Ellis and Hal Sharp, both Ph.D. candidates in architectural history at the University of Virginia, are each discovering the subtle and crass ways in which nineteenth-century Virginia piedmont planters incorporated into their new homes techniques for segregating work from domestic space, thereby regulating slaves' access to the white household. I am indebted to each of them for their conversations and public presentations on their respective works in progress. Finally, for an experiential example of domestic segregation within a nineteenth-century slaveholding household, visit the permanent exhibit, "Shared Spaces, Separate Lives," at the Valentine Museum's Wickham House in Richmond, Virginia. Built in 1812 by a New England architect, this "modern" house was designed with a ground floor for public reception, a basement work area for slave servants, and a second-floor living space for the white family. See exhibit precis online at http://www.valentinemuseum.com/Wickham/.

[30]Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1988), 63, quote 64.

longed to hold and frequently asserted that they did hold over slaves. "Just as in the home or school," Rose writes, "the use of violence" in domesticated slaveholding households "was considered to be a failure of diplomacy." This was the hegemony of paternalism Eugene Genovese says southern planters and slaves had in fact largely established by the late antebellum period, a disciplinary system based on reciprocal--if clearly unequal--negotiations which served to mask the coercive force on which all power ultimately was based.[31]

This paternalistic ideal surely held resonance in daily practice, but just as we must read northern domesticity as an emergent ideal rather than successful reality, so must we read southern slaveholders' paternalism as a similarly nascent ideal in the nineteenth century.[32] Under the circumstances of market production and expansion in which both groups of reformers took active part, neither vision reached full fruition. Otherwise, reformers would have found themselves unnecessary. In fact, Genovese has recently returned to paternalistic reform as an acknowledged failure in practice. During the Civil War, southern evangelical reformers interpreted Confederate defeat as punishment for slaveholders' unwillingness to protect marriage ties and to promote reading

---

[31]Rose, "The Domestication of Domestic Slavery." Eugene Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll, and Slaveholder's Dilemma: Freedom and Progress in Southern Conservative Thought, 1820-1860 (Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1992).

[32]I label paternalism an "ideology" rather than a "hegemony," following John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff's crucial distinction. Hegemonic ideas and practices went unquestioned and were taken for granted, whereas ideological notions did battle with one another. Paternalism may be said to have held the balance of power among ideological approaches to slavery within the South in the late antebellum period, but since so many people--enslaved African Americans, northern abolitionists, and even many southern slaveholders--did not fully imbibe it unquestionably, it cannot be said to have held hegemony. John and Jean Comaroff, Ethnography and the Historical Imagination (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 28-30.

skills among the enslaved.[33]

Virginia planter-essayists wrote in to agricultural journals about their latest efforts to reform slave management. Analogous to the education reforms Brodhead explores, these exchanges constituted the formulation of a self-consciously new kind of slaveholding in the nineteenth century. Reformers advocated a system of plantation discipline driven by "rewards," "privileges," and "rights" bestowed upon the enslaved, along with "corrective" rather than "punitive" regulatory actions. The difference was crucial, as reformers sought to wean slaveholders of the physical punishments of the eighteenth century and teach them the persuasive arts of discipline. Slaveholders were counseled to use confinement or loss of privileges, rather than whippings or beatings. They were to resort to corporal punishment only when deemed necessary and only in a "moderate, uniform, and dispassionate fashion.[34]

Like their northern counterparts, southern proslavery reformers found willing allies in novelists. White southern sectionalists recognized literature's

---

[33]If Genovese's recent work is on target, paternalism did not in fact prevail as a hegemonic ideology, even among whites. Outright patriarchy--masters' overt assertion of power over slaves--held sway, as paternalistic reformers failed to gain legal or popular recognition for slave families or slaves' access to literacy. Genovese, Consuming Fire, 19-24, 51, 57-60.

[34]Genovese explores this notion of cultural hegemony in Roll, Jordan, Roll. For a sampling of reformers' ideas, see James O. Breeden, ed., Advice Among Masters: The Ideal in Slave Management in the Old South (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press,1980). Not all planters agreed on these relatively "progressive" methods; for some contemporary debate, see Breeden, Advice, ch. 22. For reformist writings from Virginian planters (including one planter woman) see: on management techniques, 38-39, 44-45, 52-53, 56, 80-82, 90, 93-94; on privileges and rewards, 250-251, 257-258, 170, 195, 199-300; on personal, individualized attention, 31-33, 166, 178, 283-284, 302; on housing and clothing, 114-119, 126-127, 129-132, 141. Slaveholders did not abandon patriarchal physical coercion, however, even in these advice columns. One South Carolina planter summed it up best; "the two great principles in [slaves'] government," he said, were, "fear and love"; 36.

power of moral suasion and, starting in the 1820s, moved to found a distinctive literature of their own. South Carolinian Robert Hayne, for example, calling for the creation of the Southern Review in 1827, pointed explicitly to the northern literary journals as models. These had, he believed, "exerted a wonderful control over public opinion both in Europe and America." He wanted southern literature to develop a readership of that "class of persons who have great influence in giving the tone to the sentiments and opinions of the people," thereby promulgating "sound southern principles" in the interregional and transatlantic arena of print.[35]

Virginia writers especially rose to the task, producing their own brand of domestic fiction. George Tucker's Valley of the Shenandoah (1824) modeled the new, paternalistic brand of slaveholding, even offering the a slave auction scene as a negative example to would-be paternalists. The slave auction scene soon disappeared from the genre, but as other writers followed suit, they gave readers a splendid vision of reformers' goal, a harmonious slaveholding South resting on slaves' loyalty and affection instead of the master's lash. Known generically as "Virginia novels," these books represented a southern offshoot of Samuel Richardson's sentimental novels Clarissa and Pamela, the Virginians now defending hierarchical ideals rather than bourgeois ones.[36]

---

[35]Quoted in Jeffrey Young, "Domesticating Slavery," 321. See also Elizabeth Moss, Domestic Novelists in the Old South: Defenders of Southern Culture (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press); and John McCardell, The Idea of a Southern Nation: Southern Nationalists and Southern Nationalism, 1830-1860 (New York: 1979).

[36]Susan J. Tracy, In the Master's Eye: Representations of Women, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Antebellum Southern Literature (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 33-34, 49-62, 156-158, 165-173. Ironically perhaps, given the popular notion of "separate spheres," in which

While Virginians did not embrace the novel as did northern readers, traveling bookseller Mason Weems had more requests for novels more than he could fill.[37] Fiction both laudatory and critical of chivalry and honor found its way into private homes, as Virginia town-dwellers, especially, participated in a "book culture" shared with other eastern seaboard towns.[38] Alice Izard, on trip to Virginia in 1811, noted that she "met with several new things" while in Fredericksburg, a backwater village in her view. "Is it not droll," she wrote, "to find new novels in such a little out of the way spot?"[39] Weems, however, had

---

women were to attend only to "domestic" matters, female southern novelists' works seem to have been even more explicitly polemical than the men's and were certainly more popular. See Moss, Domestic Novelists in the Old South, 7-11.

[37]Ronald J. Zboray, A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993), 42-45, incl. maps 1 and 2. Zboray notes, however, that Weems' supplier, Philadelphia book dealer Matthew Carey, viewed the South as a prime "dumping" market for his poor sellers in the North. The book market in the South grew more slowly than the Northeast or Northwest, and novels were most popular in the Northeast; see 39-40, 66-67, 133-135.

[38]Joseph F. Kett and Patricia A. McClung, "Book Culture in Post-Revolutionary Virginia," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 94 (1984): 97-147; on chivalric and picaresque novels, 127; on Weems, 126. Kett and McClung studied estate inventories from the 1780s through 1861 in the counties of Allegheny, Botetourt, Charles City, Fairfax, and Lunenburg, and in the two towns of Petersburg and Fredericksburg. They found that fifty percent of all estates inventoried contained books. Novels were far fewer than expected, but grew in importance at least in Petersburg, where 26 percent of itemized libraries contained them before 1801, rising to 43 percent thereafter (123). Among the measures of more avid participation in a "book culture," they tallied those "who owned twenty or more books or books valued at $6 or more." Here the town versus country discrepancy revealed itself clearly. For Petersburg and Fredericksburg combined, just over 40 percent of book owners fell into that category, while in the five counties combined, just under 25 percent did. (Figures from Table 1.1, and calculated from Table 4.0.)

[39]Alice Izard to Mrs. Jos. Allen Smith, 1 Nov. 1811, Manigault Family Papers, South Carolina Library, USC, quoted in Jeffrey Young, "Domesticating Slavery," 232. Young sees the Izard and Manigault families as emblematic of the importance of the book market in the dissemination of the ideals of slaveholder paternalism.

been selling books in Fredericksburg for twenty years by that time.[40]

Northerners learned from the southern models, leaving white southerners with much to appreciate even in the likes of Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, itself an adaptation of the Virginia plantation novels. Stowe had conceded enough to the proslavery image of sentimental masters, mistresses, and slaves to allow Uncle Tom and little Eva especially to find adoption in white southerners' homes. Mr. and Mrs. Shelby, Tom's Kentucky masters, were portrayed as indulgent, to the extent of rankling less enlightened slaveholders. Mrs. Shelby had given the slaves a Christian education and, in her words, had "taught them the duties of family, of parent and child, and husband and wife." The Shelbys were portrayed as victims of slave trader Haley, who forced the sale by leveraging against Shelby's debt. As Mr. Shelby explained to his incredulous wife, "I was in his power, and had to do it." Stowe, of course, wielded all this in striking her coup argument against slavery: no matter how kind and caring the white masters, the legal and economic system defining people as chattel inevitably destroyed black family life.[41] Yet by flattering the self-image of slaveholders themselves, she unintentionally displaced their individual condemnation.

---

[40]Southerners, like northerners, seem to have applied what they learned in novels to their daily lives. Nehemiah Adams claimed that white southerners frequently referred to Uncle Tom's Cabin in making judgements about the character of local neighbors, as in "He is a real Legree; or He is worse than Legree." Adams, South-Side View of Slavery (1854; repr., New York: Kennikatt Press, 1969), 158. Frances Trollope noticed a southern belle similarly adopting gestures she had apparently read about in a novel. See Zboray, Fictive People, 81.

[41]Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852; New York: Penguin Books, 1981), 49, 63, 84. Stowe made the point explicitly clear on 50-51.

Indeed, Stowe's work found a home in Virginia in several incarnations, especially in the hands of transplanted northerners. In March 1853, Mary Ann Waterman of southwestern Virginia wrote her cousin in Massachusetts that "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was then playing on stage in nearby Kingsport, Tennessee, where it was "all the rage." She had not yet seen the play or read the book, but as she admitted, "my curiosity is very much excited. I have heard and read so much about it." By May, her Massachusetts relatives and friends had sent her a copy of the novel, but she had still not had a chance to read it yet, explaining, "The children are reading it now." Finally, by September, she had read it and was "much pleased" with it. "All who hear of it are anxious to read it," she added. Waterman herself still had reservations about holding slaves, but it is likely that many of her neighbors "anxious" to see or read about Uncle Tom did not share her equivocation.[42] Alansa Rounds Sterrett, who had moved to Augusta County, Virginia, from New York, seems to have imbibed the proslavery implications of certain of Stowe's images. In the fall of 1860, she staged Uncle Tom's Cabin, among other "tableaux," for friends and family at their Stribling Springs retreat, as she recorded in her memoir. In a bid for realism, she recruited "the Sterrett's oldest slave, grey headed Uncle Kit Matthews" for the starring role. Obviously, this northern-born slaveholding woman used Stowe's novel--not to mention "Uncle" Kit Matthews--to replicate

---

[42]Mary Ann Waterman to Lucretia Sibley, 23 March, 31 May, 26 Sept. 1853, Lucretia Cargill Carter Sibley Correspondence, 1841-1876, American Antiquarian Society. Waterman had lived in Clear Creek, in southwestern Virginia, since at least 1847; hiring enslaved servants from others, she still expressed reservations about slaveholding; see Mary Ann Waterman to Lucretia Sibley, 5 Feb. 1859. Nehemiah Adams claimed white southerners discussed Stowe's novel "with candor, and with little appearance of wounded sensibility"; South-Side View of Slavery, 158.

rather than to undermine slavery's social power.[43] What's more, as other northern publishers picked up on the Uncle Tom and Little Eva craze, some produced inoffensive books merely sentimentalizing Eva's relation to Tom, effacing any condemnation of slavery.[44] These might easily have found a welcome in white southerners' homes, as they portrayed the ideal master-slave relationship, one in which an angelic little white girl could find complete trust in an enslaved adult black man, bound as they were by pious affection.

Stowe's success at the plantation novelists' very game vexed proslavery fiction writers, however, who launched a raft of repudiatory novels. In doing so, they ironically reaffirmed and illuminated the common ties between northern and southern visions of sentimental domesticity. For Stowe, slavery's paramount cruelty was the chattel principle--the "turning of a man into a thing"--which caused the sundering of African Americans' sentimental family ties. The anti-Stowe literature characterized the master-slave relationship in terms of sentimental domesticity, bound as it ostensibly was by mutual ties of affection. It was the abolitionists who cruelly broke in on these paternalistic "family" bonds in the anti-Stowe novels. Both arguments rested wholly on sentimental visions of a domestic sphere protected from market intrusion. For abolitionists,

---

[43]Memoir of Alansa Rounds Sterrett [ca. 1859-1865], unpaginated, repr. in "Valley of the Shadow," Univ. of Virginia, http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/vshadow2/.

[44]A New York publisher produced an inoffensive little picture book entitled Little Eva, Flower of the South. Utterly bereft of any polemical content--unlike the bulk of antislavery juvenile literature--this children's book obviously made a bid for the lowest common denominator shared by northern and southern parents: the sentimentalization of children. Little Eva: the Flower of the South (New York: Philip J. Cozans, n.d.) AAS. The American Antiquarian Society has dated its two copies between 1853 and 1855, and between 1855 and 1861, respectively.

domesticity resided within the slaves' nuclear family, broken by the market-driven actions of slaveholders and slave traders. For proslavery apologists, sentimental domesticity resided between masters and slaves, and was threatened only by Yankee abolitionists representing the market-driven, free labor North.[45]

Adherents of both domestic visions reviled the corrupting influences of "the market," embodied in the character of the slave trader. For abolitionists, the slave trader represented the very foundation of southern slave society: the chattel principle. For white southerners, slave traders served as a convenient scapegoat, standing in for what evils they might have seen in the otherwise "domestic" institution. None gave more pithy expression to such sentiments than did the Alabama-born minister and lawyer, Daniel Hundley. In his 1860 treatise, Social Relations in our Southern States, he labelled slave traders as

---

[45]Eric Scott Gardner provides the most stimulating and thorough exploration of the literary responses to Uncle Tom's Cabin, in "After Uncle Tom: The Domestic Dialogue on Slavery and Race, 1852-1859," Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 1996. See also Moss, Domestic Novelists in the Old South, ch. 3. The most famous of the anti-Tom novels included Caroline Lee Hentz, The Planter's Northern Bride (1854); Mary H. Eastman, Aunt Phillis's Cabin; or Southern Life As It Is (Philadelphia, 1852); John W. Page, Uncle Robin in his Cabin in Virginia and Tom without one in Boston (Richmond, 1853); and Robert Criswell, Uncle Tom's Cabin, Contrasted with Buckingham Hall, the Planter's Home, Or a Fair View of Both Sides of the Slavery Question (New York, 1852). Putnam's editors criticized the response novels as bad literature and bad polemic; Putnam's Monthly Magazine 3 (Jan.-June 1854), 560. The anti-Tom movement was not nearly as widespread nor did it exploit so many different media as the Uncle Tom phenomenon, but see the songsheet "Aunt Harriet Becha Stowe," by Charles Soran and John H. Hewitt (H. McCaffrey, Baltimore, 1853), copy at AAS; it was "Respectfully dedicated to the estimable wife of Ex-President Tyler, and the other patriotic and Union loving Ladies of Virginia, who so justly rebuked Lady Sutherland and the Ladies of England for their uncalled-for meddling in the affairs of the people of the United States." The AAS has collected many of the more popular Uncle Tom's Cabin spinoff songsheets. See also "Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture: A Multimedia Archive," Univ. of Virginia, http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/utc/. Finally, my thanks to Sara Roth, who shared with me her bibliography and thoughts on the anti-Stowe literature.

"Southern Yankees," driven only by their "greedy love of filthy lucre."[46] In Hundley's view, slave traders, along with other southerners more interested in profit than social order--including planters who drove their workers too hard--stood as anomalies in the organic, paternalistic society slaveholders had, he believed, successfully adhered to. Like other proslavery lights in the late antebellum period, Hundley contrasted "Yankee" values of individualism, acquisitiveness, entrepreneurship, and industry, with "Southern" values of order, hierarchy, and reciprocity. Hundley perceived the problem as the incursion of "Yankee" values among "Southerners" themselves.[47]

In Virginia, however, slave traders were not merely proslavery scapegoats.[48] In fact, public men deployed rhetoric about the state's prolific export trade not as a smoke screen but rather as a foil. In Virginia's 1831-1832 special session on slavery, reformers and conservatives alike seized on the sentimental and financial import of the slave market. Spurred by the bloody 1831 revolt in Southampton County, legislatures sought to unburden white

---

[46]Daniel R. Hundley, Social Relations in Our Southern States (1860), as quoted in Tadman, Speculators & Slaves, 183.

[47]White southerners indeed had imbibed a great deal of northern ideology; Hundley in fact failed to see just how much. As Larry Tise has painstakingly uncovered, key tenets of the proslavery defense itself had been brought to the South by evangelicals migrating from the North. Larry Tise, Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701-1840 (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1987). Conversely, Hundley's own northern ties were strong. He took a law degree from Harvard University and practiced law in Chicago. See Edward L. Ayers and Bradley C. Mittendorf, eds., The Oxford Book of the American South: Testimony, Memory, and Fiction (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997), 46. For proslavery polemicists' stinging attacks on free labor and industrial society in the North, see Genovese, Slaveholders' Dilemma.

[48]Tadman reads such proslavery portrayals of slave traders as mere smoke screen. I hold that they were indeed that, and more. Tadman, Speculators, 180-184.

Virginians of their fears of an overabundant slave population. According to representative Philip A. Bolling of piedmont Buckingham County, Virginia's burgeoning slave population had reduced slaveholders to metaphorical cannibalism. In order to prosper in their depleted soil, Virginians had come to devour their slaves--"yes, sir, eat them." "The slave is sold," he explained, and "the money, or price, then represents the slave; that money is laid out with the drover for beef and pork--the beef and pork is eaten--and thus, indirectly, the slave is consumed." Bolling's critique condemned Virginia's dependence on the slave market, which forced slaveholders to turn slaves into commodities like beef, pork, or cash.[49] This commodification, Bolling implied, was alien and abhorrent to Virginia slaveholders, debasing their character. Thomas Jefferson Randolph similarly held out the threat the slave market posed to Virginia planters' character. He warned that if white Virginians did not act soon to rid themselves of slavery, then his beloved "ancient dominion" would be "converted into one grand menagerie where men are to be reared for market like oxen for the shambles." Citing an annual export of 8,500 slaves, Randolph believed that slaveholders "in parts of Virginia" might already be resorting to such debasing practices.[50]

---

[49]Phillip A. Bolling, Speeches of Phillip A. Bolling (of Buckingham) in the House of Delegates of Virginia, on the Policy of the State in Relation to Her Colored Population, 2nd ed. (Richmond: Thomas W. White, 1832), 14. Copy at UVA.

[50]Thomas Jefferson Randolph, Speech of Thomas Jefferson Randolph in the House of Delegates of Virginia, on the Abolition of Slavery (Richmond, 1832), as quoted in Bancroft, Slave Trading, 69-70. Randolph doubtless though his figure high enough to shock Virginia slaveholders, but his estimate was probably conservative; exports for 1832 may have been twice his estimate; see ch. 1 above.

Like very few other white critics of slavery in Virginia, Bolling even stressed the sentimental impact of the slave trade on African Americans. Slaves too, he believed, had "hearts and feelings like other men." "How many a broken heart," he wondered, "mourns because her house is left unto her desolate"?[51] Yet in their efforts to co-opt conservatives, Bolling and his fellow "abolitionists" offered slaveholders ample opportunity to take full advantage of the slave market in order to preserve their capital investments. According to Randolph's plan, only those African Americans born after 1840 would go free, and then only when they reached adulthood, age eighteen for men and twenty-one for women. The state would compensate their masters and pay for their passage to Liberia. Randolph reassured slaveholders that they could sell or remove "beyond the limits" of Virginia--even those slaves born after 1840--as long as they did so before the would-be freed men and women came of age. Bolling went so far as to laud the plan's market-driven effects. A "multitude" of slaves "which no man could number," he predicted, "would be sold and sent off," thus relieving the state of its financial duty. Not only that, but women "would be sent off in the greatest numbers," presumably since slaveholders would seek to preserve their capital investment in women's reproductive potential. This selective forced emigration would effectively check natural reproduction and therefore diminish the state's future black burden.[52]

---

[51]Bolling, Speeches, 14.

[52]Bolling, Speeches, 10. Slaveholders routinely calculated women's reproductive value when determining their selling price. For statistical evidence, see Alfred H. Conrad and John R. Meyer, "The Economics of Slavery in the Antebellum South" (1964), repr. in Did Slavery Pay? Readings in the Economics of Black Slavery in the United States, ed. Hugh G. J. Aitken (Boston:

Opponents of Randolph's plan likewise used the slave trade as a foil. Legislator William Henry Brodnax, a rare tidewater advocate of more radical emancipation and colonization measures, condemned Randolph's plan, saying it would give every Virginia planter "the strongest temptation . . . to convert himself into a negro-trader." William and Mary professor Thomas R. Dew concurred. He branded Bolling's notion as inhumane, turning the reformer's sentimental rhetoric back on itself. The "voice of the world would condemn Virginia," Dew warned, "if she sanctioned any plan of deportation by which the male and female, husband and wife, parent and child, were systematically and relentlessly separated."[53] Yet Dew's alternative offered no protection for enslaved families, either. As William W. Freehling has acutely analyzed, Dew

---

Houghton Mifflin Co.,1971), 153-157. For anecdotal evidence of planters discussing "breeding wenches," see Bancroft, Slave Trading, ch. 4. On the evolution of slaveholders' asserted property rights to include unborn children, see Thomas J. Flemma, "Gradual Emancipation and the Fifth Amendment: The Extrajudicial Precedents of Due Process in the Dred Scott Case," M.A. thesis, Univ. of Virginia, 1994), 28-36. On the post-nati abolition plan in Virginia, see Alison Freehling, Drift Toward Dissolution: The Virginia Slavery Debate of 1831-1832 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1982), 129-132. On the quantitative effects of such plans in northern states, see Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, "Philanthropy at Bargain Prices: Notes on the Economics of Gradual Emancipation" and Claudia Goldin, "The Economics of Emancipation," both repr. in Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery:...Technical Papers, v. 2, 587-605, and 614-628, respectively.

[53]Here I am closely following William Freehling's acute analysis of what he calls the Virginia "Deportation" debates. See The Road to Disunion, ch. 10. See also Alison Freehling's in-depth study, Drift Toward Dissolution and Joseph Clarke Robert, The Road to From Monticello: A Study of the Virginia Slavery Debate of 1832, published in Historical Papers of the Trinity College Historical Society, ser. 24 (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1941). Brodnax as quoted in W. Freehling, Road to Disunion, 185. [Thomas Dew], "Abolition of Negro Slavery," American Quarterly Review 12 (Sept. 1832), 207-208. Originally published anonymously, Dew's essay was revised and expanded as Thomas R. Dew, Review of the Debate in the Virginia Legislature of 1831 and 1832 (Richmond: T. W. White, 1832); it was later reprinted in The Pro-Slavery Argument as Maintained by the Most Distinguished Writers of the Southern States (Charleston: Walker, Richards & Co., 1852), 287-490. An abridged version of the original appears in The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860, ed. Drew Gilpin Faust (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1981), 21-77.

merely followed the majority of the legislators in rejecting state-sponsored means of black emigration--compensated emancipation and colonization to Africa--in favor of "natural," market-driven means, the domestic slave trade to the deep south.[54] Dew went further than the reformers in this recognition of the domestic slave trade, noting that Virginia was already a "negro raising state for other states." If the state government intervened in the market by compensating owners for emancipated slaves, it would have to "overbid the southern seeker," thereby raising prices artificially and encouraging the breeding of slaves for the market. By Dew's reading of Malthus, state intervention would only bring on the problems reformers were trying to avoid. Dew's solution ultimately was an amplification of Bollings: the slave market would ultimately rid Virginia of its slave population. Thus Virginia's leading lights in 1832 found themselves in the remarkable position of seeking a market solution to their domestic "problem." Far from castigating slave traders specifically as social pariahs, they recognized and embraced Virginia's thorough absorption into the interstate slave market.[55]

Not all Virginia slaveholders would have celebrated this capitulation to

---

[54]Again, this follows W. Freehling's reinterpretation of Dew and the debates, in Road to Disunion, 178-196.

[55][Dew], "Abolition of Negro Slavery," 207-208. Dew's idea of slavery draining out of Virginia constituted a reverberation of the notion of "diffusion" by John Tyler and Thomas Jefferson during the Missouri crisis. See Freehling, Road to Disunion, 150-157. Dew applied his Malthusian logic selectively. He held that South American and Caribbean markets would be able to absorb all of Virginia's slaves, but he did not follow with the Malthusian conclusion that demand from these markets would in turn spur Virginia slaveholders to "breed" yet more slaves for that market. On Malthusian population theory in proslavery and agrarian ideology, see Joseph J. Spengler, "Malthusianism and the Debate on Slavery," South Atlantic Quarterly 34 (Apr. 1935): 170-189; and "Population Theory in the Antebellum South" 2 (Aug. 1936): 360-389.

market forces. Many had long seen a fundamental difference between southerners' sense of personal economy and that of the North. For them, personal honor dictated economic as well as social relations. Travel to the north could highlight this distinction. Richard Barnes Mason, having been left with what he considered less than his fair share of his father's estate, joined the army and found himself on the growing nation's transportation frontiers. He worked on the military road through Alabama and bragged that he had sailed on "the first Steam Boat that ever was on Lake Michigan" when stationed at Green Bay. He was looking to make his fortune, flirting with one speculative scheme after another, from buying Alabama land along the road, to investing in the Great Lakes fur trade.[56] But at the same time, he felt himself an alien in this market-oriented world.

The grandson of Virginia revolutionary scion George Mason, Richard had grown up in a local economy in which "friends" willingly floated each other credit on a regular basis. In Michigan, he was left strapped for credit in the all-cash economy he found on the northwestern frontier. "Being a stranger in this part of the world," he wrote, "I dislike to ask a man for Credit." More to the point, "the people do not like to Credit, even their most intimate acquaintances."

---

[56]Mason wrote that with only a "few hundred dollars capital," he could "speculate to a great advantage" by buying claims on land further along the road's trajectory. "In less than twelve months," he predicted, "it will be one of the greatest thoroughfares in the United States," and he would profit from his investment. R. B. Mason to George Mason, 16 August, 27 July 1821, Mason papers, AAS. Mason appears to have altered his position on this kind of speculation in accordance with his rising military career, or perhaps also with his own speculative shortcomings. Having taken command as military governor of California in 1847, he was "disgusted with the crass commercialism and wealth hunger that were stampeding soldiers into desertion." Pamela C. Copeland and Richard K. MacMaster, The Five George Masons: Patriots and Planters of Virginia and Maryland 1975 (Lorton, Va.: Board of Regents of Gunston Hall, 1989), 262. My thanks to Peter Wallenstein for this reference.

He was shocked to find that even the frontier trading posts took only cash. Mason recited an anecdote to illustrate the contrast he had known in the South. While on the Ohio River in 1818, he had met a man named John Peyton, sfrom Fauquier County, Virginia. Peyton was a friend and relation of men whom Mason knew, and when the man fell sick on the journey, Mason loaned him fifty dollars. He collected the small debt by writing to his own brother George back in Virginia, who was to get the money from Peyton's father.[57] In the Northwest Territory, however, Richard Mason bristled at his isolation from the networks of friendly credit which bound Virginian planters together in mutual obligation. He was a southern man on the make, but he also felt that market relations isolated him and put him at a distinct disadvantage.[58]

Mason's southern sense of personal economy was matched by his sense of personal honor. He upheld the code of honor in which his personal self-worth was based on other white men's esteem of him. He walked away triumphant in at least two challenges to his honor, one culminating in a duel. He contrasted this system of value to the more sentimental one he felt had come to prevail in the country. He ridiculed these sentimental checks on vengeful punishment of a wrong. When shot by a soldier he had disciplined, Richard wrote his brother George that the man had been tried, convicted, and probably sentenced to

---

[57]R. B. Mason to George Mason, 16 Aug. 1821, 24 July 1818. For Mason's instructions on other small Virginia debts he wanted repaid, see letters of 5 Dec. 1818, 1 Dec. 1823. Mason Papers, AAS.

[58]Still able to tap that network of southern friends, however, Mason asked his friend George Graham to get him transferred back to the South, which afterward Graham was proud to say he had accomplished. George Graham to George Mason, 19 Dec. 1821, Mason Papers, AAS.

execution, a "punishment which he so richly merits." The President, however, was likely to commute the sentence, since "to have him executed would be (as Genl Jackson says) too much at variance with the refined and delicate feelings of the day."[59] What Mason saw was a nation changing its notions of discipline, its notions of honor, and its notions of reciprocal, personalistic relationships.[60]

Mason was not alone. In 1832, Phillip Bolling himself linked Virginia's economic woes also to the proliferation of a new breed of dishonorable businessmen preying on indebted slaveholders. Bolling condemned the "credit stores and pop-shops" which Bolling said now "thronged" the state. Their proprietors, he explained, first worked to get a hard-pressed slaveholder in debt until "He is literally their bondsman." Having sapped him for all his available capital, they would then foreclose and send the gentleman to jail. "Then steps forward the paper-shaver, (another fungus of our present condition)," Bolling went on, who offered renewed credit to the indebted slaveholder, but at extortionate rates. Worst of all, Bolling thought, was the ubiquity of these new financiers in the South. "We have been taught from our infancy to chime the

---

[59]R.B.Mason to George Mason, 5 Feb. 1822. Mason Papers, AAS. Mason had boxed the soldier's ears for some perceived insolence. Mason's behavior apparently did not comport to others' standards of honor, and he had to fend off accusations of "conduct unbecoming a gentleman and a Commanding Officer." Copeland and MacMaster, Five George Masons, 262.

[60]The culture of honor--as a system of externalized values--often found itself pitted against the evangelical culture of internalized dignity. Overall, Edward Ayers found a "fundamental ambivalence" towards honor in the antebellum South. See Edward L. Ayers, Vengeance & Justice: Crime and Punishment in the 19th-century American South (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1984), pp. 13, 16, 23-33. Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor: Ethics & Behavior in the Old South (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982). For the same tension between Christianity and honor among enslaved African-Americans, see John C. Willis, "From the Dictates of Pride to the Paths of Righteousness: Slave Honor and Christianity in Antebellum Virginia," in The Edge of the South: Life in Nineteenth-Century Virginia, eds. John C. Willis and Edward Ayers (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1991), ch. 2.

stale tune of 'Yankee tricks'," he noted, but he did not expect to see such Yankee practices in Virginia.[61]

Other Virginian practitioners of "Yankee tricks" might have given Bolling pause. Edmund Logwood, with a partner named Wright, had issued his own banknotes in Lynchburg, using the name "Mechanics Bank." When a local panic struck, they invited in "gentlemen" auditors, who affirmed the solvency of the company and restored confidence in the notes, which in 1853 were "still the currency of our town for sm[all] change." Logwood dabbled in several other entrepreneurial ventures in Nelson County and in Lynchburg, selling tobacco, clothing, and shoes with various business partners. He may have even facilitated the local slave trade, funnelling slaves to traders Woodruff, Yancey, and Davis of Lynchburg.[62] While Logwood remained solvent, other such entrepreneurs did not. Joseph Crockett, a merchant and slave trader of Abingdon, was said to have "shaved the best paper in the country," buying other's notes at a 20 percent discount and presumably reselling them at a profit. But Crockett could offer only "ham" as security against his debts, a practice R. G. Dun's agent considered

---

[61]Philip A. Bolling, Speeches, 5. Unlike others opposing these changes in market relations, Bolling did not extend his criticism to legitimately chartered banks. Virginia boasted an extensive and solvent system of mother-branch banks and independent banks touching almost every section of the state. In the 1840s and 1850s, Virginia banks generally kept between six and twelve million dollars in circulation at any given time, and they never failed. The notes they issued were always good currency in the major commercial hubs of Philadelphia and New York, where they could be cashed or deposited at a fairly low discount. See George T. Starnes, Sixty years of Branch Banking in Virginia (New York: Macmillan Co., 1931) and William L. Royall, A History of Virginia Banks and Banking Prior to the Civil War, with an Essay on the Banking System Needed (New York: Neale Publishing Co., 1907).

[62]Virginia, Vol. 9, (Campbell Co. and Lynchburg), pp. 29, 60, R. G. Dun and Co. Collection, Baker Library, Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration [hereafter R. G. Dun, HBS]. This may be the same Logwood who had dealings in slaves in Lynchburg; see B. M. DeWitt to Iverson L. Twyman, 27 Mar. 1847, Austin-Twyman Papers, W&M.

"a bad omen." Dun's agent warned potential creditors not to sell goods to Crockett, "except for cash."[63]

Other signs of change could be seen in Virginia. In 1847, two Germans named Kohleber and Greenwald were operating a general mercantile in Pittsylvania County, importing goods from Philadelphia and selling locally only for cash. Suspicion of this unique marketing experiment might be read into the name locals called it: "the Jew Store."[64] Ten years later, T. G. McConnell and Co. of Abingdon advertised their changeover to "The Pay Down System." Cheap rail freight, they said, would allow them to charge the lowest prices ever, but the company would no longer extend credit to its patrons. McConnell and Co. not only sold in cash, but also offered to pay cash for flax seed, wheat, wool, feathers, beeswax, and skins (bear, mink, and coon, among others). McConnell and Co. were willing to take farmers' wheat to settle any outstanding balances currently on the books, but thereafter would apparently only take cash for store merchandise.[65] Richard Barnes Mason would have been incensed to see this trend reaching Virginia. The vast majority of mercantile stores could hardly have afforded to convert to this system, however, for most farmers had little access to cash.

While these stores helped create a new demand for cash, slave traders

---

[63]Interestingly, the agent did not mention Crockett's attempted entry into the slave trade. Virginia, Vol. 52 [Washington Co.], p. 31, R. G. Dun, HBS.

[64]Virginia, Vol. 37 [Danville/Pittsylvania Co.], p. 7, R. G. Dun, HBS. Dun's agent could find little information about the men and counseled potential creditors against loaning them anything. It was, he noted, "imposs[ible] to tell what they are doing."

[65]Abingdon Virginian, 3 Jan. 1857.

helped supply it to local slaveholders. Commercial slave buyers scouring the state routinely offered the highest market prices and, most importantly, in cash. For indebted slaveholders, this cash must have come as a windfall. For men like Richard Mason, however, slave traders would represent all the worst aspects of the cash economy: their role as professional speculators, their role as itinerant merchants, their partial commodification of slaves, their taking advantage of indebted slaveholders.

Virginia traditionalists criticized and avoided the market in other ways as well. Emory and Henry College, a Methodist institution, advertised in 1843 that it was "remote from market." Located "miles from any town or village," its students could be sheltered from falling prey to the fashions of the day.[66] The market, by providing exposure to urban trends, held out the sinful implication of vanity, college administrators believed, and they offered parents an alternative path in this new Virginia.

While white Virginians might have criticized the "Yankee tricks" of the market, entrepreneurship seemed to be just what Virginia slaveholders needed in order to stave off the forced exodus of its enslaved population. Seeking to forestall emigration of both planters and slaves, Edmund Ruffin and other agricultural reformers called for "scientific" farming methods, urging planters to diversify their crop mix, rotate fields, and aerate and fertilize their soils.[67] Railroad construction in the 1840s helped Richmond and Petersburg merchants

---

[66]Lynchburg Virginian, 5 Jan. 1843.

[67]On efforts at agricultural reform, see Avery O. Craven, Soil Exhaustion as a Factor in the Agricultural History of Virginia 1926 (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965), 138-147.

monopolize the tobacco market not only of piedmont Virginia, but also of north-central North Carolina.[68]

These reforms in market-crop production and transportation no doubt helped fuel the tobacco revival of the 1850s, and lobbyists saw railroads as the vehicle for the expansion of slave-based agriculture into the trans-Allegheny sections of the commonwealth as well. Henry Wise in 1850 envisioned that western Virginia agricultural products "would flow down in golden streams to enrich the East." At the same time, the western counties would provide an outlet for the glutted eastern slave market. The "slaves of the East would find labor in the fertile valleys of the West," Wise went on, and the "whole state would be cemented together." Eastern planters traditionally had feared western reformers would tax slaves to pay for improved transportation links to eastern markets. Now in the 1850s, easterners were using railroads as a tool for the cooptation of westerners precisely by encouraging western farmers to stake a more obvious claim in slavery.[69]

---

[68]Joseph C. Robert, The Tobacco Kingdom: Plantation, Market, and Factory in Virginia and North Carolina, 1800-1860 (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1938), chs. 4, 5.

[69]Wise in Richmond Enquirer, 16 Jan. 1850, as quoted in Kenneth W. Noe, Southwest Virginia's Railroad: Modernization and the Sectional Crisis (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press), 28-29. Noe documents more and larger slaveholdings and increased market-crop production in southwest Virginia in the 1850s, evidence that Gov. Wise's economic dream was coming true even before completion of the railroad to Bristol in 1856. Noe goes on to argue that the railroad, by linking southwestern Virginia to the slaveholding east, proved key to keeping southwest Virginia out of Unionist West Virginia during the Civil War; Southwest Virginia's Railroad, ch. 4. Many southwestern Virginians had always kept ties to eastern markets, however, both as producers and consumers. see The Shenandoah Valley had long been commercially connected to Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Baltimore markets, and there slaveholders held their own. Nonetheless, western reformers called forth an image of a western Virginia free from the stain of slavery and free also from unwanted African Americans. In 1829, Phillip Doddridge (anti-slavery and anti-black) had similarly called for western farmers to act lest the "black vomit" from the east taint the yeoman west. In the 1832 debates,

These internal improvements may in fact have helped keep many enslaved African Americans in the state in the 1850s, if not always at their own homes. Hiring enslaved workers to dig trenches and tunnels, to build levees and road-beds, and to lay track, Virginia's industrialists simultaneously took up some of the slack in the slave labor market and improved planters' paths to market, encouraging internal agricultural expansion.[70] Virginia's future, many slaveholders believed, lay in modernizing the state's market network. One planter made this point explicitly clear. Lobbying for the proposed Keysville extension, which would connect Clarksville to Richmond's tobacco markets, he warned sarcastically that if the Keysville line did not materialize soon, "Cuffee will be obliged to emigrate."[71]

Here, as in the 1832 debates, the interstate slave trade served as a foil, not a scapegoat. Slave outmigration signalled Virginia's failure to compete in the

---

Representative Phillip Bolling had foreseen slaveholders' use of internal slave migration to unify the state and sought to "rescue the west from this mildew" in the 1832 debates. Scott Crawford, "Ties to External Markets: Imports and Exports in the New River Valley, 1745-1789," Smithfield Review 2 (1998): 23-38. Robert D. Mitchell, Commercialism and Frontier: Perspectives on the Early Shenandoah Valley (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1977). J. Susanne Simmons, "They Too Were Here: African-Americans in Augusta County and Staunton, Virginia," M. A. Thesis, James Madison University, 1994. Doddridge quoted in W. Freehling, Road to Disunion, 186. Bolling, Speeches, 9.

[70]Robert F. Hunter, Claudius Crozet: French Engineer in America, 1790-1864 (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1989). Kenneth W. Noe, Southwest Virginia's Railroad: Modernization and the Sectional Crisis (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1994). Wayland F. Dunaway, History of the James River and Kanawha Company (New York: Colombia Univ. 1922). For chronological accounts of antebellum canal construction and use, see the American Canal Society's reports: "Canalized Rivers of West Virginia and Kentucky" The American Canal Guide: A Bicentennial Inventory of America's Historic Canal Resources, pt. 4 (Freemansburg, Pa.: American Canal Society, 1988); and "Canals and River Navigations in Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware," American Canal Guide, pt. 5 (Freemansburg, Pa.: American Canal Society, 1992).

[71]Quoted in Robert, Tobacco Kingdom, 71.

new century--either with its traditional northern rivals or with the states of the southwest Virginia had done so much to help populate. Polemicists in Virginia used the domestic slave trade not to praise their brand of slaveholding, but rather to criticize their own political economy, their own inability to harness the market revolution for their own betterment. Slaveholders seldom dealt with this problem on the polemical plane, however, more often facing the slave market in their own personal households economies. Consequently, they framed their discussions of the slave market in language framing their own financial, sentimental, and social interests. They selectively employed the language of sentiment and of honor in order to resolve their efforts to direct the implications of their calculated participation in the slave market.

II

Virginia slaveholders operated in a modernizing world, one they actively participated in and yet remained anxious about. The mass migration and commodification implied by the domestic slave trade seemed part of a larger trend towards speculative market ventures. Some slaveholders embraced this mobile new world, themselves traveling from and to Virginia looking to seize on speculative opportunities. They calculated slave sales and purchases in this larger context and saw no reason for apologizing for their actions. Whether within or outside Virginia, these slaveholders had to deal with the tricky issue of trust, communicated across the distances standing between themselves and their business counterparts. Despite the distances covered in these market relations, slaveholders displayed a remarkable trust for professional slave traders. To

close the gap and to incorporate slave traders into the known network of relations, slaveholders not only relied on personal networks of trust, but took advantage of market innovations such as banking, a new kind of trust.

For some slaveholders, this market world--represented either by the prevalence of cash transactions or of the slave market itself--seemed to contradict ways they deemed more traditional. Some sought to mend this rupture in terms of honor, while others embraced a sentimental idiom. In either case, these slaveholders concerned themselves not so much with the African-American lives most clearly at stake, but rather with their own sense of self worth. Honor or sentiment rectified their actions, helping them to preserve a paternalistic self image.

No slaveholder, however market-oriented, could afford simply to commodify enslaved people. As legal chattels, slaves stood as capital investments, to be sure, but this encouraged slaveholders to know what they could about individuals. Slaveholders' own fortunes relied too heavily on acquiring knowledge of particular enslaved people's skills, deficiencies, work habits, sentimental attachments, and family histories. In this sense, every slave purchase was a speculation. As Ulrich B. Phillips put it in his inimitable fashion, "If horse trading is notoriously fertile in deception, slave trading gave opportunity for it in as much greater degree as human nature is more complex and uncertain than equine and harder to fathom from surface indications."[72] As Walter Johnson has recently shown, African Americans resisted commodification

---

[72]Phillips, American Negro Slavery, 199.

even in the slave markets. Charged by traders with helping to sell themselves, enslaved people were also sizing up potential buyers and shaping their behavior accordingly. Buyers frequently called the kind of slaves they were looking for as "likely," a descriptive term meaning fit, but a term which also embodied the speculative nature of any slave purchase.[73]

Slaveholders' relative sensibility or market shrewdness in regard to slaves might be best indicated in when slaveholders chose to write about the enslaved. For most slaveholders, the proper role of slaves in family correspondence was absence. When making decisions about buying and selling slaves, slaveholders remained parsimonious in their private writings. African Americans appeared far more often in planters' ledgers and farm account books--where planters recorded sales and work schedules--than in personal correspondence or diaries. For most slaveholders, silence on their enslaved workers in personal correspondence or journals remained the norm.[74]

The correspondence of the relatively few slaveholders who did write about slaves is therefore illuminating, for these people might openly acknowledge the very sentimental attachments they were in the process of

---

[73]Walter L. Johnson, "Masters and Slaves in the Market of Slavery and the New Orleans Trade, 1804-1864," Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1995, 161.

[74]In his study, Stephen Stowe found so little discussion of enslaved African Americans--"even familiar, personal servants"--in the planters' papers he examined that he mentions slaves only half a dozen times. Walter Johnson, by contrast, found slaveholders' letters "full of talk about slaves." The difference may lie in geography and in relative chronology in the life of the slave society. Perhaps in the frontier entrepot of New Orleans, talk of slaves--the basis of the society's very expansion--came to the surface more often than in the older, established eastern seaboard states, where whites had long taken slavery for granted as part of the southern way of life. Stowe, Intimacy and Power, xvi-xvii. Johnson, Soul By Soul, 13.

breaking in the slave market. Their inclusion of enslaved household members within the realm of their personal correspondence, in fact, might be taken as one of the very signs of their participation in sentimental notions of the black and white family, even as the correspondence itself contemplated the ramifications of sale. Slaveholders unconcerned with the sentimental impact of sale on African-American families simply would not have bothered writing letters about it.

But slaveholders talked in more ways than one about slave sale in their letters. They spoke both conscientiously and pragmatically about separating and reuniting husbands and wives, children and parents, and other kin. They did so always with an eye to making their household function more smoothly and more profitably. When they talked about the need to move enslaved people around or sell them altogether, they talked both of profits and convenience, weighing in disturbances among the enslaved workers as one of the costs of deploying their labor efficiently.

Virtually all slaveholders, like it or not, found the slave market omnipresent. The buying and selling of slaves was not restricted to professional slave traders. Rather, it was part and parcel of the entire system of plantation management of enslaved labor. Men not only bought and sold slaves for themselves, but they also found themselves acting as agents for their family members, friends, and business associates. They would have never considered themselves slave traders, whom they perhaps would have characterized as professionals looking only "to make a speculation." Yet their own actions sometimes held similarly remunerative aspects, and certainly they held similarly

distressing implications for the enslaved people involved.

Some tried to purchase family groups rather than individuals. In February 1832, for example, John Roane wrote to his friend Dr. Austin Brockenbrough of Tappahannock County, Virginia, that a friend of his, the "worthy & wealthy" South Carolina legislator John M. Felder, was looking to buy "at least 50 negros" for next fall. Roane assured Brockenbrough that Felder was "a most humane and indulgent master" and "a man of fine feelings." "Nothing," he added, "is more distressing to him than the separation of families." As important to Brockenbrough, perhaps, was the fact that Felder was ready to pay a premium, in cash, if he could find family groups rather than individuals. Roane was ready to escort Felder to Tappahannock that spring and urged Brockenbrough to act now if he wanted to sell.[75] Felder likely knew both the sentimental and pragmatic benefits of buying in slave families. Rather than build his new plantation community from scratch, he would find it gained social stability more quickly if he could find groups of family members to start with. He could feel good about preserving family ties and, he hoped, reap the profits from their relative happiness.

Virginia planters facing shortfalls in profits, however, could not afford the luxury of paying attention to slaves' family ties. Planters sometimes moved directly into a trading position for themselves and others, taking note only of the most profitable way to make a sale. James P. Harrison of Brunswick County wrote his friend Alex Cunningham in 1828. They were both facing hard times,

---

[75]J[ohn] J[ones] Roane to Austin Brockenbrough, 7 Feb. 1832, Brockenbrough Papers, MSS-38-157a, UVA.

apparently, and had been discussing their situations. Harrison had made a decision. Looking to divest himself of his capital in enslaved people, he knew that depressed local markets would not suffice. "I see little or no prospect of disposing of my negroes in this part of the country," he had concluded. Virginia slave prices, having fallen to an all-time low with the panic of 1819, remained in a deep trough while New Orleans prices had already risen considerably. Harrison had determined to take his slaves south to sell, and was wondering what Cunningham had decided to do. "You spoke something of wishing to send some of yours to the south," he wrote, and ventured an offer. "I should be glad to take them out for you," he said, "if you conclude to do so & think proper to entrust them in my care." He told Cunningham to let him know quickly so he could prepare for the journey.[76]

Other men speculated locally and found innovative ways to put their enslaved laborers to work for them. Jeremiah Morton of Orange County had started his career as a lawyer, and by his early twenties he was capitalizing ably on his legal background. Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, he bought, sold, and hired slaves, both for himself and in complicated dealings as the agent or trustee for other slaveholders.[77] As a commissioner of the Orange County Court, he

---

[76]For average Virginia and New Orleans slave prices ("prime field hands"), see Phillips, American Negro Slavery, 371. James P. Harrison to Alex Cunningham, 7 Sept. 1828, Southside Virginia Slavery Papers, UVA (RASP).

[77]These complicated dealings were not always profitable, as indicated in this notation of 14 March 1840, in his account with Milly T. Smith: "Note I purchased from Smith and his trustee, Carmack, 11 slaves for $6000, which was made up & in debt due me and a portion of his dues to Mrs. Smith. viz. $3554.20. I acted as the agent of Mrs. Smith and intended selling and dividing the loss between us in proportion to the amounts of each own[ed] in them. I sold them and 4 of mine which I had taken for a debt, making 15 to Dr. G. Terril, for the sum of $7000. The 15 cost in claims $8535.74, the loss in sale was $1535.74, which divided in proportion makes Mrs.

also inventoried local estates and sold slaves by order of the court. It is unclear whether he practiced any significant long-distance trading, but in 1836 he did purchase more than one city lot in New Orleans and kept tabs on rates of exchange for various state bank notes. Moreover, he and his associates, including his son-in-law Joseph J. Halsey, remained keenly aware of the varied advantages of different Virginia slave markets. They had their choice, depending on what kinds of buyers they sought. Concerning the sale of two people in 1839, Halsey had preferred conducting it in Culpeper Courthouse, to draw "the competition of buyers from opposite points" of the state, but another concerned party urged them to sell in Richmond, since "The Southern purchasers invariably" flocked there "for their supplies."[78] A sale at Culpeper might have meant the opportunity for these two enslaved people to stay near home, closer to spouses, children, and other loved ones. A sale in Richmond would mean the likely loss of all contact with Virginia. These matters were not Morton and Halsey's concern, however.

Whether Morton ever worked as a professional trader or not, his own personal financial decisions certainly had their interstate effects on the lives of enslaved African Americans. Calculating his own assets and debts in 1852, he made himself a promise, noting at the end of his tally: "My interest is to sell off

---

Smith's part $639. with which I charge her." J. Morton Ledger (1836-1844) 29-30, Morton-Halsey Papers, UVA (RASP).

[78]H. M. Somerville to Joseph J. Halsey, 26 Aug. 1839, Morton-Halsey Papers, UVA, in "Topical Correspondence" folder. Since Somerville wrote from Memphis, it is curious he did not suggest bringing the two to the deep South to sell at an even higher price. This suggests that Halsey and Morton were probably not involved directly in the interstate slave trade, at least at this point.

all my real property &c, pay off and take my negroes to Mobile & hire them out, I wish not to own one cent in 2 years, & shall try to sell all my real estate in Va. present now."[79] His novel plan highlighted the relative investment values of slaves versus Virginia land. He did not want to divest himself of his several dozen enslaved laborers; rather he wanted to live the rest of his life off the profits to be gained from their hire. By the time he had recorded this vision of his retirement, he was already acting on his scheme, having moved several enslaved workers to Alabama.

Morton modified this plan but put it into effect over the next ten years, every stage of it rending the families of the enslaved people he moved around. In 1856, he purchased from Robert Ragland ten young men, all but one aged twenty-one. He apparently sought background information on them and Ragland supplied him with the geographic origins of each. The information was telling. Five had grown up in Virginia, but only two in the same county, Goochland; the other three Virginians were from Southampton, King and Queen, and Charles City County. Three other men were from South Carolina, from Sumpter, Barnwell, and Greeneville Districts, respectively. Of the remaining two men, one had come from Macon County, Georgia, the other from Autauga County, Alabama.[80]

---

[79]J. Morton Ledger (1836-1844) pp. 215-216, Morton-Halsey Papers, UVA.

[80]That enslaved people from so many deep-south locations would be carried to Virginia for sale seems odd, but certainly plausible. Morton may have purchased them in Alabama, for he paid Ragland with notes on the Southern Bank of Alabama. But he apparently did move them to Virginia, for an 1860 list located them there. Bill of sale and annotated list, 5 April 1856, John C. Ragland to Jeremiah Morton. Morton-Halsey Papers, UVA.

Morton likely had Ragland bring them from the deep South to Virginia, against the great flow of the overall interstate trade. Buying single young men without any of their familial encumbrances obviously suited Morton's purposes, and his desires here clearly meant the alienation of these ten men from their various homes across the South. His other plans mitigated against the continuance of marriages among his enslaved people. In 1860, he decided to send eighteen to Mobile, following his plan to hire them out. All eighteen he sent were male, aged ten to twenty-one. He sent no women, no wives or mothers or sisters to accompany any of these eighteen men and boys.

Morton frequently failed to date his lists of slaves, making tracking his numbers impossible, but these lists still give us a clue to how he thought of enslaved families. In one list, he bracketed various groups together. There, Americus, 30 years old, was listed with two children. Maryland Mallory and Belingsley Mallory, 22 and 18 years old respectively, were also bracketed together, perhaps indicating siblings or spouses. Moses, 30 years old, was bracketed with a 7-year old child. Other groups appear to have been work gangs composed of male members of a family sharing a surname, for example, Solomon, Jim, Bill, and Andrew, all named Chew, respectively aged 20, 18, 14, and 13. Other bracketed groups constituted gangs as he had bought them; the ten he bought from Ragland were bracketed together and assigned the surname "Ragland." No female family members of any of these men appeared on the list. And in fact, in his Virginia-Alabama totals, he tallied 67 males and only 4

females.[81] On another list, dated October 1860, he alluded to forty-seven females, but all of them were to be left in Virginia, along with only eighteen males. The rest of their husbands, brothers, and sons held by Morton had been or were to be sent to Mobile.[82]

Far from commodifying these people he moved around, however, Morton was keenly aware of his enslaved workers' familial bonds. While the family connections of many were difficult to discern from his notations, two of the ones sent to Mobile were identified clearly by their mothers' or wives' names: "Willson (Ann's)" and "Charles (Solla's)." Neither Ann nor Solla was apparently sent to Alabama. In 1864, his Alabama agent, charged with hiring out his men in Mobile, Montgomery, Pensacola, and elsewhere, wrote Morton that an enslaved man named Lewis Jackson anxiously awaited Morton's visit to Mobile. He "wants you to come badly," the agent wrote, "as he wants to go back to see his farther and Mother."[83]

Most striking was Morton's detailed genealogical knowledge of one formerly enslaved man, Esson Taylor, as he demonstrated in a letter just a few years after the Civil War. Morton had been called on for unknown reasons "to state what I know in relation to his parentage." He readily complied, both

---

[81]"List of slaves in Va. & to be taken to Mobile, by 1 Dec '60," Morton-Halsey Papers, UVA.

[82]It is likely that these women had kin on neighboring plantations, however. List headed "Males in V.a. Oct '60," Morton-Halsey Papers, UVA.

[83]D. M. Prichard to JM. Prichard, 19 Mar. 1864, reported that many other African Americans were leaving for Union-occupied Mobile Bay. One slaveholder sold two such fugitives when they were caught, but kept the others and sent them to Selma, their "being his old family negroes." Morton-Halsey Papers, UVA.

demonstrating his knowledge of both of Taylor's parentage and of the family separations he had faced. Esson Taylor's mother, Morton wrote, was Easter, a woman owned by Morton's great uncle William Morton of Orange County, Virginia. Easter had married the late Esson Taylor [Sr.], who belonged to James Buckham, a neighboring planter. The two "were married according to the custom, among slaves at that time in Virginia," Morton wrote; they "lived together as man and wife and were so regarded by both white & black." Morton had grown up at his uncle's house, he explained, "and to the best of my belief & recollection," he averred, Easter and Esson Taylor had "lived happily as man and wife." When Buckham died, Esson fell to an heir who sold him south. "This broke the connection between Esson & his wife Easter," Morton stated rather flatly.

The senior Esson managed to obtain his freedom, however, moving to New Orleans. There, as Morton had heard from a friend, the freedman had become "quite a man of business, and had accumulated considerable property"; he died some time later. Before leaving Virginia, Esson had fathered two children with Easter: the junior Esson Taylor now in question, and his sister, Ellen. In an estate division, their mother Easter fell to one of Morton's brothers before she died in 1851. The two siblings, Esson and Ellen, fell to another Morton brother, who took them with him to Florida, where they remained until emancipation. The younger Esson Taylor must have moved to Mobile only during or after the war, giving rise perhaps to the request for references to his background.

Morton's detailed genealogical information went beyond the Taylor

family's ownership, extending to their genetic background as well, apparently the object of the request in the first place. The elder Esson Taylor, Morton knew, "was half blood," while Easter had been "unmixed african." The junior Esson now in question, Morton concluded, "is one fourth white." "He is not quite so light as his father was," he went on, but "both he & his sister, in the face, bear a likeness to the father. The present Essen, both in face & person, bear as striking a likeness to the late Essen Taylor, as I know, in the whole circle of my acquaintances between father & son."[84]

Morton, then, carried on his destructive practices in full knowledge of close and meaningful African-American kinship ties. He never expressed any sense of his own affectionate attachment for any of them, nor did he feel the need to justify any of his actions by denying their obvious sentimental attachments to their own families. Yet he knew about all these links, and had sometimes taken these into account when making his calculated moves.

Other Virginia planters decided to move along with their slaves, looking for a new opportunity in the rich lands of the west or south. While these migrating planters sought to replicate eastern plantation communities, keeping many more kin together in the move, they, too, separated family members, and they knew it. As one commented on her family's partial removal to Kentucky in 1804, "Tomorrow the negroes are to get off and I expect there will be great crying and morning, children Leaving there mothers, mothers there children,

---

[84]Morton spelled both men's names variously Esson, Essen, and Essom. Physical appearance served here as it did in several ex-slave autobiographies, as a sentimental link between family members lost in slavery. Just as in those autobiographical accounts, that link was testified to by a white patron, whose voucher legitimated the link. Jeremiah Morton to [no recipient named], 17 July 1869, Morton-Halsey Papers, UVA.

and women there husbands." This particular separation was to be temporary, yet uncertainty prevailed, as this white family member understood, "for the ensuing Faul [Fall] I suppose whoever Lives to see it both black & white will Leave this State."[85]

Other men looking for opportunities by leaving Virginia themselves struggled with decisions over where best to put their enslaved laborers to work. Perhaps some of the more daring answered the call of the "Southern Slave Colony" being organized in 1850 for the settlement of California, despite previous settlers' pending petition to enter as a free state. An Alexandria paper reported in March that the organization, based in Jackson, Mississippi, planned to settle mining and agricultural areas expressly "to secure the uninterrupted enjoyment of slave property." Its founders optimistically expected to attract 5,000 members, with 10,000 slaves, by the following spring.[86]

More typically, men migrated on their own or with the help of family members. Richard Barnes Mason was forced to make serious decisions after his father bequeathed him little or nothing of his estate. In December 1817, the young Mason left his Fairfax County home and set out to Kentucky to try to capitalize on some of his father's land claims there. While he was gone, he gave

---

[85]Unidentified member of Cabell-Harrison-Breckinridge family, quoted in Gail S. Terry, "Sustaining the Bonds of Kinship in a Trans-Appalachian Migration, 1790-1811: The Cabell-Breckinridge Slaves Move West," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 102 (Oct. 1994): 464. Terry has fruitfully explored the alternating cycle of hope and despair involved in these serial migrations to Kentucky.

[86]The advertisement was originally placed in the [Jackson?] Mississippian; it was reproduced without comment by the Alexandria Gazette & Virginia Advertiser, 16 March 1850, under the heading, "Southern Colony in California."

his brother George power of attorney over what little enslaved property he did hold. George was instructed to sell one man named David, but two others, Demus and Gill, were hired out locally for three months. Mason had considered selling all of them and had apparently made arrangements to that effect, but what he saw in Kentucky changed his mind. "Negroes are valuable property in this country," he wrote to his brother. "I had rather have them in this country than they should be sold [in Virginia], for I could make $1000 per year by them, by renting land and cultivating tobacco."[87]

Mason had not yet settled on Kentucky, however, and like other free white men seeking their fortune, he joined the army and traveled extensively along the frontier territories, always looking for his best chance. Although communication was often difficult and his brother seemed unresponsive, Richard continued to write home with his ever-evolving plans. By December 1818, he had traveled through Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, and Louisiana, but he still liked Kentucky best. That preference had everything to do with the market in slaves and draft animals there. "Negroes, horses and mules sell very high" in Kentucky, he noted, understanding implicitly that bringing his slaves out of Virginia could only raise their capital value, even if he did not sell them on speculation. His main goal in mind was to work them profitably. An array of marketable farm products to grow--hemp, corn, rye, whiskey, beef, and pork--provided ample choice of opportunity, while the Ohio River and other navigable waterways, providing crucial connections to market outlets, elevated particularly

---

[87]Mss. notices, 10 Dec. 1817, 6 Jan. 1818. Richard Barnes Mason to George Mason, 24 May, 24 July 1818. Richard Barnes Mason Papers, AAS.

the value of tobacco. Kentucky, then, seemed to be the place.[88]

He instructed George on the consolidation of his slaveholdings in preparation for their transfer to Kentucky. George was to dispose of Rose and Davy--the latter being a "scoundrel" who had run away. The money from their sale, he said, was to be "laid out in the purchase of other negroes." He did not want just any "other negroes," however. He had two enslaved men in particular in mind. He told George to buy a local man Richard knew named Aaron Baker, "if he can be got on reasonable terms." He also expected George to send out Tom Clark, despite the fact that their brother William held what Richard considered an illegitimate claim to the enslaved man.[89] These men perhaps possessed special skills Mason might need to carve a plantation out of the forest. A carpenter would have been especially helpful, and after the first tobacco was cut and dried, Mason would need a barrel maker. He did not say whether Aaron Baker or Tom Clark possessed these skills, but he knew that he wanted these two men in particular. Mason soon changed his mind on Davy, if the man happened ever to get caught. He told George he would "much rather get him to Kentucky than sell him," thinking Davy "would stay very contented when once there." But when he heard from his sister Ann that Davy had in fact been apprehended, jailed in Baltimore, and sold "to a Georgia man," he was pleased, for he already had new plans for the money: investing in speculative land along

---

[88]Richard Barnes Mason to George Mason, 24 July, 1 Dec. 1818, Richard Barnes Mason Papers, AAS.

[89]Richard Barnes Mason to George Mason, 1 Dec. 1818, Mason Papers, AAS.

the military road through Alabama.[90] Transferred to Green Bay, however, Mason quickly scoped out a new market scheme, and, having learned that George had sold the slave Tom Clark, asked him to forward the money. He revealed his "contemplation to lay out all the money I can in purchasing Furs."[91]

As Mason abandoned one speculative scheme after another, he repeatedly turned his sights on Kentucky. While looking to expand his labor force in the 1820s, he also sought to augmented his own status. Again, a slave would serve that purpose for him. When brother William died, Richard wanted his fair share of the estate, but as importantly sought out two of William's men by name. He wanted either Bill or Rice, but preferably Bill, he said. "I want him especially for a servant, to keep always with me."[92]

Mason's purposes were speculative, and he sought every advantage he could.[93] Yet he did not commodify the enslaved men and women he bought and sold. He made the important distinctions a slaveholder would need to

---

[90]Richard Barnes Mason to George Mason, 17 Aug. 1818, 6 July 1819, 27 Aug. 1819, and [ca. Aug. 1819-Jan 1820], Mason Papers, AAS.

[91]Richard Barnes Mason to George Mason, 16 August, 27 July 1821, Mason Papers, AAS.

[92]Richard Barnes Mason to George Mason, 5 Feb. 1822, Mason Papers, AAS.

[93]Richard seized on what family fortunes and misfortunes he could in order to build his Kentucky farm. In the land patent books, he had discovered a George Mason whom he took to be either his father or grandfather, and felt he could gain title to these fertile lands along the Ohio River. In May 1818, he wrote his brother asking for the deed their Aunt and Uncle Cohburn had made out to their father, conveying to him their own Kentucky claims. He was keen to get this land, and six months later inquired whether the Cohburns were still living. The following summer, he asked George about whether he could get Uncle Cohburn's slaves cheaply. Richard Barnes Mason to George Mason, 24 May, 1 Dec. 1818; 27 Aug. 1819, Mason papers, AAS.

make. To his way of thinking, Davy was a "scoundrel" and should be sold; or, on second thought, he might be worth keeping since, once away in Kentucky, he might be less likely to run away. Aaron Baker was clearly worth getting, if his owner would sell him. It had been a mistake to let George sell Tom Clarke; he should have been sent to Kentucky to work. Bill would make a better body servant than Rice, but either of these two would have been preferable to any of William's other slaves. Helen was "a first rate house servant," he told George, while Betty was "a common field negroe."[94] In making these distinctions, Richard Mason drew both on his financial and personal interests. His comments reflected his concern both with how much and what kind of work particular enslaved people could do and with what kind of loyalties he thought he saw in them.

Like other slaveholders, Mason understood this buying and selling in the context of his own social and economic position. Ultimately his quarrels with them turned on his relative position in the family. In the end, the slaves over which they fought stood not just for the labor or capital they represented--and certainly not for the family or individual lives they represented. For the Mason brothers, the slaves became pawns in a larger game of family politics. For others, slaves stood in as indicators of slaveholders' own character.

Richard Mason had problems realizing his vision of a successful start in Kentucky. His two brothers threw considerable obstacles in his path, hampering his efforts to gain access to his enslaved capital in Virginia. On learning that

---

[94]Richard Barnes Mason to George Mason, 27 Jan 1820, Mason Papers, AAS.

William had in fact sold Tom Clark to a third party, Richard was at first upset. He told George he did not think their brother would "cheat me out of him" since William's "pretended claim" to Tom was one of convenience, "only to accommodate Tom."[95] While he did not spell out how this deal served to "accommodate" Tom Clark, it indicated that concern for Clark's own preferences may have played a role in the Mason brothers' decisions. Whether William's sale of Clark also served those purposes, Richard Mason did not say, and perhaps did not care.

Having lost Tom Clark, Richard pursued gaining the proceeds from Clark's sale, first with the idea of invest in fur trading, but ultimately hoping to find a suitable replacement. But then George became the obstacle. George had negotiated the difference between Richard and William and was supposed to have sent to Richard the money from Tom Clark's sale. By September 1822, Richard had to insist that George "make some exertion to pay me," since "you have had the use of the money five Years." Pressing George again fifteen months later, Richard grew exasperated, as sibling rivalry rose to the surface and displaced his concern over Clark's sale. "It is not right," he charged, "that you . . . who inherited half my Fathers fortune, withhold from me, who got none." He fumed that "while you have been living at your ease at home, and enjoying a princely fortune, I have been thrown upon the world & among strangers with

[95]Richard Barnes Mason to George Mason, [ca. 27 Aug. 1819-27 Jan 1820], Mason Papers, AAS.

nothing but the paltry pay of a Subaltern."[96]

Debates between white men about enslaved African Americans often turned on such grounds, on white men's standing. In this regard, Mason was playing by Virginia's rules, and in this he demonstrated that his calculated maneuvers including the buying and selling of land and slaves, coexisted with a culture of honor which explicitly rejected northern notions of market relations and sentimentality. Mason's complaint about having to make his way "among strangers," and working as a "Subaltern" would have stung his brothers. They had grown up in a culture of honor, in which a man's self-worth depended in large part on the esteem given him by others.

Honor could play a more pronounced role in settling controversies in the enslaved labor market. As slaveholders sought to maintain reputations of integrity, they remained sensitive to accusations of improper conduct of business. The Rev. A. A. Reese of Staunton found himself facing the prospects of a duel with local lawyer John H. McCue over the reputed character of a hired slave woman. In July 1850, Reese wrote to McCue about his dissatisfaction with the hired woman, Becky. He found "intolerable" Becky's "insolence to my wife in my absence." "Besides," he complained, "Ephraim her husband has turned my Kitching into a perfect grocery--a complete 'grogshop'." Reese, being a man of the cloth, did not think it becoming to apply the whip, so he simply wanted to send her back and pay McCue for the time she had already served. McCue

---

[96]Richard Barnes Mason to George Mason, 25 Sept. 1822, 1 Dec. 1823, Mason Papers, AAS. Richard Mason's poor speculative judgement appears to have thrown further obstacles in his path. He sold his claim on three thousand acres of Kentucky lands for only $5,000 in 1822; it would soon be worth far more. Copeland and MacMaster, Five George Masons, 262.

perhaps would have accommodated Reese's resolution, had Reese not made a careless gaffe. Becky, he added in conclusion, had "not answered to one of the good traits of character given her by yourself."[97]

Three days later, McCue responded, taking note of the "remarkable tone" of Reese's letter, "especially the concluding paragraph." He quoted the offending line, demanding an explanation of "how you intend me understand" its implication. "As affairs now stand," he stated flatly, Reese's irresponsible language "precludes any adjustment of the difficulty." When Reese ignored the reply and then Becky showed up at McCue's house, McCue was furious and sent her back with a second letter. He denounced Reese's impropriety, describing the first note's tone more dramatically now as "coarse" and "insulting."[98] Reese rose to the occasion and launched an open attack on McCue's honor. He now denounced McCue's first reply as "so foreign from that manliness of character which men of sterling principal are always allowed to possess that I could not with proper self respect, pay any attention to it." Further, he baited, "your note of [to]day, fully satisfies me of your unfitness to be brot into contact with a gentleman." Finally, he found McCue's "very ill bred and hasty note" to be "quite uncalled for."[99] This was the last straw for McCue. He responded immediately--that day--and told Reese that only the vestments of the church had

---

[97]A. A. Reese to John H. McCue, 16 July 1850, McCue Papers, UVA.

[98]McCue added "vulgar" but then visibly struck it out. McCue to Reese, 10 July, 6 August 1850, McCue Papers, UVA.

[99]Reese to McCue, 16 Aug. 1850, McCue Papers, UVA.

protected him from chastisement for his "insolence." "Throw off your sacred garb," he challenged, "and I will then . . . know what course to pursue." He demanded an immediate retraction.[100]

In the best form of honor challenges, each man carefully laid out his case as it developed. McCue claimed to have made clear "distinctly upon what grounds" he knew Becky's "character." He had originally hired Becky from a Mr. Mills, on the strong recommendation of Mills and "others who knew her." She and her husband had lived with him for two or three months with absolutely no problems. He and his wife were "well pleased" with her and let her go only "with much reluctance," having bought another cook in the meantime. He could speak only of the time Becky and Ephraim had spent at his own residence, and therefore Reese's "insolent" language was unacceptable. McCue stressed that he had "in civil & courteous terms" tried to "open the door" to an "honorable" settlement by giving Reese the chance to explain or retract his first statements.

For his part, Reese denied McCue's right to take offense at his the words of his original correspondence. "I must insist," he wrote, "that there was nothing in my former note that reflected upon you, or which by fair construction of language could so be understood, or was (to use your own chaste and classical terms) 'coarse and insulting.'" Further, he had not in fact sent Becky back to McCue, but had sent her to find another suitable home, just as McCue had done "after similar trial." Given McCue's attacks on the Rev. Reese's own honor, in

---

[100]McCue to Reese, 6 Aug. 1850, McCue Papers, UVA.

his final communication Reese did in fact send Becky back.

At bottom, of course, the dispute was not about Becky's character, but rather about Reese's and McCue's. It was about the way in which the two had negotiated the contract, and more proximately, about how they had tried to resolve the dispute. Reese had failed to employ proper obfuscation of blame in his original letter, and McCue's "open door" of escape was only cracked open partway. The precise language of the letters was key, for the hiring affair itself, as well as the ongoing exchange of letters, had taken place entirely through third parties. Indeed, as Reese pointed out contemptuously, "I most fortunately have no acquaintance with you. In having thus escaped I feel myself happy." As McCue acknowledged, Becky did not even belong legally to McCue, but to Miller. McCue sought simply to sub-contract her hire for the rest of the term, rather than send her back to Miller. Becky herself then went to Reese's brother, who negotiated directly with McCue for her hire to Reese. McCue, then, had conveyed his knowledge of Becky's character to Reese's brother, not the Reverend himself. Reese sent his first volley by way of his son, and McCue responded by having his friend, John Imboden, deliver the note to Reese's wife. As Reese had said, he was frequently absent from home. Reese's last correspondence, McCue said, had turned up "upon my table," so it, too, was delivered in the lawyer's absence.

The quarrel, then, began explicitly in the wide-open gaps of knowledge lying between Miller, McCue, and Reese in this negotiation over the hiring of the slave. As their contract of reconciliation would state, the problem had in fact arisen "out of a Correspondence between them." McCue took Miller's word,

Reese's brother took McCue's word, and Reese took the word of his brother. Their letters had to negotiate the physical space between them, and did so only imperfectly. The specificity and inflexibility of Reese's written words gave rise to an escalating conflict which the two mediated through the third parties of their family members and friends. In the end, again in good form of honor, the two negotiated a settlement through their "seconds," with John Imboden retracting McCue's letters, and James Points retracting Reese's. No mention at all was made of Becky, her character, or the question of her hire.[101]

Most slaveholders could not rely on the dictates of honor to resolve their disputes. They needed more secure means of assuring the business of buying or selling was carried on with perfect propriety. Despite the public scapegoating of professional slave traders, many buyers and sellers trusted professional traders to do their business for them, even at a distance. Buyers and sellers relied in part on traditional networks of patronage and friendship to make connections with and to gain information on slave traders. But they also employed modern means of transferring funds and enslaved people. Each of these was a means of negotiating the distances involved in the slave market. By tapping social, financial, and transportation networks, sellers and buyers could have money and slaves transferred without leaving home. With all the principle items of exchange passing through these institutions, buyers and sellers could enter the slave market with some assurances that traders would conduct their business

---

[101]Imboden transcribed copies of the relevant documents, and they remained filed together in McCues papers. Agreement between Rev. A. A. Reese and John H. McCue, 7 Aug. 1850, signed by their respective "seconds," James Points and John D. Imboden, McCue Papers, UVA; also publ. online, in "Valley of the Shadow," Univ. of Virginia, http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/vshadow2.

rapidly and honestly.[102]

Nowhere was sentiment more noticeably absent than in the correspondences between slave traders and their customers. Here buyers and sellers focused on the most important issues at hand: finding an enslaved worker with the right qualifications, getting the best price, and ensuring the safe transfer of funds. "Buy for me a first rate cooper," Isaac Carrington wrote trader S. R. Fondren in May 1863, "one that can make at least six best flour bbls. [barrels] per day." He did not mention a price range, nor did he make arrangements at this point for payment. The two must have known and trusted each other well, or had previous arrangements in this matter. He did have his standards, however. "Don't buy a rascal," he instructed; he was looking for a man under thirty and "from a country mill." Despite wartime production imperatives, he did not seem to be in a particular hurry, counseling the trader, "Take your time for the purchase," but to send him out as soon as the purchase was made.[103] Mrs. R. H. Roberts of Petersburg put similar faith in Richmond trader [E. M.] Stokes. "I would like to buy a seamstress," she wrote in 1863, "have you one you would recommend?" She mentioned her deceased husband,

---

[102]Laws protecting slave purchasers from fraud worked to alleviate some of the doubt involved in long-distance transactions. Caveat emptor did not rule slave sales as it did northern commodities and even southern non-slave sales. On the protection that lawmakers and jurists provided slave buyers, see Judith K. Schafer "'Guaranteed Against the Vices and Maladies Prescribed by Law': Consumer Protection, the Law of Slave Sales, and the Supreme Court in Antebellum Louisiana," American Journal of Legal History 31 (Oct. 1987): 306-321; Andrew Fede, "Legal Protection for Slave Buyers in the U. S. South: A Caveat Concerning Caveat Emptor," American Journal of Legal History 31 (Oct. 1987): 322-358; Jenny B. Wahl, "The Juridisprudence of American Slave Sales," Journal of Economic History 56 (Mar. 1996): 143-169; and Morris, Southern Slavery and the Law, 104-113. For the implications of these market protections on southern honor, see also Ariela Gross, "Pandora's Box," Ph.d. diss.

[103]Isaac C. Carrington to S. R. Fondren, 26 May 1863, "Slavery" MSS folder, CHS.

whom Dickinson likely knew, and urged him to write quickly, as she was "in need of such a servant." She, too, had in mind what she wanted. The enslaved woman should "wash & iron well," have a "good reputation of course." Further, Mrs. Roberts "would prefer a bright color." When Stokes found one of that description which he could "recommend," she would come to Richmond and take a look.[104]

Not only did they put their trust in the traders, but also in their own agents and in the modern means of transportation and finance. Carrington wanted his enslaved cooper sent via the agents he knew on the Richmond and Danville and Railroad. Sellers, too, trusted the traders and these means of commerce. Robert Meredith of Louisa County wrote to Dickinson & Hill in 1860 that he was disappointed they had to make a $55 discount for a malady he did not know about. But he trusted their judgment in the matter, and asked that his money be deposited at a local bank and to have the notes sent to him at Jackson's Post Office, Louisa County.[105] Similarly, Thomas Robinson sent by stage coach a woman he had purchased from Dickinson and Hill. She "does not answer the purposes I purchased her for," he said, but he did not blame them. He simply asked them to sell her again "for whatever she will bring," and to deposit his balance in a Richmond bank.[106]

---

[104]Mrs. R. H. Roberts, c/o William B. Green, to Mr . Stokes, 10 June 1863, in R. H. Dickinson & Brother correspondence, [1846-1865], Slavery in the United States Collection, AAS.

[105]Robert Meredith [Louisa] to Dickinson & Hill, 7 Sept. 1860, Dickinson correspondence, AAS.

[106]Thomas Robinson to DickinsonHill&CO., 10 mar 1855, Dickinson correspondence, AAS.

Other sellers relied on more traditional means of conveying the money, but still lent traders their good faith in matters of the sale. In 1847, Alexander Fontaine sent a woman named Sooky to Richmond by way of his friend or agent Charles T. Lowry. Lowry was to bring back the proceeds of the sale, if Dickinson thought "tomorrow as good a day to sell her as any other." If not, then Fontaine's brother would pick it up, for he was to come up to Fontaine's home from Richmond shortly. "As to the time of selling her," he wrote, "I will leave it up to you."[107]

Many such sellers seem to have known and carried on cordial relations with traders for some time. On occasion, they lent their good names to friends unknown to the traders, continuing to expand upon long-standing patronage relations. When M. Rogerson traveled from Edenton, North Carolina, to Richmond to sell a "negro Boy," he carried a letter of reference from Edenton local John H. Hall, who knew the traders Dickinson and Hill. Hall wrote that Rogerson was "a young man of limited Education & means," and told the traders that "any assistance you can render him will be most thankfully received."[108] Rogerson knew that his lack of wealth, education, and experience put him at a significant disadvantage in dealing with shrewd speculators, whose well-being rested on their ability to buy low and sell high. Tapping traders' social and business networks may have helped him level the playing field, if Dickinson wanted to keep his planter friends in Edenton happy.

---

[107]Alexr. R. Fontaine, by Mr. C. T. Lowry, to R. H. Dickinson, 16 Feb. 1847, Dickinson correspondence, AAS.

[108]Jno. H. Hall to D&Hill., 23 Feb. 1857, Dickinson correspondence, AAS.

These distances did cause some sellers trouble, as they had difficulty ensuring they were getting the best price and that traders were not simply holding onto potential sales in order to charge more for room and board. Sellers sometimes grew impatient with the time traders took to dispose of their slaves and urged them to complete the business in a more timely manner. One slaveholder living outside Danville had sent an enslaved woman for sale to Dickinson, Hill, and Company, via their Danville agent Thomas D. Neal. The man apparently grew a little impatient, or more needy of the money, and wrote Neal to have her sold. Neal wrote twice to Dickinson to sell her "immediately" and send the money by check.[109] Another seller, from Tarboro, North Carolina, wrote instructing Dickinson to sell Cato and Tenessy "as soon as possible"; "I dont want them upon expense no longer than can be helped." To verify the necessity of Dickinson's prevarication, he asked for a report on "the state of the slave market" in Richmond.[110]

Others watched the state of the market for themselves and instructed the traders accordingly. F. Fitzhugh wrote R. H. Hill in February 1846 telling him that if he could not "get the price I told you to take," then to wait until he heard back from Fitzhugh. He would contact Hill again the next week, he said.[111]

Still others dealt with the traders through their own agents. N. E. Venable

---

[109]Thomas D. Neal to Dickinson, Hill & Co., 20 Feb. 1857, Dickinson correspondence, AAS.

[110]L. C. K---- [illegible] to Messrs. R. H. Dickinson & Bro., 27 Feb. 1846, Dickinson correspondence, AAS.

[111]F. Fitzhugh to R. H. Hill, 22 Feb. 1846, Dickinson correspondence, AAS.

of Farmville sent the enslaved man James to Dickinson by way of his friend John W. Ritchie, instructing Dickinson only to "make sale of the negro as soon as you can" and to "obtain full value" for him. All he told Dickinson about James was that he was a "sound healthy & valuable one." Another friend, Robert Quathers, was to pick up the proceeds for Venable and give Dickinson a receipt.[112]

Sellers tried to keep tabs on their property at the traders' marts, some going to great lengths. In May 1863, D. W. Rencher wrote to Richmond trader E. H. Stokes from his encampment with the 5th Alabama Battalion. He had sent an enslaved boy to be sold, but now wanted to know if his father could "redeem" the boy. If the boy was not sold, then Stokes was to hire him out until the elder Rencher could come pay for him and pick him up. If the boy was already sold, then Rencher instructed Stokes to hold onto the money "until I come to Richmond," itself a speculation, as he added, "which will not be long unless I am Killed soon."[113]

Sellers testified to the fungibility of their slave capital. Auctioneers Betts & Gregory advertised, apparently for one of their clients, a twenty-four year old woman, a "good cook, washer, and ironer," who could be bought, or else "exchanged for State stock, Bank stock, or real estate."[114] Some sellers openly invited traders to purchase. Many advertised they were selling for cash, a

---

[112]N. E. Venable, c/o R. Quathers[?] Esq., to R. H. Dickinson & Bro., 27 Feb. 1847, Dickinson correspondence, AAS.

[113]D. W. Renche to E. H. Stokes, 20 May 1863, Dickinson correspondence, AAS.

[114]Richmond Daily Dispatch, 30 Nov. 1860.

something most local buyers would not or could not pay for such a large investment. One man flatly stated in his ad that "No objection will be made to traders purchasing."[115] By contrast, the executors of Sarah Denham of Leesburg noted in their advertisement that the three women and five children for sale were "directed by the will, not to be sold to traders, but to some person residing in Loudon, Fauquier or Fairfax" Counties. Given the omnipresence and buying power of export traders scouring the area, the ad urged local planters to seize this "rare opportunity" to buy locally at a fair price.[116] When W. W. Sylvester advertised the auction of his Norfolk-area farm, he added that "should the purchasers desire to buy negroes, I will sell about 20 very likely ones on very accommodating terms." He seemed to want them to be able to stay on the farm, stating explicitly that he did not really want to auction them publicly, "as I would like for them to get good homes in the neighborhood."[117]

Likewise, local buyers were often careful to distinguish themselves from traders. While James Paxton of Lexington offered "a liberal price in cash" for an enslaved cook, he noted, in language common to other ads, that he sought to purchase her "for my own use," not for resale.[118] Traders might even play to this kind of language in their own ads. One anonymous man advertising through Norfolk auctioneer James Pollard said he sought "about forty negroes,

---

[115]Bancroft, Slave Trading, 25.

[116]Leesburg Washingtonian, 24 Sept. 1858.

[117]Norfolk & Portsmouth Herald, 23 Sept. 1859.

[118]Lexington Valley Star, 19 Jan. 1860.

men, women and children, in one lot from one person, on a credit of five years." He appealed directly to sellers who might rather avoid commercial buyers, and who would find locals' interest as attractive as traders' cash. But his other language might have given him away. His headline read "LOOK AT THIS. NEGROES WANTED," blaring in similar fashion to the traders' many ads. And, like interstate traders offering cash, he promised he would pay the "highest market price."[119]

For the most part, Virginia slaveholders saw no reason to shun long-distance slave traders, whom they knew would give them the best possible prices, often in cash, or the local auctioneers, who likewise knocked off their slaves to the highest bidder. Yet at the same time, proslavery polemicists had begun to scapegoat slave traders for one of the most callous aspects of the system, the splitting up of enslaved family members. Polemical assertions, culminating in Daniel Hundley's characterization of traders as alien "Southern Yankees," might easily be written of as mere rhetorical bluster, as smokescreen.[120] But when aversion to traders or sentimental anguish over sale was expressed in private correspondence, however, it can not be so easily dismissed.

Precious few slaveholders wrung their hands over these decisions; fewer still expressed their reservations in their correspondence. Those who did,

---

[119]Norfolk & Portsmouth Herald, 18 Aug. 1859. For other examples of suspicious anonymous advertisements and of planters advertising to buy for their "own use," see Bancroft, Slave Trading, 21-22, 31-36.

[120]Tadman, Speculators, 180-184.

however, demonstrated their full entanglement both in the slave market and sentimental paternalism. Those who did anguish over this difficulty, in fact, may have been more likely to write about it. Exchanging letters constituted part of the actual demonstration of sentimental bonds, both to family members and by extension to those African Americans considered part of the black and white family.

Whatever reluctance slaveholders expressed in dealing with traders arose out of concern for their own self-image as sentimental slaveholders. In 1853, W. Meade discovered he had unwittingly helped spread a vicious rumor, and he wrote to Robert Randolph in an effort to clear up the matter. At issue was a letter Meade had written to the Rev. Hutchinson who, as gossip "in the neighborhood" had it, was planning to carry "his lot of servants" with him when he moved to St. Louis, "where they would command a higher price." Although Hutchinson was said to be leaving behind those slaves who were "connected inn the neighbourhood," since "it would be inhuman to separate from the connection," Meade counseled Hutchinson to sell the rest locally as well, "at a reduced price." He was concerned that Hutchinson "avoid the imputation of the undue desire for gain on a minister of the Gospel." But now it seems Meade had become the subject of speculation, for he had wrongly repeated what turned out to be false rumors about Hutchinson's intent. News had traveled fast through various relatives, and Meade worried that his letter had now become "the subject of conversation, & may be yet more so in the neighborhood."[121] Meade,

---

[121]Meade outlined the chain of gossip thus: his son Philip had mentioned that his Aunt Lucy had received a letter from Randolph's wife, which had alluded to the letter from Meade to Mr. Hutchinson. News traveled quite a distance; Meade lived in Buckingham County, in

in trying to help one slaveholder avoid a dishonorable act in the slave market, was now himself implicated in committing a different dishonorable act.

Randolph said he was sorry that Meade and others had believed the rumors, and he sought to cleared up the matter point by point. First he verified Hutchinson's "intention not to sell the negroes except to prevent division of families." Hutchinson would take only those "willing to go," in order to prevent hiring them in Virginia "to their discomfort, or to give trouble to any one here to attend to them." In fact, Randolph attested, Hutchinson "gave them all, the liberty of choosing masters here, which they have done," except for one man who would possibly go to St. Louis with the reverend. Furthermore, Hutchinson had sold them below market value, so "the whole transaction" was "an act of justice" by a "gentleman." Hutchinson felt stung by the rumors, and Randolph agreed he had been "uncharitably dealt with." Some people had gone so far as suggest he was unfit to minister a church. Meade's letter had only added fuel to that fire, which Randolph now sought to quench. "We all appreciate your motives in writing to Mr H," he said, "but he was mortified to think that you and others could believe such things of him." Hutchinson could answer any charge, he closed, but slander was impossible to defend against. Coming dangerously close to accusing the Bishop of affronting Hutchinson's honor as a gentleman, Randolph in closing asserted friendly ties, sending his

---

southside piedmont Buckingham County, while Randolph lived in Clarke County, in the northern Shenandoah Valley. W. Meade to Robert Randolph, 9 Jan. 1853, Randolph Family of Millwood papers, UVA.

regards to Meade's son, whom Randolph held in great esteem.[122]

Unlike the McCue-Reese imbroglio, this one probably did not escalate into a near duel. Yet they shared certain characteristics in regards to the slave market which bear illumination. Both cases involved ministers of the Gospel, and turned on what kind of behavior might be proper for such men. Reese felt it would be improper to discipline the enslaved woman Becky with the whip, as he was a man of the cloth. Thus he returned her. He did not hesitate, however, to chastise McCue for what he considered a breach of honor--McCue's alleged misrepresentation of Becky's character and McCue's rude language directed at Reese. McCue claimed to give deference to Reese's vestments, but Reese himself proved ready to defend his honor without any regard to any impropriety in that act. Randolph's defense of Hutchinson seemed to imply that the Rev. Hutchinson, too, acted on the premise of honor, and Randolph even came close to accusing the Bishop Meade of impugning the Reverend's honor. That case, too, revolved around white men's relation to the slave market, or more specifically, white men's efforts to avoid the open slave market. All concerned believed it improper for a minister to participate speculatively in the selling of slaves. All three men involved seemed to have believed it to be a violation of honor to be seen as doing so, to be accused of doing so, or to accuse others of doing so. The resolution of the crisis involved a very careful explanation of Hutchinson's intent and his ultimate actions regarding the enslaved people he had held.

---

[122]Robert Randolph to Bishop W. Meade, 12 Jan. 1853. Randolph Family of Millwood Papers, UVA.

Finally, although the most important aspects of the dispute were about what white men had said about each other, key to Randolph's defense of Hutchinson was an emphasis on the ostensible will of the enslaved people concerned. All three men recognized that if Hutchinson moved all his slaves with him, it would cause the "inhuman" breaking of marriages, families, and friendships--in short, of "connections." Randolph said Hutchinson had offered all of them to "choose" their own masters, to whom he then sold them. Only one man went unsold, and Randolph said he "hoped" the man would choose to follow Hutchinson to St. Louis. Randolph and others had become familiar with this kind of sentiment. A friend wrote Randolph in 1852, for example, wonderings about a certain enslaved servant he had met when the man had been hired in Winchester. He was "anxious to get a good dining-room servant," he said, "and have been told that this man bears an excellent character." He asked for the price and qualified his enthusiasm only with the statement that he "would not wish to purchase unless the servant was willing to live with me."[123]

Such assertions of African-American "choice" in the slave market seemed to arise out of tension arising from slaveholders' conscious recognition both of actual African-American agency--even in slavery--and their own balance of power. Walter Johnson has illuminated the ways enslaved people frequently expressed their own agency, even in the slave market. Traders relied on them to "sell themselves," by playing to the qualities traders had bragged to potential buyers. At the same time, African Americans in the slave market sized up their

---

[123]R. H. Dulany to Dr. R. C. Randolph, 4 Jan. 1852, Randolph Family of Millwood Papers, UVA.

potential buyers and monitored their behavior and responses accordingly. They "chose" among those looking to buy, picked those who seemed more likely to provide a passable situation, and tailored their appearance and language to suit that buyer. Thus in some small but important way, enslaved people enacted choice within the severe restrictions of the slave market.[124] Slaveholders understood that African Americans miserable in their situation might disrupt the slaveholders' life and profits. It made sense to provide some accommodation to some of enslaved people's interests. Moreover, slaveholders' explicit assertion that enslaved people had "choices" in such matters fed into their own rather benevolent self-images. If enslaved people were choosing masters, then such mastery was benign indeed.

However much slaveholders may have protested slave traders' behavior, they recognized these dealers' legal rights embodied in the chattel principle. Rutson Maury wrote in 1833 to his kinsman Reuben Maury that he was "concerned" to learn that Mr. Bishop, who was apparently tending the affairs of the family's estate, had sold two slaves, Jupiter and Evelina, to a "Negro-trader," and "that they are to be carried out of the state." Rutson was shocked at Bishop's apparent duplicity, telling Reuben that he "never could have imagined Mr. Bishop would be guilty of such bad faith"; otherwise he would have categorically "declined all dealings with him as he must have been well aware of." He conceded Bishop's legal claim, however, as long as Bishop continued to pay the bond. The only way Rutson saw to prevent Jupiter and Evelina's

---

[124]Johnson, Soul By Soul, 176-187. Ex-slave autobiographers, by nature of their task, tended to highlight such personal agency in the slave market, though they simultaneously betrayed their failures effectively to effect those choices. See ch. 4 below.

departure was if Bishop failed to pay. In that case, he instructed Reuben to go after Bishop legally and to re-take possession of Jupiter and Evelina if possible.

Maury expressed the position many Virginia slaveholders would have held, both publicly and privately. They made just enough effort to avoid traders, but ultimately found themselves unable to do so, recognizing the chattel principle which united all slaveholders, whether or not they considered themselves speculators.

Perhaps no other slaveholders expressed this never-ending internal conflict more cogently than the members of the Austin and Twyman family of Virginia's southside piedmont. The Austins and Twymans found letter-writing a particularly important means both of conducting business and of sharing family news. The Archibald Austin estate, in Buckingham County, had once held over fifty enslaved workers. But in the years following the patriarch's death in 1837, not to mention the economic panic of that year, his heirs had to liquidate much of his slaveholding capital. As John Austin wrote his sister Frances, they had so far "spent forty-three negroes" in the twelve years since their father's death, and they should avoid selling any more.[125] By 1850, the Austins and Twymans debated the various ways to render the estate sound.

When selling off the enslaved people of their father's estate, they seem to have made some efforts to keep certain people together. But the pressure was on. Debt was at their door, literally. A slave trader came knocking at Twyman's house, sent by one of the Austins' creditors as a not-so-subtle hint. Of the 48

---

[125][John Austin?] to Frances Austin, [ca. 1848-1849], Austin-Twyman Papers, W&M.

people sold in the estate division or soon afterward, 39 left in groups of two or more, 22 of those clearly in mother-child pairs or trios, such as Betty and her daughter, Lydia. A nine- or ten-year old girl named Betty, however, was sold separately, as was another girl named Lydia, aged sixteen. The same man bought them, though, along with Daniel, age fourteen or fifteen, and Aaron and Emanuel, each aged eighteen. These ages, and the names of Betty and Lydia, clearly indicate these five were separated from many other kin on the Austin estate. Similarly, two men named Beverly were sold off separately, one with his wife, Big Lucy. A third Beverly, Lucy's son, remained in the Austin family's possession.[126]

While "spending" these slaves like money, the Austins still operated under sentimental notions of the black and white family. They gave their enslaved workers--those remaining in the 1850s, at least--wide freedom of movement. Enslaved couriers delivered private letters between the Austin plantation in Buckingham County and the home of Dr. Iverson L. and Martha E. (Austin) Twyman, across the James River in Amherst County. These unaccompanied slave couriers also delivered horses, clothing, produce, and even jewelry back and forth between the estates. In one case, Twyman considered letting the enslaved man Andrew pick up a gun which had been repaired in Lynchburg. He decided against it only because "some trifling white man" would probably take it from him, regardless of any note or pass Twyman might write

---

[126]The genealogical ties of the third Beverly to Big Lucy are not perfectly clear; his mother was named Lucy. Information gathered from three separate lists of Austin slave sales, in Archibald Austin estate legals file, Austin-Twyman Papers, W&M.

for Andrew.[127] Enslaved members of the Austin household held relative autonomy in their religious participation, and a few gained considerable influence in choosing their hiring employers. The white Austin women, especially, involved themselves in the lives of the enslaved men and women, keeping close tabs on the tasks of household sustenance, such as spinning, looming, and clothes making. In their letters they occasionally included the cliched but significant closing, "give my love to the whole family--black and white."

Martha Twyman herself showed tremendous capacity to express highly emotional sentiments toward some of the slaves. Learning in 1849 that a favored family was to be sold, she wrote to her sister Grace Austin, "I feel very sorry for the poor negroes. Tell Burwell and Linda farewell for me. Tell them that they must be sure to write to us and let us hear from them." Clearly, she acknowledged the slaves' literacy and understood what use Burwell and Linda were to make of their literacy, namely the maintenance of the emotional bond that Martha felt she shared with them, across the very distance Martha's family was imposing on them. But this was not even the height of Martha's sentimentalism. She went on in the letter to describe the bundle of clothes she and Frances, another sister, had put together for the family. "You will find in it a pair of pantaloons for Burwell, a pair of shoes and stockings for Linda, and a little Sack for Linda['s daughter] little Lizzie. Frances sends Linda a cape and neck ribbon."

---

[127]Twyman to "Fanny" [Frances Austin], n.d. 1849, Austin-Twyman Papers, W&M.

It had long been common practice to give slaves new clothes when they were being sold at auction, itself something of a bid for domestic respectability, as an indication that the slaves had been from "good homes." Martha often worked to get enslaved men and women ready for market, fitting them with new clothes, shoes, stockings, even making sure they brushed their teeth. She took pride in her feminine contribution to the marketing of these people, bragging to Iverson that the slave traders--being men of business--"would most probably dress them fine, but not in taste."[128] But Burwell and Linda's case was different. Here Martha's sentimental language was overwhelming. When Grace gave Burwell's family the clothes she was to "Tell them that they must think of us when they put them on."[129] These articles were to be tangible reminders, embodiments of the sentimental bond between Martha and Frances on the one hand, and Burwell, Linda, and Lizzie on the other. They were meant, like the letters she wanted them to write home, to serve as a tokens of sentiment, an emotional bridge spanning the distance that the market imposed.

Burwell and Linda probably understood well what these tokens of affection were meant to do. Another enslaved Austin woman, Mary, writing from South Carolina to her mother, had sent home a letter with a present in it. She talked about sending a little present for her sister, and asked her father and

---

[128]Martha E. Twyman to Iverson L. Twyman, 27 Feb. 1855; Martha E. Twyman to Francis Austin, 7[?] Oct. 1848; Martha E. Twyman to John Austin, 14 Oct. 1848; Iverson L. Twyman to John Austin, 14 Oct. [no year], Austin-Twyman Papers, W&M. Martha also knew more hard-nosed market ways, counseling Iverson on one occasion (27 Feb. 1855) to wait for Richmond prices to rise before sending the two women she was fixing up for sale.

[129]Martha. E. Twyman to Grace Austin, [n.d.] Sept. 1849, Austin-Twyman Papers, W&M.

uncle to send her something as well. Passing along mementos folded in letters amplified the role of familial letters in bringing the writer and recipient together in a common psychological space that was emotional and tangible.[130] This was certainly the effect Martha Twyman was looking for.

Emotions drove Martha Twyman's interactions with enslaved African Americans in other directions as well. Three months after the sad departure of Burwell and Linda, she learned her brother John was taking another slave, "old Mary," to a trader in Richmond. She felt quite differently about the sale of Mary, as she wrote to Frances. "I understand," she said, "that the old hag says that she intends to come back here to live. But I hope that her home is in the 'Sunny South' far away from me." What's more, when Martha learned that the traders had not allowed Mary's husband Alfred to see her before they took her away, Martha said she was "very glad they did not."[131] Here the slave market proved a tool in the service of Martha's vindictive wishes, erecting an insurmountable geographic barrier not only between Old Mary and herself but between Mary and her mate. Sale constituted an expression not only of an utter lack of sympathy between Martha Twyman and Old Mary, but also of the effective denial of Mary's sentimental bond with Alfred.

---

[130]Mary to her mother, 22 June 1851, Austin-Twyman Papers, W&M. Other enslaved and recently freed African Americans used such sentimental tokens to connect to their loved ones, for example, an ambrotype or a string of beads. See Dorothy Sterling, We Are Your Sisters, 50; and Berlin, et al., eds., Families and Freedom, 98.

[131]Martha E. Twyman to Frances A. Austin, Dec. 1949; 18 Dec. 1849, Austin-Twyman Papers, W&M. I am speculating that Alfred was her mate. Mary sent for him and he went to Richmond before being denied. He may have been a son, brother, father, uncle, or friend.

Martha's emotions ran hot and cold with these enslaved people. The intensity of these sentiments, as she expressed them in this time of crisis, spoke to the importance with which she invested those relations. Her sentiments had been shaped by daily interactions with them. Those relations had helped her define, situationally, who she was as a slaveholder, and prevented her commodification of the people her family thrust upon the slave market. With Burwell and Linda's family, she felt strong affection, and she assumed--or hoped--it was mutual. Mary, however, was a "hag" in her opinion, and she probably thought Mary felt likewise about Martha Twyman.

While Martha Twyman focused on the domestic aspect of the family's participation in the slave market, delving into the emotional implications of sale, she also participated in less sentimental conversations about the family's finances. But her husband Iverson and her brother John took care of most business when the time came. Iverson corresponded regularly with commercial slave traders in Richmond and Lynchburg, asking for the latest price quotes. Whatever reservations he had about splitting up slave families, he did it without recording any remorse. His correspondence indicates he may have even sold two teenaged women whom traders thought sounded like potential "fancy girls."[132]

On one occasion, however, Dr. Iverson Twyman did express his more sentimental side. Even then, his emotions were laced with hard-nosed

---

[132]Seth Woodruff to Iverson L. Twyman, 5 March 1854; R. H. Dickinson & Bro. to Iverson L. Twyman, 20 Nov. 1854; Austin-Twyman Papers, W&M. Whether or not Twyman intended to sell these young women into sexual slavery, traders might do so after they left Twyman's hands. Twyman corresponded fairly frequently with these and other traders from the 1850s through 1864.

calculation. In 1848, an enslaved man named Bob was killed in a work accident while hired out to work on the canal. "This is sad news," Iverson wrote to Martha. "I am sorry for the loss of the poor negro, as property, & I am sorry on account of the loss of a member of our family." Bob did in fact represent a loss, both in Twyman's heart and in his ledger book. Iverson saw perfect symmetry in expressing his sympathy and his interest.

Ultimately, however, Bob served Twyman's own ends, even in his death. It spurred Iverson to reflect on his own philosophy and life, and to share those thoughts with Martha. "I look upon my negroes and myself as belonging to the same family," he told her, "and when one is snatched off by the hand of death, it not only leaves us one less but it is eminently calculated to remind us that 'in the midst of life, we are in death.'" Even sentimental Providence, it seemed, had a calculating mind, serving up Bob as an object lesson just for Twyman. Twyman went on to note that Bob's accident had killed him instantly. Rather than sympathizing with Bob or expressing thanks for a quick demise, Iverson again used Bob's death as a point of departure into his own philosophy. He reflected that he agreed with "the great doctor Adam Clark," who preferred "to have a long warning to enable him to buckle on his armor before he went into the presence of God."[133]

Iverson and Martha Twyman may well have needed that armor in facing their God, but they did not indicate that it had anything to do with their participation in the slave market. For them, the market was part of the

---

[133]Iverson L. Twyman to Martha E. (Austin) Twyman, 7 Sept., 8 Sept. 1848, Austin-Twyman Papers, W&M.

slaveholding world. On the one hand, some of its effects were deemed regrettable, mainly for denying them the privilege of maintaining the sentimental slaveholders' domestic ideal. On the other hand, they embraced the convenience with which the commercial slave market allowed them to liquidate their capital investments to pay down the debts of the estate. They saw no contradiction in their behavior, but they did employ sentimental language to channel their mixed feelings about their actions. Martha could lament the sale of one but revel in the sale of another. Sentiment could help soothe her sense of losing the favored Linda and Burwell, just as vindictive language helped her celebrate her triumph over the "hag" Mary. For Iverson, sentimental language about death and the loss of the enslaved Bob helped him channel his feelings about the uncertainties not only of death, but of his life as a slaveholder. The loss of a slave to death, or indeed by sale, as with Aggy, the thieving woman he discussed with John, was "calculated" to remind him always that "the life of a negro is uncertain."

Chapter Three: Enslaved Correspondence

In 1859, at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, Dangerfield Newby went into battle against slavery. He was armed with more than zeal and steel. He carried in his pocket a small collection of letters written by his wife, Harriet Newby. Living in slavery in Brentville, she had recently urged him to come and buy her, fearing impending doom at her master's hands. "He may sell me," she wrote, "an then all my bright hop[e]s of the futer are blasted." She had but "one bright hope to cheer me in all my troubles," she confided, and "that is to be with you." "If I thought I shoul never see you," she assured him, "this earth would have no charms for me." Her bright hopes were indeed blasted, as Dangerfield Newby was killed in John Brown's conflagration at Harper's Ferry. When authorities found her letters to him on his broken body, she was promptly sold south.[1]

Harriet Newby's situation was unique, but her expressions were not. Others in slavery, especially women, managed to write letters to their spouses, mothers, children, and other kin. They shared with Newby not only the desire to communicate with and to reunify their families, but also the sentimental language in which they expressed those longings. Sentiment constituted a language of grief and of hope. It leant writers images and tropes with which to express the inexpressible feelings of loss they were experiencing and gave them a form in which to communicate those feelings across the distances which had

---

[1]Harriet Newby to Dangerfield Newby, 16 Aug. 1859, in Calendar of Virginia State Papers (Richmond, 1875-93), v. 11, 310-311; repr. in Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies, ed. John Blassingame (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1977), 118-119.

engendered them.

Surviving letters written by enslaved African Americans are rare historical gems. Several forces acted to restrict the flow of written communication between people in slavery. Relatively few slaves gained access to the implements and skills of reading, and fewer still to those of writing.[2] Of those fortunate ones, few found much time to write, and fewer still succeeded in

---

[2]Probably fewer than five percent of slaves could write, but many more could read only. A unique source indicates what literacy rates enslaved African Americans might achieve under the most favorable conditions Virginia slaveholders had to offer. In a petition to the American Colonization Society in September 1853, slave John Scott indicated that of the 118 slaves on John Enders's plantation, "some 45 or 50" knew how to read, and "some 6. or 7." could also write. On Enders's plantation, then, about forty percent could read only, while five percent could both read and write. These represented the maximum respective rates of reading and writing likely for enslaved African Americans, since Enders's strategy of manumission and colonization had probably encouraged literacy. John Scott to American Colonization Society, 19 Sept. 1853, American Colonization Society Papers, Library of Congress, in Blacks in Bondage: Letters of American Slaves, ed. Robert Starobin (New York: Franklin Watts, 1974), 108-110. As Jennifer Monaghan explains, far more enslaved people would have been able to read than to write. Reading pedagogy followed evangelical imperatives; its goal was to lead the reader to salvation through God's Word. Writing was taught more as a secular, pragmatic tool for the world of commerce, travel, and politics. These distinctions led slaveholders to be far less likely to counsel writing for slaves than reading. Moreover, learning to read required only written materials, while proper writing instruction required specialized tools. Writing also required time, a commodity slaves found especially scarce. Jennifer Monaghan, "Reading for the Enslaved, Writing for the Free," Wiggins lecture, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA, 5 Nov. 1998; publ. in Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 108 (1999). (My thanks to Jennifer Monaghan for providing me with a copy of the lecture and for her encouragement in pursuing enslaved correspondence.) Other historians have made estimates and ventured guesses of five to ten percent literacy among slaves, sometimes higher, but without making Monaghan's key distinction between rates of reading and rates of writing. Carter G. Woodson, The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861 (orig. 1919; repr. Salem, N.H.: Ayer Co., 1986), 85, 227-228. Janet Duitsman Cornelius, "We Slipped and Learned to Read: Slave Accounts of the Literacy Process, 1830-1865," Phylon 44 (Sept. 1983), 186; and "When I Can Read My Title Clear": Literacy, Slavery, and Religion in the Antebellum South (Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1991), 8-9, 62-64. W. E. B. DuBois, Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880 (1935; repr. New York: World Publishing Co., 1964), 638. Dorothy Sterling, ed., We Are Your Sisters: Black Women in the Nineteenth Century (1984; repr., New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 44 n. On evangelical efforts to encourage literacy among slaves, see Cornelius, When I Can Read; and Slave Missions and the Black Church in the Antebellum South (Columbia : Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1999). See also James Bruce Fort, The Politics and Culture of Literacy in Georgia, 1800-1920," Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Virginia, 1999.

getting their letters past white censors. Letters which did find their way to loved ones were often kept as tokens of affection, unfolded and re-read over and again, worn past preservation. Gaining and putting to use the skills of writing proved an arduous process in slavery. It first involved stealth or a tolerant master, sometimes both. Next it involved acquiring specialized tools difficult to obtain and, if necessary, to conceal. Finding the time and place to write might have seemed easy compared to the daunting task of getting a letter past the censoring screen of slaveholders, even those who acknowledged a slave's literacy. Negotiating the barriers to black literacy was difficult, even when slaves had their own masters' permission to read and write. Getting a letter to a loved one in slavery involved knowing the right people in the right places and saying the right things in the right ways. It required a certain degree of geographic literacy: the skills of reading the social landscape, understanding the connections between and among certain people (slave or not), and the ability to tap into those connections in order to transfer information and even emotional content from one place to another. Even with masters' permission, letters did not always travel by U. S. mail, and writers seeking to communicate with family often had to wait on the departure of a traveler going in the desired direction. Letters might be passed along a network of the masters' friends and relations before finding their way to the household of the recipient. That slaveholder then might hand the letter to its intended recipient, or not. A slaveholder might simply read the letter to its recipient, perhaps editing or even misrepresenting its contents.

This much is clear, then: when enslaved people did submit themselves to the process of writing and sending letters, they had something important to say.

The language with which they said it, however, may mislead modern readers. Frequently couched in sentimental terms, the letters at times might seem only to echo one another or even the letters of their mistresses and masters. By falling into conventions of letter-writing, they might seem to convey little of personal or historical value. But, as William M. Decker has explained, stock phrases of letter writing acquired emphatic or even ironic significance when deployed at the hands of enslaved people. The common opening, "I embrace this opportunity to write you a letter" reflected the reality that postal service was not at all regular even for free people. For people held in slavery, the rare opportunity to send news to loved ones was indeed worth embracing. It took the enslaved woman Lucy Tucker over ten years to send word from Alabama back home to her mother in Virginia; when she did, she pointed out her means of communicating and suggested her mother to take advantage of that same opportunity. "I send this letter by kindness of Mrs Burr," she said, adding, "and hope to receive an answer when she comes back."[3]

Similarly, many letter writers, both enslaved and free, assured their correspondents that they were "still in the land of the living." Under the

---

[3]Lucy Tucker to her mother, 20 May 1845, in John Hartwell Cocke Papers, UVA, in We Are Your Sisters, ed. Sterling, 49. William Merrill Decker, Epistolary Practices: Letter Writing in America before Telecommunications (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1998), 58, 95. Decker is almost alone in exploring the genre of familiar correspondence in the nineteenth century, while the "familiar letter" of the eighteenth-century has inspired a rich critical literature. In that genre, a writer sought a "natural" style which allowed his or her own feelings--sentiments--come through. See Bruce Redford, The Converse of the Pen: Acts of Intimacy in the Eighteenth-Century Familiar Letter (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1986); Howard Anderson, Philip B. Daghlian, Irvin Ehrenpreis, eds., The Familiar Letter in the Eighteenth Century (Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas Press, 1966); and Andrew Burstein, The Inner Jefferson: Portrait of a Grieving Optimist (Charlottesville: Univ. of Virginia Press, 1995), chs. 2, 4. My thanks to Andrew Trees for his thoughts and these citations on the eighteenth-century familiar letter.

arduous conditions of long-distant migration, Decker notes, this "formulaic affirmation" reiterated a fact that was "not only far from self-evident to addressees but even somewhat improbable to themselves." For forced migrants in slavery, that news would be a Godsend. Sometimes a cliché could find ironic significance, heightening the expression of pain the letter conveyed. An enslaved man named Abream Scriven struck a particularly dissonant chord as he wrote to his wife, "I take the pleasure of writing you these few [lines] with much regret to inform you that I am Sold to a man by the name of Peterson a treader and Stays in new orleans." Scriven's jarring contrast captured the bittersweet tension of such communication in slavery.[4]

One final cliché in common coinage seemed especially meaningful to enslaved African-American correspondents. Writers separated by sale and migration frequently assured their family members that if they did not ever meet again in this world, they would surely meet again in heaven. Far from expressing hollow hopes, this phrase asserted a spiritual unity of family members who still looked to one God, wherever in creation they might find themselves. The lives of antebellum Americans involved endless cycles of migrations, effecting family scatterings with no earthly regathering possible. To insist on heavenly communion was to claim God's "many mansions," the site of

---

[4]And, as Decker notes, the information is made all the more poignant by the exceptional quality of Scriven's literacy; most enslaved men could not have conveyed the news to their wives. Decker, Epistolary Practices, 87-88, 96. Abream Scriven to Dinah Jones, 19 Sept. 1858, Charles Colcock Jones Papers, Tulane University, in Decker, Epistolary Practices, 87-88, and also in Blacks in Bondage, ed. Starobin, 58.

eternal reunion.[5]

In writing, enslaved women and men sought in some way to overcome the vast space the slave market had opened up between themselves and their loved ones. To meet this end, they frequently had learned to frame a letter in the same sentimental language as their white masters and mistresses. Like the white families who had come to cast family in terms of affection rather than economy, literate African Americans in slavery asserted their family ties in exactly that same domestic language.

Sentimentalism, the lingua franca among northern and southern white family members in the nineteenth century, had also been picked up by some enslaved African-American families as well, precisely because it seemed particularly suited to convey the sense of loss imposed by forced migrations across the country.[6] Sentimental language not only provided an emotional link to family members, but it also helped mediate between black family members and the white family through whom a letter might have to pass. This process implicated slaveholders in the emotional exchange, helping ensure their approval of the letter and their conveyance of the letter to its intended recipient. Enslaved correspondents sought to overcome or minimize the effects of the slave market by communicating emotional as well as factual information, to send something

---

[5]Once again, Decker is lucid on the point: "Unity in God [was] very commonly cited as a consolation for what correspondents knew to be the uncertainty of earthly convergences"; Epistolary Practices, 76.

[6]On the connections of northern sentimental language to the migrations of the market revolution, see the forthcoming dissertation from Nicholas Marshall at the University of California, Davis. On southern white sentimental domesticity and the market, see ch. 2 above.

of themselves in the language of their letters. Their sentimental acts of letter writing sought to deny their masters' market decisions their full force by helping them converse in sentimental, human form back across the space over which they had been moved as chattel.

In order to increase the chances that white censors would pass along the letters to their rightful recipients, African Americans learned to couch their sentiments in terms their masters would comprehend and accept. Black writers asked about their white "family" members as well, and turned the conventions of letter-writing into statements whites took as loyalty. Signing a letter "your obedient servant" took on a particular poignancy when written to one who claimed or had claimed legal possession of that obedient service. African Americans' efforts to mediate the market's pernicious effects relied on playing to masters' sentimental interests, obscuring for the moment masters' own complicity in making those market decisions.

Literacy held powerful significance to African Americans precisely because it allowed them to communicate across the space of slavery, helping them obviate the social death which the slave market and long-distance forced migration threatened to impose. African Americans had long dealt with short-distance sales and migrations by creating a network of inter-plantation kinship and friendship relations. They built two-parent households whenever they could, but their family extended to the broader community beyond their individual households. Husbands "abroad" visited their wives and children. Adult children visited their parents. Couriers ran errands for masters and mistresses. People avoiding punishments hid out and maintained clandestine

links to the plantation. Along this network, which could stretch for miles, enslaved African Americans passed the information, news, and gossip which connected each to the larger "neighborhood," their broad community.[7]

Frederick Douglass was only the most famous autobiographer to detail

---

[7]Slave family life in nineteenth-century has long stood in the polemical and historiographical limelight. Herbert G. Gutman, reacting against sociological assumptions that slave families were both "matriarchal" and failures, emphasized the roles of fathers and of the larger community of kin in sustaining family life. Ann Patton Malone's quantitative study bolsters aspects of Gutman's work, finding two parents in roughly half of all antebellum Louisiana slave households. Brenda Stevenson, however, finds far fewer such "nuclear" slave households in late antebellum Loudon County, Virginia. Stevenson has turned emphasis back on the "matrifocal" nature of much slave family life. Here she concurs with Deborah Gray White, who finds slave women far less geographically mobile than slave men, and thus more central to local communities. Allan Kulikoff, Philip Morgan, and others have studied African-American slave family life through the eighteenth century, focusing on African and African Americans' elaboration of new forms of kinship and broad "neighborhood" networks of kin and friends. Cheryl Ann Cody and Emily West have each detailed the implications of cross-plantation marriages and other neighborhood kinship relations, which broadened the impact of any given sale or separation but also helped sustain people through such separations. Herbert G. Gutman, The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976). Ann Patton Malone, Sweet Chariot: Slave Family and Household Structure in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1992), 17, fig. 1.2. Brenda E. Stevenson, Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996), chs. 7, 8; see also "Distress and Discord in Virginia Slave Families, 1830-1860," in In Joy and In Sorrow: Women, Family, and Marriage in the Victorian South, ed. Carol Bleser (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992), 103-124. Deborah Gray White, Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985), 132, 154. Allan Kulikoff, Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800 (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1986). Philip D. Morgan, Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1998), ch. 9. Mary Beth Norton, Herbert G. Gutman, and Ira Berlin, "The Afro-American Family in the Age of Revolution," in Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution, eds. Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983), 175-191. Cheryl Ann Cody, "Naming, Kinship, and Estate Dispersal: Notes on Slave Family Life on a South Carolina Plantation, 1786 to 1833," William And Mary Quarterly 39 (Jan. 1982): 192-211; and "Sale and Separation: Four Crises for Enslaved Women on the Ball Plantations 1764-1854," in Working Toward Freedom: Slave Society and Domestic Economy in the American South, ed. Larry E. Hudson Jr. (Rochester: Univ. of Rochester Press, 1994), 119-142. Emily West, "Surviving Separation: Cross-Plantation Marriages and the Slave Trade in Antebellum South Carolina," Journal of Family History 24 (April 1999): 212-231; and "The Debate on the Strength of Slave Families: South Carolina and the Importance of Cross-Plantation Marriages," Journal of American Studies 33 (1999): 221-241. See also Phillip D. Troutman, "Family, U. S.," in Macmillan Encyclopedia of World Slavery, 2 vols., eds. Paul Finkelman and Joseph C. Miller (New York: Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1998), 322-325.

his clandestine efforts to gain education, linking literacy with freedom. Others stressed literacy's power to deliver Biblical solace, as well as to connect one with separated loved ones. William Hayden, who published his highly idiosyncratic autobiography in 1846, had learned to write "a tolerably legible hand," and regarded himself privileged:

> Yonder is a WHITE man--he has . . . never been able to learn to read the word of God, or transmit by writing one solitary thought to his distant relatives and friends; whilst I, a poor, friendless colored boy,--a slave--can read the consolations held forth in the Scriptures, and inform my distant friends of my progress through life. O, the difference! I would not part with my little knowledge, for all the wealth of your illiterate dealer in flesh and blood![8]

Hayden, sold from northern Virginia to Kentucky as a boy, was indeed able to effect reunion with his mother in part through correspondence carried by indulgent white patrons. Louis Hughes, originally from Albemarle County, Virginia, recounted in his 1897 autobiography how he had learned to read from the slave coachman, Thomas, who in turn had learned from house plasterers working in the neighborhood. Tom would write figures in chalk on the side of the barn, which Hughes would copy. Narrowly escaping punishment after his first lesson, Hughes was more careful in the future, but he and Thomas

---

[8]Hayden had gained his literacy (alphabetic and numeric) in part through the teaching of white mistresses, in part on his own. He claimed once to have run a school for black children in the area of Lexington, Kentucky, with full permission of local planters and town leaders. William Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, containing a Faithful Account of His Travels for a Number of Years, Whilst a Slave in the South; Written by Himself (Cincinnati: for the Author, 1846), 32. For more on Hayden, see ch. 4 below.

continued in their "secret studies" and determined to be free one day.[9]

Learning to write was one thing, but sending a letter could prove an even more vexing process. Without masters' permission, a correspondent would have to find outside allies, whether white or black, to get the letter away without discovery and to pass it along to its recipient. Hughes's compatriot Thomas again illustrated the difficulties. Their overseer, "Boss," was kind enough to write periodically to Tom's family in Virginia, so Tom's "people might hear from him." Unsatisfied with this constrained medium, however, Tom learned "enough to frame a letter" and wrote home himself. The local postmaster apparently passed along Tom's mail until Boss, growing suspicious for some reason, asked the official to stop anything Tom was sending to Virginia. After intercepting three letters to Tom's mother, Boss confronted Tom. Demanding to know how he had learned to write, he had him whipped "severely."[10] As Harriet Newby, too, could attest, gaining and employing ones literacy surreptitiously could prove disastrous.[11]

To some slaveholders, however, teaching or allowing enslaved African

---

[9]Louis Hughes, Thirty Years a Slave: From Bondage to Freedom (Milwaukee: South Side Printing Co., 1897; repr. in Documenting the American South, http://metalab.unc.edu/docsouth/, [hereafter, DAS] 1998), 100-101.

[10]Thomas responded by absconding, using his literacy both to get away and to flaunt the fact. Writing himself a work pass, he hired onto a riverboat, and made it to New Orleans, where he caught a steamer to Boston and thence to Canada. Reaching Niagara, he flaunted his literacy and his freedom, writing a letter home to his chagrined former master. Hughes, Thirty Years a Slave, 102-106.

[11]For examples, see Woodson, Education of the Negro, 206-207, 216-217; Eugene D. Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made (1972; repr., New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 563-564; and Thomas L. Webber, Deep Like the Rivers: Education inn the Slave Quarter Community, 1831-1865 (New York: Norton, 1978).

Americans to read and perhaps also to write did not seem dangerous, at least for those slaves whom masters felt they could trust. Slaveholders in Virginia had both evangelical and pragmatic interests at heart in doing so. John Hartwell Cocke embodied both impulses simultaneously. Desiring to free his slaves and colonize them to Liberia, he felt they needed the skills of reading and writing, both to promote the missionary aims of the colony and to endow them with "suitable qualifications for Citizenship in the embryo Republic." In the meantime, however, he sent many of them to Alabama in preparation for their new life. Needing to keep tabs on the management of those distant cotton plantations, he relied heavily on his correspondence with George Skipwith and Lucy Skipwith, two of the enslaved servants who ran the plantations and instructing the colonists-in-training.[12]

Correspondence with enslaved workers could prove quite useful for masters with more mundane and secular interests, as they hired out slaves at a distance and as they themselves traveled on vacation. Slaveholder William S. Pettigrew, socializing at the Virginia Springs throughout the summer months of 1856 through 1858, corresponded almost every week with Moses and Henry, the two enslaved overseers on his plantations in Terrell County, North Carolina.[13]

The benefits of master-slave correspondence could sometimes go both ways for those hired away from home. When Quintus Barber wrote from

---

[12]Cocke quoted in Alison Freehling, Drift Toward Dissolution: The Virginia Slavery Debate of 1831-1832 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1982), 223. For the Skipwith correspondence to Cocke, see below, and in Dear Master: Letters of a Slave Family, ed. Randall M. Miller, (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1990).

[13]For this correspondence, see Blacks in Bondage, ed. Starobin, 12-35.

Richmond to his master in Orange County, the enslaved man asked his master to "give my love to Mother and all enquiring friends." Failing to hear from her yet, he said, had given him "but litle sa[t]isfaction."[14] The enslaved workers hired out by the Austin and Twyman family of Amherst and Buckingham County occasionally wrote home to protest the treatment received at the hands of their hiring bosses. "I do not think it posible I can stand the cap I am now working with," Absalom wrote from Howardsville in 1859. The captain had, he said, "ran of[f] several of the hand[s] and has thretened to Take my shirt several times."[15]

Slaves in the market could usually not hope their masters would help them, however, for it was the masters who had put them there. Instead, they sought out family members, first in attempts to find other buyers locally, and last to say goodbye. Without adequate knowledge of the social geography, however, both these efforts would fail. "This is the third letter I have written to you, and have not received any from you," Sargry Brown wrote from Richmond her husband Morris Brown in Goochland County, in October 1840. She took his silence as negligence. "I think very hard of it," she said, warning him, "If you don't come down here this Sunday, perhaps you wont see me any more." A trader had already visited three times, she said. She held out little hope in

---

[14]Quintus Barber to Charles P. Howard, 6 Sept. 1840, Grinnan Papers, UVA, in Blacks in Bondage, ed. Starobin, 88.

[15]Absalom to Dr. Iverson L. Twyman, 1 March 1859, Austin-Twyman Family Papers, Swem Library, College of William and Mary [hereafter, Austin-Twyman Papers, W&M]. In Records of the Ante-Bellum Southern Plantations from the Revolution through the Civil War (Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, 1985-), microfilm [Hereafter, RASP].

Morris's ability to find a buyer for her, and instructed him to give her love to "them all," including his mother, aunt Betsey, Jane, Mother, and "all the children." She closed in resignation, writing, "I wish to see you all, but I expect I never shall--never no more." It is likely that Brown's husband never even saw her first two letters. Indeed, this last one wound up in the dead letter office in Washington, D. C., as she had not been able to pinpoint Morris's location more precisely than "goughland county." Her attempts to relay crucial information along the best established network of communication available--the United States Post Office--had failed her miserably.[16]

Maria Perkins of Charlottesville faced similar prospects. In fact, she had already just lost a son to at trader. But she seems to have had a keener sense of her geography and had not quite given up on the resourcefulness of her husband, Richard Perkins. On October 8th, 1852, she sent a letter to his address in Staunton, forty miles away, over the Blue Ridge. She was in a panic. Her master had suddenly put her and her two children up for sale. A trader had already bought her son Albert and was "gone I don't know where." She had heard the trader's name was Brady and he was from Scottsville. Perhaps something could still be done.[17] More urgently, her own time was short. "I

---

[16]Sargry Brown to Mores Brown, 27 Oct. 1840, in the National Anti-Slavery Standard, 16 Sept. 1841, repr. in Slave Testimony, ed. Blassingame, 46-47; and repr. in We Are Your Sisters, ed. Sterling, 45.

[17]Brady was a saddler and slave trader in Scottsville from the late 1840s through at least 1856, forwarding his purchases to Richmond auctioneers for resale. See accounts, bills of sale, and correspondence in Harris-Brady Papers, UVA (RASP). See also Virginia, Vol. 2 [Albemarle Co.], p. 74, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library, Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration [hereafter, R. G. Dun, HBS].

don't want a trader to get me," she insisted. Richard would have to act quickly. She wanted to hear from him immediately, before the next court day, when a sale might take place. Her sellers had left her one hope. She said they had "asked me if I had got any person to buy me," and were open to her doing so. If Richard's master or Dr. Hamilton would step in as purchasers, they might forestall the separation.

Her master's actions had caught her completely off guard. She had no time to gather her belongings, which she had kept "in several places," including Staunton. Apparently she had experienced relative freedom, perhaps hiring her own labor at different times in those "several places." At any rate, she had taken advantage of her freedom to travel and had maintained her relationship with her husband. He apparently had visiting rights as well, though at the time of her letter, in October, his next trip to see her was not scheduled until Christmas. Whatever strain her marriage tie had experienced across this distance, the fear of being sold south left her exasperated. "I am quite heartsick nothing more," she closed, "I am and ever will be your kind wife."[18]

Like Harriet Newby, Virginia Boyd found herself in trouble and took striking measures to extricate herself from it. On May 6, 1853, she wrote her master, ex-trader Rice Ballard, from a slave jail in Houston, Texas. In the 1830s

---

[18]Maria Perkins to Richard Perkins, 8[?] Oct. 1852, Ulrich B. Phillips Papers, Yale University Library. This document has been frequently reproduced. I am quoting from the verbatim transcription in A Documentary History of Slavery in North America, ed. Willie Lee Rose (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976), 151. Also in Life and Labor in the Old South, ed. Ulrich B. Phillips (Boston: Little, Brown, 1929), 212; Slave Testimony, ed. Blassingame, 96-97; and Valley of the Shadow: Two Communities in the American Civil War, http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/vshadow2/, along with a digitized image of the document.

and early 1840s, Ballard had based his operations in Richmond, working the Chesapeake-Mississippi slave trade in partnership with Isaac Franklin and John Armfield. By the late 1840s, he had married and established a residence in Louisville, Kentucky, but ran several large plantations in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas. Virginia Boyd reached Ballard at Magnolia Plantation, Warren County, Mississippi. "I am at present," she wrote, "in a negro traders yard, for sale, by your orders." Her humiliation there was almost complete. She had been "humbled," isolated "a mong strangers without one living being to whom I have the least shadow of claim upon." Her downfall carried great emotional weight. "My heart feels like it would burst asunder," she wrote. But she was also angry and she wanted justice. As she wrote, she revealed the cause of her distress:

> do you think . . . that its treating me well to send me off among strangers in my situation to be sold without even my having an opportunity of choosing for my self. its hard in deed and what is still harder [is] for the father of my children to sell his own offspring yes his own flesh & blood.[19]

The enslaved woman was not referring to Ballard, however, but rather to "the old man (I don't call names)," who had apparently asked Ballard to send her down. Given her surname and her situation, the "old man" in question was most likely Judge Samuel S. Boyd, who had served as legal counsel to Ballard's

---

[19]Virginia Boyd to Rice C. Ballard, 6 May 1853, Rice C. Ballard Papers, UNC. All subsequent quotation of Virginia Boyd is from this letter.

slave trading firm and now remained his business partner, sharing in Ballard's investment and management of the Mississippi Valley plantations.[20] Samuel Boyd was already known to have inflicted sexual abuse on at least one enslaved female. Ballard himself had expressed "horror" at Boyd's predatory actions to his friend J. M. Duffield. In 1848, Duffield reported back that the Judge had continued to make her a "sufferer of great agony mentally and bodily." "All these cruelties," he wrote, "have been inflicted upon the feeble frame of that girl--and are frequently inflicted." Her health was "sinking," and he feared she would die. He asked Ballard to let him have purchase her so he could free her, appealing to Ballard's "humane heart." "Only listen to the dictates of your own kindly nature," Duffield pleaded, "and you will grant the request."[21]

Virginia Boyd played on other aspects of character, both of Ballard's and of that of her children's father. "My god," she exclaimed, "is it possible that any free born American would hand his chareter with such a stigma as that"--"to sell his child that is his image." She still held out hope, however, believing "that he is possest of more honer than that." As for Ballard, she knew he might use his "influence" with the Old Man, and she both flattered and indirectly threatened him. "I wish you to reflect over the subject," she asked, and called on his honor to play its part. She knew he was an "honerable high minded man" and "would

---

[20]The other likely culprit was James Boyd, Samuel's brother, who worked for Judge Boyd and Ballard. Samuel Boyd had helped file Ballard v. Turner in 1841, bringing the $200,000 suit to settlement out of court. See Ariela Gross, "Pandora's Box: Slavery, Character, and Southern Culture in the Courtroom, 1800-1860," Ph.d. diss., Stanford University, 1996; and ch. 1 above.

[21]J. M. Duffield to R. C. Ballard, 29 May 1848, as quoted in Africans in America: America's Journey through Slavery, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/.

wish justice to be done to all." More importantly, he was a husband and father. "You have a family of children," she reminded him, "& no how to simpathize with others in distress." She also held out an indirect, but perhaps stinging threat. Any "mercy & pity you show to me," she assured him, "god certainly will show you. what can I say more."

Virginia Boyd offered Ballard a viable way out. "All I reques or ask," she said, was for Ballard to appoint an agent in Texas, to oversee her while she worked off the cost of her freedom and that of her children. For her part, she would "work my finger ends off," and would "earn . . . evry dime." Furthermore, she would leave the Old Man alone. "I dont wish to return to harras or molest his peace of mind," she promised, "& shall never try get back if I am dealt with fairly." Her sincerity was backed up by the secrecy she had kept so far in the matter, and with another, more temporal threat. "I use my precaution to prevent others from knowing or suspecting any thing," she assured Ballard. "I shall not seek ever to let anything be exposed," she promised, "unless I am forced from bad treatment &c."

Ballard was not predisposed to help Virginia out of her bind, however. He was "prejudist" against her, she knew. She felt she had been the victim of malicious gossip, especially from the lips of a "rascal" named Pussel, and Virginia felt she had to discredit this attacker. If only he knew "all that she [Pussel] has said relative to you & matters concerning your family," Virginia scolded, then he would "not have so great a confidence in all the tales she fabricates." To be on the safe side, Virginia repeatedly offered her own apologies for ever having "spoken hastly that which I should not" to or about Ballard. "I hope you will

forgive me," she stressed, "for I hope god has."

In the end, all her efforts--the supplication and assertion, pleas and threats, calls to Ballard's honor, piety, generosity, and self-interest--all this was in vain. By August, Virginia Boyd and her younger child were sold, separated from her older child, while Ballard stood by doing nothing. Ballard may have stepped in to stop the sale of Virginia's older child, however. Through Louisville trader C. M. Rutherford, he had informed his agent in Houston to refrain from selling her, and as of August 8, she remained unsold. What Ballard wanted with this older daughter is unclear. At $1,000, her price indicates she was not a young child. It is possible that Rutherford had his own designs on her. Only two days before notifying Ballard about Virginia and her daughter, Rutherford had expressed dissatisfaction with his own recent business and told Ballard, "if I dont make some more sales shortly I will have to trouble you to get some more fancy."[22] Ballard, despite his own retirement from the slave trade in the 1840s, apparently still acted periodically as a supplier, perhaps from his own plantations. Whether he had Virginia's older daughter in mind for such a speculation, however, and even whether he ever removed her from the Houston trader's jail is unknown.

What remains striking about this entire exchange, however, is the negotiation of distance involved in obtaining and conveying information, and in acting on it. First, Ballard had sent Virginia Boyd about as far away as possible, not to the convenient markets of Natchez or New Orleans, but the distant market in Houston. He clearly did not want her returning to bother him. She

---

[22]C. M. Rutherford to R. C. Ballard, 6 Aug., 8 Aug. 1853, Ballard Papers, UNC.

had only learned serendipitously of Ballard's direct involvement in the deal from a letter he had sent to his agent Ewing at the Houston Post Office. Ewing apparently did not know the contents referred to Virginia Boyd, and had read the letter aloud in her presence. Virginia knew something of the damage she could cause, or thought she could cause, to Ballard's or the Old Man's reputations, and she took measures to keep the scandal under wraps. She had written to the Old Man, she said, but had done so with a keen sense of propriety and confidentiality. "I have my letters writen & folded put into envelop," she explained, "& get it directed by those that dont know the contents of it."[23] She did not name the people involved in getting her letters to her former masters, but she did detail how she sealed the letter and passed it to someone who would not know the situation. To do this, she may have had some ally at the jail, for she did not mention any aid from Ewing in this regard.

Ballard himself, from his Magnolia plantation in Mississippi, found out about the final sale of Virginia and her younger child from his trader friend writing from Louisville, Kentucky. C. M. Rutherford was still supplying slaves for Ballard; in fact his August 6th letter informed Ballard of yet another purchase and passed along Virginia price quotes from Richmond trader Col. Dickinson. Although he had left Virginia in the mid-1830s, and had retired from trading in the 1840s, Ballard remained a member of the fraternity of traders who traveled and corresponded between the markets of the Chesapeake, the Ohio River

[23]Virginia Boyd to Rice C. Ballard, 6 May 1853, Ballard Papers, UNC.

Valley, the Mississippi Delta, and the expanding West.[24]

Colonizationist and evangelist John Hartwell Cocke, whose interstate slaveholdings served quite a different purpose than Ballard's, nonetheless found himself the object of pleas from the African-American families he moved to separate. Cocke combined his life's passions--scientific agriculture and evangelical Christianity--into a biting critique of slavery's detrimental impact on Virginia's economic, religious, and social life, especially after the Southampton revolt in 1831. He and his equally devout wife, Louisa, worked to educate the slaves on their "Bremo" plantations, in Fluvanna County, eventually ordering the construction of a brick schoolhouse and chapel to accommodate and commemorate their project. Theirs was a conservative reformism, however, and like most antislavery Virginia planters, their proposed solution hinged on the colonization of all freed slaves to Liberia. Taking bold action to effect his plan, and some implied, to keep afloat his experimental Virginia plantations, Cocke bought eight hundred acres in Alabama and sent forty-nine slaves there to grow cotton on it. Cocke covenanted with the emigrants for their eventual freedom, and the largely self-managed plantation was to serve as a "school for freedom." Reversing some of the usual patterns of slave migration and sale, Cocke had sent the men and women south not as punishment but rather as step towards their eventual freedom. Similarly, rather than wield the threat of sale against slaves' marriages, he used the threat to enforce monogamy and deter

---

[24]In April and May, Rutherford wrote from New Orleans with his prospects of buying slaves for Ballard. Samuel Boyd and Ballard were contemplating a major expansion at this time, capitalizing on the loss of a planter who had planned to free his slaves and send them to Liberia. C. M. Rutherford to R. C. Ballard, 2 April, 16 May, 6 Aug. 1853; Boyd to Ballard, 2 April 1853, Ballard Papers, UNC.

extramarital sex.[25] This use of sale would threaten the family lives, however, of even Cocke's relatively privileged enslaved managers.

In the 1850s, George Skipwith and his daughter Lucy Skipwith served as two of Cocke's key managers of the Alabama experiment. George served as the driver and often as overseer as well, while Lucy ran the household and led religious and secular instruction. Despite their demonstrated loyalties to Cocke and the favoritism he bestowed upon them, their power was precarious, especially in regards to Cocke's decisions to separate them from family members through hire and sale. In 1848, Cocke found two of George's daughters living with and bearing children by local white men, and within two years he had sold them, "without remorse." Lucy, too, bore two children, Betsey and Maria, by white men, but her usefulness and loyalty to Cocke seems to have protected her. She struggled with only mixed success to play that loyalty into protection for her daughters.[26]

Cocke threatened to sell Betsey after she was caught stealing money in 1859. As Randall Miller points out, Lucy Skipwith's strategy was to stress Betsey's lack of motherly care, and to blame that deficiency on Cocke himself. In 1851, Cocke had hired seven-year-old Betsey away from her mother, and Lucy complained in 1856 that Betsey was "learning but a very little" from her white caretakers, that she "cannot write atall." After the stealing incident, Lucy reiterated to Cocke that "the girl has had the raising of her self up." Lucy had

---

[25]Miller, ed., Dear Master, introductory essays, 23-36, 140-143, 150; quoting Cocke, 36. For the criticism of Cocke's agricultural reform, see ch. 2 above.

[26]Miller, ed., Dear Master, 150-151, 159 n, 188-189; quoting Cocke, 150.

"not seen the girl but once in twelve months." Without her mother present, Betsey lacked any guidance in her work or in her moral development. Betsey's guardians neglected her, left her "with not as much as a little sewing to do" for up to six weeks at a time, and "now they complains of her being so lazy." Lucy asked to "let the Child come home," where she herself could "give her religious instructions and try to be the means of saving her soul from death." Lucy succeeded temporarily in getting Cocke to refrain from selling her and to send her back home. But, as Cocke's plantation steward, Richard Powell, wrote, "I did not put Betsey with her mother to stop the sale of her but to better prepare her for sale."[27]

In October 1861, Lucy reported the birth of Betsey's first child, "a fine child and a white one," she wrote, not at all surprised or alarmed at the baby's appearance. Cocke was disturbed, however, and made plans to sell Betsey the next spring, meanwhile contemplated selling or hiring out Maria as well. Lucy could protest Betsey's sale no longer, and demurred on the hire of Maria only because she would be going to living with Lucy's own mother. "When Betsey is sold," she hastened to add, "it will be hard for me to give them both up." In 1864, when Cocke did move to sell Maria, Lucy protested, pointing out his implicit responsibility for Betsey's demise. "I do not wish Maria sold," she told him, but would "try to make up my mind" to accept it. She would not, however, let Cocke forget what had happened to Betsey. "My other poor child," she reminded him, "came very near being ruined while liveing away from me." She

---

[27]Miller, ed., Dear Master, 211 n. Lucy Skipwith to John Hartwell Cocke, 13 Oct. 1856, 9 June 1859, in Dear Master, ed. Miller, 211, 221-222.

affirmed that "there is nothing like a Mothers watchful eye over a child."[28]

Other African American mothers would have agreed heartily with Lucy Skipwith's sentiment and they tried in various ways to effect or to forestall their own forced migration. In December 1837, Matthew Watts wrote from Campbell County, Virginia, to Elizabeth Brown in Kentucky. "You Sent us word that you wanted us your Servants to come out," he wrote, and he was now disappointed that she had delayed their trip until next year. He spoke for himself, his son Harrison, and others who were "very anxious to come," having "Sold all of our plunder" in preparation for the journey. He wrote of Collins's son, who had been inherited by an in-law of Brown's apparently, leaving Collins "much Distressed" and in hopes that Brown would buy him and let him accompany them to Kentucky. As for Watts, he had already lost his wife and daughter, whether by sale or by death he left unclear, but he made clear that Brown's indecision was interfering with his own future family plans. "If you dont send for me verry quick," he told her, "I shall be compelled to get me another wife." In seeking to join his mistress in Kentucky, he clearly had his welfare in mind, as well, writing that he had difficulty clothing himself and paying her fees on what he could make hiring out his labor.[29] He sought relief from this hardship by moving to Kentucky, where he more easily might communicate and perhaps negotiate with her his hire.

---

[28]Miller, ed., Dear Master, 222 n. Lucy Skipwith to John Hartwell Cocke, 28 Oct. 1861, 30 May 1862, 26 Mar. 1864, in Dear Master, ed. Miller, 239, 244-245, 261.

[29]Matthew Watts to Mrs. Elizabeth Brown, 3 Dec. 1837, Orlando Brown papers, Filson Club, Louisville, Ky., in Slave Testimony, ed. Blassingame, 27.

By contrast, Susan and Ersey, serving in slavery in St. Louis, wrote their absentee Virginia master, Beverly Tucker, in no uncertain terms of their strong aversion to quitting their home there. They had "become much attached to the place (our Husbands being here)," they dryly informed him, and they had "a great many friends in this place." If Tucker were going along, they allowed, they would happily travel, but they could not "bear to go to Texas with a parcel of strangers." An unknown place with unknown people was too much to bear. Instead, they let him know that they "do not think there will be the least difficulty in getting ourselves sold." In fact, they had already solicited potential new masters locally, and gave him the names of four such men. Their only concern was that Tucker sell their children along with themselves; "we hope you will not separate us," they asserted.[30]

Having failed to stop a separation through sale or migration, enslaved African Americans occasionally wrote letters trying to effect a reunion. Violet Lester, sold to Georgia through the Richmond slave market in 1852, wrote in 1857 to her former mistress in North Carolina. She anxiously opened her letter by "unfolding my Seans [seeings] and fealings" since her forced departure. She detailed the geography of her journey through the slave market up to her present location: first to Rockingham, North Carolina, for five weeks; three days in Richmond; carried to Georgia by trader Groover, who took nine months to sell her again; bought by a man named Rimes, who sold her again to James B. Lester of Bullock County, Georgia, with whom she had remained the last four

---

[30]Susan (Sukey) and Ersey to Beverly Tucker, 24 Oct. 1842, in Virginia Silhouettes (Richmond, 1932), ed. Mrs. George P. Coleman; repr. in Slave Testimony, ed. Blassingame, 13-14.

years. Lester planned to keep her unless, she hinted hopefully, "Some of my old north Caroliner friends wants to buy me again." She deeply regretted that she had been "constrained to leav my Long Loved home and friends," she had said in her opening, but her criticism of the family's decision to sell her remained muted. She had described in vague and passive terms her journey: "I left there and went to Richmon virginia to be Sold and I Stade there three days and was bought by a man . . . ."[31]

She asked about other family members before moving on to her reason for her writing. She asked about her "Presus little girl," whom she had to leave in Goldsboro in the hands of Mr. Walker. She wanted specifically to know whether Walker would sell, for Violet had convinced Lester--perhaps it had taken four years to do so--to purchase the girl. Violet pointed out that Lester, as "a man of Reason and fealing," wanted to "grant my trubled breast that mutch gratification," an implicit challenge to Mr. Walker to prove himself an equally honorable slaveholder.[32]

In order to gain a sympathetic audience and perhaps an advocate, Violet Lester emphasized her sentimental attachment for the white family, ranking it on par with that towards her own family. Sending greetings to her "old Boss," to Miss Rahol [Rachel], and to her own mother, she exclaimed that she could not decide "which I want to See the worst." She settled on her mother, explaining in

---

[31]Vilet Lester to Patsey Padison, 29 Aug. 1857, Joseph Allred Papers, DU, in African-American Women On-line Archival Collections, Special Collections Library, Duke University, http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/collections/african-american-women.html, 1997.

[32]Vilet Lester to Patsey Padison, 29 Aug. 1857, Allred Papers, DU.

a foreshadowing of her very purpose in writing, "Never befour did I no [know] what it was to want to See a parent and could not." She closed the letter in a bid for Patsey Padison's nostalgia and loyalty, "Enscribing my Self you[r] long loved and well wishing play mate as a Servant until death."[33]

African Americans in slavery knew that their separations and reunions depended on the many economic and family decisions of their masters, and while they might seek to influence those decisions, they also had to rely on their own efforts to effect reunions. The difficulties in doing so could lead to troubles within black families, as Elizabeth Keckley's letters and autobiography testified. She had seen her father, George Pleasant Hobbs, only twice a year, and never again after his master moved to Tennessee. Keckley's parents, though, "kept up a regular correspondence for years." Her mother, Agnes Hobbs, kept these "old faded letters," and Keckley came to consider them "the most precious mementoes of my existence," sentimental tokens of her parents' marital love and parental care. George wrote to Agnes in 1833 that he was working to secure his freedom, so that they may meet again not only in heaven, but also first "on the earth." To young Elizabeth, he conveyed a sense of hope, and of his own (and of God's) ever watchful parental eye. He told her "to be a good girl and not to thinke that because I am bound so fare that gods not abble to open the way."[34]

---

[33]Vilet Lester to Patsey Padison, 29 Aug. 1857, Allred Papers, DU.

[34]Elizabeth Hobbs [Keckley] to Agnes Hobbs, 10 April 1838, in Elizabeth Keckley, Behind the Scenes; or, Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House (1868; repr., New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1988), 39-42; repr. in Slave Testimony, ed. Blassingame, 20-21.

This distance, and the letters they sent out across it, exposed rifts in whatever domestic ideals of family enslaved people might have tried to assert, as Laura Fleischner notes in regard to Elizabeth Keckley's correspondence. Keckley deployed these documents as a testament to her domestic ideal, but the content of the letters did as much to show her inability--in slavery--to live up to that ideal. Keckley's letter to her mother revealed her own tenuous sense of connection to her family despite her relative closeness. Sent to North Carolina to live with relatives of her master, Keckley, then a young woman, wrote her mother critically in April 1838, "I thought very hard of you for not writing to me." Lonely and isolated from her kin as well as from the "brick-house people" (white gentry) she had known in Virginia, Elizabeth expressed her fear to her mother that "you and all the family have forgotten me." She longed to see any written communication from them, "if it was only a line." Though she had no news from them, she had received their "presents" the previous summer, and was "so particular" about Aunt Bella's, apparently a dress or a hat, she had "only worn it once." Her misery in North Carolina was compounded exponentially by the vindictiveness of her white mistress there, and by the predations of more than one white man, and she wanted desperately to escape those "griefs and misfortunes." She saw only one way out, and closed her letter with a special plea for the white mistress she herself had raised. "Tell Miss Elizabeth that I wish she would make haste and get married," she urged, "for mistress says that I belong to her when she gets married."[35] Although Keckley did not record how she had

---

[35]Applying psychoanalytic theory, Jennifer Fleischner exposes the domestic rift Keckley was attempting to cover up by inserting the letters in her autobiography. Fleischner, Mastering Slavery: Memory, Family, and Identity in Women's Slave Narratives (New York: New York

come back into possession of the letter, if she actually sent it then her mother must have kept it with the other precious "mementos," giving it back to her after their reunion.

Others expressed the strain the separation had put on their family ties. In doing so, they turned sentiment inside out, openly expressing rather than veiling their sense of grief over spoiled relations. Adam Plummer had at first given up on their marriage, to the shock of his wife Emily. "I want you to let me know why you wrote me so troubled a letter," she demanded in 1856, adding, "I was very sorry to hear that you should say you and I are parted for life." He continued to struggle with his doubts as the two communicated news of their various children, scattered about the Washington, D. C., area, and Baltimore, Maryland. And in 1861, when their daughter Sarah Maranda Plummer was sold, carried to Alexandria, and shipped to New Orleans, she too gave up on seeing them again. In fact, she was angry that no one had visited her during her two months' confinement in an Alexandria jail. Her grandmother was in Washington, "and of course she knew where I was." She knew her mother had been too far away, but she did "think it very hard that father did not come to see me as he was nearer." Regardless, she sent her love to all and reminded her brother to write her "as he promised to do." And she conveyed the surprising news that she had run across Aunt Sarah, who "did not know me until I made myself known unto her." She sent her love to her sister--Emily, perhaps--and the children. Sarah knew her mother would be "sorry to hear I am so far," but

---

Univ. Press, 1998), 119-120. George Pleasant Hobbes to Agnes Hobbs, 6 Sept. 1833, in Keckley, Behind the Scenes, 26-27; repr. in Slave Testimony, ed. Blassingame, 19.

in closing, she indicated what the letter would mean to her mother, writing, "I hope you will have a pleasant time over my letter." The letter was a mixed blessing, freighted both with sentimental and bitter feelings.[36]

Like Sarah Plummer, most enslaved people carried to the deep South expected never to see their families again. For those few getting letters back home, the missives served not to reunify them, but rather to establish and to maintain a sense of familial presence across the distances forever separating them. To do so, they needed to deploy their language with care, avoiding uncharitable feelings towards slaveholders, their last link to their family.

In 1807 a woman named Gooley wrote from Port Royal, Virginia, to her mistress in Kentucky. Several of Gooley's children had been taken away from her and carried to Kentucky, along with her sister Clary, while she had been left behind. She had heard the mistress had, she wrote, "lost some of your Small Negroes by death." Gooley feared the worst and sought news of her children. She also sent word to her sister Clary "not to let my poor children Suffer." Finally, she inquired of the mistress "what sort of a life Clary leads," and "how my little daughter Judith is."[37]

Gooley's careful language permitted her to skirt any direct associations of her family's welfare and treatment with the actions or responsibility of her "Dear

---

[36]Sarah Maranda Plummer to Emily Plummer, 24 May 1861, in The Mind of the Negro as Reflected in Letters Written During the Crisis, 1800-1860, ed. Carter G. Woodson (1926; New York: Russell and Russell, 1969), 527-528. Emily and Adam were reunited in 1863, and in 1866, Sarah's brother travelled to New Orleans and brought Sarah back home; Sterling, ed., We Are Your Sisters, 47-48.

[37]Gooley to "Dear Mistress," 30 Nov. 1807, in Duke Marion Godbey Papers, University of Kentucky, in We Are Your Sisters, ed. Sterling, 51.

Mistress" in Kentucky. The white woman might have blanched at the suggestion that Clary would have to make sure Gooley's children did not "suffer," but for the most part Gooley spoke of her family's lives as if detached from that of their white mistress, asking "what sort of a life Clary leads," for example, or, in regards to her daughter Judith, whether "she is now injoying health." Gooley's concern with the number of childhood deaths certainly might imply a criticism of the Kentucky mistress's management, but if so, it remained a veiled criticism.

On one final score, Gooley provided a criticism of slave sales and separations, but again deflected it through generalization and a deft assertion of the white mistress's sympathy with the enslaved woman. Gooley sent the doubly upsetting news that her Virginia master was "on the brink of death" and "about to Sell 40 of his Negroes." Joshua, her husband, was probably one of them. She told her Kentucky mistress that she wanted to stay with Joshua. "As you must know," Gooley ventured, "its very bad to part man & wife." Having thus conveyed the standard by which she expected to be treated and implicating the white mistress in an understanding of that standard, she shortly closed the letter by pledging her "Warmest Love & friendship," and signing it "your Most Affectionate Servant."[38]

Lucy Tucker's letter of May 1845 spoke of the wide dispersal of people she had known on and around John Hartwell Cocke's Virginia plantation. Having been in Alabama over ten years, Tucker finally wrote her mother back in

---

[38]Gooley to "Dear Mistress," 30 Nov. 1807, in We Are Your Sisters, ed. Sterling, 51.

Virginia. She had only heard from her mother once since leaving Virginia, and that eight or nine years prior. "I wish I had written to you & kept up a continual correspondence," she admitted. She had a lot of news to catch up on. She and her son Burrel were both Christians, she said. She heard from him occasionally, but had not seen him in nine years, "since he was a boy." She wanted "to know from you who of all the family have embraced the cause of Christ Since I left & whom mournfull death has taken away." She did not even know if her mother were still living. She asked also who had married, and if "married well or not & to whom." She herself had a "good husband." About those she had traveled with from Virginia, Tucker knew little, having been separated from them after a year in Alabama. Their scope of their scattering is hinted at, however, in her knowledge of two of them. "Moses," she did happen to know, had "drowened some years ago in Kentucky drunk as usual." And Scipio was in Nashville, "doing very well," but still "desires to hear from his wife & children." She had to admit that she had "seen a great deal of trouble" since leaving home, "but," she added encouragingly, "by the grace of God I have overcome it all."[39]

Enslaved Virginia families were often scattered throughout the South, rarely finding the opportunities to communicate with each other or with their kin back home. At the Austin family plantation in Buckingham County, however, many of the enslaved African Americans knew how to write and had the white Austin family's consent to do so openly. The Archibald Austin estate had once held about fifty people in slavery, but by the 1850s, only a dozen or so

---

[39]Lucy Tucker to her mother, 20 May 1845, John Hartwell Cocke Papers, UVA; in We Are Your Sisters, ed. Sterling, 49.

remained, the rest sold away. Even these few remaining did not all stay together. Many were hired out or worked with one of the in-laws in various locations. For them, and even for at least three of those sold away, writing letters provided a crucial link both to their masters and mistresses as well as to their own family members. Their precious few surviving letters provide a look at what effect sales and migrations forced by masters had on enslaved families, even when those African Americans had gained relatively privileged access to writing.

The dictates of the various Austin family members scattered enslaved family members across a relatively local sphere, but one across which separations were acutely felt nonetheless. An elderly man named London wrote to "Master James" Austin in July 1854 that he was "very sick, sicker than I have been for some time." He asked Austin to allow Sally--perhaps his wife, or a daughter--to come live with him, citing two reasons he hoped James would find persuasive. "I am unable to do anything for myself," he said; he thought he was dying soon and needed Sally's help. Second, he was concerned for Sally's possessions at his house. "If I do die," he worried, "Sally will loose all of her things that are at my house as there is no one there to take care of them." In a bid for friendly masculine banter, London added the news that "Your colt is the likeliest colt you ever saw in your life," counseling James to keep what would be a valuable stallion. London also added that the field hands were "done cutting oats to day," and closed by encouraging Master James to come visit soon.[40] In

[40]London to James [M. Austin], 13 July 1854, Austin-Twyman Papers.

May 1852, Lucy Patterson, who was at Howardsville with an Austin in-law, Dr. Iverson Twyman, sent a note by him to her son Beverly, who then lived at the Austin estate in Buckingham County. She wrote to tell Beverly that his sister Frances's funeral would be preached sometime in the next month, and she wanted him to be there. She told him Isaiah wanted badly to see him, and then signed the brief note "your affectionate Mother until death."[41]

Three enslaved mothers were fortunate enough to hear from their respective daughters in the 1850s. Mary wrote from Laurenceville, South Carolina; Anika Blew from Warren County, Tennessee; and Susan Austin from Emanuel County, Georgia.[42] Like Gooley and Lucy Tucker, these women did not have to hide their literacy; Susan Austin, in fact, engaged the white Austin family both lovingly and critically in her letter. Their correspondence home is instructive for the ways enslaved families might accommodate themselves to the permanence of their separation, and how that permanence helped shape the way they communicated with one another through and with the white family.

The letters, though never intended for publication, often represented a curiously semi-public performance of private sentiment. Even slaves who could write did not often have the luxury of sending private letters directly to their relatives. Many would have to forward them through the hands of white masters and mistresses. In fact, as the Austin letters suggest, the letters were

---

[41]Lucy Patterson to Beverly, 31 May 1852, Austin-Twyman Papers.

[42]Mary, c/o Col. F. H. Grby[?], to her mother, c/o Frances Austin, 22 June 1851. Anika Blew to her mother, c/o Iverson L. Twyman, 26 July 1857. Susan Austin to her mother, c/o Mrs. Grace Austin, 18 July 1851. (Susan Austin used the spelling "Auston" for both black and white Austins.) Austin-Twyman Papers.

often addressed explicitly to a variety of people, black and white. And since they carried news, the letters were passed around and, we hope, delivered to or read to their intended recipients.

Despite the openness of the enslaved Austin families' writing, however, these women did not always have an easy time passing letters back and forth. Each approached her letter knowing that it passed through the hands and under the observation of their new masters as well as the white Austins and Twymans back in Virginia. When Anika Blew wrote in 1857, she said she had heard no reply to her previous letter. Worrying that her message might not reach her mother, on the reverse she inscribed a note to Iverson Twyman, who had married Martha Austin and now managed much of the Austin estate. "Mr Twimon Sir," she wrote, "I will be very glad if you would take this to mother a[nd] oblige me being that I am black." Her note to Twyman was as much assertion as plea, his act of passing the letter more duty than favor.

The other two women sent their letters through women of the white Austin family, who were perhaps more sympathetic or attentive than Twyman. Mary addressed her mother in care of Francis Austin. She already had sent two letters before, and had received two letters in return (though she thought she should have received more by then). Other than in the address, Mary did not acknowledge the white Austins at all. By contrast, in Susan Austin's letter, apparently the first she had written since her fairly recent sale south, the black and the white Austins were interspersed throughout. She wrote her mother in care of Mrs. Grace Austin--Francis and Martha's widowed mother--to inform them of her new address. "When you write," she instructed both black and

white, "direct your letters to Swainsboro PO, Emanuel County, Georgia, Directed to Master Richard Edenfield."

Anika Blew's letter and Mary's both focused almost exclusively on their own enslaved families. They made no mention at all of the means of their separation from Virginia, seeking only to overcome that distance with their correspondence. Blew began her 1857 letter in typical contemporary fashion: "I take the pleasure of riting you a few lines to let you know that I am still in the land of the living yet." In Blew's case, she had already written once, but had not heard back from her mother. She could not know whether her mother knew she was alive or not. Blew had also written previously, she said, about the birth of her second son, Alex. "I dont now whether you know anny thing about it," she said, "and I thought maby that I would rite a gain" to make sure. In any case, Alex was a "fine large boy" and "gron very fast." Andrew, the older boy, was also "well and grows finely." She wanted desperately to hear from her mother, for news of her life and "all of the rest of the connection." She passed individual messages along to two members in particular. "Father," she wrote, "I want to see you very bad and you to rite to me." And she assured her Aunt Judy that she had not forgotten her advice, that "I intend to do what you told me to do." Repeating the sentiments of many others, she insisted to her mother, "I want you to not greave after me," and reassured her that she was "going well a beter satis fied than I every were."

Blew's letter resonated clearly with the one Mary had written in 1851 to her mother. Like Blew, Mary wrote of her two children, neither of which her mother apparently knew about yet. The younger one, Luviania Josy, was only

eight months old, and while Mary said she was not married to Luviania's father, he was "very good" to the infant. Like Blew, Mary also reassured her mother she was "well satisfide as I ever was"; she had not yet been put to field work. Mary looked for news from home, hoping her sister Frances was married, and sending her love especially to Aunt Lucy and Clary. In an appended note to her father, Mary asked after him and her grandmother, "Little wathmore," uncles, aunts, and cousins.

Perhaps Anika had in fact seen Mary's 1851 letter, since Anika apparently had left the Austin estate only recently in 1857. Both women would most likely have learned to write and the proper way to frame a letter from the same teachers. Perhaps Mrs. Grace Austin or one of her daughters, Martha, Francis, or Grace, taught them. Or perhaps they learned from one of the several other literate enslaved residents of the Austin estate: Lucy Patterson, her son Beverly, Chambree Austin, Absalom, Ben, or London.[43] In any case, by holding to similar forms and content of familial letters, these women sought to seize on the known, legitimate vehicle of conveying news and sentiment across the country. By asking after each family member individually, if only briefly, they called up specific memories of these individuals and conveyed to those people that they were in fact remembered, despite the space and time now separating them. It was a way of letting family members know that whatever the physical separation, they remained in the same emotional and spiritual world, represented by the tangible token, the letter.

---

[43]Enslaved letter writers included: Lucy Patterson to Beverly, 1852 May 31; Chambree [i.e., Cambridge?] Austin to "Doctor Twyman", n.d.; Absalom to Dr. I. L. Twyman, 1 March 1859; London to James [M. Austin], 13 July 1854; Ben to "master," 14 Aug. 1864. Austin-Twyman Papers.

Mary sought to exchange other tokens of familial sentiment in addition to the letter itself. She hoped to have something to send to little Maria in Virginia next time she wrote home. In turn, she added, "I hope that father will send me somthing and ouncle Wilson also." Other letter writers had similarly asked for and sent such tokens, sometimes even a photograph or a lock of hair.[44]

Mary did offer her mother one disturbing observation on the goings on in Laurence County, South Carolina. She had "seen a grate many droves of black wones" passing through, headed apparently either to market or west with their masters. She had "not seen none of my adquatenes" among them, happily, except for one. The constant threat of removal these "droves" represented may in fact have helped her decision not to marry the father of her child. As she told her mother, somewhat cryptically, "I wold have been maried if it havent been for the black wones." Perhaps the threat of separation gave her pause when considering marriage.

Remarkable as these letters might seem, Susan Austin's letter was even more impressive and potentially vexing. Writing in 1851, she managed simultaneously and selectively to ingratiate herself to the white Austins and to criticize their actions in selling her south, to triumph over that forced distance by communicating across it--both to her own family and to the white Austins--a

---

[44]Enslaved servants understood the networks along which white people passed similar sentimental tokens. As Phill Anthony dictated in the post-script of a letter to his master, "Miss Bowdoin sent a handkerchief by Miss C. Balfour to be forwarded from Richmond to Mrs Coalter"; Anthony to St. George Tucker, 14 Sept. 1807, in Slave Testimony, ed. Blassingame, 8-9. Self-emancipated Union soldier Aaron Oats, serving in Virginia in 1864, sent his wife back in Kentucky a photograph portrait he had made, though she never received it. Lucretia to Aaron Oats, 22 Dec. 1864, in Families and Freedom: Documentary History of African-American Kinship in the Civil War Era, eds. Ira Berlin & Leslie S. Rowland (New York: New Press, 1997), 160-161.

sense of domestic security she did not experience in her old Virginia home.

Susan wrote for many of the same reasons as Anika Blew and Mary. Like the others, she employed certain tropes of sentimental letter writing, but perhaps with more skill. She began more elaborately, "Dear mother after my respects and goods wishes I take this opertunity to write you a few lines which will inform you that I am well hoping that these lines will find you and all the rest enjoying the same blessing." She asked after her Virginia family: her father, her Aunt Jane, her little brothers James and Phil. She plead also with her mother to "take care of little Dallas and Joe for my sake," indicating perhaps these two were her own young sons whom she had been forced to abandon. Like the others, she also sent news of the infant son she had with her in Georgia. "Little James Washington is well," she told her mother, "and can most walk and has four teeth."

She assured her mother, just as Anika Blew and Mary had done, that she had a "good home," and was "well satisfied" in Georgia. She sought particularly to assuage the fear that her Virginia friends might have of being sold to the South. "Do tell mary and sam not to be so much alarmed about the south," she insisted, "for it is as good living here as it is there." She knew the rumors, spread by slaveholders to compound the threat that separation already posed. "I have often heard it said that b[l]acks have nothing to eat at the south but cotton seed," she acknowledged, "but I am b[l]essed with a plenty that is good." She was worried about other pending sales on the Austin estate, asking where Henry

was "gone" to, and whether he "has left his family or not."[45]

Susan Austin reinforced her sentimental ties to the white Austin women as well. Almost as recitation, she went through the names of her former mistresses, qualifying each individual with some special remembrance: "remember my best love to old Mrs Auston, for she has been a kind mistress to me. remember my best love to Francis Auston; how bad I want to see her. remember my best love to Carline; she has been kind and well disposed to me."[46] Near the closing of her letter, she sought out from the white Austin women sentimental tokens of their bond and of their continued correspondence across the distance between them. She asked the widow Grace Austin to write her. And to Francis, she made a special request, to "write me a letter and send me some flower seed in it." She had now "got to a place where I need them." She recognized the letters as bonds keeping open communications between herself and her family, and she also sought out some living sentimental token of Virginia, some tangible tie to her home. Flower seeds would provide a renewable resource, a vehicle of sentimental memory.[47]

Suddenly, in the middle of her letter, Austin found a surprisingly

---

[45]Her reference to Henry could conceivably referred to his running away, rather than sale. But her question about him was immediately followed by the advice to Mary and Sam about their forced exile to the South. It seems likely Henry was to be sold, too.

[46]I have added punctuation in this instance to clarify the parallel language of her remembrances.

[47]She also wrote, "remember my best love to Agnes Auston and tell her to send me some of her flower seed that bloom all the winter," but it remains unclear who Agnes was. She was most likely a member of the white Austin family, given her placement in the letter. But Susan did mix her references to white Austins and black family members throughout the letter, so Agnes may in fact have been African American kin.

vindictive and mocking voice. Turning to yet another Austin woman, she lashed out:

> Rebecca Auston you sent me to the cotton country to make me miserable but . . . . I would not swapp homes and go back and live with you for the whole world . . . . recollect Rebecca Auston when I was confined you would not allow me any thing to eat for four days but I now have a good home and plenty to eat and no fuss about what I have to do. I am so glad that I have got away from the [Horsleys] that they were so mean that I was ashamed to go in the neighborhood.
>
> my good respects to Master George for I was sarrow to leave him but he had such a cruel wife that I am glad that I have left.

Susan's charges were not to be taken lightly. Rebecca (Horsley) Austin, she alleged, had treated her with cruelty during her recent pregnancy. Furthermore, the untoward actions of some unnamed member of Rebecca's family had left Susan feeling "ashamed" to be seen in public.[48]

Susan's unrestrained condemnation of these slaveholders' actions and character demands an explanation, especially since it was bracketed by affectionate expressions of her continued bond to the other white Austin

---

[48]Susan Austin also leveled criticism at the DeWitt family, most likely Bennet M. and Julia (Horsley) DeWitt of Lynchburg. Her causes were unclear, but Bennet DeWitt had married into the Horsley family, and he occasionally brokered slave sales from Twyman to traders in Lynchburg and Richmond. B. M. DeWitt to Iverson Twyman, 26 March 1846, 31 Dec. 1846, 27 March 1847, and "Memorandum," 28 Nov. 1863, Austin-Twyman Papers.

women, within the letter whose very purpose was to solicit an important emotional exchange with her own mother and family members. She obviously thought she could get away with her attack on Rebecca without risking any retribution on her own family still held by the Austins, and in fact while still accomplishing the sentimental goals of the letter. And she may well have succeeded. The explanation for Susan's brazenness, it seems, lay in Austin family politics.

Rebecca Horsley had married George Austin, to the great distress of nearly everyone else concerned. George was a brother to Francis Austin and to Martha (Austin) Twyman, and they saw Rebecca as an upstart and a gold digger, a woman out to satisfy her own desires to the intentional detriment of both white and black members of the Austin household. In 1848, before the marriage took place, Martha saw what was to come. She wrote to Frances, Rebecca "may pretend that she loves him as long as he has anything" to spend, "but you know when that is gone she will treat him like a dog." Martha knew George had already been duped, however, and that Rebecca's actions were soon to wreak havoc. Rebecca was already putting her hands on George's few assets: slaves he had received in the estate division. "You mind what I say," Martha predicted, "that if Geo[rge] sells Sukey," Rebecca "will take a $100 or more and go to Lynchburg or Richmond and spend it on fine dressing and come back and splurge about thinking she will triumph over us greatly." Martha could only pray that by "a merciful Providence" the family might "be delivered from her

evil designs."[49] They were not spared, as Susan Austin well testified from her new home in Georgia.

Susan Austin's letter was no lament, however. She both condemned Rebecca Austin's actions and provided evidence for her own triumph over the capricious woman. Her assurances to her mother that she now had a good home also served to taunt Rebecca. Here, her dual agendas in writing came together and became clear. The most significant emblem of her newfound domestic freedom was her son, "Little James Washington" who, despite Rebecca's cruelty during the pregnancy, was now "well and can most walk and has four teeth." By bragging about the boy to her mother, she also drove home the point that she and her son were now free from Rebecca Austin's grasp.[50]

Other African-American letters catalyzed and illuminated the network of connections intersecting in the slave market. Flight and sale had long served as weapons in the contests between enslaved African Americans and white slaveholders. On occasion these partisans pulled in allies from the extremes of the larger political struggle over slavery, creating an ironic dialogue in which abolitionists and slave traders exchanged letters and negotiated the exchange of cash for prisoners. The antislavery press made effective use of these dialogues, calling special attention to the sentimentality of the documents created by slaves themselves, and perhaps exaggerating that language for dramatic effect.

---

[49]Martha E. (Austin) Twyman to Francis Austin, 29 Dec. 1848, Austin-Twyman Papers.

[50]Here I am grateful for Brenda Stevenson's insightful comments on my paper, "Sentiment and the Slave Market: Corresponding with Family," at the American Historical Association Annual Meeting, Washington, D. C., 10 Jan. 1998.

Following the recapture of the seventy-six African Americans fleeing aboard the schooner Pearl in 1848, many were sold as punishment to Alexandria trader Joseph Bruin. One of the young convicts, Emily Russel, managed to get a letter sent to her mother, Nancy Cartwright, a free woman in New York. "I take this opportunity of writing you a few lines," she began, "to inform you that I am in Bruin's jail." In language suggesting her letter was taken down by dictation rather than written in her own hand, she exclaimed, "Oh, mother! my dear mother! come now and see your distressed and heartbroken daughter once more." Her Aunt Sally and Aunt Hagar were there, too, she said, with all their children. At such knowledge, she wrote, "Grandmother is almost crazy." She implored her mother not to "forsake" her in her "desolate" state.

Her mother promptly sought the aid of abolitionists and found an advocate in Quaker William Harned. Harned wrote to Bruin, asking what price would keep Emily out of the New Orleans market. Playing to whatever sense of propriety the trader might aspire to, Harned wrote that "from what I know of you, I have no idea that you prefer" to sell Emily south "against the wishes of such a mother as Nancy is." Bruins's reply lay bare his interests and his plans for Emily Russel. She was "said to be the finest-looking woman in this country," he wrote, claiming he already had "two or three offers" on her "from gentlemen from the South." Her price stood firm, therefore, at $1,800--three times the price of "prime field hands" in Virginia at the time. Bruin doomed any efforts they might have made, giving them less than a week to act. In the end, Bruin's purely financial calculation cost him what he had paid for Emily, and it cost Emily her

life, as she died en route to New Orleans.[51]

Harriet Beecher Stowe reprinted copies of both Emily Russell's and Joseph Bruin's letters in The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin, as evidences of the sentimental truth of her own sentimental novel. She pointed to Emily's letter as a powerful sentimental document, calling her reader--presumably a "Christian mother"--to pause and "think what if your daughter had written it to you!" She recounted how Emily's mother had carried the letter "blotted and tear-soiled" to abolitionists as evidence of her domestic crisis. Recognizing that "People who are not in the habit of getting such documents have no idea of them," she included "a fac simile" of the letter of another Pearl refugee, since sold south. She noted that the letter's very handwriting--"with all its poor spelling, all its ignorance"-- testified directly to its writer's "helplessness, and misery."[52]

In 1852, the Liberator similarly published the plea of James Phillips, who wrote his wife Mary Phillips in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, from Cochran's slave jail in Richmond. According to the Liberator, James had fled Virginia fourteen years prior to his arrest in May 1852. In his letter, he told Mary he had been sold

---

[51]Average price for Virginia "prime field hands" stood at only $600 in 1850; even New Orleans "prime field hands" sold at an average of only $1,100; U. B. Phillips, American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime 1918 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1966), 370, table. Emily Russel to Nancy Cartwright, 22 Jan. 1850, in Harriet Beecher Stowe, Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1854; repr. in Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture, http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/utc/, 1998), 332; letter repr. in Slave Testimony, ed. Blassingame, 87. William Harned to Joseph Bruin, 28 Jan. 1850, in Christian Citizen, 4 May 1850; repr. in Slave Testimony, ed. Blassingame, 87. Bruin & Hill to [William Harned?], 31 Jan. 1850; in Stowe, Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin, 333. For more on the Pearl refugees, see Bancroft, Slave Trading in the Old South, 330-333; and John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999), 14-15.

[52]Stowe, Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin, 331-332. Thomas Ducket to Mr. Bigelow, 18 Feb. 1850, in Stowe, Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin, 340; repr. in Slave Testimony, ed. Blassingame, 89.

to trader William A. Branton, who could always be found at the jail. James listed three potential advocates and instructed her to "show [them] this letter" and to have them come to Richmond immediately to buy him. James had less than six weeks before his scheduled departure. "Do not feel any hesitation at all," he warned his patrons; "Feel for me now or never." James spoke to the white men's economic concerns as well, insisted he was "worth twice" the $900 Branton was asking; James himself could repay them in no time. He tried further to convince them of the feasibility of his rescue by assuring them that the trader "gave me full consent to have this letter written." Closing with an assurance of his continued love for his wife and children, he insisted that Mary's reciprocal action was imperative. "You may depend," he wrote, "I am almost dying to see you and my children. You must do all you can for your husband."[53]

Most enslaved African Americans did not have access to the abolitionist press, of course, and most would have to await the Civil War and emancipation before they could write openly to relatives. Letters continued to serve an important role in post-bellum years, conveying other tokens of family connection along with them. As John Quincy Adams wrote in his 1872 autobiography of his twin brother Aaron, "I thank God to-day that we can write to each other, and visit each other when we wish to." He had rejoiced when Aaron sent him a photograph. "You could not tell it from mine," he declared,

---

[53]James Phillips to Mary Phillips, 20 June 1852, in The Liberator, 16 July 1852; repr. in Slave Testimony, ed. Blassingame, 95-96.

reaffirming his reunion with his lost twin via this sentimental token.[54]

Post-war correspondence proved one viable means to reunion but also unloaded in one fell swoop the accumulation of many years' worth of bad news. Fugitive Cyrus Branch connected back up with his family in Virginia in 1868 despite the thirty years intervening since his departure. Spurred by the sale of his oldest daughter, and by his master's prohibitions on his seeing the rest of his family, he had fled in the late 1830s, settled in Vermont, and eventually remarried. In the spring of 1868, he seized on the opportunity of a traveler going to Petersburg, and sent an open letter seeking information on his lost family. His notice found an audience in his daughter's church, Guilfield Baptist, and in a series of letters that summer Elizabeth Smith conveyed to him the devastating news of the past three decades. She was happy to hear from him, that he was still alive and well. "You wished to know about your people," she began. The news was mixed. His mother had been dead fourteen years, hiss sister Maria for eleven. His first wife, Mary Ann Twyne--Elizabeth's mother--had died only the previous summer. His daughters Martha and Lucinda had been "sold away for over twenty years." And "all the old Deacons" of the church--"brothers Holloway, Walker, Wilcox, Lewey, Cox and Guivens"--presumably his friends, too, were dead. But his sister Lucy was still living nearby, as was his daughter Mary, now widowed, and her six children. And Elizabeth herself, five years old when Branch had left, now was married and had two children, Lucinda and Mary Ann, the latter after her mother.

---

[54]John Quincy Adams, Narrative of the Life of John Quincy Adams When in Slavery and Now as a Freeman (Harrisburg, Pa.: Sieg, Printer, 1872), 29-30.

Elizabeth worked also to join her father's two families. His second wife had died in 1860, but their marriage had produced a daughter, to whom Elizabeth reached out as a new-found sister. "As I am not acquainted with your daughter, I cannot say much to her," Elizabeth noted, "but will you please to give my love to her, and tell her, although we are at present strangers, I hope we may become acquainted, as I am anxious to see her." Elizabeth also hoped her father would be able to come see her and the grandchildren he had never known. Her letters, in fact, may have helped raise the funds for him to do so, as they were published in a biographical pamphlet published and sold for that purpose in Manchester, Vermont. The little book's title conveyed the sentimental message evidenced by the letters: A Lost Family Found.[55]

Others were less lucky. Sentimental language would not bring lost loved ones physically closer, and too often African Americans' reading of the market's geography did not go far enough. Milly Johnson of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, demonstrated the difficulties in an 1867 letter to the Freeman's Bureau. "My purpose" in writing, she said, was "to advertise for my children." She had five children sharing the surname Johnson, and she provided the best information she had about their last known locations. Musco had been held by Hugh Billaps, and Letty by Dr. Richards, both slaveholders of Essex County, Virginia. Two other children, Henrietta and William Quals, had been "sold to speculators" in Richmond. "Where they were carried I do not Know," she stated flatly. The last

---

[55]Elizabeth Smith to Cyrus Branch, 6 June, 27 June, 28 July, 24 Aug. 1868, quoted in [Elizabeth Merwin Wickham], A Lost Family Found; An Authentic Narrative of Cyrus Branch and His Family, Alias John White, of Manchester, Vermont [Manchester, Vt.: n.p., 1869], 6-7; see also 9, 11-12. Copy at American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass. (AAS).

child, Anna, had only recently slipped from her grasp. Her former master, Albert Elliott of Hertford County, North Carolina, took her away after the Confederate surrender, Elliott's wife claiming she would hold Anna until age twenty-one. "I protested," Johnson wrote, but to "no avail." She had written letters to Elliott, trying to get Anna back, but he refused to respond. "Now Sir," she wrote the bureau, "I want her." She admitted that the other four were perhaps lost, but Anna "can be gotten I presume." Her directness, her lack of obfuscation, her plain assertion of motherly right, all seemed products of her own newfound freedom and the urgency of her situation. She assumed the Freedmen's Bureau was on her side; they would assume a sentimental bond between her and the children, and she did not emphasize it explicitly. Her presumption, on all counts, was correct. Bureau agents succeeded in restoring Anna to her, but they turned up only a few dead-end leads on Musco and Letty, and they found no way at all to locate either Henrietta or William. The four had disappeared into the unknowable gulfs of the slave market.[56]

---

[56]Milly Johnson to Assist. Subasst. Commissioner, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Hillsboro, N.C., 26 March 1867, in Families and Freedom, eds. Berlin and Rowland, 214-215.

Chapter Four: Maps to the Self

In Beloved, perhaps the most disturbing and enlightening meditation on African-American life under slavery, Toni Morrison evokes the chattel principle's central depredation: its power not only to scatter family members but also to disorient an individual's compass, his or her sense of self. Baby Suggs's predicament proved emblematic: "What she called the nastiness of life was the shock she received upon learning that nobody stopped playing checkers just because the pieces included her children." Yet that was not the worst of it: "Sad as it was that she did not know where her children were buried or what they looked like if alive, fact was she knew more about them than she knew about herself, having never had the map to discover what she was like."[1] Morrison illuminates enslaved African Americans' life histories as physical journeys across a compelling and tortured landscape, a landscape in which enslaved people dare not love, yet must love in order to survive. In doing so, Morrison's work represents a complex reverberation of nineteenth-century African-Americans' own autobiographical journeys across and out of the slave market.

Formerly enslaved African Americans writing their autobiographies or recounting their stories to amanuenses understood the problem of alienation in slavery as a geographic one, and they worked to overcome it in those terms as well. The slave trade within Virginia and within the United States continually reasserted enslavement through physical removal, just as the African and

---

[1]Toni Morrison, Beloved (New York: Knopf, 1987), 23, 140.

Atlantic slave trades had.[2] Unlike enslaved people removed from Africa to North America, however, American-born slaves who were moved through the antebellum market remained within national boundaries, within the same commercial world across whose networks their masters continued to communicate and to travel. Enslaved African Americans were able to learn about and even sometimes communicate across those same networks. These skills of geographic literacy, forced on them by sale and migration, enabled them to envision something of the vast enslaved landscape within which their families had been scattered.

As writers working from the perspective of freedom, these autobiographers were dedicated to the task of reconstituting individual identities and family lives scattered by the slave market. Centering their stories on forced migration and the physical separation of family members, these authors frequently found refuge in sentimental language suited especially for those themes. They employed sentiment to convey their grief not only at having lost family members and their own identities to the slave market, but also at having to recall those memories and to recount them in autobiographical form. They employed sentiment in an effort to claim family lives the slave market had denied them, to conjure up the pain of separation as a means of dealing with it. They used sentiment selectively when it seemed suited to their narrative purposes, notably in eliciting sympathy from readers by asserting a common

---

[2]On enslavement as a process of alienation from kin and community, see Orlando Patterson, Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1990).

bond of family values.[3]

As these men and women strove to fulfill the domestic promise of freedom, however, the auction block proved an enduring stumbling block, hampering their narrative attempts to join in the cult of domesticity. Unlike Harriet Beecher Stowe and other sentimental novelists, these autobiographers frequently found themselves incapable of striking a tone which would elicit middle-class white readers' sympathy. They struggled to find common ground, but may have confounded readers' ability to empathize by lashing out, falling into disorganization, or simply by leaving unexplained gaps in the narrative.[4] These writers failed to produce boilerplate sentimental polemic, and in embracing their own idioms of expression some of them, like Henry Box Brown,

---

[3]Sentimental language frequently focused on pain as a common human experience. As Franny Nudelman writes, the "facility with which sentimentalists objectify pain expresses their assumption that community, in the form of shared sentiment, already exists and must, simply, be revealed." Franny Nudelman, "Harriet Jacobs and the Sentimental Politics of Female Suffering," English Literary History 59 (1992), 964 n. This was particularly true, but with different implications, of northern reformers, including white abolitionists. See Karen Halttunen, "Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American Culture," American Historical Review 100 (April 1995): 303-334.

[4]Writing about Harriet Jacobs's autobiography, Franny Nudelman sees these narrative gaps as evidence of "the particular insufficiency of a sentimental model for a black female narrator." Consequently, she says, Jacobs turned frequently to an "adversarial rather than cooperative" relationship with her readers. Nudelman, "Harriet Jacobs and Sentimental Politics," 952, 939. See also Valerie Smith, Self-Discovery and Authority in Afro-American Narrative (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1987), 37-42. Other scolars have interpreted narrative gaps in light of psychoanalytic theory, as evidence of unresolved problems stemming from sexual abuse. Nell Painter, Soul Murder and Slavery (Waco, Tx.: Baylor University Press, 1995); and "Of Lily, Linda Brent, and Freud: A Non-Exceptionalist Approach to Race, Class, and Gender in the Slave South," in Half Sisters of History: Southern Women and the American Past, ed. Catherine Clinton (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1994), 93-109. Jennifer Fleischner, Mastering Slavery: Memory, Family, and Identity in Women's Slave Narratives (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1997), 93-153.

actively drew abolitionists' ire.[5] Many did adhere to certain tropes of the emergent genre of ex-slave autobiography, influenced in part by the white editors who were often involved in their projects.[6] African-American autobiographers frequently transcended the trappings of the genre, however, deploying those tropes ironically or idiosyncratically to tell their own stories in their own ways.[7] They may have shared a moral map of the enslaved South,

---

[5]Marcus Wood deftly shows how Brown employed elements of comedy and minstrelsy to "embrace the bathetic elements" of his life history, thereby confounding the abolitionists' stereotype of the pious slave. Marcus Wood, "'All Right!': The Narrative of Henry Box Brown as a Test Case for the Racial Prescription of Rhetoric and Semiotics," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 107 (1998): 84.

[6] James Olney asserts that such tropes dominated these works; he has likened ex-slave autobiographies to "painting by numbers," arguing that they left the conventions of the genre "untransformed and unredeemed" by any significant autobiographical or literary contribution. James Olney, "'I Was Born': Slave Narratives, their Status as Autobiography and as Literature," in The Slave's Narrative, eds. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Charles T. Davis (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985), 150, 152-153, 158. African-American autobiographers imbibed various motifs and tropes, particularly from picaresque and romantic novels and northern domestic reform literature. Jean Fagan Yellin, introduction to Harriet A. Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1987), xiv, xxvii-xxxiii. Francis Smith Foster, Written By Herself: Literary Production by African American Women, 1746-1892 (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1993), 98-99; Henry Louis Gates Jr., Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the "Racial" Self (New York: Oxford UP, 1987), 81. Charles H. Nichols, "The Slave Narrators and the Picaresque Mode: Archetypes for Modern Black Personae," in Slave's Narrative, eds. Davis and Gates, 283-298. Smith, Self-Discovery and Authority, 11-13. Annette Niemtzow, "The Problematic of Self in Autobiography: The Example of the Slave Narrative," in The Art of Slave Narrative: Original Essays in Criticism and Theory, eds. John Sekora and Darwin T. Turner ([Macomb, Ill.]: Western Illinois University, 1982), 104-107. For other cross-genre readings of the tropes of ex-slave autobiographies, see Kari J. Winter, Subjects of Slavery, Agents of Change: Women and Power in Gothic Novels and Slave Narratives, 1790-1865 (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1992); H. Bruce Franklin, Prison Literature in America: The Victim as Criminal and Artist (rev. ed., New York: Oxford UP, 1989); and Nicholas K. Bromell, By the Sweat of the Brow: Literature and Labor in Antebellum America (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993).

[7]Henry Louis Gates has outlined a theory of "signifyin," whereby narrators alluded to and layered meanings upon certain tropes, creating an ongoing critical commentary across time. William Andrews has pointed to fugitives' ironic deployment of such tropes to highlight the disjuncture between conventional autobiography and that of the former slave. Ex-slaves' explanations of birth and genealogy, for example, served not to establish stable places of origin as in other autobiography; rather they serve to highlight how that would-be norm of (middle

and they encountered many of the same landmarks and sign posts, but they were compelled across different routes through that landscape, and they found different means of expressing those journeys in autobiographical form.

African-American autobiographers, of course, wanted their narratives to serve the larger cause of abolition. Auction scenes had become a staple of abolitionist literature and imagery by the 1830s and found their way into ex-slave narratives, especially those with explicitly polemical agendas. Peter Randolph devoted a five-page section of his 1855 Sketches of Slave Life to generic account of "Slaves on the Auction Block." Henry Watson, whose 1848 autobiography was equally polemical, even included an image of a slave auction lifted directly from abolitionist George Bourne's 1838 Picture of American Slavery. Bourne had used the image generically, accompanied by a highly rhetorical denunciation of auctions in Richmond. Watson's publisher captioned that same image "The Author upon the Auction Block." Watson described the auction scene in generic terms already familiar to abolitionist readers, with examinations, bidding, family separations, and crying or passive silence from

---

class white) family life was interrupted by the outside authority of masters. Similarly, Houston Baker, while recognizing autobiographers as "bound" by the "organized self," sees autobiographical conventions as potentially empowering. Ex-slave autobiographers could use tropes of the genre as rhetorical tools in gaining control not only over their own representation, but also over that of their former masters as well. Henry Louis Gates Jr., The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism (New York: Oxford Univ. Press: 1988), esp. ch. 4, "The Trope of the Talking Book." William L. Andrews, To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865 (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1986), 27-28. Houston A. Baker Jr., "Autobiographical Acts and the Voice of the Southern Slave," in Slave's Narrative, eds. Davis and Gates, 242, 251.

slaves themselves.[8]

On the whole, however, these narratives did not represent boiler-plate abolitionist polemic. Even as African Americans made use of abolitionist tropes, they turned those images to their own autobiographical purposes. William Hayden, for example, mustered all the abolitionist rhetoric indignation he could, but the idiosyncracy of his own auction scene cut against the grain of the generic auction image. Recalling his 1810 sale, Hayden cast himself as the "ox brought to the shambles," his potential buyers as "butchers." Yet five members of "that flesh-buying crowd" were actually his patrons trying to secure him his freedom. Furthermore, Hayden couched the bidding as a choice on his own part, with each patron entreating Hayden to choose among them.[9] Hayden's desire to

---

[8]Peter Randolph, Sketches of Slave Life: or, Illustrations of the "Peculiar Institution" (Boston: the Author, 1855), 52-57. George Bourne, Picture of Slavery in the United States (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838), 111-113; image "Auction at Richmond" repr. in Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture, http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/utc/. Henry B. Watson, Narrative of Henry Watson, a Fugitive Slave, Written by Himselft (Boston: B. Marsh, 1848), 7-9.

[9]William Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, Containing a Faithful Account of His Travels for a Number of Years, Whilst a Slave, in the South; Written by Himself (Cincinnati: the Author, 1846), 40-41. Other narrators cast themselves in the role of bidders at auction scenes, trying to redeem their family members. For Solomon Bayley, the auction was yet another trial of faith. Grieved that a trader's bids on his son were outstripping his own, he retreated and collapsed against the court-house wall. Providentially, just as he gave up hope, local white patrons intervened and redeemed the son, serving as a lesson in faith for Bayley. Noah Davis recounted similar situations in his 1859 narrative, with patrons helping him buy his son out of a Richmond slave jail, then outbid a trader at auction for his daughter. As with Bayley, these trials served to bolster his own faith in Providence and stood as an example to his readers of God's bounty to the faithful. In this sense, these narrators may have been fulfillling white abolitionists' desires for pious slave models, but these scenes certainly did not serve as all-out attacks on slavery itself. Solomon Bayley, Narrative of Some Remarkable Incidents in the Life of Solomon Bayley, Formerly a Slave in the State of Delaware, North America, Written by Himself, and Publisehd for His Benefit; to which are Prefixed a Few Remarks by Richard Hunard, ed. Richard Hunard (London: P. Youngman, 1825), 29-33. Editor Hunard mentioned a version published prior to 1820, but I have not been able to locate any bibliographical reference of it; it may be represented the main body of Hunard's edited edition, which also includes a second section consisting of subsequent correspondence with Bayley. Noah Davis, A Narrative of the Life of Rev. Noah Davis, a Colored Man; Written by Himself, at

show his own personal connections and self-determination in this case undermined his purposeful abolitionist rhetoric. Indeed, these autobiographers seem to have pitched their books to a diverse audience, including not just white abolitionists but also, and often primarily, their friends and family and other African-American readers in the community.[10]

Just as these autobiographies served larger political agendas only ambivalently, they never remained in perfect concert with one another. As each autobiographer sought an appropriate idiom, he or she often echoed, extended, or overturned the tropes of their predecessors. The narratives of both George White (1810) and Solomon Bayley (1825) fell squarely within the genre of spiritual biography. For them, physical slavery stood as a worldly symbol for the metaphysical slavery of sin.[11] Grimes turned the spiritual biography on its

---

the Age of Fifty-Four (Baltimore: John F. Weishampel Jr., 1859; repr., Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1969), 55-59.

[10]African-American literary societies, both male and female, flourished from the 1820s and 1830s on in northern cities such as Philadelphia, Boston, and New York. The members of theese societies, Elizabeth McHenry argues, claimed their freedom explicitly through the acquisition of literacy and the dissemination of literary texts. African-American readers, like other antebellum American readers, emphasized classical and European texts, but they also drew material from black newspapers, which frequently announced the publication of ex-slaves' autobiographies of both local and national interest. Elizabeth McHenry, "'Dreaded Eloquence': Origins and Rise of African American Literary Societies and Libraries," Harvard Library Bulletin 6 (Spring 1995): 32-56; and personal corresponodence with McHenry, May 1999. My thanks to John Gennari for recommending McHenry's work and for putting me in touch with her. See also Julie Winch, "'You Have Talents--Only Cultivate Them': Philadelphia's Black Female Literary Societies and the Abolitionist Crusade," in The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America, eds. Jean F. Yellin and John Van Horne, (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press,1994), 101-118; and Anne M. Boylan, "Benovelence and Antislavery Activity among African American Women in New York and Boston, 1820-1840," in Abolitionist Sisterhood, eds. Yellin and Van Horne, esp. 128-130.

[11]George White, A Brief Account of the Life, Experiences, Travels, and Gospel Labours of George White, an African; Written by Himself, and Revised by a Friend (New York: J. C. Totten, 1810). Bayley, Narrative of Some Remarkable Incidents.

head. He cast himself as an anti-hero, a faithless pilgrim, triumphant only in his utter failure to represent the pious ex-slave. His sole God was fate, his faith a resignation. His escape from slavery, far from signifying an escape from sin (or a call to escape from sin), simply transposed the site of his misfortunes.[12] Grimes did, however, introduce a paradoxical dynamic amplified by William Hayden some twenty years later. Both men emphasized assertions of free will and consent as they dealt with the slave market, Hayden more successfully and all the more paradoxically. Hayden returned to the theme of Providence, now as a power which assured him of his eventual freedom from the slave trader he worked for. He would gain this freedom only through the accoutrements of masculinity he gained, ironically, in the course of commanding the slave trader's business.

The narratives of Moses Grandy (1844) and Noah Davis (1859) detailed these men's somewhat less extraordinary struggles in the slave market, as each worked to purchase freedom for himself and then his family. Both published their works in an effort to raise money to purchase family members still enslaved, but there the similarities ended. Grandy's narrative caught him in the midst of that effort, hampered by unwilling masters and the unknown locations of his loved ones. Davis, aided by exceptionally generous slaveholders, had already worked to fulfill the Biblical duties of fatherhood. He had only one son

---

[12]William Andrews keenly note that Grimes's narrative "has stood as a loaded gun," posing "as much a threat to the literary system of autobiography as to the social system of slavery." Andrews, To Tell a Free Story, 81. The only other published assessment of Grimes's autobiography is Charles Nichols, "The Case of William Grimes, Runaway Slave," William & Mary Quarterly 8 (Oct. 1951): 552-560. William Grimes, Life of William Grimes, the Runaway Slave; Written by Himself (New Haven: the Author, 1825).

left in slavery, and seemed likely to win his battle. He returned to a pious model of ex-slave autobiography made more prescient perhaps by the publication in 1852 of Uncle Tom's Cabin.[13]

As fugitives or freed people who had gained the skills of literacy, ex-slave autobiographers proved themselves exceptions. Virginia's ex-slave autobiographers and biographical subjects compounded these peculiarities with geographic ones. They came mainly from areas thoroughly connected both to northern commercial networks, especially the Chesapeake tidewater, the lower James River watershed, and northern Virginia.[14] The reason for the geographic bias is clear from the narratives themselves. Commercial links to the diversifying labor markets of Norfolk, Richmond, Petersburg, and northern Virginia had provided some of these writers with access to legal and illegal means of freedom, either through flight or through hiring their time to purchase freedom. At least half the autobiographers had been fugitives, and another half-

---

[13]Moses Grandy, Narrative of the Life of Moses Grandy, Late a Slave in the United States of America (Boston: O. Johnson, 1844; repr. in Documenting the American South, http://metalab.unc.edu/docsouth/, 1997). Davis, Narrative of the Life of Rev. Noah Davis.

[14]Of the thirty-one Virginia autobiographical subjects whose place of birth was identified, thirteen (forty-two percent) were from the James and Appomattox River corridors, or linked closely by turnpike roads and, by the 1850s, railroads. Ten (thirty-two percent) came from northern Virginia's tidewater, piedmont and valley counties, all either bordering the navigable Potomac River or linked to it by turnpikes or railroads. Seven (twenty-three percent) came from the eastern shore or southern tidewater, both opening onto the Chesapeake Bay. Booker T. Washington, born Franklin County in 1856, came from the far western edge of the southern piedmont. The southern piedmont (southside) region, except for the Petersburg area, was vastly underrepresented despite its turnpike and rail links to Richmond.

dozen detailed how they had paid their masters for their freedom.[15]

In another important sense, however, these autobiographers seem to have been fairly representative, having shared the experience of sale which many Virginians had known. Those same links to larger commercial networks generally gave urban-based slave traders and rural slaveholders greater access to each other, facilitating slave sale and forced migration of enslaved Virginians. More than half of the antebellum subjects said they had been sold at least once, nearly four times on average. Of postbellum writers, a third had been sold, on average, just under three times apiece. These writers had been sold away from their mothers at a young age as well. For antebellum writers, the average age at separation was ten--age seven for those whose separation was effected through sale. For postbellum writers, separation came at age nine on average, whether

---

[15]Benjamin Drew's 1850s interviews with refugees in Canada illustrate the exceptional experience of fugitives, who in many cases were sold more times than average. Harry Thomas's narrative, compressed into two short pages, sketched out a chaotic sequence of almost constant motion, wilful as well as forced, fluctuating between confinement and release. He ran away at least a dozen times and was sold eight times in his life. He was sold first from Southampton County, Virginia, to trader, then to a South Carolina planter, who then took him to Mississippi. Thomas ran away twice, caught each time, then sold to the master's cousin. He ran away to Alabama, was caught, jailed, and sold to a general from Georgia. He ran away again, was caught, sold to a trader, and taken to New Orleans. Since no one would buy him there, he was taken upriver to Natchez, was sold to a local cotton planter, and again ran off to see friends. He was caught and beaten, ran away again, was caught and forced to wear an iron collar. He ran again to the woods; was caught and beaten, but escaped yet again after the collar was removed. He then followed the North Star to Kentucky, where he was betrayed and jailed; bought by a Nashville doctor. Four years later he stole a horse and escaped; was caught, jailed, and sold to a bankrupt slave-trader; escaped and got to Indiana; was taken to Evansville, where the jailer refused him; was taken to Henderson, Kentucky, and jailed. He cut chains and escaped to Ohio, found help and finally got to Canada. By stark contrast, his life in Canada had thus far been rather sedentary, even curative: he practiced herbal medicine. Of the twenty-eight Virginia interviewees whose reasons for quitting the South were published by Drew, twenty named sale as the proximate cause. Either they themselves had actually been sold, or had heard rumors of or feared their impending doom. Benjamin Drew, A North-side View of Slavery; The Refugee, or, The Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada Related by Themselves (Boston: John P. Jewett and Co., 1856; repr. in Four Fugitive Slave Narratives, ed. Robin W. Winks, Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969), 211-213.

via sale, death, or forced moving.[16] While no one has done an overall statistical study of family separations in Virginia, figures for the "export" states as a whole suggest that these autobiographers may have experienced more engagement with the slave market than average, but perhaps not exceptionally so.[17] And, with forced emigration rates for African Americans in many tidewater and piedmont counties running in the twenty- to thirty-percent range, Virginia's autobiographers wrote about what many thousands of others had experienced.[18]

While these writers can not be said to represent fully the experiences of most enslaved Virginians, their autobiographical struggles out of the slave market are nonetheless instructive. By seizing on a genre of expression so thoroughly introspective and so often sentimental, African-American autobiographers illuminated the emotional landscape of their lives in slavery. In doing so, they consistently highlighted the central importance of the slave

---

[16]These numbers are drawn from the seventeen autobiographies before 1861 and the twelve thereafter which gave the kind of detail needed.

[17]Michael Tadman estimates that for enslaved children living in the upper-south states in 1820, the cumulative risk of sale out of the state by 1860 stood at around thirty percent. Using a different statistical method, he calculates that up to one-third of all upper-south children aged ten to fourteen were separated from one or both parents by the slave trade. He also estimates that about one-third of all first marriages among upper-south slaves were broken by sale. Michael Tadman, Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 45, 170-171. Thomas D. Russell estimates the cumulative risk of sale in South Carolina (whether in-state or out of state) at over fifteen percent by age fifteen, nearly thirty percent by age twenty, and fifty percent by age forty. Thomas D. Russell, "Sale Day in Antebellum South Carolina: Slavery, Law, Economy, and Court-Supervised Sales," Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1993, 75, fig. 6. Neither Tadman nor Russell, however, estimates average number of sales or average age at first separation from parents.

[18]See maps, Appendix 1.

market in shaping that landscape and in compelling the scattering of their families across it. The autobiographies served as "maps to the self," geographic chronicles which directed their subjects towards a new family and individual life outside the slave market.

Virginia's fugitive and formerly enslaved autobiographers established the first in a long tradition of African-American migration narratives. Their chronicles served as counter-narratives to an emergent body of bourgeois American travel literature, exposing the irony of forced migration within a rapidly expanding free republic.[19] While all autobiographies to some extent might be cast in terms of journeys, that motif held special resonance in ex-slave autobiographies because the chattel principle--slaves as mobile personal property--lay at the bedrock of slavery in the United States.[20] Slaveholders could not only buy and sell them, but legally move them at will, hiring them out, bequeathing them to heirs, reassigning them to new work patterns, or migrating with them to new lands. Slavery, to these autobiographers, <u>was</u> the slave market, and the slave market was the motor driving their narratives. Together,

---

[19]The most comprehensive analysis of antebellum ex-slave autobiographies, including on the motif of journeys, is Andrews, <u>To Tell a Free Story</u>. On fugitive slave autobiographies as a countervailing travel literature, see Lisa C. Brawley, "Fugitive Nation: Slavery, Travel, and Technologies of American Identity, 1830-1860," Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Chicago, 1995, introduction and ch. 4. For post-bellum and twentieth-centuries literary traditions, see Farah J. Griffin and Cheryl J. Fish, eds., <u>A Stranger in the village: Two Centuries of African-American Travel Writing</u> (Boston : Beacon Press, 1998); Farah Jasmine Griffin, <u>"Who Set Your Flowin'?": The African-American Migration Narrative</u> (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995); and Lawrence R. Rodgers, <u>Canaan Bound: the African-American Great Migration Novel</u> (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1997).

[20]This notion of property rights, of course, lay at the heart of the sectional controversies over slavery in federal territories. Abolitionists seized on the connection betwen the slave market and landed expansion of slavery; see ch. 6 below.

they sketched out the affective world of the slave market in Virginia.

Taken chronologically by birthdate, the Virginian subjects of ex-slave autobiography tell the story of each phase of Virginia's enslaved migration. The earliest autobiographers, George White and Solomon Bayley, were born on the eastern shore of the Chesapeake around the 1760s, and were separated from family when sent across the bay to Virginia's mainland, plantation slavery's second frontier. William Hayden and William Grimes, both born in northern Virginia in the 1780s, followed traders' and planters' migrations west to Kentucky and south to Georgia, respectively, two of the fastest growing states in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Henry Watson, Louis Hughes, and Charlotte Brooks, born between 1810 and 1840, were forced to travel to the booming cotton and sugar plantations of the Mississippi Delta, slavery's final frontier in North America. Moses Grandy, Peter Randolph, and Bethany Veney also attested to the complexities of the slave trade within Virginia and of migration from Virginia to the North variously through self-purchase, escape, and manumission.

While sentimental language suited itself well to these stories of sale and family separation, these narrators applied that language selectively, often working it into their own idioms of expression. And although each employed different motifs and expressions, several common themes emerged. Narrators grounded their stories in local social geographies, showing a keen awareness especially of white family genealogies, links which frequently determined slaves' their own migratory fates. This initial grounding often stood in marked contrast with the physical alienation imposed by removal, a process in which

topographical landmarks or obstacles played a significant role. Narrators turned continually to the themes of communing with the lost homeplace and with actual reunion with kin lost to the slave market. Those narrating successful reunions struck confident tones, detailing the chief means of their reunions, chief among them literacy, spirituality, domesticity, and for male writers, a particular sense of their own masculinity. All of these proved problematic, however; even as these means were achieved, the slave market tended still to pervert them or hamper their full development. When reunion was not possible, these narrators revealed the innovative ways in which they managed to commune with loved ones far away. While some reminisced in nostalgic longing for home, others explicitly rejected romantic visions of Old Virginia, despite their family ties. By the same token, those unable to achieve reunion or a firm sense of self tended to use sentimental language parsimoniously. Even some of the successful reunions were tinged with a halting embrace of sentimental language, as if they did not fully patch up what had been torn asunder.

Virginia's ex-slave autobiographers began their narratives at home. Alongside their common statements of "I was born," they usually cited a specific place of origin, even if they were not always able to give their full genealogical background.[21] Henry Watson said he was born "about thirteen miles from Fredericksburg, as near as I can now recollect." London Ferrill and Gilbert Hunt each gave their respective biographers the specific sites of their birth. Fugitive

[21]James Olney recognizes the importance of these statements of birth in rhetorically establishing ex-slaves humanity. In his focus on the many tropes of ex-slave autobiography, however, he misses the importance of individuality these "I was born" statements helped to establish. Olney, "'I Was Born'."

Cyrus Branch's biographer, a Vermonter writing in 1869, emphasized that during the Civil War, "when Petersburg, and Bermuda Hundred, and City Point became common nouns," Branch "could describe them all." One of the earliest writers, George White, began his narrative, "My mother was a slave" in "the township of Accomack, state of Virginia, where I was born in the fall of 1764." Bethaney Veney, writing in 1889, gave her birthplace with schoolgirl precision: on the farm of "one James Fletcher, Pass Run, town of Luray, Page County, Virginia."[22]

Having located the site of their birth, narrators often demonstrated a wider knowledge of local social landscapes. Especially when giving their own family background and again at moments of changing masters, they laid out complex genealogies of enslaved and enslaving family members, linked across the space of miles by kinship, ownership, sale, and hire. Their own genealogies, fixed onto white family trees, remained rooted in the larger landscape. The passing of an enslaved family member from the master to a son, for example, also meant removal to another location, perhaps nearby, perhaps not. The young William Grimes knew his family's King George County neighborhood well; he often traversed the short mile from his enslaved mother's house to his white father's home to play with all his half-brothers, enslaved and free. His

---

[22]Watson, Narrative of Henry Watson, 5. Anon., Biography of London Ferrill, Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Colored Persons, Lexington, Ky. (Lexington, Ky.: A. W. Elder, 1854), 1. Phillip Barrett, Gilbert Hunt, the City Blacksmith (Richmond, Va.: James Woodhouse, 1859), 6. E. M. W. [Elizabeth Merwin Wickham], A Lost Family Found; An Authentic Narrative of Cyrus Branch and his Family, Alias John White of Manchester, Vermont ([Manchester, Vt.]: n.p., 1869), 3, 16, copy at AAS. White, A Brief Account of the Life, Experiences, Travels, 5. Bethany Veney, The Narrative of Bethany Veney, A Slave Woman (Worcester: G. H. Ellis, 1889; repr. in Documenting the American South, http://metalab.unc.edu/docsouth/, 1997), 7.

second master, Col. Thornton of Culpeper County, first refused the offer of a brother-in-law, Major Jones, to buy Grimes, and sent the enslaved man to work for his own son George, in Northumberland County. The colonel later brought Grimes back to Culpeper, but later bequeathed him as a gift to George, who soon sold him to his brother Phillip, in Port Royal. Bethaney Veney similarly recounted how she and her kin migrated locally among their masters' heirs and in-laws, noting her changing relative proximity to her sister, grandmother, and uncle. Elizabeth Keckley testified most poignantly to the importance of her knowledge of white familial relations by inserting into her narrative the text of a letter she had written home to her mother in 1838. On loan to her master's son, she had to move to North Carolina with him. Writing home to her mother in Petersburg, Virginia, she took special interest in their master's daughters' prospects of matrimony. "Tell Miss Elizabeth," she wrote, "that I wish she would make haste and get married, for mistress says that I belong to her when she gets married." It was in fact another of the white daughters whose marriage brought Keckley back to Petersburg, near her mother.[23]

Keeping track of the market and white family networks dispersing their own kin would also prove key to any attempt to reunite with those kin. In 1843, the great task which lay before narrator Moses Grandy was the serendipitous detective work of turning up their trail and tracking them down. He took pains to explain how this might be done:

---

[23]Grimes, Life of William Grimes, 7, 16, 20. Veney, Narrative of Bethany Veney, 10. Elizabeth Keckley, Behind the Scenes; or, Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House (New York: G. W. Carleton & Co., 1868; repr., New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1988), 42-43.

> The way of finding out a friend or relative, who has been sold away for any length of time, or to any great distance, is to trace him, if possible, to one master after another; or . . . to inquire about the neighbourhood where he is supposed to be, until some one is found who can tell that such a person belonged to such or such a master: and the person supposed to be the one sought for, may perhaps remember the names of the persons to whom his father and mother belonged.

Grandy, lacking such information on all but one of his own children, lamented, "I have little hope of finding my four children again."[24]

Knowledge of immediate "neighborhoods" and white family connections proved crucial to maintaining relations with family as well as with local white people. Peter Randolph, writing in 1855, demonstrated his extensive knowledge of the neighborhood by describing the character of overseers and owners in the area between his home and Cabin Point, seven miles away, and connecting his own family members to those same plantations. Such knowledge also helped navigate the dangers and slim opportunities proffered by local white people. Bethaney Veney recounted her many journeys across and outside her own neighborhood, hiding in woods, travelling across the mountain, and hiring herself out in the area. In a signal event early in her narrative, she ran to the farm of her master's father, who she knew would protect her from an unjust whipping. She found another white ally in a Methodist minister, but her

---

[24]Grandy, Narrative of the Life of Moses Grandy, 50.

"running to meeting all the time" vexed her master. He sent her to another farm two miles away, but she continued to attend the religious meetings. Sale south frightened her most because it would remove her from her neighborhood, "where, for miles and miles," she asserted, "I knew every one, and every one knew me." [25]

Moses Grandy's travels empowered him similarly with a geographic knowledge he could use to effect the freedom of himself and his family. His brother worked on a ship plying the West Indies trade, and Grandy himself knew the waterways stretching both north and south. Hiring his own time, he manned canal boats moving between Elizabeth City, North Carolina, and Norfolk, Virginia. During the War of 1812, when Britain blockaded the Chesapeake Bay, he had helped ship goods along the canal to Elizabeth City, "so that it might get to sea by Pamlico Sound and Ocracock Inlet," over one hundred miles to the south. He worked on a schooner shipping lumber from Albemarle Sound to markets in Elizabeth City, and later on canal boats collecting wood shingles in the Dismal Swamp for shipment to Norfolk. These travels gave him not only the income for his purchase, but also access to a broader scope of knowledge and contacts. When given the opportunity, he was able to hire a horse and ride to Norfolk, "fifty miles off," to find Captain Minner, who agreed to buy his freedom. And thus, looking for a way to pay off Minner, he made camp on the far shore of Lake Drummond, in the middle of the Dismal Swamp, to cut barrel wood to sell. He knew the byways of the swamp and the economic

---

[25]Randolph, Sketches of Slave Life, 35-48. Veney, Narrative of Bethany Veney, 12-13, 16-17, 21.

niches black men had carved out there. He knew the contacts to markets and the white men who could protect him if need be.[26]

Home, then, represented a complex matrix of family, friends, and acquaintances. It was neither static nor completely benign, but at least its dangers were familiar. As autobiographer Austin Stewart reflected on his own departure from Virginia to New York with his master early in the 19th century, it was far better to "bear the ills we had, than to fly to those we knew not of."[27]

Having rooted themselves geographically, narrators then recounted how sales and separations served to alienate them from their kin, to deny them the kind of home and parental care implicit in notions of domesticity. Here narrators were most likely to use highly sentimental language, but they might even break off as if unable to put even sentimental words to their emotions. George White of Accomac wrote in 1810 how he had lost his mother while still an infant. Though he was "torn from her fond embraces" and later carried into Maryland, he sought her out at age nineteen, citing as inspiration "the sympathy of nature" and his own "filial affection." With his master's grudging permission, White found her. "As my mother knew not what had become of me," he went on, "the reader will easily imagine the affecting nature and circumstances of the

---

[26]Grandy, Narrative of the Life of Moses Grandy, 14, 18, 25, 32-33, 38-39. Edmund Ruffin, Frederick Law Olmstead, and David Strother all observed and wrote about the free, hireling, and "quasi-free" black men who worked the shingle trade in the Dismal Swamp. See Jack Temple Kirby, Poquosin: A Study of Rural Landscape and Society (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1995), 154-161, 167-168. Unfortunately, Kirby overlooked Moses Grandy's autobiography as a source.

[27]Austin Steward, Twenty-Two Years a Slave, and Forty Years a Freeman (Rochester, N. Y.: William Alling, 1857; repr. in Documenting the American South, http://www.metalab.unc.edu/docsouth/1997), 49.

scene of the first meeting, of a parent lost, and a child unknown." The "mingling anguish" of their meeting was brief, however, and White and his mother "were obliged to undergo the painful sensations" of parting once more.[28]

William Hayden, reflecting on his boyhood sale at auction, wrote that in Kentucky, where he was headed, "no mother's smiles were decreed to welcome me--no maternal words to soothe my pains, no kind and long known home to yield me sustenance and repose." William Grimes, sold away at age ten, recalled that it "grieved me to see my mother's tears at our separation." Although a "heart-broken child," he said he was "too young to realize the afflictions of a tender mother" losing her child. While John Quincy Adams of Frederick County was not sold from his mother, his twin brother Aaron and sister Sallie Anne were, leaving him "a very sad and heart-broken boy." He had few words to describe his feelings, and would "just say that any human reason can imagine how I felt." He reflected more generally on the impact of chain-gangs he had seen leaving for Richmond. "To hear their cries and groans," he averred, "would make every tender-hearted man or woman shed tears."[29]

These autobiographers' fixation on the palpable signs of motherly affection and the pain of loss made clear their aim at striking a sentimental chord in their readers. The smiles and tears, the tender and broken hearts, the soothing maternal words: all these constituted the vocabulary of sentimentality,

---

[28]White, A Brief Account of the Life, Experiences, Travels, 5.

[29]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 20. Grimes, Life of William Grimes, 8. John Quincy Adams, Narrative of the Life of John Quincy Adams, When in Slavery and Now as a Freeman (Harrisburg, Pa.: Seig, 1872), 20.

the language of loss. "Affection," "anguish," and "grief" were all highly experiential "sensations" these writers believed their readers would understand. Yet the heightened emotional content of the sections also raised the possibility that even sentimental language would not prove sufficient to the task. In that case, readers would be left to their own sentimental devices, to "imagine" how these children and mothers must have felt. Grimes went so far as to admit that even he could not completely understand how his own mother must have felt at his forced departure. Sentiment only carried one so far towards understanding the loss another person endured at sale.

The scene of his wife's departure was especially heartrending, one of the few scenes where Grandy elaborated any emotional investment in the narrative. They had been married only eight months, and everything had seemed fine; "we were nicely getting together our little necessaries." One day he heard her call out from a passing coffle of slaves on the move. "Moses, by dear!" she cried, "I am gone!" Grandy accosted the white driver, demanding, "for God's sake, have you bought my wife?" The white man drew a pistol, warning Grandy back. He allowed them a parting word, but as Grandy remembered, "My heart was so full, that I could say very little. . . . I loved her as I loved life." He asked the trader's permission "to shake hands with her" at least, but he was not allowed to approach her. He fought back tears, passed his wife a token of money, and said good-bye.[30]

While Grandy was not permitted an effusive goodbye, the money he

---

[30]Grandy, Narrative of the Life of Moses Grandy, 16, 24.

handed her stood not only as a pragmatic item she might need, but also as a sentimental token of his love. It was probably the only thing of value he could give her under the circumstances, caught off guard as they were by the sale. Bethaney Veney experienced a similarly restrained parting scene with her husband, again in the slave trader's presence. She said she "stifled my anger and my grief" as her husband Jerry handed himself over to the slave trader McCoy. And like Grandy, she passed Jerry sentimental tokens of her love, a testament and catechism, and "shook hands 'good-by'." Thus they were "parted forever, in this world."[31]

The reticence shown in the shaking of hands--rather than embracing--probably represents an inhibition imposed by the situation under the watchful eye of the trader, but it may also betray a Victorian narrative restraint. Veney and Grandy both seem to have "stifled" any urge towards sentimental outburst even in writing about the parting. Yet these passages still focused on physical tokens of affection passed between the loved ones--money, a testament, and a catechism--markers of sentimental attachment readers would surely have recognized as conveying sentiment far more effectively than words.

Solomon Bayley's 1825 narrative provided yet another variation on the theme, now with the sentiments of slaveholders holding sway to bar the separation of enslaved family members. As always in Bayley's narrative, the key role was played by Providence, but intervention came in the form of white feminine sentiments of "family" connection. When Bayley's daughter was about

---

[31]Veney, Narrative of Bethany Veney, 19-25.

to be taken away, the master's daughter "broke out and cried in such a distressing manner" at the sight of losing her black playmate that the master rebuffed the slave trader's offer. Later, as Bayley tried to unify his family in Delaware, his master's wife came forward, urging "with such concern of mind" that her husband let Bayley take his wife. It was her mental powers, however, not her sentimental wailing, which carried "such force" on her husband's "mind." The master, continuing this gender reversal, consented "with a whining tone," to sell Bayley's daughter to him. Bayley cast the master-mistress conflict here in terms of mental power rather than sentimental swaying of the heart. She upstaged him intellectually rather than emotionally, and he retreated having been bested, not convinced.[32]

Bayley extended this reversal, showing how public demonstrations of masculine sentiment--again through divine intervention--might also work to preserve his family. Bayley had found several white allies, whom he paid to bid on his son Spense, hoping to rescue him from the Virginia "back-woods-men" who threatened Bayley's Delaware family throughout his narrative. The Virginia traders outbid Bayley's proxies, and all seemed lost until the "Most High" reached down to two other local white men, "to touch their hearts, with such a sense of sympathy and pity towards my case, that they could not endure." A masculine sense of family ties this time weighed in, as one "great man" in the crowd cried out: "there, let the old man have him, he is his son, he wants him, he can get security." This last qualifier no doubt played a role here, as these

---

[32]Bayley, Narrative of Some Remarkable Incidents, 25-26, 28-29.

generous planters were not likely to risk their own finances to help a free black man. Chipping in what Bayley lacked, they helped him outbid the Virginia men, securing Spence.[33] In Bayley 's case, the divinely inspired sentiments of white people had forestalled his need to narrate an emotional separation from his family.

However Virginia narrators may have dealt with scenes of parting, most of them stressed alienation in the physical removal from their homelands and family. Topographic features served as landmarks on the journey away from home, signposts on the landscape of slavery. For Bayley, Virginia played the role "the South" would play in later narratives, that unknown land where masters might make a slave disappear from the known world of kin. Virginia's "back country" lay as a moral wilderness in which he would find his first trial of faith. Carried illegally out of Delaware and into Virginia's eastern shore, he had sued for freedom but before trial he "was taken up" and shipped across the Chesapeake, where he was put in chains and "brought very low." Just as he gave up all hope, however, the Lord "sent a strengthening thought into my heart" that the one who had "made the heavens and the earth, was able to deliver me." Looking about the landscape, Bayley found the wilderness transformed into proof of God's greater glory. In the sky, the trees, and the ground, he now saw temporal indications of a heavenly realm. Trusting the Lord, he escaped and carefully picked his way back across the Virginia landscape, eluding the dogs, slave catchers, and false friends who put themselves in his

---

[33]Bayley, Narrative of Some Remarkable Incidents, 31-32.

path. Making his way back across the Chesapeake Bay to his wife, he implicated his audience, calling on their empathy and, like White and others before him, called on his readers' imagination in conveying this emotionally charged scene: "And now, reader I do not tell thee how glad I was, but will leave thee to judge, by supposing it had been thy own case"[34] God had delivered him from the Virginia "back country," yet still he "se[e]med to be in the wilderness," out of which only prayer, soul-searching, and repenting would free him. Virginia's wilderness threatened Bayley's family in the physical realm as well. His wife and daughter, still in slavery, had "fallen out" with her master, who threatened to send them "away to the back countries." He found it vexing "to keep up true love" in this terrible legal and spiritual state.[35]

---

[34]Bayley, Narrative of Some Remarkable Incidents, 1-6.

[35]S Bayley, Narrative of Some Remarkable Incidents, 17-18, 21-26. Like other spiritual autobiographers, Bayley used slavery as metaphor for sin; gaining legal freedom served only as preface to gaining his full, spiritual freedom from sin. George White's 1810 narrative remains among the best known of African-American spiritual autobiographies, and is explored in Andrews, To Tell A Free Story, pp. 46-48, 52-56; and in Daniel B. Shea, Spiritual Autobiography in Early America (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968). George White, A Brief Account of the Life, Experience, Travels, 5-7. Other spiritual autobiographies and biographies of black Virginians have remained rather obscure. One of the earliest was written around 1797, recounting briefly the life of a Mandingo man named Sambo who was sold from the West Indies into Virginia and eventually to Moravians in Salem, North Carolina; see "Memoir of Abraham," trans. Erika Huber, in Jon F. Sensbach, A Separate Canaan: The Making of an Afro-Moravian World in North Carolina, 1763-1840 (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1998), 309-311. See also Christopher McPherson, A Short History of the Life of Christopher McPherson, Alias Pherson, Son of Christ, King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Richmond, Va.: the Author, 1811; 2nd ed., Lynchburg, Va.: 1855). [Aaron], The Light and the Truth of Slavery: Aaron's History, [ed. anonymous "abolitionist of Leominster"] (Worcester, Ma.: for Aaron, [ca. 1847]). [Cook] Fields, "Observations" [1847] in Mary J. Bratton, ed., "Fields' Observations: The Slave Narrative of a Nineteenth-Century Virginian," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 88 (Jan. 1980): 79-93. Thomas Anderson, Interesting Account of Thomas Anderson, A Slave; Taken From His Own Lips, ed. J. P. Clark [n.p., ca. 1854]. William S. White, The African Preacher (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1849). Anon., Biography of London Ferrill.

Moses Grandy similarly found himself caught between complete freedom and reenslavement on the Chesapeake Bay. Having paid for his freedom, he had migrated to Boston, but he returned to find his family. On a trip to Norfolk to buy his son, he had been warned out of town by the mayor, who felt Grady had been contaminated by Yankee ideas of freedom. Storms kept his ship from setting sail, however, Grady was forced to sit and wait, reminded of his potential fate by the public jail and whipping post visible from the harbor. Grandy's fear was augmented by the sight of two boats docking from Virginia's Eastern Shore, "laden with cattle and coloured people." The analogy between the two forms of chattel was complete in Grandy's language. "The cattle were lowing for their calves," he said, "and the men and women were crying for their husbands, wives, or children."[36] He must have felt deeply the fine distinction between those people travelling as legal goods and his own tenuous position as a passenger.

In other narratives, mountains loomed precipitously as symbols and reminders of the profound uncertainties of enslaved migration out of Virginia, even when accompanied by loved ones. Fourteen-year old Frances Fedric was forced to move from Fauquier County to Kentucky, along with the rest of his master's slaves. He described the Alleghenies as foreboding. "The scenery was what I may term hard and wild," he remembered, and he looked on with "amazement and wonder." Mountain tops rose up into the clouds, where "huge, blue-looking rocks seemed impending," threatening at any moment to "fall upon us and crush us." Mountain streams swelled into "torrents . . . rushing down in

---

[36]Grandy, Narrative of the Life of Moses Grandy, 44.

hundreds of directions," while flocks of crows called with a "loud screaming noise." Camped at night, Fedric and his peers were "reigned" in by a "solemn stillness" broken only by the howling of wolves and their master's gun shots to scare them away.[37]

Bethany Veney's account of losing her husband to slave traders was marked similarly by her own arduous journey over the Blue Ridge to see him. While she lived in Page County, in the Shenandoah Valley, her husband had been carried to the town of Washington, some fifteen miles to the east across the Blue Ridge. She rushed out to see him as soon as she could get away, starting out in broad daylight. But, she recounted, "before I was half over the mountain, night had closed round me its deepest gloom." Through "vivid flashes of lightning," the road was alternately lit beneath her feet, then shrouded in darkness. As she slogged on, soaking in the rain, "the rolling thunder added to my fear and dread." The weather mirrored her own emotional state, as this frightful journey over the Blue Ridge marked her last days with Jerry.[38]

For John Parker, the sojourn in the mountains marked not only his forced exile through Virginia's slave trade, but also his initiation into a comprehension

---

[37]Francis Fedric, Slave Life in Virginia and Kentucky; or, Fifty Years of Slavery in the Southern States of America, ed. Charles Lee (London: Wertheim, Macintosh, and Hunt, 1863), 15-17. Even in freedom, the mountains remained a threatening presence for those looking for a better place. London Ferrill, a freed man who had travelled with his wife to Kentucky, described to his biographer a dreadful journey along the Wilderness Road, where only "a kind Providence" had prevented them from being "devoured" by bears and wolves. Anon., Biography of London Ferrill, 5.

[38]Veney, Narrative of Bethany Veney, 19, 24-25. The town where Jerry was jailed lies in Rappahannock County and is now known colloquially as "Little" Washington, to distinguish it from Washington, D. C.

of what slavery meant generally. Parker, who would come to serve twenty years as an active agent on the Underground Railroad in Ohio, cited a formative incident on his trip south, a scene still "indelibly fixed in my mind" over forty years later. Sold from his Norfolk home at the age of eight, he had been sent to Richmond, sold again, and chained in a coffle heading south and west en route to Alabama. He grew increasingly incensed on his forced march through the beautiful Alleghanies. "It was June," he recalled in the 1880s. "Azaleas and mountain laurels were in full bloom" and "the wilderness was all about us, green and living." But nature mocked the enslaved child, who picked up a stick and "struck at each flowering shrub, taking delight in smashing down particularly those in bloom." In fact, "everything that was without restraint was my object of wrath," he recalled; he lashed out at a babbling brook and at a red bird, "things that were free."[39] Nature's lushness had revealed to him a natural state of freedom, an Eden from which he understood he had been unjustly banished.

These autobiographers could reasonably expect their readers to have enjoyed the beauty of the natural world, and more particularly that of the Allegheny mountain chain which stretched from Georgia to New England. Providing readers with geographic cues might heighten the sense of sympathy readers might experience. Readers had likely travelled themselves. They had experienced the rough roads and bad weather rendering even pleasure touring a potentially miserable affair. They had seen the mountain laurels bloom in the

---

[39]John P. Parker, His Promised Land: The Autobiography of John P. Parker, Former Slave and Conductor on the Underground Railroad, ed. Stuart Seely Sprague, (New York: Norton, 1996), 27. Parker, born in Norfolk in 1827, dictated his narrative to white journalist Frank M. Gregg in the 1880s; it remained unpublished until 1996. On Gregg's role in transcribing and editing the manuscript, see Sprague's introduction, 12-16.

mountains of Pennsylvania and Vermont, and perhaps even Virginia. They might therefore seize on these concrete images as a way to evoke empathy for the autobiographers' state of mind. These physical landmarks, then, might help provide that crucial link that formerly enslaved narrators sought to forge across the gulf between themselves and their intended readers, presumably white, northern, and middle-class.

For Charles Ball, Virginia's landscape held out quite different significance than for the others. He saw its natural features as landmarks denoting his path back home to his Maryland family. Sold from his wife and children to a Georgia trader, he worked on his forced march to memorize the landmark towns, rivers, and fording places so he could follow them back home one day. "By repeatedly naming the rivers that we came to, and in the order which he had reached them," he recalled, "I was able at my arrival in Georgia, to repeat the name of every considerable stream from the Potomac to the Savannah, and to tell at what ferries we had crossed them." Ball's narrative read like a road map, naming each river as his chained gang crossed it: the Patuxent, Potomac, Rappahanock, Matapony, North Anna, South Anna, James, Roanoke, and Yadkin. The geographic detail early in his narrative foreshadowed the use to which he would one day put this knowledge, as a return roadmap back to his family.[40]

---

[40]Escaping from Georgia, Ball navigated by the stars and the sun, reading hills, swamps, roads, and hamlets, and gaining geographic information by listening in to conversations along the roadside. He recounted crossing the Apalachie, Oconee, Savannah, Catawba, Yadkin, and Appomattox before finding his original route south; he then easily retraced his way back across the James, Pamunky, Matapony, Potomac, and Patuxent. Charles Ball, Slavery in the United States: A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball, a Black Man, who Lived Forty Years in Maryland, South Carolina and Georgia, as a Slave, [Isaac Fisher, ed.] (3rd ed., Pittsburgh: J. T. Shryock., 1854), 40, 345-401.

Most African Americans forced out of the Chesapeake, however, were not so lucky. While most would have had to make the best of their new homes, forging new relationships among the other migrated strangers, Virginia's narrators stressed the isolation from old kin and communities. For some, the social isolation proved almost total, at least at first. In 1879, Charlotte Brooks recounted to African-American writer Octavia Rogers Albert how her removal from Virginia tore her not only from her family, but also stripped her of her religious and cultural community. Carried by "speculators" in the 1840s from Baptist Virginia to Catholic Louisiana, her alienation and her redemption lay in the spiritual realm. When she learned of another Virginia woman had arrived on a neighboring plantation, she travelled the distance as often as possible, communing with her new "Aunt Jane" Lee by singing the old "Virginia hymns" her mother had taught her. She found transcendence of her physical isolation in the legacy of religious hymnology her mother had bequeathed her, expressing it with her one human link to her old world.[41]

Some found solace in adopted kin. Louis Hughes, sold from his mother at age eleven, was taken in by a woman he called Aunt Sylvia, who "always spoke consolingly to me, especially if I had been blue," at least until he was sold away again.[42] In Mississippi and Memphis, Hughes eventually formed his own family and after the war was reunited with lost members of both his and his wife's

---

[41]Octavia V. Rogers Albert, The House of Bondage: or Charlotte Brooks and other Slaves (New York: Hunt Baton, 1890; repr., Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1972), 4-9, 11-13, 18.

[42]Louis Hughes, Thirty Years a Slave: From Bondage to Freedom (Milwaukee: South Side Printing, 1897; repr. in Documenting the American South, http://www.metalab.unc.edu/, 1998), 10-11.

family. William Grimes's life history, by contrast, remained one of utter isolation, as he was buffeted by one bad situation to another, haunted by supernatural omens, beset by enemies at every turn, and frustrated in his attempts to seek protection from masters. Once sold from his mother, he found no friends among the slave community at his new Culpeper County home. Entrusted with the keys to the pantries, he became the target of jealousy, for the keys had traditionally given their holder the power to redistribute foodstuffs surreptitiously to "acquaintances and relations." Patty, the enslaved head servant and seamstress of the house, connived against young William in order to have one of her own children removed from the toil of the fields to replace him. She caused him many whippings by tainting the coffee Grimes prepared for the colonel every morning. As a "poor friendless boy, without any connexions," Grimes turned to his white mistress as his only protection from field labor. Several years and two owners later, in Savannah, Georgia, he would seek out his master's aid in avoiding unjust punishment at the hands of the black driver, with whom he had fought. Pleading for sympathy, he told his white master that "I had no friend, except it was himself," adding "that not one negro on the plantation was friendly to me." For Grimes, frequent sale from master to master left him without deep roots among any of the enslaved communities in which he found himself. His masters' capricious decisions ironically drove him towards them to seek them out protection in the absence of any larger kinship connections in the enslaved community. He often found himself caught between two oppressors, however, in one case having to dupe his master into selling him in order to escape from the master's other slave, a witch named Frankee who

vexed Grimes by riding him nightly.[43]

Longing for mothers, families, and old homeplaces might cause autobiographers to express nostalgia for Virginia. Such nostalgia would have fitted nicely into an increasingly common romanticized view of family, Virginia, and even of slavery. When Bethany Veney reflected on having left Virginia in the 1850s, she hesitated at the thought of "parting with all the old faces and places," even though she was headed for a free state. She was consoled only by the hope of soon returning to visit, which she finally did after the war. Austin Steward, remembering in 1857 his own forced exodus from Virginia with his master in the 1810s, lapsed into nostalgic reverie for the "old plantation which seems dearer than ever, now that we are about to leave it forever."[44]

Steward's nostalgia, however, was tempered by the reminder of the root cause and perceived purpose of the dislocation: his master's profit. One day, slaves might rest happy at home, "surrounded by their family, relatives and friends." The next, they may find themselves sent to "the dreaded slave-pen" or "to the distant rice-swamp." Steward even narrated the painted image, the slave trade marring horribly the nostalgic Virginia landscape. "True," he admitted, "around the well-remembered spot where our childhood's years were spent, recollection still loves to linger. "Yet memory," he cautioned, "paints in glowing colors" the reality of "Virginia's crouching slaves," along with "her loathsome

---

[43]Grimes, Life of William Grimes, 8, 37-38, 25-26.

[44]Veney, Narrative of Bethany Veney, 36, 38. Steward, Twenty-Two Years a Slave, 49-50.

slave-pens and slave markets--chains, whips and instruments of torture."[45]

Fedric saw his new Kentucky home in similar light. He appreciated it as "a very beautiful country," but that only served, as it had with Parker, to mock human enslavement. He contrasted the bright and beautiful plantation with the darkness of its owner's heart, identifying that owner with his old homeplace, the "slave breeding State" of Virginia. He invited his readers to imagine "the lovely landscape" of a Kentucky estate--its "fine house" and "splendid lawn" opening on as "magnificent scenery as you perhaps ever saw"--then immediately introduced the estate's owner, whose "ungoverned lust" rendered him a "tyrant polluter" of enslaved women. As for his own connection to Virginia, Fedric associated it only with the separations forced by his master's removal to Kentucky when Fedric was fourteen. "Still, after so many years," he testified, the "lamentations and piercing cries" of spouses left behind "sound in my ears whenever I think of Virginia."[46]

Ball's account similarly read Virginia's landscape in moral terms, undercutting any nostalgic image of the Old Dominion and even undercutting a major proslavery defense against accusations of a profitable slave trade. Ball passed by abandoned farms, grown up in cedar and brush, their once-grand homes now rotting, their soils worn out from tobacco culture. Even the relatively fertile southwestern Virginia soils were put to waste through exhaustive measures, he noticed, despite planters' diversification of crops. The

---

[45]Steward, Twenty-Two Years a Slave, 49-50.

[46]Fedric, Slave Life in Virginia and Kentucky, 15-17, 91, 95-96.

very landscape, in Ball's eyes, spoke of the economic and thus moral bankruptcy of slavery. Ball allowed that Virginia planters, poor but proud, avoided selling off slaves to pay debts, but added ironically that they simply let their slaves go hungry instead.[47]

In so reading the Old Dominion's landscape, these Virginia autobiographers were seconded by none other than Frederick Douglass, who had grown up in Maryland. Douglass chastised himself for his own nostalgic inclinations towards the landscape, extending his scope to the entire nation. Admitting in My Bondage and My Freedom that he could easily revel in America's natural splendor, "admiring her bright blue sky, her grand old woods, her fertile fields, her beautiful rivers, her mighty lakes, and star-crowned mountains," he reminded himself and his readers that the land was "cursed with the infernal spirit of slaveholding, robbery, and wrong." Feeling "unutterable loathing" for such a landscape, he regretted his lapse into romanticism and portrayed America's terrain in grotesque terms, where "the waters of her noblest rivers" washed "the tears of my brethren" into the sea and where "her most fertile fields drink daily of the warm blood of my outraged sisters."[48]

---

[47]Ball, Slavery in the United States, 32-56. Ball's narrative, perhaps better than any other, justifies Lisa C. Brawley's categorization of fugitive slave narratives as a kind of travel literature. Compare Ball's account of Virginia with, for example Frederick Law Olmstead's A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States, with Remarks on Their Economy (New York: Dix & Edwards, 1856), ch. 2. Brawley, "Fugitive Nation," Ph.D. diss., 1995.

[48]Douglass, My Bondage and My Freedom, quoted in Lisa C. Brawley, "Fugitive Nation," 200. Brawley keenly explores the ex-slave autobiographies of Frederick Douglass and of Harriet Jacobs as part of the larger mid nineteenth-century genre of American travel literature. Like other writers of travel narratives, the fugitives made the nineteenth-century necessity of travel into a matter of choice. They were forced to migrate by masters, but chose to migrate by flight.

Douglass further heightened his interpretation of an American landscape polluted by slavery in his fictional treatment of the real Madison Washington, a co-conspirator in the successful 1841 revolt aboard the coastal slave ship Creole.[49] Douglass located his "heroic slave" in the pantheon of Virginians who had fought for American freedom: Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, and of course, the revolutionary slave's namesake founding fathers. These slaveholding revolutionaries, Douglass knew, best represented Virginia as a land of freedom as well as of slavery, a rhetorical contradiction Douglass extended to the United States as a whole.[50] In Douglass's reading, Virginia stood at the crossroads of the mobile nation, represented in the presence of the fictitious Listwell, a white traveler whom locals wager is clearly either an "northerner"--read abolitionist--or a "nigger-buyer"--the ultimate white southerner.[51]

---

[49]Frederick Douglass, The Heroic Slave, A Thrilling Narrative of the Adventures of Madison Washington, in Pursuit of Liberty, in Julia Griffiths, ed., Autographs for Freedom (Boston: Jewett & Co., 1853), 174-239. On the Creole revolt, see ch. 2 above. For Douglass's reliance on newspaper reports on the Creole revolt, see Maggie Sale, "To Make the Past Useful: Frederick Douglass' Politics of Solidarity," Arizona Quarterly 51 (Autumn 1995): 25-60.

[50]See Robert B. Stepto, "Sharing the Thunder: The Literary Exchanges of Harriet Beecher Stowe, Henry Bibb, and Frederick Douglass," in New Essays on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986), 135-153; and "Storytelling in Early Afro-American Fiction: Frederick Douglass's 'The Heroic Slave'," in Critical Essays on Frederick Douglass, ed. William A. Andrews (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1991), 110-118.

[51]Douglass, Heroic Slave, 212. Listwell's character and role in the revolt was Douglass's fictional creation. Although it was rumored that a (white) Baptist minister named George Bourne had plotted with the Creole slaves in Richmond, Virginia Baptists denied the existence of such a man. Former Presbyterian George Bourne, however, had preached in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia before 1815 and had turned against slavery. He had accused local slaveholders of cruel misdeeds (instigating his removal from the Presbytery) but had withheld their names until 1839, just two years before the Creole revolt, when they appeared in Theodore Dwight Weld's widely publicized American Slavery As It Is. It is conceivable that Bourge visited Richmond in 1841. Howard Jones, "The Peculiar Institution and National Honor: The Case of the Creole Slave Revolt," Civil War History 21 (March 1975), 30 n. John W. Christie and Dwight L. Dumond, George Bourne and *The Book and Slavery Irreconcilable*

The handful of slave narratives published by slavery's apologists and conservative reformers attempted to overturn these fugitives' readings of the Virginia landscape. By interviewing slaves and ex-slaves in or from Virginia, white writers hoped to downplay the slave trade and dissociate it from Virginia. Ralph Roberts's posthumously published narrative, perhaps the most famous of these, was submitted anonymously to Putnam's Monthly Magazine by one of his former masters in 1857. In this white slaveholder's account, Roberts validated key aspects of the proslavery defense, highlighting, for example, the economic sacrifices masters supposedly made to keep slave families together. Even in Roberts's flight from a bad master, he ran not for freedom, but to the Shenandoah Valley, where his kind old master lived, where beatings were "rare," workloads were "light," and slaves were all "civilly treated."[52]

Gilbert Hunt's biographer, Philip Barret, went to even more tortuous lengths to avoid discussing the slave trade. As a free blacksmith working in Richmond's central business district, Hunt almost certainly would have found employment making chain and manacles for Richmond's slave traders, whose establishments surrounded his. Yet in Barret's editing, Hunt mentioned making shackles only once, and then for inmates whom he had ironically just helped escape from a fire in the state prison. Barret in one instance did come perilously

---

(Wilmington, Del.: Historical Society of Delaware, 1969), 15, 28, 49.

[52]Roberts's master was no staunch defender of slavery per se; in fact he claimed he had "always advocated some plan of gradual emancipation," as long as it would be carried out "by our own state." He saw himself as a critic, illuminating what he saw as the social and familial dysfunction in black family life engendered by slavery. "A Slave's Story," Putnam's Monthly Magazine 9 (June 1857): 614-620; Roberts's quotations, 619, 620; his editor and former master's, 614.

close to admitting Hunt's likely link to the Richmond slave market, again rather ironically, in an African context. Visiting Liberia, Hunt witnessed slave traders illegally loading African captives--"securely ironed"--onto boats bound for Cuba. In an ostensible nonsequitor, Hunt's very next sentence related that he "also saw a blacksmith," whose work pace put his own to shame. Despite the narrative proximity of these two sights and their obvious parallel in Hunt's own life, Barret--or perhaps Hunt himself--saw best to avoid that obvious identification.

Hunt ultimately rejected Africa in emphatic terms. "I have lived in Richmond, I have labored in Richmond, I hope to die and be buried in Richmond," he testified. Hunt's rejection of his ancestral homeland and his renewed embrace of the Old Dominion tickled his white editor to no end. At this point in the narrative, Barret interrupted Hunt's first-person monologue to introduce "a little anecdote, which we very much suspect lies at the bottom of our blacksmith's returning to America." Hunt's voice was then allowed to resume, in telling how a group of "perfect African Yankees" had taken him for all his premium Virginia tobacco then left him stranded offshore. Hunt was crestfallen, as Barret stressed, at having been "sold" by "perfect barbarians." Barrat's quotation of Hunt identifying Africans with "Yankees" and with "barbarians" left no doubt about what civilized land Hunt wanted to remain in. Barrat concluded Hunt's African sojourn with the minstrel's nostalgic refrain, "Carry me back to old Virginia."[53]

---

[53]Philip Barret, Gilbert Hunt, the City Blacksmith (Richmond: James Woodhouse and Co., 1859), 7, 11, 14-16. Other conservative biographers or editors treated their subjects' relation to the slave sale more openly but not necessarily sympathetically. London Ferrill's anonymous biographer openly dismissed Ferrell's grief at being sold from his mother in Virginia, while editor J. P. Clarke did allow narrator Thomas Anderson to show his anguish at losing three of

Barret's (and Hunt's) geography lesson did not hold with most fugitive narrators, however. For Austin Stewart, Francis Fedric, Bethaney Veney, and others, nostalgia for family, friends, and the familiar ways of Virginia would forever remain tainted with memories of sales, separations, and violations of the family. Furthermore, most ex-slave autobiographers spoke of the landscape in pragmatic as well as symbolic terms. They worked to read and to communicate across the landscape of slavery, maintaining or re-opening connections with kin forced to separate by sale.

Alienated from family and home, autobiographers testified to the remarkable and imaginative ways people sold and removed from kin might seek to communicate with them, and even on occasion effect reunion. Some means seemed rather random. Three narrators mentioned physical resemblances among kin as helping in some way effect the reunion. Other means arose more from autobiographers' own initiatives. Having gained literacy either before or after finding freedom, these men and women tended to stress reading and writing skills not only as symbolic of their own liberation, but as pragmatic means of communicating with loved ones across hundreds of miles. As autobiographers, they also strove to portray their actions, especially those aimed at reuniting lost kin, in particularly self-fulfillling ways. In painting these self-portraits, they relied heavily both on gender conventions and on the imperatives of domesticity. Each of these means spoke to the alienating power

---

his children to sale. See Anon., Biography of London Ferrill, 1. Anderson, Interesting Account of Thomas Anderson, ed. Clarke, 6. See also White, The African Preacher, the spiritual biography of an enslaved African man, "Uncle Jack," who lived in Nottoway County. For more on Gilbert Hunt, see Marie Tyler-McGraw and Gregg Kimball, In Bondage and Freedom: Antebellum Black Life in Richmond, Virginia (Richmond: Valentine Museum, 1988), 55-58.

of the chattel principle in the hands of slaveholders, as each of these means sought to come to terms and perhaps overcome the distances imposed by the trade.

Other autobiographers rooted the meaning of freedom in the more earthly geography of "blood" ties to family. Three writers connected with their family members because their connection could literally be read in their faces. Aiding William Hayden's efforts at reconnecting with home and family in Virginia was his striking resemblance to his mother. To the white Virginians who ran across him in Kentucky, and especially the locals who recognized him on his homeward journey to Virginia, Hayden's very face linked him across space to a known place and a known family. Over and again, one white friend of his mother's after another sensed that he knew Hayden; on making the connection, each would remark, as did ex-Governor Garrard, that he "would have known me if he had met me in any State in the Union." In Kentucky, the resemblance provided the entree to correspondence with his mother.[54]

Back in Virginia, the resemblance fixed Hayden firmly in the minds of locals (black and white) as belonging to the neighborhood, as one of their own. In fact, many took him for a longtime local, based on their familiarity with his face, only to learn he had departed Virginia as a child.[55] And finally, during his last exodus from Virginia, with his mother and other friends and family, the uncanny mother-son resemblance served to vouch for his identity at a

---

[54]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 37-39.

[55]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 123, 124, 126, 127.

checkpoint along the way, validating his story to a doubtful white tavern-keeper.[56] The imprint of his mother's face on his own provided Hayden, first, with a road map home; second, with a welcome party once there; and finally, a pass with which to make his way out. In the narrative, he succeeded in creating his own trope, proceeding to employ it again and again to underscore the importance of the social and geographic networks he had learned to read and to fit himself into.

John Quincy Adams of Winchester, writing in 1872, recounted how his twin brother Aaron, sold eventually to Memphis, was eventually able to write a few letters home, even sending a photograph. After the war, John and Aaron's identical features led to their reunion. A white man who knew John was traveling in Memphis and saw Aaron, thinking it was John. Learning Aaron's true identity, he promptly notified John, and the twins were able to resume communications. When Aaron sent his picture, John exclaimed, "You could not tell it from mine." Twenty-five years later, Louis Hughes recounted a remarkably similar story, but from the perspective of the one sold away. He also wound up in Memphis, having been sold from his twin brother. After the war, they wound up, respectively, in Detroit and Cincinnati, both working in hotels, where a white traveller recognized the kin connection in their faces.[57]

More common were autobiographers' assertions of the importance of literacy skills in enacting reunion with kin sold away. Some enslaved letter-

---

[56]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 138.

[57]Adams, Narrative of the Life of John Quincy Adams, 28-31. Hughes, Thirty Years a Slave, 196-197, 201-205.

writers simply wanted to inform their family members that they were indeed still alive and well. When Solomon Bayley's father, sister, and brother were suddenly sold and carried from Virginia's eastern shore to the West Indies, he and his mother found out their location only through the West Indies master's correspondence. Bayley recognized the crucial importance of those communications for his family. Without them, he said, "we never should have known what had become of them."[58] Aaron Adams had sent letters home to Virginia from Memphis, even sending a photograph as his twin brother John Quincy Adams recalled in 1872. Enslaved people were often unsuccessful at getting letters through to kin. Adams's secret letters home were eventually intercepted, as were those of a friend Louis Hughes remembered in his own autobiography.[59]

However slim the chance of succeeding at such correspondence, ex-slave narrators and their biographers maintained the importance of these rare written communications, documenting their use of them as a means to freedom and reunion. William Hayden, rejoicing in his reading and writing skills knew well what those skills were best used for. He did not envy illiterate men, even if they happened to be rich slaveholders, for his literacy skills, he asserted allowed him to read the Bible and to communicate with friends and family.[60] His reunion

---

[58]Bayley, Narrative of Some Remarkable Incidents, 39. According to Bayley, his family, originally in Delaware, were entitled to freedom and had been removed to Virginia in their master's attempt to keep them enslaved.

[59]Keckley, Behind the Scenes , 26-27. Adams, Narrative of the Life of John Quincy Adams, 28-29. Hughes, Thirty Years a Slave, 101-102

[60]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 32.

with his mother back in Virginia was effected through such correspondence, after white travelers serendipitously made the connection between them.[61]

Hayden took pains to point out the dual importance of these skills . Literacy empowered him both to "read the consolations held forth in the Scriptures" as well as to "inform my distant friends of my progress through life." For him, literacy facilitated the crucial practices of correspondences with God (crossing spiritual barriers) and with family (crossing geographic barriers). Though a slave, he compared his situation favorably to that of many free white people knew, choosing, as he often did, slave traders as representative white men. "Oh, the difference!" he exclaimed, contrasting his situation to theirs; "I would not part with my little knowledge, for all the wealth of your illiterate dealer in flesh and blood!"[62]

Hayden's alphabetic literacy proved crucial to his reunion with his mother, first in letters and finally in person. His correspondences with her was in fact founded on a geographic literacy expressed in both his and his mother's sustained efforts to make personal links across the mountains and the miles which separated them. In Virginia, Hayden's mother asked men and women travelling west to keep an eye out for her son and to ask him to write home to her. Meanwhile, in Kentucky, Hayden asked every passing stranger or new settler from the east if they were from his mother's neighborhood. Their independent efforts paid off on two occasions, as white friends of his mother

---

[61]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 37, 58, 62.

[62]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 31-32.

serendipitously ran across Hayden's path in Kentucky. After sending a letter by way of one such traveler, then one on his own, Hayden finally received his mother's reply, which "filled my heart with unspeakable joy."[63]

Some autobiographers transcribed the text of a letter into their very narrative, presenting its contents directly to the reader. William G. Eliot, in his biography of ex-Virginian Archer Alexander, included a transcription of the letter Archer's wife Louisa Alexander had written in November 1863, hoping he could find a way to help her escape. Cyrus Branch's biographer in 1869 documented him in the midst of effecting a long-distance family reunion with kin he had to leave behind when he escaped from Virginia to Vermont in the 1830s. He had first reopened communications through a traveling friend, who sought out Branch's kin in Virginia, and he proceeded to exchange letters with one of his daughters, extracts of which were included in his biography.[64]

Emblematic at several levels of Elizabeth Keckley's unfolding and enduring understanding of familial separation was a handwritten letter her father had sent to her mother. Writing from Shelbyville, Tennessee, Hobbes sent this letter to Agnes by way of his mistress's party travelling back to

---

[63]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 36-37. Anthony Burns's biographer, Charles Stevens, stressed the crucial importance of Burns's surreptitious letter-writing in helping his northern allies find him and negotiate a price for his freedom. Charles E. Stevens, Anthony Burns: A Historyt (Boston: J. P. Jewett, 1854). Two of Burns's letters remain extant and are reprinted in Albert J. Von Frank, The Trials of Anthony Burns: Freedom and Slavery in Emerson's Boston (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1998), 287-289.

[64]William G. Eliot, The Story of Archer Alexander from Slavery to Freedom, March 30, 1863 (Boston: Cupples, Upham and Co., 1885), 78-79. [Wickham], Lost Family Found. See ch. 4 for a discussion of Branch's letters.

Virginia. "I am very sorry that I havn['t] the chance to go with them," he wrote, "as I feele Determid to see you If life last again." By hiring his own time and saving money, he hoped to raise the means to see her not only in heaven but here on earth. Most importantly to Keckly, he enclosed this parental warning and promise: "I want Elizabeth to be a good girl and not to thinke that because I am bound so fare that gods not abble to open the way."[65]

The letter served a complex set of purposes. The letter served as evidence of the efforts a father would take to play a sustained role in his wife and daughter's lives, despite the hardships of imposed geographic barriers. Perhaps more importantly, the letter, carefully preserved in succession by Agnes Hobbes and by her daughter Elizabeth Keckley, played an important sentimental role in sustaining these women through the hardship of loss. The letter served as a token of Hobbes's affection. It rendered him present to them in some real sense, both at its arrival and initial reading, and moreover, in its subsequent handling and re-reading, its unfolding and refolding.[66] While Keckley kept the letter as a token of her distant father's sentimental tie, it had served additional means for her father. He was writing to tell his wife that he was working to pay for his freedom, and hoped to see her "on the earth" again.

Letters helped Solomon Bayley find out at least where his lost kin were. They had been moved illegally from Delaware into Virginia, then dispersed.

---

[65]Keckley, Behind the Scenes, 26-27.

[66]Jennifer Fleischner points to Keckley's insertion of the letter as an effort to heal the open wound of her father's loss; yet, as Fleischner says, the body of the letter itself exposed rather than smoothed over the "jagged edges" of the family disruption. Fleischner, Mastering Slavery, 119-120.

Some members were shipped off and sold in the West Indies. But rather than seeing them as disappearing into a void, Bayley was able to pinpoint their location, thanks to two letters written back by their new master, Abner Stephen.[67]

These letters, both in slavery and in freedom, served as powerful testimony to the importance of the geographic literacy these individuals had gained. The social knowledge needed to get a letter passed through the right hands and into the hands of the proper recipient were indeed hard to come by. Left without those skills, others in slavery found other means to communicate, if vicariously, with their separated kin.

Peter Randolph communed with his family through more spiritual means. Writing in 1855, he lamented the loss of his brother Benjamin to the slave trade. He had no way of writing to him, knowing only that he had gone to the cotton South, but he had another powerful means of maintaining a connection. He may not see his brother, he admitted, but "Thanks be unto God, prayer can ascend, and will be listened to by Him who answereth prayer!" Although an insurmountable geographic gulf lay between Peter and Benjamin, both maintained direct access to an all-hearing God above. "To him who crieth unto Him day and night," Randolph knew, God "will listen, and send His angel of peace to quiet his trouble heart." Their mother, a long-suffering widow, especially had God's ear. They all took comfort in the knowledge that their family could commune in prayer while on earth and would be reunited in

---

[67]Bayley, Narrative of Some Remarkable Incidents, 38-39.

heaven.[68]

Kate Drumgoold also looked to the heavens, but for a temporal rather than spiritual reunion. In 1861, her mother was secretly taken away from her ten daughters in and sold in order to buy her master's way out of Confederate service. A very young girl at the time, Drumgoold longed to know which way her mother had gone and found hope in a startling signal. "I used to go outside and look up," she recalled, "to see if there was anything that would direct me." Remarkably, she discovered a "clear place in the sky, and it seemed to me the way she had gone." The little girl continued to keep her eye on that spot until the end of the war "and it was there the whole time that mother was gone from her little ones." One day out picking flowers with her sister she was suddenly "led" to find a vantage point "where I could look up at that nice, clear spot." Climbing up on a fence, she spied below a "form coming to me that looked like my dear mother's." Her older sisters had known their mother had been carried to Georgia, and "it was like a dream to them to see how far she had been sold and to see her back there again."[69] This mysterious clear spot up in the sky, like some inverted daytime North Star, had, for the young Drumgoold, pointed the direction of her mother's departure, held out the promise of reunion, and finally

---

[68]Randolph, Sketches of Slave Life, 18. Similarly, Anthony and Albert Brown, two brothers who had escaped from Norfolk to Canada, sought to comfort their spouses with the knowledge that "there is the same prayer-hearing God here as there is in old Va." God transcended human geography. See Anthony and Albert Brown to William Still, 7 March 1856, in William Still, The Underground Railroad: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters, &c. (1871; 2nd ed., Philadelphia: People's Publishing, 1879), 292-293.

[69]Kate Drumgoold, A Slave Girl's Story, Being an Autobiography of Kate Drumgoold (Brooklyn, New York: n.p., [1898]), 4-5, 34.

signalled the return of the lost mother. Drumgoold's sky-gazing recalled William Hayden's. As a child growing up on Potomac Creek, he had looked out at the morning sun, reflected in the creek forming a vaguely mystical "two suns." Removed to Kentucky, he found the same sight reflected in the pool of a spring, and would often retreat there to reflect on his lost home.[70]

William Hayden's first memory was marked by his perception of a divine landscape. Every morning, as "the Day God" rose in the east over his cabin in Bell Plains, three-year-old Hayden watched its reflection rise simultaneously "from the clear bosom of the Potomac." His mind was captivated by the two suns, examples of the "beauties of Heaven."[71] After his sale to Kentucky, Hayden reached out for reminders of his Virginia home, finding a local version of the "two suns" in a nearby spring. Lonely in his new world, he would retreat to the spring and "weep bitterly" as he watched the rising sun and its reflection "upon the bosom of the spring." Hayden's attempts to reach out for his homeplace were even marked visually at this point in the narrative by the insertion of a picture of his old Virginia home, with its two suns shining on the lonely little cabin.[72]

Like Peter Randolph's prayers ascending and God's blessings descending to earth, Keckley's spot in the sky and Hayden's two suns implied a heavenly power which superseded and transcended earthly boundaries, laws, and

---

[70]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 16, 22; illus. following 26.

[71]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 16.

[72]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 18, 22.

practices, represented most clearly in these narratives by the slave market. The heavenly bodies provided a crucial link, lying as they did in a realm above and between family members separated on earth. Like a satellite hovering in space, each heavenly force provided a triangulated point on which separated family members might focus, thus keeping each other in view and within the realm of hope for reunion.[73]

For one ex-slave narrator, purchasing his freedom--taking himself permanently off the slave market--meant actually gaining a perspective unbound by human and earthly laws. Moses Grandy, upon repaying the patron who had purchased him, found a giddy sense of emotional freedom. "I felt to myself so light," he recounted, "that I almost thought I could fly." In his dreams he could, "flying over woods and rivers." He already knew that landscape well, having plied boats along the canal and worked the shingle trade between Norfolk, Virginia, and Elizabeth City, North Carolina. He knew the geographic locations of employers and masters good and bad, patrons and family members. He knew the pain of geographic separations from his siblings, wife, and children, and in fact was in the midst of a desperate effort to buy them back when he published the autobiography. Finding his own legal freedom momentarily

---

[73]Francis Fedric understood that messages sent heavenward were not necessarily relayed back to earthly recipients. In Kentucky, Fedric recounted how the arrival of two northern travellers had once forestalled his master's punishment of two enslaved men. Hiding this fact from the visitors, Fedric's master impressed them with his "kindly" treatment of his slaves, then resumed the whipping immediately on their departure. In a highly effective image, Fedric described the slaves "shrieking for mercy," but to no effect, their pleas "ascending to heaven at the very time when the two northern gentleman were protesting that every word about the cruelty of the southern planter was false." The disconnectedness of that heavenward communication was tragic: the slaves' cries went unheard by the northerners (not to mention by God, though Fedric refrained from blasphemy), who would carry back the proslavery message that all was well in the South. Fedric, Slave Life in Virginia and Kentucky, 98-99.

released him from these earthly bindings, allowing him imaginatively to transcend the landscape that had bound him throughout his life.

Douglass contrasted the enslaved Virginian landscape--and by extension the American landscape--with the open sea, where masculine freedom went unencumbered by artificial laws. The metaphor unfolded in the story's closing scene, a barroom dispute between the Creole's first mate, called Tom Grant, and a local named Williams--a dialogue which, Douglass emphasized, "throws some light" on the nature of the enslaved revolutionaries' bid for freedom. Williams derogated the Creole crew's handling of the revolt, notably the fact that they had fought the slaves like men. "For my own part," Williams asserted, "I would not honor a dozen niggers by pointing a gun at one on 'em,--a good stout whip, or a stiff rope's end" was the appropriate weapon against brutes. Grant countered that Williams's method "sounds very well here on shore" but would not "stand the test of salt water." Swaggering about with a whip might serve to keep slaves in line in Virginia, Grant admitted, "where you have the sympathy of the community, and the whole physical force of the government, State and national, at your command." But out on the open sea, "on the lonely billows of the Atlantic, where every breeze speaks of courage and liberty," keeping men in slavery was a different matter, Grant chastised. Douglass's contrast illuminated the elaborate social and legal constructions keeping people enslaved in America, and pointed to the ocean as an open arena where "natural" masculine qualities shone through in equalitarian struggle, man to man.[74] Douglass had

---

[74]On Douglass's Heroic Slave as a an expostulation on masculinity and nationalism, see Maggie Sale, The Slumbering Volcano: American Slave Ship Revolts and the Production of Rebellious Masculinity (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1997), esp. 192. On Douglass's notions of heroic black

Washington himself encapsulate the lesson to first mate Grant. After manfully piloting the ship through a storm, Washington turned to Grand and announced, "Mr. mate, you cannot write the bloody laws of slavery on those restless billows. The ocean, if not the land, is free."[75]

Virginia autobiographers William Grimes and William Hayden both sought to express such masculine freedom, ironically, enough in the arena of the slave market itself. Their narrative attempts to express a highly masculine sense of free will in the context of the slave trade were, of course, not completely successful. Curiously, however, neither tended to emphasize the contrast their natural freedom with unnatural laws. Rather, they both cast their own assertions in the context of a fate or a Providence, a force much larger than themselves or even the slave trade itself. In their own accounts of their life-histories, it was this force to which they found themselves bending their will, but with quite different implications for each.

Set out in the world an orphan, Grimes's own sense of agency and control over his life was riddled with conflict. His narrative swings back and forth between his wilful control of events and his seeming helplessness, especially in the face of sale. In was in the realm of his own sale, however, where he began to exercise agency, if ultimately without success. His sense of consent and of force are quite muddled in his narrative, as he struggled with the consequences of his frequent sale.

---

masculinity, see also Waldo E. Martin, The Mind of Frederick Douglass (Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1984), 253-278.

[75]Douglass, Heroic Slave, 236-237.

Grimes remained fairly unsentimental in his account, apart from the account of leaving his mother. In fact, his only other account of a sentimental parting was between him and his master. Here his own agency backfired, as he "consented" to leave this indulgent master. Consulting fortune tellers from time to time, he learned in Virginia that he would be bought by a "crabbed," white-haired man; he would be taken south and "severely dealt with." Warning him that his master would not force him to go, he told himself he will not do it, but she countered that in the end, he would "consent" to go. Just as predicted, the man came, offered Phillip Thornton a price, and Thornton put the decision to Grimes. Grimes twice refused, but when informed that the man might "give me my time after a few years," and after "a great deal of coaxing and flattering," he "consented" to go with the stranger. Thornton gave him one more chance to refuse, but on Grimes's insistence, they parted; he "would not stay to see me start, but bade me good bye, and rode off with tears in his eyes."[76]

This scene baffles the reader. The master's "tears" stood as a powerful token of his sentimental attachment to Grimes, and it was Grimes the slave choosing sale away. Readers were left with no explanation for this reversal from Grimes himself, apart from a sense that his fate, as revealed by the conjurer, had demanded his compliance. His consent to the dictates of fate stunted his attempts at autonomy under slavery, and would do so throughout his narrative. But he continued to exert agency in dealing with masters. Having "heartily repented" of this decision within two miles of leaving for Savannah, and "many a

---

[76]Grimes, Life of William Grimes, 21-22.

time" thereafter, Grimes could only trust in God, who "had not left me in my sixth trouble, and would be with me in the seventh."[77]

Unhappy with Mr. A. from the beginning, Grimes feigned illness in a successful effort to get the stubborn master to sell him. Revelling in winning this battle of wills, he rode past Mr. A. at his new job, "cracked my whip with as much pride, spirit and activity, as one of Uncle Sam's Mail carriers, who drives four horses, on a general post road, drunk or sober."[78] Grimes's triumph over his former master was symbolized effectively by his flaunting the accoutrements of masculinity, driving four horses and cracking his whip.

Successful in this change of masters, Grimes took on efforts to buy his freedom so he could return to Virginia. He focused less on the homecoming and more on his own agency in the negotiations. He said he received a "proposition" from a Dr. Collock to buy him, "if I would be contented to live with him" and do regular servants' chores. Upping the doctor's offer, Grimes promised to work faithfully five years' time in exchange for his freedom. As he explained, "I had been sold from my parents in Virginia, and felt anxious to see them again once more." The doctor agreed, but never kept the promise. Grimes sought a better deal, soliciting A. S. Bullock to buy him as a livery servant. To do this, he had to hide his own agency in the act from Collock, telling him that Bullock had approached him in the street and inquired whether Collock wanted to sell. Dr. Collock indicated no interest in selling, but Bullock had the money sent over,

---

[77]Grimes, Life of William Grimes, 21-22.

[78]Grimes, Life of William Grimes, 26-27.

which Collock accepted only after a moment of suspense in which Grimes feared Collock in fact meant to send him south. In a replay of his first "consensual" sale, he became "dissatisfied" with Bullock's distrust in him, and for a third time sought out a new master. Again trying to hide his own instigation of the sale, he told Bullock about an outside inquiry for his purchase. Bullock flew into a rage, beating him and cursing, "sell you? yes, you damned son of a bitch. God dam you, I'll sell you; I'll sell you by God; . . . who wants to buy you?"[79]

Grimes's efforts to portray his own agency, his own willful action in negotiating or effecting his own sale, were entirely unsuccessful. While had promised to trust in God, he continued to exert his own actions. But he often had to hide these actions from his masters, suffering punishment when they found him out.

Like Grimes, William Hayden portrayed the slave market as an arena of conflict, as a space where the narrator deployed his wit and will in a battle over the shape of his own life-course, but where fate ultimately ruled. Both men sought to make his own way in the world, to exert his own will, but always in the context of more potent, otherworldly forces. Yet Hayden's roguish narrative was upbeat, marked by optimism rather than resignation. Hayden proved more successful than Grimes in his battle of wills with slaveholders, or at least in his own portrayal of it. Supernatural forces, which had haunted Grimes and frequently thwarted his bids for autonomy, instead bolstered Hayden's confidence in his own abilities and in the inevitability of his freedom. Hayden

---

[79]Grimes, Life of William Grimes, 29-30, 39-40.

was "endowed with special "knowledge" and "forewarned" of troubles by a "Power" whose "voice has ever been with me."[80]

This spiritual knowledge helped him gain an assertive sense of masculinity, in direct tension with his state of bondage. He sought through his behavior as a slave to walk that line, acting "stern, rigid and independent, yet at the same time obedient" towards his masters. [81] Hayden's spiritual knowledge encouraged the development of his independence among men at the same time that it required the bending of his will to the dictates of the Spirit. As he put it succinctly, if paradoxically, "My liberation was to be supernatural--and effected through my own exertions." He would reiterate this paradox throughout his masculine struggle with the slave market.[82]

Hayden's masculine efforts had long held a conflicted relationship to the slave market. Taken to the auction grounds, Hayden's assertions of youthful strength appear to been his undoing. Five other boys had been sent along with Hayden to pay off their master's debts, and in the three weeks they awaited sale, they engaged in "feats of wrestling, leaping, &c.," at which Hayden always "came off victorious." His victories only seem to have marked him as the choice purchase, however, for the white men doubtless looking on.[83]

---

[80]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden , 30, 89, 107, 101, 105, 111.

[81]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 4-8.

[82]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 88; see other examples, 60, 73, 97, 99.

[83]The vignette calls to mind Ralph Ellison's account of the "battle royale" in Invisible Man, where white civic leaders, for their own amusement, compelled black youths to fight each other for money. Ellison's protagonist, who was to deliver a speech to the group, found his

Hayden later fell into the hands of a slave trader named Philips, but instead of emphasizing the separation, alienation, and powerlessness normally associated with that experience, he narrated a contest of wills and of wits with the trader. This struggle, in Hayden's recounting, culminated in highly confrontational assertion of independence and manhood. His narrative swung between accommodation to the trader--even collaboration--and outright resistance, emphasizing his own will at every turn, and always in the greater context of bending his will to that of the Spirit, not man. Throughout, he determined through his behavior and faith to control his status as moveable property in order eventually to gain his own freedom of movement. Following his fate, Hayden eschewed opportunities of escape and even blew the whistle on a planned revolt among Phillips's other chattel.[84] Hayden succeeded in pleasing Phillips, and soon found himself replacing the trader's white partner as boat captain and eventually taking over Phillips's finances from the white clerk.[85]

Though Hayden's behavior towards Phillips initially smacked of capitulation, his behavior towards the other white people, including potential buyers, stressed his independent black manhood. He regarded Phillips's white associates and potential buyers with suspicion, alternately deploying aloofness

---

intellectual pride undone by the white men's reducing him to physical violence. In William Hayden's case, he was undone by the very physical prowess he had taken pride in, sold away from his mother because of his demonstrated agility. Ellison, Invisible Man (1947; New York: Vintage, 1989).

[84]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 73, 78.

[85]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 54-55, 70-71.

and open defiance to establish his relative independence and forestall his sale.[86] His narrative development of his manhood in the slave market was most strikingly illustrated by his attractiveness to female buyers, one of whom, a white confectioner in New Orleans, offered to buy him explicitly so she might "live with me as my wife." Hayden instead used the buyer's interest in him to get a wholesale good price on candies from her, which he could resell.[87] With the profits from that and other ventures, Hayden took on the paradoxical position of loaning Phillips the money, at interest, for his own self-purchase and entering into businesslike relations with the trader.[88]

If men's ex-slave narratives were, as one literary critic has called them, "stories of triumph in a public sphere," then Hayden's should be taken as the supreme example of the genre.[89] His narrative of escape from the slave market turned on a series of public showdowns with his ostensible owners. Increasing in their potential violence, these situations provided Hayden ample narrative opportunity to launch an attack on his continued enslavement. Invoking the authorities of heaven, of the law, and of his own masculinity, Hayden gave his enslaver no moral or honorable way out but to deal with Hayden not as property but as one able to possess property and himself.

Phillips precipitated the series of confrontations by trying to sell Hayden.

---

[86]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 58, 71, 77, 79, 95.

[87]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 80-81.

[88]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 54.

[89]Niemtzow, "Problematic of Self," 104.

Hayden protested that Phillips had no right to sell him, having agreed to sell him his freedom. Furthermore, Hayden held the promissory note on the $300 he had already "loaned" Phillips in payment. Since Phillips had breached their mutual trust, Hayden declared their master-slave relationship "void," unilaterally declaring himself a free man. As Phillips tried to take possession of the erstwhile slave in the streets of Natchez, Hayden unleashed a vituperative challenge. "Whence, then, comes your authority?" he demanded. "From the motto claimed by pirates and cut-throats--from the voice of panderers in human blood," he answered; "This is where your authority comes from, and I envy you not the very ELEVATED source of its coming." Hayden would now accept death, he said, before he would "serve either you, or any other dealer in the God-like attributes of man." He threw down a final gauntlet: "God gave me means and the light, and by these I claim to be your equal." Phillips backed off and the crowd dispersed.[90]

Hayden, in fact, had already proved himself Phillips's superior by the standards of southern masculine honor. When Hayden had returned to demand his money back, Phillips invoked his property rights in Hayden and therefore in the money. He tried to back up that claim with a threat, locking himself in the room with Hayden, taking out a pair of pistols and a bowie knife, and laying them on the bargaining table between them. Yet he found himself unable to rise to his own challenge, and Hayden, armed with Phillips's promissory note and the force of his own will, compelled the trader to give up the money. Hayden

---

[90]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 99-100.

heightened Phillips's shame by re-counting the money in front of him "in order," he said, "to show him that I placed no confidence in his honesty."[91]

When Phillips, completely shameless at this point, tried a final time to sell him in Kentucky, Hayden simply devoured his would-be owner. The man sent for Hayden, calmly informed him of the purchase, and ordered him to polish his shoes, provoking Hayden's wrath. "Purchased me!" he cried, "You, sir, cannot purchase me: I am a free man, and no power on Earth can compel me to play the part of the Slave any longer. And from my master too:--Sir, who is my master? Have you a Bill of Sale signed by the God of the Universe? If not, you have no Bill of Sale from the hands of my master." He went on to berate the white man, challenging him not only on divine and legal grounds, but on grounds of honor as well. He unleashed a string of invective: "Clean your shoes! thou audacious coxcomb! better were it that thou, in thy ill-gotten arrogance and assumption of power, which you know not how to use, should think of cleaning mine! for in the scale of honesty and morality, I look upon you as my inferior!--This is your first offence of the kind--let it be the last, you miserable puppy. I scorn you too much to meddle further with you." As before, his words left his audience stunned, with the gentlemen onlookers "pleased to excess at my manly course" and his hopeful purchaser left "chopfallen" and silent.[92]

---

[91]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 97-98.

[92]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 103. Hayden most assuredly had imbibed the South's culture of honor, in which men held exactly as much worth as other men deemed them to have. Bertram Wyatt-Brown stresses that in free white men's system of honor, slaves by definition had no honor. But enslaved men did in fact practice their own system of honor, as

Hayden most explicitly underscored the separation of his individual manly selfhood from the slave market by contrasting himself with the description of him in a "wanted" poster. Returning to town as a fugitive, he greeted his friends by declaring himself a free man, to which they replied that there must be "now two Billy Haydens in town." Asked whether he did not "recognize" himself on the wanted posters, Hayden replied, "Poor Devil! He's some slave I suppose." Contrasting his imposing bodily presence with the representation on the poster, Hayden explained the difference. The Billy Hayden who stood before them was "free! Free as any of you"; by contrast,"that Bill calls for a slave--a thing--an article of a negotiable nature." Billy Hayden, the man, was no marketable commodity.[93]

His freedom and his manhood, as he had proved in his showdowns with his would-be seller and buyers, was nonnegotiable. He did, in fact, have to negotiate his legal freedom with the slave trader, but in his final reckoning with Phillips, he called attention explicitly to his bodily liberation from the slave trade which had ensnared him. He offered Phillips $450 in cash and a note for the balance, totalling the agreed-upon price of $600. Phillips, trying to save face, declared he would take the offer, as a "mere act of clemency" since he could easily sell Hayden for $2,000 in the southern market. "Provided, in all cases . . .

John Willis eluminates. Edward L. Ayers, Vengeance & Justice: Crime and Punishment in the 19th-century American South (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1984), introduction. Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor: Ethics & Behavior in the Old South (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982). John C. Willis, "From the Dictates of Pride to the Paths of Righteousness: Slave Honor and Christianity in Antebellum Virginia," in The Edge of the South: Life in Nineteenth-Century Virginia, eds. John C. Willis and Edward Ayers (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1991), ch. 2.

[93]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 115, 117.

that you had me there," Hayden interjected, "determined" that "no wretch who barters in human blood, shall ever again have dominion over me in a slave market."[94]

In sharp contrast to Hayden, Moses Grandy failed several times to effect a similar deal. Unlike Hayden, who by his own account at least was able to force the sale through his own superior wit and bravado, Grady's superior intelligence only embittered his master, who then successfully reneged on the deal. A hiring boss and ally had helped Moses negotiating the selling price, even getting the master to lower the price from $800 to $600. Moses dutifully paid his master regular installments, keeping his receipts, but when he made the final payment, the master tore up the receipts and sold him. He was embarrassed, Grandy reflected, "because people had jeered him," telling him his slave "had more sense than he had."[95]

Hayden's narrative revealed another key aspect of masculinity he had ironically gained from working with the slave trader. Hayden understood geographic mobility as key to his manhood, and therefore to his eventual freedom. Having been compelled to keep moving for most of his life, he seems to have grown accustomed to it and cast it as a preference; he said he like to travel and complained that he was "illy contented" in small towns. Winning a horse, saddle, and gig in lotteries, he fantasized about the power with which they endowed him. "Now," he thought, "the very acme of happiness is mine--as I

---

[94]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 115, 117.

[95]Grandy, Narrative of the Life of Moses Grandy, 21.

have now the means of making a grand display, in returning to my home again in Virginia."[96] Working for Phillips, his first return to Virginia was indeed that of a worldly, independent, and regal black man. Phillips had outfitted him well, and Hayden's princely attitude carried it off. "The richness of my clothes; the span of horses in my possession, and the fact of a colored man speaking the French language," signalled to startled white onlookers as "a new era of things under the sun." They deferred to the apparent power of this alien, treating him "with a civility, seldom extended to the colored race in the slave holding states."[97] Finally, in his public showdown with Phillips, when challenged to defend his capacity for freedom, he declared, "I have both the means and the knowledge to travel by land or water--I have the money, and I am master of the English and French languages . . . a <u>freeman</u> I am determined to be!" [98]

Virginia's ex-slave autobiographers thus had described the slave trade's effects as ones of geographic isolation. They had focused in sentimental language on the pain of family separation across space, and had sketched out the physical landmarks associated with that separation. They had sought reunion with lost kin, seeking out various means in their narratives to connect up with separated family members. Physical appearances, tokens, gestures, letters, and imaginative or spiritual communication had all served as the vocabulary in this sentimental language. Others, most notably Hayden has sought out alternatives

---

[96]Hayden, <u>Narrative of William Hayden</u>, 38, 42, 47.

[97]Hayden, <u>Narrative of William Hayden</u>, 60.

[98]Hayden, <u>Narrative of William Hayden</u>, 100.

to the sentimental vision, emphasizing a vision of individual and wilful masculinity gained out of engagement with he slave trade itself. In all these struggles to communicate across the landscape and reach home rested on notions of family and home as a respite from the harsh world of the slave market. While their domestic visions were not perfectly expressed and perhaps not perfectly clear to them, they remained important to these autobiographical efforts.

Narrators sometimes made the contrast between domestic family values and the market. Bayley found in a visit to his mother "that satisfaction, which I esteemed more than time or money." In his mother's home, Bayley found a shelter from the market world, dictated as it was by "time" and "money." After they gained their freedom, Bayley brought his mother back to live with him, where their spiritual and temporal lives intertwined in bittersweet harmony: "when brought together, it was indeed like heaven on earth begun; we could sit and tell of the dangers and difficulties we had been brought through."[99] Now free from the grasp of the slave market--represented always by Bayley as the Virginia "back country"--this mother and son could commune in their painful past, praise God for their rescue, and re-establish their affectionate bond.

Most narrators did not realize this domestic vision, however, and they probably recognized that sentimental language served them with only mixed success. William Grimes noted early in his narrative that he "had too much sense and feeling to be a slave." He asserted an adherence to a sentimental mode of

---

[99]Bayley, Narrative of Some Remarkable Incidents, 40-41.

expression which made him more fully human than slaveholders were willing to recognize. It was this "sense and feeling"--not intellectual capacity, or bravery, or cunning, or any of a number of other human traits Grimes might have selected--which made him unfit for slavery. Yet his narrative also betrayed the failure of sentimentality in helping him gain a grasp on full autonomy. Grimes's troubles followed him even into freedom, as he kept on the move to avoid masters looking for him, and as he fell constantly into trouble, always finding new enemies along the way. He summed up his life pithily and pathetically: "It has been my fortune most always to be suspected by the good, and to be cheated and abused by the vicious."[100]

When Benjamin Drew interviewed refugees in Canada in the early 1850s, he found much evidence for the slavery's pernicious effects on African-American domestic relations. Many of the refugees, almost all of whom were men, seem to have struggled with their status as runaways who had left spouses and children behind. Many expressed conflicted feelings about having left families enslaved. Isaac Williams, once questioned by another slave about whether he would leave behind his wife and children to escape, had replied, "What's the reason I wouldn't? to stay here with half enough to eat, and to see my wife persecuted for nothing when I can do her no good." He concluded that if he was ever separated from his wife for any reason, that he would "never have another in slavery, to be served in that way." Williams's master sold him, forcing upon him the decision to abandon his wife. Dan Lockhart, on the other hand, ran

---

[100]Grimes, Life of William Grimes, 60.

away for more suspect reasons. Once threatened with sale to traders, he had convinced his wife's master to buy him. But when that master beat her and the children, he "could not stand this abuse" and decided to leave. "They were not punished severely," he reflected, "but I did not want her whipped at all. . . . I bothered her enough and didn't want anybody else to trouble her at all." Neither the better judgement of his wife nor the query of his little girl stopped him from walking out the door. For Williams, slavery's evil was not its abrogation of a sentimentalized domesticity, but rather of his own brand of patriarchy. The worst thing about slavery, he said, was "the abuse" of "a man's wife and children." His wife, who remained in slavery, was not able to comment on what Williams had actual "bothered" her before he decided to leave.[101]

It was an issue Drew knew might trouble his readers, and he cautioned them not to heed proslavery accusations that runaways might leave in order "to get rid of a scolding wife." Drew apparently posed the question to Elija Jenkins, who responded confidently, "I never heard of a man running away from slavery to get rid of his wife."[102] Most who talked about it, though, considered leaving their families only in the face of eminent sale. Describing his new life in Canada, David West's "only trouble" was the absence of his wife and children, who were "perpetually on my mind." "If my wife had known it, and had said half a word, I should have stayed to the moment of being sold," he said with regret.[103] Facing

---

[101]Drew, A North-Side View of Slavery, 30-34, 40.

[102]Drew, A North-Side View of Slavery, 6, 79.

[103]Drew, A North-Side View of Slavery , 60-61.

separation by sale or by escape, he chose the latter.

Those formerly enslaved Virginians who wrote autobiographies dealt more fully and yet less forthrightly with their own struggles to uphold the sentimental domestic standards they held out for themselves. Their domestic visions were filtered through highly gendered perspectives, represented most clearly by the narratives of William Hayden and Bethany Veney. Each of them sought to fulfill their gendered roles and create a domestic haven from the slave market, Hayden as the dutiful son and Veney as the loving mother. In retelling their efforts in autobiographical form, they relied heavily on sentimental language to convey a sense of overcoming the distances the slave market had imposed. Yet the slave market's reach remained pervasive even in scenes of reunion and even after these narrators' liberation from that market.

Hayden's narrative was replete with filial connections to his Virginia home, expressed variously through remembrances, fantasies, word of mouth, letters, and even trips back home. Throughout his sojourns in Kentucky and up and down the Mississippi, he maintained emotional and literal correspondence with his old home place and family. When his slave-trader master offered to take him on a buying trip to Virginia, Hayden was elated. "Fancy pourtrayed to me in her most vivid colors, my long lost mother--" he recalled, "the joyful greeting of maternal and filial affection--the checquered scenes of my infancy--the salutations of my playmates, and the blissful recollections of my long deserted home."[104] Even the suggestion of a trip home in the hands of a

---

[104]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 56.

slave trader brought forth a flood of memories and fantasies. Hayden reflected not only on his mother as he remembered her, but as he imagined she would be upon seeing him for the first time since his childhood, and, importantly, on how he envisioned himself on that day of reunion. Hayden turned his affection into action, writing his mother letters and setting sights on her long-term care. He linked his first effort to document and to secure his payments to Phillips to his mother's care, instructing his lawyer friend that if anything should happen to Hayden, the money should go to his mother,"as the present of an affectionate son."[105]

Despite Hayden's continual longing for home and mother, when he finally had the opportunity actually to return and see her, he balked. He had arranged through letters to meet her in Baltimore while there on Phillips's business. It was the moment he had been so long waiting for, his reunion with his long lost mother, yet he froze. On recognizing her, he hesitated and actually hid his true identity from her. In a bizarre narrative choice for someone trying to assert his filial affections, Hayden recounted how he interviewed his mother to ascertain whether it was really her. Hearing her story, he was overcome with a grievous sort of joy, becoming paralyzed in a "delicious trance." Finally, after further interviewing her, he owned up to his identity and they celebrated the joyful and tearful reunion that his stalling tactics had frustrated. But the joy was too much for her as well, apparently, and she fell to the ground, lying

---

[105]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 83, 90.

unconscious until the next day.[106]

Hayden's readers must have thought his behavior strange. His ability to hide his identity from his own mother seems especially dubious, given his assertions that observers everywhere, black and white alike, were all struck by his remarkable resemblance to her. Why Hayden would choose to write about his reunion in such circuitous, halting manner remains unclear. It seems clear, however, that when faced with the problem of describing his moment of reunion, his opportunity to express his filial affection, he found himself incapable of employing sentimental language to express his convoluted feelings. Sold away from her at a tender age, he found himself standing before her as an enslaved servant of a slave trader. He had made the best of his situation and converted his forced mobility into masculine self-assuredness, yet he was unable to face his mother and close the domestic circle in the sentimental mode.

His later actions extended the awkward relationship between his sentimental domestic vision and his own actions. Once able to purchase his mother's freedom, he returned to Virginia and rejoiced as he "prepared to lead her from all her trials to a land of freedom and the home of a son." The "land of freedom" he had in mind, however, was not some free state or Canada, but rather Natchez, Mississippi, one of the major slave-trading posts in the Delta. For Hayden, this posed no real contradiction, and here his logic was more obvious. To him, the town had indeed become the "home of a son," a place where he was known and trusted. This fact was underscored in his narrative

---

[106]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 60-67.

when, while near his mother's home in Virginia, he chanced to meet up with a barroom full of his "customers and strongest friends" from Natchez. Among these men were probably some slave traders, who had the most compelling reasons to be in Virginia on business. His patronage connections in Natchez marked him as an acknowledged member of that community, a recognition that remained applicable even in Virginia, so far away.[107]

Hayden's choice probably would not have validated the domestic vision of either northern or southern sentimental readers. While northern abolitionists would have been appalled at Hayden's establishing a domestic shelter for his mother in the midst of the slave trade, and southern proslavery apologists might have revelled in his choice of Mississippi as his home in freedom, as Barrat had for Hunt's remaining in Richmond. But for Hayden, the meaning of his enslavement, of the slave trade, of his freedom, and of domesticity were all rooted in familiar and familial social geographies, not political or polemical ones. These were realities that a sentimental mode of expression was not fully able to convey, as his ambivalent use of that prose indicated.

If the goal of sentimental domesticity was to shelter the family from the market and from patriarchal authority, such an arrangement was impossible for enslaved African Americans. Moses Grandy had known only eight of his mother's many children; the rest were "dead or sold away before I can remember." What he could "remember well," however, was that his mother had "often hid us all in the woods, to prevent master selling us." When one very

---

[107]Hayden, Narrative of William Hayden, 127-128.

young brother was sold away, his mother became "frantic with grief." When she tried to intervene in his removal, she was lashed to a tree and whipped. Grandy had also learned the horrifying fate of another brother, sold less than forty miles away. Sent out "naked and hungry" in search of lost cattle, the boy was unsuccessful and afraid to return without them. Hiding himself in a pile of leaves, he died of exposure. No one found him until the buzzards had already "pulled his eyes out." Such horrifying scenes in the young Grandy's life doubtless impressed on him his enslaved mother's utter inability to provide a home as a haven from the heartless world.[108]

Bethany Veney proved more evasive in her narrative, but she too associated sale and the slave market with the impossibility of domesticity in slave homes. Veney's evasive yet revealing language revolved around the birth of her daughter, Charlotte. Veney had just closed one chapter with the sorrowful farewell to her husband, sold south. She opened the following chapter with the passive elision: "Several months passed, and I became a mother." Immediately connecting her daughter's birth to a generalized condemnation of sexual abuse, she lamented the enslaved mother's sorrow when, "from her own experience she sees its almost certain doom is to minister to the unbridled lust of the slave-owner." Though she sought to hide the identity of the child's father, she seems to have revealed it nonetheless. While dwelling on her own sorrow at the birth of her child, she made no mention whatsoever of any loss Jerry presumably would have suffered, having been sold south with no chance to even know his

---

[108]Grandy, Narrative of the Life of Moses Grandy, 7-8.

own daughter. And whether consciously or unconsciously, Veney followed her general condemnation immediately with the specific acknowledgement that "Master Kibbler was still hard and cruel." Veney's owner, Miss Lucy, was "grieved" at Veney's condition in Kibbler's household and sought another master for her, one under whom she "would not be so wretched." Veney's oblique comments seem to have closed up the ellipses she sought to leave in the narrative at this painful juncture. Veney's readers would have known how to read through this Victorian evasion, concluding that Kibbler had forced himself on her and fathered her child.[109]

As she sat down to write her story in 1880s, Veney's projected back a fantasy of domestic fulfilllment she would have seized on if only she had been free to do so. "I have imagined myself with a young girl's ambition," she reflected, "working hard and carefully saving my earnings, then getting a little

---

[109]If Jerry were Charlotte's father, then Veney missed the narrative opportunity to draw the parallel to the absence of her own father. Her silence there may perhaps indicate her mother's own sexual abuse by a master. The paternity of Veney's second child, Joe, likewise remained enigmatic. She married a free man named Frank Veney, loved him as she had loved Jerry, and took his name. But he disappeared immediately and completely from the narrative. After a three-year ellipses, in which Bethaney Veney hired out in various places, her son Joe appeared, suddenly and incidentally. He was already two years old and Veney made no mention of who his father might be. Elizabeth Keckley related rather more openly the consequences of her master's "base designs" on her. "He persecuted me for four years," she explained, "and I--I--became a mother." Keckley deliberately employed a hesitant voice in her narrative, whereas Veney's narrative gap was less obvious. Keckley, Behind the Scenes, 32-39; quotation 39. Whatever the paternity of her children or herself, Veney, like Elizabeth Keckley, clearly associated masters' sexual abuse with a more general physical violence, intended to effect the enslaved women's submission of will. Veney, Narrative of Bethany Veney, 26, 32. Nell Painter has read such gaps and slippages in Sojourner Truth's and Harriet Jacobs's respective autobiographies, as has Valerie Smith for the latter; Painter and Fleischner employ psychoanalytic theory to read what such gaps and slippages tell us. My own reading of Veney here draws from these approaches, but somewhat more circumspectly than Painter. Painter, "Of Lily, Linda Brent, and Freud"; and Sojourner Truth: a Life, a Symbol (New York : W.W. Norton, 1996). Smith, Self-Discovery and Authority, 40-43. On reading Elizabeth Keckley's narrative gaps, see Fleischner, Mastering Slavery, 26-32, 93-132.

home with a garden, where I could plant the kind of things I had known in the South, then bringing my sisters and brothers to share with me these blessings of freedom." As a woman accustomed to working for her living and to living without a husband, her domestic vision did not involve her restriction only to home duties. But in her notion of home as a delightful haven, a welcoming shelter for family, she concurred with domestic reformers dating to the antebellum period.[110]

Veney reiterated her own enforced inability to live up to those domestic obligations at every crucial family juncture in her narrative. As a child, an estate sale had separated her from all her brothers and sisters. As an adult, she married Jerry despite her explicit acknowledgement that their masters might at any time separate them by sale. In telling about her Jerry's seizure for sale south, Veney noted that the imprisonment of slaves awaiting sale was a "was a necessary part of the system of American slavery" and that "neither wife nor mother could intervene to soften its rigors one jot." And in lamenting the circumstances surrounding the birth of her daughter, she appealed to her presumed readers' sense of domestic duties and protections. "My dear white lady," she started, "in your pleasant home made joyous by the tender love of husband and children all your own, you can never understand the slave mother's emotions."[111]

Now, in freedom, she sought to fulfill that pent-up desire for domesticity. In 1858, she was rescued from sale by a Rhode Island transplant whom Veney

---

[110]Veney, Narrative of Bethany Veney, 13-14.

[111]Veney, Narrative of Bethany Veney, 20, 26.

had worked for in Virginia. He purchased her freedom, along with that of her young son, Joe. She followed him north as a domestic servant, but finally settled on her own in Worcester, Massachusetts. She marked her freedom in the north explicitly as freedom from the slave market. "A new life had come to me," she said. "I was in a land where, by its laws, I had the same right to myself that any other woman had. No jailer could take me to prison, and sell me at auction to the highest bidder. My boy was my own, and no one could take him from me." She equated free territory with freedom from the slave market which pervaded the southern states, and she equated freedom with her rights over her own person and her own family. Finally, in freedom and after the war, Veney was able to escape her enslaved familial nightmare, to live her dream of familial freedom. She now seized on the opportunity to bring h her family together, to shelter them in her New England home just as she had fantasized. Taking four return trips to Virginia from Massachusetts, she gathered up her family, "sixteen of my relatives," and settled them in Worcester. She now owned two small houses, with her daughter Charlotte's family living next door.[112]

Still, there remained one unresolved narrative tension laying in wait. On recounting her leaving Virginia, she reflected and foreshadowed that it would be a long time before she saw her neighborhood again, "and grasped again the hands that before had beaten and bruised me."[113] That time finally came when

---

[112]Veney, Narrative of Bethany Veney, 33-40, 42, 44.

[113]Veney, Narrative of Bethany Veney, 37. As with Frederick Douglass, Austin Stewart, and Fedric Francis, Veney's nostalgic and sometimes romantic look back on Virginia were tempered by caustic associations with the horrors of slavery.

David McCoy came to pay her a visit in Worcester. True, he had once helped sell her husband Jerry and had tried to sell her, she reminded her readers, but "all was changed now. He was not even Master McCoy. He was Mr. McKay." He greeted her "not exactly, perhaps, as a reconstructed man," she admitted--he still called her "Aunt Betty"--but still, he had "at least learned something from the 'logic of events' of the difference in our relations to each other," and they carried on a "friendly interchange." Veney first visited him at his hotel room, and then he visited her home, invited there to dinner.[114]

The apex of Veney's reconciliatory vignette came when McKay asked about a pair of kid gloves he had seen her wear. Playing the gracious hostess in her adopted town, Veney escorted him through the local shops until they found a pair he liked. Then, she recalled, "I had the pleasure of paying for them, and then presenting them to him, as a remembrance of his visit to the North, as well as of me." Veney sought to reconcile herself to the past and to McCoy's past actions through the medium of this sentimental token. She took great pride in the giving and receiving of this highly personal object, which stood as an indicator not of some sentimental attachment to this former owner or to any nostalgic notion of Old Virginia, but rather as a triumph over him. On free soil, in abolitionist Worcester, she had invited him into her own domestic realm--the house she owned. She had shown him around her town and had paid for the gloves with her own money. The gift marked not only his new status as "Mr.

---

[114]Veney, Narrative of Bethany Veney, 42-43.

McKay," but also her new status as her own woman.[115]

All was still not well, however, despite Veney's remarkable effort to set the moral example. The reconciliatory language at the end of her story did not successfully neutralize the language of bitterness, sadness, and confusion she had used in describing the incidents surrounding McCoy's selling of Jerry a few chapters earlier. Presumably she had written those passages, as well as the reconciliatory ones, in the 1880s, long after McKay's visit to Worcester as a "new man." The drastic change in tone between the two sections dealing with McCoy/McKay, then, indicated that she had clearly not forgotten the pain caused her by the slave trader, whatever her desire to put forward her best face in freedom.

This sharply ambivalent contrast in tones echoed in the dual sense of right and wrong Veney had long experienced in the face of the slave market. This dual loyalty--to telling the truth and to the preservation of her family--had long disoriented her moral compass. Even as she wrote in the 1880s, she worked to justify her acts of dishonesty aimed at preserving family bonds.

Her adherence to telling the truth was fixed, she recalled, long ago in the blackberry patch on her master's farm. There Betty, as she was called, was instructed by her young white mistress that "every little child that had told a lie, would be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone." More importantly, the veracity of this assertion was upheld by own mother, searing this precept into young

---

[115]Veney, Narrative of Bethany Veney, 42-43. Keckley's visits with her former mistress put similar emphasis on the new relations between former slaveholders (now impoverished) and former slaves (now living bourgeois model of domesticity). Fleischner, Mastering Slavery, 117-118, 205 n.; and William Andrews, "Reunion in the Postbellum Slave Narrative: Frederick Douglass and Elizabeth Keckley," Black American Literature Forum 23 (Spring 1989): 5-16.

Betty's conscience. This call to moral righteousness, unfortunately, plagued her as she faced threats to her family by her masters' participation in the slave market. On her wedding day, she refused to promise "til death do us part," knowing full well that her master or Jerry's might force her to break that promise. She did not want the slave market to make a liar out of her, and she explicitly recalled the "lesson learned, so many years before, in the blackberry pasture." When that fear became reality, she and Jerry struggled with doing the right thing. Contemplating running away together, she said they actually "felt ashamed, for a moment, as if we had tried to cheat." Yet, she asked rhetorically, "what right had White to carry him away, or even to own him at all? Our poor, ignorant reasoning found it hard to understand his rights or our own." Veney's moral standards seemed woefully inadequate when white people, especially slave traders, did not seem to uphold those same moral principles. Jerry, seeing no hope in flight, returned to the trader and was never seen again.[116]

Veney developed a more healthy stance towards honesty in regards to the slave market, however. She learned to lie unapologetically, if it meant preserving family bonds. Years after her husband's departure, she showed no compunction whatever about feigning ill to avoid sale. David McCoy--"the same who had grabbed Jerry on that fatal morning"--had bought her and carried her to Richmond, thinking he could "make a speculation" on her. "I did not think so," Veney responded. She knew how to be "ugly and wilful" when necessary and, learning "certain tricks" from a female cell-mate in the Richmond slave pens, she

---

[116]Veney, Narrative of Bethany Veney, 8, 18, 21.

managed to spoil the sale by feigning ill and by answering bidders' questions "in the ugliest manner I dared." Chagrinned, McCoy was forced to bring her back to Luray and hire her out locally to cut his losses. Later on, when faced with the prospect of being sold away from her son, she claimed she was ready to "take my child and hide in the mountains." She would "do anything" to keep from being separated from another loved one as she had been with Jerry. [117]

She had evidently come to a better understanding of her domestic rights versus the property rights of the slave trader, yet her moral compass--its orientation set those many years ago in the blackberry patch--was strong. In her last crisis with the slave market, however, her honesty held ironic consequences. McCoy's sad finances threatened her sale, and her hiring boss, transplanted northerner G. J. Adams, had promised McCoy that Veney would not try to escape if left in his hands until sale. Masters and traders could force spouses to break their domestic vows, she knew, and yet she refused to force this man to break his. "I was oh! so sorry he had promised," she said. In the end, in fact, it was Adams who procured freedom for Veney and her son Joe, paying her price and inviting her to work for him in the north.[118]

Bethany Veney's autobiography represented what Toni Morrison calls "the map to discover what she was like." It was an attempt to reclaim a family life which had been scattered across the landscape of slavery and an individual identity which had been corrupted. As with the fictional Baby Suggs, Veney's

---

[117]Veney, Narrative of Bethany Veney, 27-30, 35.

[118]Veney, Narrative of Bethany Veney, 36.

loved ones--her father, her brothers and sisters, her husband, her children--had been treated like chess pieces, as moveable articles of property. Not only had the slave trade threatened to separate her from her children, it had disoriented her moral compass, forcing her into ethical dilemmas which foreclosed the full flowering of the Victorian piety and Christian good will she sought to express. As a free woman in the post-bellum north, she had fulfillled her domestic vision as best she could. Her children and grandchildren were protected forever from the slave market's clutches, and yet its past violation of her domestic world remained prescient. Even as she could write with equanimity about the visit of the former slave trader, her bitterness was fresh when she wrote of his past actions. She might try to contain her anger or channel it through sentimental language and sentimental acts of reconciliation, but her own life history remained thus bittersweet.

Chapter Five: Abolitionist Moral Geography

"Look at the map of the United States," a Garrisonian newspaper editor instructed in 1836. "Draw with your pen a line dividing between the fertile lowlands of the coast and the south, and the more sterile and mountainous uplands of the northern slave states. On one side of this line," the editor then announced, "the principal business by which wealth is acquired is the breeding of slaves, to be driven over and worn out upon the cotton, rice and sugar plantations on the other side." Addressing "the mothers of our land," the essayist stressed that the consequent violation of the holy bonds of motherhood not only wrecked the lives of the enslaved but also jeopardized the great American experiment. "The attempt to build the wealth of a nation on the ruin of domestic ties" would surely fail, the writer concluded, as it went against God's law.[1]

Abolitionists drew many such maps for the reading public, setting down in graphic terms the argument that slavery divided the nation as surely as it divided black families. The domestic security of the Union, abolitionists held, depended on the domestic security of the nation's families, black as well as white. Theirs was a political geography in that it followed the sectional crisis over the federal territories and over the federal capital. Theirs was also a "moral geography," lamenting the separation and scattering of African-American family members across the enslaved south. With emancipation during the civil war,

---

[1]"The Disruption of Family Ties," Pawtucket Record and Free Discussion Advocate (9 April 1836), copy at AAS.

abolitionists followed these moral maps straight to the slave markets and picked up souvenirs and relics for their own sentimental and political use.

The domestic slave trade itself played a key role in abolitionist political action in the 1830s and 1840s, as activists sought to use the Constitution's commerce clause to impose Congressional jurisdiction over the interstate trade. The prohibition of the slave trade within the District of Columbia, as part of the Compromise of 1850, marked the high water mark in this movement. Thereafter, for a variety of pragmatic and ideological reasons, abolitionists abandoned this narrow legal strategy in favor of an all out moral attack on slavery itself.[2] At the same time, beginning in the 1820s and culminating in the 1850s, abolitionists increasingly cast their attack on the slavery in terms of domesticity, focusing on how slavery turned people into chattel, how it violated African Americans' sentimental ties to family.

Just as enslaved African Americans and white slaveholders selectively employed sentimental language to negotiate physical and social distances, so too did northern white abolitionists. Abolitionists' sentimental criticism of slavery

---

[2]Abolitionists pushed what they thought was a viable Constitutional argument. In prohibiting the international slave trade in 1807, Congress had acted to protect and lightly to regulate the coastal, interstate trade, setting a minimum vessel size and requiring shippers to record data on individuals transported. Yet, with the exception of the Compromise of 1850, abolitionists failed to muster any Congressional regulatory or prohibitory action against the interstate slave trade. See David L. Lightner's excellent account in his two articles, "The Door to the Slave Bastille: the Abolitionist Assault upon the Interstate Slave Trade, 1833-1839," Civil War History 23 (Sept. 1988): 235-252; and "The Interstate Slave Trade in Antislavery Politics [1840-1860]," Civil War History 36 (June 1990): 119-136. For the 1807 congressional regulation, see "An Act to prohibit the importation of slaves into any port or place within the jurisdiction of the United States," statute II (2 March 1807), ch. 22, sect. 8, 9, in The Public Statutes at Large of the United States of America from the Organization of the Government in 1789 to March 3, 1845, v. 2., ed. Richard Peters (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1861), repr. in Exploring Amistad at Mystic Seaport, http://amistad.mysticseaport.org/.

had its roots in what David Brion Davis calls "the ethic of benevolence," in which the "man of sensibility needed to objectify his virtue by relieveing the sufferings of innocent victims." Adherants of humanitarian reform, by definition, sought to reach out across boundaries of race, class, and geography through empathetic leap of faith. Abolitionists sought to connect to northern, middle-class readers by focusing on the sentimental bonds they beleived were shared by all human beings, slave or free, black or white. As Franny Nudelman puts it, "sentimentality assumes that people are related by feeling rather than by status or circumstance."[3]

To draw forth the empathy of their readers, antislavery writers and artists came to draw heavily on scenes of sentimentalized domesticity. In these images, black parents--especially mothers--worked to shelter their marriages and their children from the ravages of the market world of disruptions and family separations represented in the slave auction block. Literary critic Philip Fisher notes that Harriet Beecher Stowe's emblematic novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin "redescribed" slavery for her readers not as a labor system but rather as "an ordeal of separations." In doing so, she called on her readers' own experience of forced separations, whether through migration or death. Abolitionist graphic artists similarly called on white, middle-class viewers to make a compassionate, empathetic leap, identifying with people whose racial and social circumstances

---

[3]David Brion Davis, The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823 (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975), 45-46. Franny Nudelman, "Harriet Jacobs and the Sentimental Politics of Female Suffering," English Literary History 59 (Winter 1992), 945-946, 964 n. For the latest debate stemming from Davis's work, see Thomas L. Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility," in The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation, ed. Thomas Bender (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1992), chs. 4, 5.

were in fact far removed from their own.[4]

Abolitionists' attacks on slavery served in part to support their own domestic reforms in the North in the wake of the market revolution.[5] There they sought to create a feminized domestic sphere to shelter the family from the vagaries of the rapidly changing market world. At its heart, this new domesticity relied on a new notion of discipline, implemented through affection and love instead of through coercive force. Harriet Beecher Stowe made this contrast explicit in Uncle Tom's Cabin. Richard Brodhead argues that Stowe intended the education of the "wicked" slave Topsy by the saintly white Little Eva to represent the triumph of sentimental over corporal discipline. Eva counseled the incorrigible Topsy, "I love you, and I want you to be good . . . for my sake." Topsy responded to this new, affectionate discipline where she had shunned the physical correction of both southern slaveholders and Miss Ophelia's "old" style New England discipline.[6] Abolitionists would finally have

---

[4]Philip Fisher, Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985), 107.

[5]For the most recent exploration of abolitionism's connection to capitalism, see the American Historical Review debate among Thomas Haskell, David Brion Davis, and John Ashworth, reprinted and extended in Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism, ed. Bender.

[6]Interestingly, one white northern traveler in the 1830s made first-hand observations which resonated with Stowe's assertions two decades later. Touring mainly in South Carolina, he found it "very noticeable" that the slaves he talked with displayed "unwillingness, or a measure of sourness; otherwise, as it sometimes called, here, sulkiness" which he found "to disappear on t[he] application of a little of N[ew] E[ngland] kindness & urbanity, instead of t[he] cold, authoritative harshness to wh[ich] they are so much accustomed." William B. Bannister, "Diary of a journey from Newburyport to Charleston, S.Ca. & elsewhere," 23 Nov. 1836 to 18 May 1837, AAS. Richard Brodhead, Culture of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993), 39. Brodhead's analysis is brilliant on this crucial aspect of domesticity, linking it to school

the opportunity to draw on this ideal of discipline through love when they set up freedmen's schools for the former slaves. In at least one case, abolitionist symbolism resonated thoroughly with reality on the ground, as a freedmen's aid society took over a slave jail in Richmond as the new school. Moral and intellectual discipline through the written word literally replaced the lash.

In the meantime, abolitionists continued to flay southern (and implicitly, northern) market-driven patriarchy with the whip of northern domestic ideals. Slavery made property out of people, they observed, while plantation households remained the sites of production. Both brought the market into black and white southern homes under the authority of the slaveholding master of the household. According to Gillian Brown, Stowe forwarded this criticism in Uncle Tom's Cabin, embodied in the kitchen run by the enslaved woman, Dinah. Dinah's idiosyncratic organization--with several sugar bowls and caches of tobacco stuffed here and there--appeared chaotic compared to the neat New England kitchen plan put forward by Stowe and her reformist sister, Catherine Beecher. Enslaved households, Stowe believed, could never adhere to the domestic ideal because their female members, both black and white, remained vulnerable to male-dominated market decisions. Stowe's criticism of southerners' lack of domesticity was simultaneously meant to chide northerners

---

reform, domestic novels, and abolitionism. Moving past the debate about sentimental literature as either empowering or disempowering for white women (or even as both), he understands "that these opposed functions are not just mixed but functionally cooperative." Sentimentalized novels such as Uncle Tom's Cabin "not only free up wayward feeling and inscribe authority in the reader but inscribe authority by way of the feeling they invite." Sentiment, in other words, was the genre's power; the sentimental novel was an "agent of discipline through love" (47). The essay, "Sparing the Rod: Discipline and Fiction in Antebellum America," was originally published in Representations 21 (Winter 1988): 67-96.

into holding up their own ideal or, implicitly, risk comparison to the enslaved South.[7]

While Stowe found many sites in which to level her domestic criticism of slavery, antislavery graphic artists tended to focus that anti-market aspect of their critique on the site of the auction block. This emphasis stemmed from northern reformers' own sense that the market threatened to commodify their own lives. More explicitly, abolitionists saw slaveholders as the ultimate exemplars of this trend, a selfish minority holding sway over politics, trameling democracy, and holding millions of people as chattel, all in the name of gain. The auction block, in the generic terms in which it was usually cast, represented perfectly that commodification of human life. Thus, it stood not only as a criticism of southern slaveholding society, but also an implicit warning to northerners about the potential of their own market-oriented society, and especially about the dangers of the "Slave Power" which threatened to rule northern political economy as well.[8]

Abolitionists' means of promulgating their critique of slaveholder commodification remained entangled in the market, however. Their vision

---

[7]Virginian ex-slave Bethany Veney could have offered a validation on this point. On her arrival in the North in the late 1850s, she noted the remarkable organization of kitchens, with their "Yankee inventions and improvements to make work easy and pleasant." Narrative of Bethany Veney, A Slave Woman (1889: repr. in Documenting the American South, http://www.metalab.unc.edu/docsouth/1997), 39. Gillian Brown, Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1990), ch. 1.

[8]David J. McInerney eluminates this general abolitionist critique, though he does not address the auction block imagery. See McInerney, "'A State of Commerce': Market Power and Slave Power in Abolitionist Political Economy," Civil War History 37 (June 1991), esp. 102, 104-105.

rested on the notion of "sentimental possession," the idea that individuals "owned" themselves like property. The language and images of sentimentalism expressed this idea frequently through artifacts or tokens of sentiment, objects standing in for the person and effecing an affectionate bond to that person. As Brown argues, Stowe's "sentimental fetishism" shared with consumerism a "sense of empathy between the object and its owner . . . a mythology of things in which possessions appear necessary and constitutive supplements to persons." Sentimental acts, in this view, then enacted a mere softening of market relations, a way to rationalize them. Sentimentalism itself remained commercial, illustrated by no more clear example than the mass marketing of Uncle Tom's Cabin, in all its guises. Possession of the book itself might serve its readers in the same way other "sentimental tokens"--locks of hair, clothing, and other "memorials"--served its fictional characters, to remind them of their sentimental ties to family, or in the case of ex-Yankee Simon Legree, of his denial of his own mother and her New England domesticity in the face of market opportunism.[9] In the broad wake of Uncle Tom's Cabin, abolitionists went even further, decorating icons of slavery on all manner of domestic artifacts, from kitchen aprons and pot-holders to china plates and ceramic figurines. Possessing these sentimental object furthered both their adherence to domesticity and to an antislavery yet sentimental image of slavery.

Abolitionist graphic artists created a lexicon of images designed to effect these sentimental ends, demonstrating this "sentimental fetishism" in their focus

---

[9]Brown, Domestic Individualism, 39, 43, 50-51. Brown draws heavily here on ch. 35 of Uncle Tom's Cabin, entitled "The Tokens." See also Ann Douglass, The Feminization of American Culture (New York: Knopf, 1977), introduction, on "artifacts of sentimentality."

on the implements of slavery and especially of the slave trade itself. [10] Maps laid out the moral world of separation and sectional politics, while objects brought these ideas home to readers in a tactile way. Abolitionist illustrators focused closely on the concrete implements of the slave market--chains, whips, jails, and especially auction blocks--as perverse tokens of sentiment, symbolizing the breaking of rather than the maintenance of sentimental family bonds. These objects stood for everything northern reformers worked against, the enforcement of discipline by coercion and the forcible the division of families. As Karen Haltunen has begun to explore more broadly for the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, reformers' sentimentalism frequently led them to

---

[10]Despite the ubiquity and power of abolitionist imagery, it has received relatively little historical notice, especially as it pertained to domesticity and the domestic slave trade. Several recent essays have begun to explore how graphic images of African Americans and of slavery served both as overt polemical tools and as subtle instruments of social order, whether in abolitionist, proslavery, or nonpolemical literature. Phillip Lapsansky, "Graphic Discord: Abolitionist and Antiabolitionist Images," in The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America, eds. Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press,1994), 201-230. Gregg D. Kimball, "'The South as It Was': Social Order, Slavery, and Illustrators in Virginia,1830-1877," in Graphic Arts & the South: Proceedings of the 1990 North American Print Conference, ed. Judy L. Larson (Fayetteville: Univ. of Arkansas Press, 1993), 129-157. Bernard F. Reilly Jr., "The Art of the Antislavery Movement," in Courage and Conscience: Black and White Abolitionists in Boston, ed. Donald M. Jacobs (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1993), 47-74. Studies of African-American images in art more generally have tended to emphasize the widespread marginalization and racist stereotyping they unquestionably often conveyed. The most uncompromising example of this literature is Francis John Martin, Jr., "The Image of Black People in American Illustration from 1825 to 1925," Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1986. Barbara E. Lacey, however, finds a fluidity and a complexity among images of Africans and African-Americans in eighteenth-century America, reading them often as central to public discourse. Lacey, "Visual Images of Blacks in Early American Imprints," William & Mary Quarterly 53 (Jan. 1996): 137-180. For other insightful critiques, see Albert Boime, The Art of Exclusion: Representing Blacks in the Nineteenth Century (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990); Guy McElroy, Facing History: The Black Image in American Art, 1710-1940 (Washington, D.C., Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1990); Ellwood Parry, The Image of the Indian and the Black Man in American Art, 1590-1900 (New York: G. Brazziler, 1972); and especially the beautifully compiled and annotated series, The Image of the Black in Western Art, 4 vols., foreward by Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow (New York : Morrow, 1976-).

fixate on the implements of pain they were trying to abolish.[11] Abolitionists fetishized the implements of the slave trade--chained gangs on the march, jails, and auction blocks--keeping these images before the public in an attempt to provoke a heart-rendering and ultimately sympathetic reaction in viewers.

The replication of images of these implements of the slave trade and of the domestic pain they inflicted held unintended potential consequences, however. Seeking to point out the ruthlessness of the slave trade's commodification, abolitionists participated in their own brand of commodifying slaves. They sometimes simply recycled images from the literature of the African slave trade abolition movement, employing scenes which did not speak to the American domestic experience. Once they hit on domestic icon of mother-and-child separations, they recycled those images ad infinitum, risking the reduction of enslaved individuals to mere interchangeable icons. To fight the slave market's commodification of human beings, in other words, abolitionist illustrators fell prey to the commodifying tendencies of the marketplace of ideas and images. They replicated the commodification in imagery which they condemned slaveholders for practicing in person.

Worse, abolitionists' images and stories could even render slaves as object lessons for their own children, rather than as African-American subjects in their own right. As Laura Wexler and Karen Sanchez-Eppler show, sentimental language frequently served to separate the reformers from their ostensible benefactors. Sentimental language tended to create boundaries between its

---

[11]Karen Haltunen, "Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American Culture," American Historical Review 100 (April 1995): 303-334.

insiders, abolitionist and their potential adherents, and its outsiders, the enslaved African Americans they were trying to help.[12] The comments of London Times correspondent W. H. Russell, Esq., on viewing a slave auction in Alabama in 1861 demonstrated the kinds of twists and turns humanitarian sentiment might put one through. "I am neither sentimentalist nor Black Republican, nor negro-worshiper," he assured his readers, "but I confess the sight caused a strange thrill through my heart." What jarred him was lack of exoticism to the scene, the sense that the people doing these awful deeds were his people. "I have seen slave markets in the East," he said, "but somehow or other the Orientalism of the scene cast a coloring over the nature of the sales there which deprived them of the disagreeable harshness and matter-of-fact character of the transaction before me. . . . Here it grated on my ear to listen to the familiar tones of the

---

[12]Laura Wexler writes that sentimental language "encourages a large-scale imaginative depersonalizeation of those outside its complex specifications [slaves, in this case] at the same time that it elaborately personalizes, magnifies, and flatters those who can accommodate to its image of an interior" [the bourgeois northern readers]. Karen Sanchez-Eppler argues effectively that Matilda Thompson's Child's Anti-Slavery Book (American Tract Society, 1859) was typical in this regard, in that it "constantly inscribes its own domesticity." It aimed to find a place in the "loving, happy homes of the American free children" and therefore "replicated" readers' idealized homes "within the stories themselves." In "Aunt Judy's Story," for example, a white mother gathered her children at her knee in order to tell a story of a slave woman having her children torn from her knee. As Franny Nudleman notes, Sanchez-Eppler has recognized this "as a form of appropriation, which by disregarding the crucial differences between actual and figurative slavery obscures the conditions of enslavement." Yet Sanchez-Eppler herself risks obliterating this crucial distinction as well, writing that the white children in Thompson's work would thus "'profit' from Aunt Judy in a manner more moralistic than, but not sufficiently distinct from, the material profits reaped by the slave owners her story teaches them to condemn." Nonetheless, Sanchez-Eppler is right that Aunt Judy and other runaway slaves in such stories were usually rendered into objects of moral instruction rather than subjects in their own right. Wexler, "Tender Violence: Literary Evesdropping, Domestic Fiction, and Educational Reform," in The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America, ed. Shirley Samuels (New York: Oxford UP 1992), 17. Karen Sanchez-Eppler, "Bodily Bonds: The Intersecting Rhetorics of Feminism and Abolition," in Culture of Sentiment, ed. Samuels, 110-111; and on the failure of sentiment's cross-class identification, see 107. Nudelman, "Harriet Jacobs and Sentimental Politics," 963 n.

English tongue as the medium by which the transfer was effected, and it was painful to see decent-looking men in European garb engaged in the work before me." His familiarity with the language and dress of the slave traders brought the scene too close to home for this Englishman, and he struggled to understand this American practice by putting himself in the shoes of the buyers. "I tried in vain to make myself familiar with the fact that I could, for the sum of $975, become as absolutely the owner of that mass of blood, bones, sinew, flesh, and brains as of the horse which stood by my side." He found he could not render this enslaved man into objectified body parts, could not place himself in the shoes of buyers. His sympathy turned, if only half-heartedly, towards that slave man on the block. The slave was, he admitted, "by no means my brother, but assuredly he was a fellow-creature." In Russell's unwilling sentimental leap, however, he moved at once closer to and away from the enslaved African American on the auction block, identifying with him and stereotyping him all at once. "On his head was wool instead of hair," he remarked. Still, Russell concluded that "There was no sophistry which could persuade me the man was not a man."[13]

The slave trade's implications in the realm of domestic politics resurfaced during the Civil War, as antislavery graphic art emphasized once again the connection between family breakup and the break up of the Union. Abolitionists in the field followed their moral maps directly into the slave traders' pens, to recover the artifacts which by then held iconic sentimental status. They effected

---

[13]Harper's Weekly, 13 July 1861, p. 442, repr. in Toward Racial Equality: Harper's Weekly Reports on Black America, 1857-1874, http://blackhistory.harpweek.com/.

a reversal of the slave auction, transforming the tools of the trade into true tokens of sentiment, commemorating the destruction of the slave market which had disrupted African-American domesticity and which has preyed on the hearts of abolitionists for so long. In doing so, they fell back on a long tradition of sentimental possession, finding in the market artifacts to connect themselves emotionally to the emotional loss of African American families broken by the market.

Abolitionist were moral cartographers, as a group of maps from the 1830s and 1840s broadly illustrates well. In an illustration from the 1843 compilation Legion of Liberty! and Force of Truth, the viewer saw, from a cosmic perspective, "Freedom's glorious Sun dispelling the black chaos of Slavery" (fig. 1).[14] Liberty's light was composed of Sympathy, Probity, and Wisdom, and it chased away the clouds of Cruelty, Ignorance, and Falsehood enshrouding the earth.[15] Two other views from that same volume seemed to zoom in on the problem. Unfolding across the frontispiece was the globe, breaking cartographic convention by foregrounding and illuminating Africa (fig. 2). Across the Atlantic , North America appeared out of the shadows and just over the northwestern horizon, with three distinctive regions labeled "Indians" across Canada, ostensibly displaced by the "U. States" across the middle, and by "Slavery" to the south. The caption conveyed abolition's global message: "My Country is the

---

[14]All illustrations for this chapter are in Appendix 4.

[15]The Legion of Liberty! and Force of Truth, 2nd ed. (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1843; repr. New York: Arno Press, 1969), not paginated, apparently part of pamphlet number 26 or 27.

World; My Religion is to do good." Turning the page, the reader would see a far more detailed and polemical geography, fittingly titled "Moral Map of U. S., Jan. 1837" (fig. 3). Most obvious even at a glance, slave states were shaded pitch black, the free states left white. On closer examination the viewer might notice the words "Boundary Line of Slavery" marking that frontier, and the "Capitol" of the nation stranded on the dark side that frontier. More insidiously, the shading representing slavery tended to bleed into Mexico and the territories immediately to the west. Summing up the map's lesson, the American eagle presided over the scene, a divided self shaded black and white and carrying the hypocritical slogan "E Pluribus Unum." Belaboring the point, the caption quoted Lafayette, calling slavery "a dark spot on the face of the nation."[16] The most narrowly focused abolitionist map was published in 1836, as part of the

---

[16]Legion of Liberty!, frontispiece and overleaf. The inclusion of the major waterways, highly visible on this "moral map" was probably no coincidence. The country's navigable rivers provided the first means of transportation, augmented heavily in the northeast and midwest by canals. In the South, the mapmakers knew, the James, the Ohio, and the Mississippi, along with the coastal shipping routes, all provided means for the transportation of slaves, and therefore the expansion of slavery across the southwest. Rivers had proved such a powerful metaphor, in fact, that Thomas Clarkson, trying to trace out all the confluences of antislavery forces arrayed against the African slave trade, chose to map them as streams and rivers flowing into bays. As he explained, each stream flowed one into the other just as abolitionist writings continued to inspire new generations of activists and thinkers. Thomas Clarkson, The History of the Rise, Progress, & Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade, by the British Parliament 2 vols. (Philadelphia: James Parke, 1808), v. 1, map facing 210. Clarkson charted two distinct but intersecting watersheds, one English and the other American; see 209-215 for his explanation of this geography of influences. In a variation on the "Moral Map," British abolitionist Marshall Hall included a fold-out map shading each state according to its "degree" of slavery, measured by its enslaved population. Virginia carried a black stain, both literally and morally in Hall's construction. Marshall Hall, The Facts of the Two-Fold Slavery of the United States, carefully collected during a personal tour in the years 1853 and 1854 (London: Adam Scott, n.d.), frontispiece. Hall also included a map shaded to indicate the "unfriendliness to the African race, in the several states." This unfreedom in "free" states was the "two-fold" aspect of slavery he pointed out. His two maps, each literally folding out, made a nice pun on his thesis.

broadside "Slave Market of America."[17] There a street map of the District of Columbia represented abolitionist moral geography in microcosm (fig. 4). Liberty and slavery both occupied the nation's city, represented concretely in the edifices of the Capitol and the slave jails marked clearly on the map.

These moral maps were not very common, but were instructive. They set the context for travelers moving across the American landscape of slavery and freedom. These travelers included both fugitives heading north and leisure travelers heading south, and both provided northern audiences with eyewitness accounts and stories of slavery so far removed from northern homes. These maps also set the context for the artifacts and scenes abolitionists focused on increasingly in the antebellum decades. These images focused on the implements of the trade--the coffles, auctions, and jails which separated black families--giving northern readers touchstones by which to envision these forced separations across those moral maps of slavery. The geographic expanses remained implicit in all portrayals of the domestic slave trade, even when slave family scenes were removed from the market itself. The fact of these imposed removals across the country--and their detrimental effect on black domesticity--lay at the bottom of abolitionists criticism of the system of slavery. The maps and images gave them a way to express the meanings of these separations graphically.

No dominant theme emerged in abolitionists graphic imagery until the 1830s. Two early examples, however, indicated ideas antislavery artists would

---

[17]"Slave Market of America" (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society [1836]); copy at AAS.

pick up again and amplify by the 1850s. During the 1820 crisis over the admission of Missouri, William Harrison illustrated his polemic with two sketches portraying Virginia planters relying on slave gangs to do their fighting for them in gaining access to western territories.[18] Only in the 1850s would this idea in graphic art reemerge, as free soilers portrayed southern planters using slave gangs to fight their expansion battles for them.

Another early theme picked up later was the focus on the implements of the slave trade itself. In celebrating the legal closing of the Atlantic slave trade, Thomas Clarkson recounted how he had sought out such implements in the markets of Liverpool. In one shop, he purchased a set each of manacles, leg-irons, thumb-screws, and a "speculum oris," a devise used to force-feed those resisting enslavement by fasting. For his 1808 treatise, published in London and in Philadelphia, Clarkson had images of these instruments engraved to accompany his description of how he obtained them and how each was used (fig. 5). He had purchased such trophies, he emphasized, "not because it was difficult to conceive how the unhappy victims of this execrable trade were confined, but to show the fact that they were so." For Clarkson, these trophies stood as concrete, incontrovertible proof of the forced enslavement and transportation of Africans to the Americas.[19] For viewers, these artifacts were to serve as

---

[18]See "The Noble Virginians Going to Battle" and "The Noble Virginians inn the Heat of Battle!" in William Hillhouse, Pocahontas: A Proclamation (New Haven: James Clyme, 1820), copy at AAS.

[19]Clarkson, History of . . . the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade, v. 1, 300-303; quotation 301, images facing 301. Clarkson also included the famous image of the plan of a slave ship, v. 2, facing 91. The highly prolific illustrator Alexander Anderson provided the woodcuts for many types of antislavery literature, including the broadside "Injured Humanity,"

touchstones, concrete images viewers would forever associate with the institution.

Clarkson's acquisition and portrayal of the instruments pointed to two themes highly resonant with American abolitionists in the 1850s and during the Civil War: possession and empathy. Possessing these artifacts, not merely handling them in the shop, was important to Clarkson. Owning the means by which others had come to be owned seemed important to him. Perhaps owning these artifacts gave him an empathetic sense of what it might be like to have been enslaved. His frank descriptions of how these implements of pain worked certainly indicated that he intended his readers to make such an empathetic leap. Holding the manacles in his hands, he might have imagined himself being bound up in them, to be sold away from friends and family, and forced into servitude for life. By looking at the images in his book, Clarkson's readers were supposed to do the same.

Some American abolitionists continued to take cues from their English counterparts, making the analogy between the African and the American slave trades. John G. Palfrey did so in 1855, for example, when he drew a comparison between former Supreme Court justice Bushrod Washington, "at his slave barrack overlooking the Potomac," and "Mongo John . . . at his barracoon on the

---

published around 1805. In the borders of this uncompromising piece of propaganda, Anderson illustrated a wide array of tools of the African slave trade: yokes, leg irons, spiked ankle cuffs, a face mask with iron bit, and a neck iron with protruding hooks. "Injured Humanity; being A Representation of what the unhappy Children of Africa endure from those who call themselves Christians," (New York: Samuel Wood, [ca. 1805-1808]), copy at AAS. My thanks to Joanne Chaison for calling this broadside to my attention. Anderson apparently had modified his cuts from those of James Poupard, which had already been used in Tobias Hirte's German-language broadside, Sclaven-Handel (Philadelphia: Saumel Saur, 1794), Historical Society of Pennsylvania, repr. in Lapsansky, "Graphic Discord," 204-205.

Rio Pongo." Washington, nephew to the first President, had sold off a large number of his own slaves to Louisiana "gentlemen" despite his own position on the board of the American Colonization Society. Palfrey sought to equate Washington--literally a legacy of the revolutionary generation--to the decidedly undemocratic African traders of the Congo. Such analogies seem not to have played well with the American public, however, and abolitionists employed them relatively infrequently.[20]

Graphic artists could simply recycle African slave trade images into American ones in a rather obvious manner. The cover illustration for one edition of Amelia Opie's "The Negro Boy's Tale" showed an African woman wailing as traders rowed her son out to tall ships waiting off shore. The scene was clearly meant to portray the Atlantic slave trade, but on an abolitionist sampler sheet meant for reproduction, it was simply relabelled "The Domestic Slave Trade."[21] Unrealistic in the African context, it was ludicrous as a portrayal of the interstate trade, but it conveyed the sense of maternal longing and grief abolitionists saw in both slave trades. Another lithograph image referred quite obviously to a tropical region, either in Africa, the Caribbean, or South America (fig. 6). It was difficult to tell whether this scene represented Africans being

---

[20]John G. Palfrey, The Inter-State Slave Trade, Anti-Slavery Tracts, No. 5 (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society [1855]), 2. The controversy over Bushrod Washington's sale had taken place in 1821. See Gerald T. Dunne, "Bushrod Washington and the Mount Vernon Slaves," Supreme Court Historical Society Yearbook ([Washington, D. C.]: Supreme Court Historical Society, 1980), 25-29.

[21]Amelia Opie, The Negro Boy's Tale; a Poem by Amelia Opie; to which is added, The Morning Dream, &c. &c. &c. (New York: Samuel Wood & Sons, [1829?]). Legion of Liberty! (not paginated); the image is in the section entitled "American Slavery As It Is," which featured a series of various engravings, apparently for local abolitionist groups to copy.

brought to the coast or redeployed in the New World, and this ambiguity lent to its flexible use. To force the image to speak unmistakably to the American situation, an abolitionist artist simply plopped the United States Capitol building down on the horizon, lurking over the scene of what he now dubbed the "United States Slave Trade."[22]

It was this emphasis on the political implications of the domestic slave trade which drew artists to the topic in the 1830s. Working to ban or abolish slavery in federally controlled territories, abolitionists saw the nation's capital, on the banks of the Potomac, as a particularly important target. Drawing on the United States Capitol building itself for ironic symbolism proved a far more resonant theme than making the African analogy, and abolitionists used this tactic with glee. Here they linked domestic tranquility with domesticity most explicitly, pointing to the hypocracy of a thriving slave trade in an ostensible land of freedom. The most impressive example was a broadside published in 1836 by

---

[22]"United States Slave Trade," engraving, 1830, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, repr. in Jacobs, ed., Courage and Conscience, 62. Almanac publishers similarly borrowed from each other, altering Caribbean or African images to suit the American situation. In 1839, the American Anti-slavery Almanac featured a celebration of emancipation in the British West Indies. In the picture, a minister preached, another, surrounded by celebrants, read what must have been the proclamation, a notice declaring "Emancipation" was nailed to a tree, from which hung broken shackles. People tended their cottage homes, and mothers embraced their children. A ship off the coast, in the background, no longer represented the middle passage, now standing (most likely) for trade in freedom. A rising sun on the horizon signified the new day of freedom dawning. Eight years later, the Liberty Almanac took the same image as its cover, modifying it only by rather unceremoniously plopping down the U. S. Capitol where the sun had risen in the earlier engraving. This modification changed the entire scene from a symbolic portrayal of British emancipation to a fantasy scene of American emancipation. The American Anti-Slavery Almanac for 1839 (New York: S. W. Benedict; Boston: Isaac Knapp, [1838]), cover; and The Liberty Almanac, for 1847 (New York: William Harned, [1847]), cover. Both copies in AAS.

the American Anti-Slavery Society, entitled "Slave Market of America" (fig. 7).[23] The sheet's subtitles read, "The Land of the Free / The Home of the Oppressed." The first three images literally mapped out the essential contradiction inherent in the broadside's title. At left, the Founding Fathers read the Declaration of Independence. The caption established the claim all Americans held on the nation's capital. In the center lay a map of the federal city, showing the location of the Capitol building and of three slave jails, both private and public (fig. 4). This map laid out the agenda for this illustrated guided tour of the enslaved capital.

At right, both republican government and the slave trade were seen in action, hypocritically occupying the same territory. The scene opened on the Capitol building during the 1815-1816 session. As House members descended the steps, they witnessed a passing gang of manacled African-Americans driven on by a slave trader. The group of enslaved men, observing their spectators, raised their chained hands and sardonically sang "Hail Columbia! happy land," which was, the text noted, "the favorite National Song" (fig. 8). This scene, the broadside affirmed, was "not fancy, but literal fact." By singing "the favorite National Song" to the men who emphatically did not represent them, these enslaved Americans had sarcastically pointed to the hypocrisy of their own position, carried in slavery before the national Capitol, the supreme symbol of

---

[23]"Slave Market of America."

freedom.[24] This abolitionist poster emphasized that this practice went on with the consent of all the American people, northerners included, since the capital was under Congressional jurisdiction.

The broadside's second row of images turned to the public jails, the sites of incarceration slave sale under the authority of Congress and at public expense. Here the twin themes of citizenship and domesticity were driven home, calling on constituents to recognize their own stake in this federally sanctioned slave market. At left, one came up against the high outer wall of the city jail of Alexandria, then part of the District of Columbia (fig. 9). Whitewashed

---

[24]The broadside took as its authority Jesse Torrey, who had heard the story from Representative Adgate. Torrey experienced his own rather mystical version of the same event about the same time. On December 4th, 1815, he was on his way to see his first session of Congress when his attention was called to a slave trader's caravan heading out for Georgia. He caught up with them just as they passed the old Capitol building, which Torrey noted was still "in a state of ruins from the conflagration by the British army" during the War of 1812. He was dumbstruck, he said, by the sight of men, women, and children "in chains." He found the old Capitol's immolation evidence of God's wrath against the Americans for worshipping freedom while practicing slavery. The juxtaposition inspired a hallucinatory vision. Looking up in the sky over the ruined Capitol, he wrote, "I imagined I discerned the geniuses of Liberty and humanity," who pitied the enslaved and condemned the enslavers. The vision, in turn, inspired the engraving he commissioned for the frontispiece, in which he and all the people in chains witnessed the vision while the trader remained oblivious. The shell of the old Capitol lay before them like a ruined Roman temple, testifying to the depravity which Torry believed would destroy the American republic. Torrey, A Portraiture of Domestic Slavery in the United States: . . . Including Memoirs of Facts on the Interior Traffic in Slaves, and on Kidnapping (Philadelphia: Jesse Torrey, 1817), 62. The 1836 broadside misidentifies this story as the source for its "Hail Columbia" image. In fact, Torrey recounted Rep. Adgate's story in a footnote (39-40). Torrey may have provided more inspiration for the broadside in his emphasis on the proximate geography of slavery and liberty in the capital city. For example, he cited the specific locations of various atrocities spawned by the slave trade in the District of Columbia, including a woman's attempted suicide on F Street, near the Mayor's residence. He closed his section on America by returning to his vision of "the sable Afrco-American, who shook his manacles at the conservators of the rights of man, while he was dragged through the city of Liberty." Torrey envisioned a day when the freedman would "raise his unfettered hands, and again exclaim, 'Hail Columbia, happy land.'" Finally, Torrey understood the importance of moral geography, exemplified by his conversation with a boy poring over Goldsmith's Geography. Reading that "The inhabitants [of the United States] are justly famed for their ardent love of freedom," the boy seemed puzzled at American slavery until Torrey explained how "inhabitants" in this Geography's narrow construction, meant white people and "liberty" meant only white people's liberty. Torrey, Portraiture of Domestic Slavery, 32-33, 35-38, 40-49.

and featureless, the wall enclosed a yard and house, obscuring everything up to the top half of the second-story windows, which seem to peek out tentatively over the barrier. Crossed bars further obviated any view into those lights, however. The viewer saw no people at all in the picture, lending to the overall feeling of isolation and obfuscation conveyed by the blank prison wall. The caption detailed how Congress supported the arrest and sale of African Americans unable to prove their freedom, and how Congress had allocated public funds to build a new public jail in part to serve that end.

Proceeding to the right, the viewer found herself stepping up closer to the wall, now at the Washington public jail, where an auction was seen taking place (fig. 10). An uneasy feeling might creep in, as it was not obvious whether one was standing outside the wall or actually within the yard of the pen. From this new perspective, the public seemed shut out, embodied in what appeared to be a fine mansion sitting across the street, whose half-obscured windows, like those of the house inside the Alexandria jail, seemed to peer over the wall, this time down into the interior courtyard of the jail. Alternately, if one decided the auction was taking place outside the wall, then one still might feel the sense of obfuscation introduced in the image of the Alexandria jail.[25] Regardless, the viewers unease would be augmented to read that the image conveyed not a slave sale, but rather the "sale of a free citizen to pay his jail fees!" Taxpayer

---

[25]A later version of this image labeled this building "JAIL," indicating the scene was actually taking place just outside the pen wall. A third image, taken from a more distant perspective, showed a similarly detailed building standing inside the wall and only vacant lots outside. In this latter image, a sale was taking place outside the wall. American Anti-Slavery Almanac, for 1839, 7. The Liberty Almanac for 1847, not paginated; copy of each at AAS.

dollars allocated by Congress, the broadside noted, were being used to subsidize the actual enslavement of free black residents. Thus the status of the nation's capital city meant that all American citizens, not just southern ones, were implicated in the domestic slave trade. The poster sought to show how the legalities of slavery made it a national rather than just sectional problem.

The poster went on to emphasize more familial concerns, signalling a theme picked up far more frequently in the 1850s. The male citizen was complemented by the appearance, in the next image, of an enslaved woman with children, highlighting the theme of mother-child bonds which would grow to prominence in the 1850s. This scene carried the viewer into the darkened cells of the public jail (fig. 11). There, one peered in with two white observers in the picture, as the white keeper held open the heavy wooden door. The jailer wore a sword on his belt while another hung on the wall and over his head a rifle with bayonet lay in its cradle. In a bit of overkill, these weapons were arrayed against the prisoners the viewer sees emerging from the cell: a mother and her three children.

Thus the broadside played to gender conventions in showing this illicit enslavement's victims. The "citizen" sold on the block was an individual man, standing aloof and representing the free republican taxpayer wronged by his own government. To portray the cruelty of the jail, however, a place normally reserved for criminals, and therefore for men, the artists chose the representatives of the domestic sphere: a woman and her children. The cold, dark jail stood in stark contrast to how white mothers were to have envisioned their own bright, warm home, or at least its ideal.

Driving home the point of domesticity wronged, the text zeroed in on the individual story of Fanny Jackson, lifted from A. A. Phelps's 1834 account of his visit with her. Her husband was in a separate cell, and she had with her "three little children, one of them an infant at her breast." The family claimed they were entitled to freedom from their Loudon County, Virginia, master and had been held in jail nine months awaiting trial. "We spoke to the mother about her little ones," Phelps said, "and we found she had indeed a mother's heart." Phelps concluded, "The scene cannot be described," summing up abolitionists' very reason for seizing on the graphic arts to convey these sentimental stories. The three scenes together with their text provided sympathetic viewers both with the cause and the justification for intervening: terrible things were being done to families and citizens, with their tax dollars, and therefore in their name.

The third and final row of images documented the enslaved exodus from the Chesapeake at the behest of commercial slave traders J. W. Neal and the firm of Franklin and Armfield. To the left and right, coffles poured out of the slave pens, heading out symmetrically and diagonally away from the center of the poster. From the center, boatloads trickled out of Alexandria's harbor.

"Slave Market of America" proved a landmark piece of propaganda, bringing together elements of the growing body of abolitionist literature and imagery, stressing the documentary aspect of graphic art and testimonial, and especially bringing nationalism and domesticity to bear on the domestic slave trade. The influence of these images and text lived on through the Civil War, as abolitionists adapted its materials to suit more manageable formats.

Antislavery newspapers and almanacs proved more prolific and

amplified the link between the slave trade the problem of Unionism by drawing on patriotic symbols. When David Claypoole Johnston created the first illustrated masthead for William Lloyd Garrison's Liberator in 1831, he created an image placing the viewer right on the capitol lawn, viewing a slave auction (fig. 12). An auctioneer's sign signalled the commodification of people: "SLAVES HORSES & OTHER CATTLE TO BE SOLD." Black family members--a husband and wife with two children, along with a third adult--wept at the prospect of being split up. In the background sat the United States Capitol, flying a "Liberty" flag. His auction scene, rather static in its iconography, implied the forces of geographic chaos which lay behind the scene. Trammelled on the ground, almost unnoticed behind the letters of the title, lay a torn document labeled "Indian Treaties." Here together lay the dual means of southwestern expansion, both of them destroying and scattering human lives across the North American continent, and both, Garrison believed, potentially destroying the Union.[26]

Almanacs reproduced the scenes from the "Slave Market of America" broadside, repeating and amplifying the scenes with new stories. On this landscape, the images from the 1836 broadside stood as landmarks, familiar signposts to which abolitionists repeatedly turned. The images were recycled again and again as abolitionist artists elaborated on the theme of domesticity, the domestic slave trade, and domestic relations among northern and southern constituents. The American Anti-slavery Almanac and the various Liberty

[26]First illustrated masthead for The Liberator, first used 23 April 1831, repr. in Jacobs, ed., Courage and Conscience, 111. See also Johnston's preliminary drawing for the etching (11). Even before Garrison had an illustrated masthead, he was already targeting the interstate slave trade and slavery in the federal District of Columbia. See the first issue of The Liberator, 1 Jan. 1831, p. 1.

Almanacs (prefixed with United States, Western, and North-western) routinely copied scenes from the 1836 broadside as activists worked to abolish at least the slave trade in the District of Columbia. The auction scene reappeared, for example, in the 1839 American Anti-Slavery Almanac, now with an added domestic dimension. In the accompanying story, a "free colored coachman" was said to have been out seeking a midwife, for his wife was about to give birth. Stopped by patrollers, he was jailed despite "his tears and entreaties." He returned on his release only to find his wife dead.[27] An 1847 redrawing of the slave gang singing before the Capitol made sure to include women and children in the chained coffle.[28] This domestic vision came to flourish in the 1850s. In the meantime, however, abolitionists' view on the nation's capitol and on other patriotic symbols was more sharply focused

An illustration for the Anti-Slavery Record of 1835 exposed the disrespect put to the American flag by slave traders, facilitators of the Union's

---

[27]American Anti-Slavery Almanac, for 1839, 7. The Washington public jail appeared yet again, from a different perspective and with yet another auction scene, in The Liberty Almanac for 1847, not paginated. That volume also included a similarly distant perspective on Thomas William's jail, engraved, the editors said, after W. J. Corcoran's daguerreotype of Washington, D.C. The image of the Rev. Phelps's meeting with Fanny Jackson was reused as late as 1850. The Liberty Almanac for 1850 (New York: American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, [1849]), cover. My thanks to Russel L. Martin at the AAS, who helped guide me to the antislavery almanacs. All the examples cited here are in the AAS collection.

[28]The text made clear the need for this repetition of images. "That slave coffle marching by the capitol is not fancy," it insisted, "but a fact not unfrequently occurring," adding that "so late as the session of 1838-39, a similar scene was enacted." To abolitionist representative J. R. Giddings, quoted in the almanac, the coffle served as a direct rebuke to Congress, which in this latter incident had only recently reaffirmed its refusal to act on slavery in the District. The Liberty Almanac (New York: William Harned, [1846]), not paginated. On Joshua Giddings, the gag rule, and slavery in D. C. during the 1838-39 Congressional session, see William Lee Miller, Arguing About Slavery: The Great Battle in the United States Congress (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 339-348.

southwestern expansion (fig. 13). Citing an eyewitness account for its inspiration, the scene portrayed a gang of men and women being driven by a slave trader to the music of two enslaved fiddlers, all under the banner of the American flag. The traveller witnessing the event noted that the flag was "carried by a hand literally in chains." This witness felt sick, he said, "As a man, . . . as a Christian, . . . and as a republican."[29] In the 1844 American Anti-Slavery Almanac, William Lloyd's critical poem, "Fourth of July" was illustrated by a black man bound to a flagpole topped by the French liberty cap. The American flag billowing in the wind was marred by fourteen black stars representing the enslaved states of the Union. On the cover of that edition, a bald eagle clawed the back of a black woman, who struggled to protect her infant child in her arms (fig. 14). Overlooking the scene, of course, was the Capitol building, topped by the American flag.[30]

This ironic theme was played out against other public buildings as well, notably Virginia's own state capitol. In a subtle but caustically ironic contrast of image and text, I. I. Nevins painted a bucolic vision of Richmond as an Acropolis (fig. 15). Its civic and religious temples--the state house and the Memorial church--appeared in alabaster, as did its stores, homes, and warehouses. Set like a jewel on a lush, verdant hill, the capital city rose above the crystal-blue James

---

[29]The Anti-Slavery Record 1 (Feb. 1835), cover. Drawing back perhaps on the scene on the Capitol steps, the scene and text were reprinted under the title "Hail Columbia! Happy Land!!!," in The Legion of Liberty! (1843), not paginated.

[30]Garrison's poem stated that since men were "like household goods or servile beasts" bought and sold and "Driven in droves e'en by the Capitol," then Americans should "haul our striped and starry banner down" until this hypocracy ended. American Anti-Slavery Almanac for 1844, ed. D. L. Child (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, [1843]), cover, 36.

River, where an angler reposed amidst his pastoral yet urbane surroundings. The image harkened to a popular type of cityscape, exemplified in another painting of Richmond from roughly that same perspective only the previous year (fig. 16). The idea expressed in the genre was the perfect marriage of republican government and the bountiful American landscape. But Nevins undercut the tranquility of the scene with his shocking caption:

"Richmond -- Virginia
Where Men & Women are bought & Sold
like Cattle in a Market.
This I have seen."

In one fell swoop, Nevins's remark cast aspersions not only on Virginia's ostensibly republican government and Christian religion, but also on southern civil society more generally. While all appeared well from the distance of this visual perspective, Nevins's testimonial--"This I have seen"--spoke to his knowledge of the dirty inner workings of Richmond's glowing city on a hill.[31]

---

[31]Nevins may have added the commentary long after painting the scene. The margin noted ar right that "The original view was taken by I. I. N. Mar. 27. 1820," and at left, "By I. I. Nevins Feb. 10. 1844." I. I. Nevins, "Richmond, Virginia," Valentine Museum, Richmond, Virginia, repr. in Gregg D. Kimball, "Expanding the Notion: The African American Presence in Virginia Cavalcade, 1851-1996," Virginia Cavalcade (Autumn 1996), 94-95. Anon., "Richmond," 1819, repr. in Virginia Cavalcade. This point was driven home in several other striking images, notably the auction scene taking place under the classical rotunda of the St. Louis Hotel in New Orleans, engraved by M. Starling for J. S. Buckingham's Slave States of America (1841); repr. in Ann Patton Malone, Sweet Chariot: Slave Family and Household Structure in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1992), following 202, fig. 11. In his lithograph, "The Sale," J. Noel Paton faintly sketched a generic state-house hovering in the background, indicating the state's sanction of slave sale. See J. Noel Paton, Bond and Free; Five Sketches Illustrative of Slavery (Glasgow: Art-Union of Glasgow; Maclure & Macdonald, Lithographers, ca. 1855-1863[?]), copy at AAS. These images, however polemical, had their bases in reality. As Thomas D. Russell points out, slave sales took place with great regularity on the steps or in the yards of every courthouse in the South, lending the slave market some regularity, predictability, and liquidity. See Thomas D. Russell, "Sale Day in Antebellum South Carolina: Slavery, Law, Economy, and Court

The cold sarcasm common to many abolitionist images of the 1830s and 1840s tended to give way in the 1850s to a more fully sentimentalized portrayal of slaves in the market. The focus shifted and softened, highlighting the emotional rather than the political impact of the domestic slave trade. This change coincided broadly with radical abolitionists' abandonment of direct political action in favor of a moral campaign to win the nation's soul.[32] This strategic path emphasized slavery's moral implications, particularly those regarding African Americans' domestic lives. To this end, abolitionists seized on novels and children's gift books, two genres which served the larger reformist goal of imposing discipline through moral rather than corporal force. In doing so, they contributed not only to abolitionism, but to the inculcation of their own version of domesticity, imposing discipline through sentimental means.[33] Early sentimental morality tales served abolitionist purposes only dubiously, aimed as they were more squarely at the moral development of their presumed readers, middle-class white children in the North. Moral instruction often overcame abolitionism, as the empathetic agenda often instead reinforced the clear distinction between white readers and black objects of pity.[34]

Supervised Sales," Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1993, pp. 80-85.

[32]Garrison and other radicals held the Constitution and politics in general to be hopelessly compromised with slaveholding interests. In 1840, Garrison succeeded in holding onto the American Anti-Slavery Society, while "conservatives" left to form the Liberty Party and the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. James B. Stewart, Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 93-96.

[33]Brodhead, Culture of Letters, 47.

[34]Sanchez-Eppler, "Bodily Bonds," 110-111.

Margaret B. Smith's American Mother; or the Seymour Family, published in 1823 in Washington, D. C., carried antislavery overtones, but focused more centrally on the evils of disobedience and the salvation found in realizing one's own wickedness. The fictional white Seymour family, living in Georgetown, D. C., stood on the crossroads of the nation and of slavery; Mrs. Seymour was the American Mother of the title, yet she apparently held two enslaved house servants. Smith carefully positioned the Seymour family's relation to slavery in an exchange early on. Walking through a dark patch of woods with her mother, little Louisa became frightened by a dark figure approaching. "Oh! Mamma," she cried, "what great black thing is that coming along the road?" Mrs. Seymour assured here that there were no "wild beasts" or "robbers" around, but Louisa was not consoled. She persisted, touching off a didactic exchange:

"But may-be, it is a negro-buyer, mamma?"

"Well, my dear, as we are not negroes, he will not hurt us."

"But may-be it's a run-away negro?"

"If it is, he will be afraid of us."

Mrs. Seymour's words assured Louisa that they were not associated with fearful slave traders; nor, clearly, were they "negroes"; nor were they the kind of white people to whom runaways would immediately turn. Mrs. Seymour had effectively distanced and protected her family from aspects of slavery that might prove frightening, including both slave traders and fugitives from slavery.[35]

The "black thing" on the road turned out to be "Aunt Betty," the subject

---

[35]Margaret Bayard Smith, American Mother; or, The Seymour Family (Washington, D.C.: Davis & Force, 1823), 26-27. Copy at AAS.

and object of that chapter's story within a story. As Smith let Aunt Betty tell her own story, Smith drew on white Virginians' moral geography, locating all the cruelties imposed Betty in Georgia, a land characterized, with certain exceptions, by passion, hatred, and irreligion, a land where domesticity was impossible for Betty. By contrast, Georgetown, the Seymour's hometown,was characterized by kindness, prayer, and love. The recipient of these gestures in Georgetown, Aunt Betty learned to forgive her cruel white masters and mistresses.[36]

Smith's story included many elements amplified by more explicitly abolitionist fiction in the decades to come: the ineffectiveness of masters' best intentions, the forced migration of slaves from parents and spouses, masters' inhumane punishments, antipathy of slaves towards masters, and slaves' lack of religious instruction. But for Smith, Aunt Betty's true role was to provide an object lesson for the Seymour children about "the sad effects of disobedience and telling lies," and of the salvation which came through recognizing and repenting of the wickedness within one's own heart.[37]

Even northern abolitionist texts fell into some of these same traps. In an 1832 story by Elizabeth Follen, the character Mr. Nelson related to his children the story of a destitute fugitive woman he had seen in North Carolina. Her master had moved away, threatening to separate her from her husband, who was owned by another man nearby. She absconded and hid with her two

---

[36]Aunt Betty's first master and mistress in Georgia were kind; they proved the exception. Smith, American Mother, 43-63.

[37]Smith, American Mother, 51. Smith's focus on mother-child moral sway was heightened by the absence of any father in the Seymour home, at least in this story.

children in the swamps. Her husband helped procure food at first, but then inexplicably stopped coming. By the time Mr. Nelson had witnessed her, she and the children were desperate, dressed only in rags, and deformed by their hardship. Rather than draw an antislavery message, however, Mr. Nelson--and therefore Follen--turned the poor woman and her children into an object lesson for his own children. Anyone who witnessed this woman's "tender and faithful affection," he said, and who had "been unfaithful in his own affections" would surely "come away instructed and rebuked by the example of this humble, living martyr to affection."[38]

Just as African-American attempts to maintain domestic ties served abolitionists as examples to their own children, so too did slave traders and slave catchers lurk in the shadows outside the idealized northern domestic sphere, urging white children to cling more tenaciously to their own hearths and homes. In these stories, fugitive women had come to inhabit the homes of the north, bringing their stories of slavery into bourgeois domestic space and creating a tension for white children nominally protected from the market by that domestic

---

[38][Elizabeth Lee Cabot Follen] Sequel to "The Well-Spent Hour"; or the Birth-Day (Boston: Carter and Hendee, 1832), 76-82; quote 82. In stories like The Edinburg Doll, white children's abolitionist sentiments, here embodied in the doll made by a dying girl, provided the focus, rather than enslaved sufferers themselves; see Aunt Mary (pseud.), The Edinburgh Doll and Other Tales for Children (Boston: John P. Jewett & Co., and Cleveland, Oh.: Jewett, Proctor, and Worthington, 1854). Other examples of abolitionist portrayals of African-American domesticity or appeals to the domestic sensibilities of white northern readers are numerous. See, for example, Ralph; or I Wish He Wasn't Black (Hopedale, Mass.: E. Gay, 1855), 17-21. The Envoy; from Free Hearts to the Free, ed. Frances Harriet Whipple [Green] (Pawtucket, R. I.: Juvenile Emancipation Society, 1840), esp. the following selections: H. H., "Appeal of a Slave Mother," 22-27; Judith Seal, "The Instinct of Childhood," 42-53; and Sophia L. Little, "Lament of the Slave Bridegroom," 85-91. Copies at AAS. My thanks to Laura Wasowicz for guiding me through the American Antiquarian Society's immense collection of juvenile literature.

sphere. One typical story was accompanied by a frontispiece perfectly illustrating this tension. Here, in this tidy northern kitchen, with candlesticks, containers, even a fly-swatter arranged neatly around the fireplace, the black housekeeper Mary told little white Louisa about her past as a slave in the South. Through the open window, readers could witness the incidents Mary was apparently narrating: a fleeing man run down by another man (a slave catcher) on a horse, while a white gentleman, arms outstretched and top-hat flying in his haste, pursued a dark-skinned woman with wanton abandon (fig. 17).

In the story itself, Mary herself had fled after her infant was sold from her, and she would soon have to flee again, thanks to the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, which drew the free north into the slave market. Perplexed, little Louisa asked, "Is every body bought, mother?" Louisa's mother offered this comfort by highlighting their own racial differences from Mary: "you and I happen to be born in a country where, if persons are white, it is against the law to buy and sell them, but if they are black they may be bought and sold. If we had not been born white I might have been sold to one master and you to another a thousand miles off, so that we would never see each other more."[39]

Unlike many other children's writers, Louisa's author tried to keep the focus on the plight of fugitives themselves, not the white readers. Seeing Louisa grieve at the knowledge of the slave trade, her mother counseled her first not to think of herself when faced with others' sufferings, and second, to try to think of

---

[39]S. C. C. ["author of the 'Wonderful Mirror'"], Louisa in Her New Home (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, 1854), frontispiece, 16-20. The empathetic and didactic thrust of such stories is perhaps most obviously exemplified by "The Story of Helen, George, and Lucy," in Aunt Mary, Edinburgh Doll, 21-25.

something else for a while if slavery troubled her too much. But the damage was done and the lesson was clear. "Oh! mother," Louisa exclaimed, "how can I ever amuse myself?" Thinking of her own little sister, she asked rhetorically, "Could I forget if little Lucy had been sold to somebody, and we should never see each other again? No, I can never think of any thing else, mother, so don't ask me to."[40]

These earlier works portrayed fugitive or enslaved women unable to fulfill their domestic duties as free white women were, asking for white women's pity at this failure of domesticity caused by the slave trade. Models for the illustrations of African-Americans could be found in the literature on the African slave trade. Abolitionists in the 1830s began to imagine African families in the absence of the slave market, in more successful domestic configurations. William Lloyd Garrison's 1835 collection, Juvenile Poems for the Use of Free American Children of Every Complexion, included scenes of African mothers torn from children by traders, contrasted with a vision of "An Emancipated Family." Here the model nuclear family, mother father, and three children, were seen in their tidy hut. Neatly arranged along the wall and shelf were farm and domestic implements. The father was reading, presumably the Bible, while one child clung affectionately onto his neck. Out their door, another nuclear family group headed down the road to the church, whose steeple and cross presided over this

---

[40]In fact, Louisa's mother had taken in the fugitive Mary out of similar sympathies. As she told Louisa, "When I heard her speak of her baby who was just your age, and saw the flash of anger in her eye, and remembered how happy I was when you first opened your eyes upon me, and then thought of what I should feel were you taken from my arms, I prayed God to help me in comforting the poor mother, who had neither child, nor husband, nor friend that she knew of in the world, and had never been told that there is one Friend that is always with us and ready to help us when we seem most alone." S.C.C., Louisa in Her New Home, 17-18, 20-21.

scene of domestic order. The contrast to the slave auction, where one child stood on the auction table while the other flails in its mother's arms, was clear.[41]

The publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's sensational novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin, in 1852 saw the further softening of abolitionist imagery in the heightened sentimentalization of enslaved nuclear families. The first edition included eight illustrations by Hammat Billings, who in the 1850s had redesigned the masthead for The Liberator. It included the obligatory auction scene, meant to illustrate the sale of fourteen-year old Albert from his mother Hagar (fig. 18). Billings's scene, however, conveyed relative quiescence, with no obvious emphasis on the separation of families, no wailing or weeping mothers, and no young children present. Three of the six other illustrated scenes were of enslaved nuclear families. On the title page the reader would see Uncle Tom's family at their cabin door. In the next image, Eliza clutched her child Harry in her arms and informed Tom and Chloe that Tom and Harry had been sold. The final illustrated scene was of the nuclear family in freedom: George, Eliza, and Harry. The theme of separation was always implicit, somewhat obscured in the softened image of slave nuclear groups held as the archetypical slave family.[42]

---

[41]William Lloyd Garrison, ed., Juvenile Poems: for the Use of Free American Children of Every Complexion (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1835), copy at AAS. See also the nuclear family group portrayed on abolitionist stationery. Envelope containing letter from Oliver Johnson to E. D. Hudson, 22 July 1841, in Slavery in the U. S. Collection, AAS.

[42]Billings' illustrations for the first edition of Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852) are reproduced in Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture, http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/utc/. See also Taylor, "An American Slave Market," oil painting, 1852, Chicago Historical Society, repr. in Just the Arti-Facts: Slavery, http://www.chicagohs.org/AOTM/, 1997. It was clearly modeled on Billings's frontispiece illustration in first edition of Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852); the details are the same, down to the runaway poster.

When Jewett and Company put out the second, "splendid" edition of Uncle Tom's Cabin for that year's Christmas season, they commissioned Billings to create over one hundred new illustrations.[43] Billings had modified his auction scene of Albert by departing from the standard perspective of auction block scenes, focused on the auctioneer, with the slave on the block. Instead, Billings focused on Albert, who now appeared clearly as a youngster and was being grabbed or roughly examined by the trader Haley (fig. 19). Hagar watched from her hunched-over position at the left, while the auctioneer carried on with other business in the background. This new scene carried a more chaotic theme, with no clear and orderly auction taking place. Its focus was more directly on the sale's impact on the family members involved, rather than the act of the sale itself.

This new image of separation captured the imagination of Jewett's layout artists, apparently, for they simply copied it into several different children's gift books, changing only the caption to suit each new story. These images proved extremely popular and gained a currency all their own as Jewett re-used them. Scenes of auction blocks and of family parting had become icons in their own right. They could be read and understood even without the accompanying text, which usually replicated in varied form the themes of Uncle Tom's Cabin. In

---

[43]Billings's illustrations to Uncle Tom's Cabin "splendid edition" (1853), repr. in Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture, http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/utc/. An English edition published in 1853 contained even more illustrations, more than one hundred fifty, engraved by William Thomas from drawings by George Thomas and T. R. MacQuoid. See Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom's Cabin; or Life among the Lowly; A Tale of Slave Life in America (London: Nathaniel Cooke, Milford House, Strand, 1853), copy at AAS. Still another set of illustrations was commissioned for Pictures and Stories from Uncle Tom's Cabin (Boston: John P. Jewett & Co., 1853[?]), copy at AAS and repr. in Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture.

Kate Barclay's "Crispy's Story" of 1856, the scene became a generic "Selling negroes at auction"; in the Child's Anti-Slavery Book of 1859, however, the scene was designated, "Little Lewis Sold." Billings's scene of Uncle Tom sold away from his family gained iconic status as well, copied for the frontispiece to Child's Anti-Slavery Book as well as to illustrate the "Farewell to home" of "Old Caesar," in another Jewett publication, Grandmother's Stories for Little Children (fig. 20).[44]

Images of Eliza clutching her son Harry gained particularly wide currency. In the post-Uncle Tom world of abolitionist children's literature, every runaway woman became Eliza, just as every pious little white girl became little Eva. In 1856, Billings's illustration of Eliza (still clutching little Harry) with Tom and Chloe was used to illustrate Kate Barclay's poem, "Little Nell" (fig. 21). In Barclay's poem, the child Harry became Little Nell (indeed, he had been disguised as a little girl in Stowe's novel, and Billings had portrayed him as rather feminine) and the two seated figures became Nell's grandparents. The poem heightened the domestic focus. Nell and her mother, it appears, had been ordered to leave "the only place that is dear," their home. The parents wept, for their daughter was "the light of their eyes." Similarly, Nell was the sole center of her mother's joy and affection, her father now "sleeping beneath the sod." No separation of Nell from her mother was imminent, yet the poem warned the little infant to "Cling tight," for "Too soon, all too soon, may you too / Be torn

---

[44]The Child's Anti-Slavery Book; containing a Few Words about American Slave Children and Stories of Slave-Life (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1859). Grandmother's Stories for Little Children (Boston: John P. Jewett & Co.; Cleveland, Ohio: Jewett, Proctor, and Worthington, 1854), 26. Copies at AAS.

from those arms."[45]

Thus images of family separations through sale--though not always at the auction block--and images of mother-child duos fleeing to escape such separation became part of the stock in trade for abolitionist children's literature. The repetition of images served several purposes at once. It saved the publishers' time and money, since they did not have to hire another artist or commission new works for each new gift book.[46] It also served to capitalize on the popularity of Uncle Tom's Cabin by providing the visible reference to her popular work.[47] Finally, it worked in the end to codify and reinforce notions of

---

[45]Kate Barclay, "Little Nell," in Minnie May; with Other Rhymes and Stories (Boston: J. P. Jewett & Co.; Cleveland: Jewett, Proctor, and Worthington, 1856), 24-25. The more common scene of Eliza crossing the ice over the Ohio river was re-used in Grandmother's Stories (10) as "Nelly's escape," and was widely copied by other artists for other children's books. For the 1858 book Jemmy and His Mother, the artist created something like a black Madonna and Child for the title page. Illustrating "Susan and Jemmy Hiding," the artist also put the two in a stance readers would surely recognize as that of Eliza and Harry. Jemmy and His Mother, A Tale for Children; and Lucy, or the Slave Girl of Kentucky (Cincinnati: American Reform Tract and Book Society, 1858), 2-3. As with the recycling of African images for the American slave trade, Billings's images did not necessarily fit these new stories at all. For example, in Grandmother's Stories, the scene of little Eva meeting Uncle Tom on the ship was used to illustrate "Rosey bidding the servants good by" on the plantation, despite the visible ocean horizon and ship in the background (16).

[46]In Jemmy and His Mother, for example, two illustrations were each used twice in the same story (frontispiece, 8, 19, 31).

[47]Other authors did the same, creating similar illustrations for their own works. Richard Hildreth, for example, revised his own 1836 antislavery novel hoping to ride the coattails of Uncle Tom's Cabin's runaway success. His 1852 British edition and 1855 American edition were illustrated with images Stowe's readers would easily recognize: slave auctions, tender scenes between enslaved husband and wife, and tragic deathbed scenes. See Richard Hildreth, ed. [i.e., author], The White Slave: A Story of Life in Virginia, Etc. (London: Ingram, Cooke, & Co., 1852). Richard Hildreth, Archy Moore: The White Slave; or Memoirs of a Fugitive, with a New Introduction (New York: Miller, Orton & Co., 1857). Although the book was sometimes apparently taken as an autobiography written by Moore and edited by Hildreth, in the introduction to the 1857 edition he clearly acknowledged his authorship, giving a review of the book's publishing history and reception by critics.

sentimental domesticity held as a norm and projected onto enslaved families by their white northern allies. By sheer repetition of their vision of black domesticity under constant assault by the slave market, abolitionists hoped gradually to sway the hearts of the children who read their books, not to mention their parents.

This strategy of empathy was seen not only in the general portrayal of families but also in the way Stowe and Billings focused much of their attention on "white" slaves being separated from family. George, Eliza, and Harry were portrayed with very "light" features, as was Emmeline, sold on the auction block.[48] One antislavery almanac drove home the point by citing a dozen examples of slaves who appeared white. The editors conclusion, aimed at white readers, was that slaveholders had "no respect for color," that the slaveholder "will have a slave, and he cares not whether his victim be white or black, red or brown, grizzly or grey."[49] If slavery was arbitrary and could even be imposed on a "white" person, then even white northerners should take an interest, abolitionists implied. The slave trade reached them as well. George Bourne, who had been exiled from Virginia for his criticisms of slavery, made the horrors of enslaving white people even more explicit. He recounted how kidnappers had taken a free white boy, dyed his skin with tannen, and sold him into slavery far away from his parents. Kidnapping, like the domestic slave trade, relied on

---

[48]See Billings's illustration for Stowe, Uncle Tom's Cabin (1853), ch. 30, repr. in Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture, http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/utc/. This illustration also found use in children's gift books.

[49]North-Western Liberty Almanac for 1848 (Chicago: [1847]), 30-31, copy at AAS.

natal alienation, the removal of one from the families who laid claim to them. Moreover, for Bourne, the point was that slavery allowed for such abuses, where whiteness did not necessarily protect one from exploitation.[50]

Abolitionists' fictional and graphic portrayal of enslaved families were informed and perhaps compromised by the reformist ideals they hoped to implement at home in the North. Through sentimental portrayals of slaves' families being broken up, antislavery writers and artists warned their own children to cling tightly to and be thankful for their loving mothers. Abolitionists held up slavery as the negative example of social organization, warning parents and children about the extremes to which greed--expressed through the slave market--could drive free people. They focused on the slave trade in part because it highlighted their own fears about the impact of the market revolution in the North. At the same time, they acknowledged the connections between slavery and the wage system only in a backhanded manner. The new market economy affected free families in detrimental ways, but these dislocations paled in comparison to what was possible in slavery, they held.

In one telling example, an antislavery almanac asked its readers to imagine the slave market working in northern society. "Most of the work in our cotton factories is done by girls," the story began. "Now suppose the owners of these factories held all these girls as slaves," the editor asked. "Suppose they have torn them from their parents, chained, them in coffles, and driven them to their establishments, where they keep them under drivers, and the whip, from

---

[50]George Bourne, Picture of Slavery in the United States (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838). Illustrations for his book are repr. in Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture, http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/utc/.

daylight till dark." The point of this fantasy was to extract an admission from readers that they would never council such an exploitation of white people, their own daughters. But, the editor pointed out, by purchasing slave-made products, including cotton, northern consumers were in fact "partners in a slave-holding firm." In this editor's analysis, "You, the buyer and consumer, are the prime mover of the whole" system of exploitation.[51]

Despite abolitionists' attempts to link consumer behavior with the exploitation of African Americans, including by making the analogy to their own free white daughters in the cotton mills, abolitionists still worked uncritically within the same consumer market. They tried to exploit consumption patterns by marketing abolitionist literature and sentimental artifacts to domesticated middle-class homes. By seizing on techniques of mass marketing, however, they were unable to escape another, less direct kind of exploitation and commodification of African Americans.

Abolitionists participated in a sentimental fetishism which linked them inextricably to the world of commodities from which both abolitionists and domestic reformers sought to shelter the institution of the family.[52] Abolitionists sometimes turned back to the tactic Thomas Clarkson had used in 1808, focusing on the instruments of enslavement and making them the object lesson for readers. Now, however, the artifacts served a more clearly didactic purpose, and were to strike a sentimental chord among children. The means was through the

---

[51]American Anti-Slavery Almanac for 1841 (New York, [1840]), 20, copy at AAS.

[52]See Brown, Domestic Individualism, 39, 43, 50-51.

expanded niche of children's books and the popular identification with Uncle Tom created by Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 novel. In an 1853 children's book entitled Uncle Tom's Kindred, the author imagined an exchange between a father, Mr. Murray, and his daughter, Ellen, focusing on a set of coffle-yokes illustrated on the page (fig. 22). Little Ellen, it seems, did not know what a coffle was; "Will you tell me, dear father?" she implored. He complied, explaining how slaves were linked together to form a gang, "and driven from one place to another." On looking at the illustration of the coffle yoke, Ellen still did not quite understand. "I do not see how they can fasten it upon the slaves," she said. Mr. Murray again took pains to explain the process, and urged little Ellen to "Just look at the picture!"[53] This imagined interaction with the image of the coffle irons replicated the exchange the reader and her own children were to undertake. The little book instructed parents, in fact, how to conduct the enquiry, using the illustration of the artifact to focus the child's questions and to provide a concrete image to attach to the concept of slavery and the forced slave migration. The author and illustrator intended the object to provide the crucial sentimental link, the bridge of empathy between white middle-class northern children and southern African-American slaves.

---

[53]E. Smith, ed. Uncle Tom's Kindred, or The Wrongs of the Lowly; Exhibited in a Series of Sketches and Narratives, v. 1 (Mansfield, Oh.: E. Smith, for the Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America, 1853), 34-35; copy at AAS. This issue also included the John G. Whittier poem, "The Farewell of a Virginia Slave Mother to her Daughters, Sold into Southern Bondage" (142-144). This was to be the first of ten volumes, but I have not been able to locate any others in the series. This compilation culled sentimental antislavery sketches, both graphic and textual, from other antislavery periodicals, including The Slave's Friend, a one-cent monthly published by the American Anti-Slavery Society, 1836-1838. For images from The Slave's Friend, see Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture, http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/utc/.

Especially in the wake of the mass marketing of Uncle Tom's Cabin, abolitionists developed quite an extensive vocabulary in tactile expression. Heightening the more mainstream aspects of sentimental culture, they created and marketed their own sentimental tokens by which they hoped people would "remember the slave," even while resting comfortably in their own middle-class northern homes. Many of these manufactured artifacts featured the cameo of the generic kneeling slave pleading "Am I not a man and a Brother?" or "Am I not a woman and a sister?" These tokens of sentiment ranged from the purely ornamental medallions to items women would use out in public or around the home: silk handkerchiefs, drawstring bags, pin-cushions (fig. 23).[54] Perhaps the most wry was a hand-stitched a pot holder bearing two black figures and the slogan, "Any holder but a slave holder."[55]

While this pot-holder was hand-made, the others were mass-produced, as were the numerous decorative and sentimental objects of Uncle Tom bric-a-brac. These artifacts of antislavery domesticity included Staffordshire figurines sentimentalizing Uncle Tom's relationship with little Eva, the angelic daughter of slaveholders. They also included chinaware bearing the image of Tom being sold away to the deep South (fig. 24).[56] These antislavery images thereby

---

[54]Silk bags, pincushion, medallion, ca. 1820-1830, Daughters of the American Revolution Museum, Washington, D. C., photograph in Courage & Conscience, ed. Jacobs, 50. See also silk handkerchief, ca. 1840, private collection (16). For another pincushion and medallion from the 1830s, see illustration in Lapsansky, "Graphic Discord," 207-208.

[55]Potholders, CHS; photo unavailable.

[56]"Uncle Tom's Cabin; The Buyer and Seller of the Human Article," earthenware plate, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, repr. in Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture, http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/utc/.

embroiled themselves in the very market-oriented commodification of slaves--albeit in representational form--that abolitionists aimed to attack.

These two forms of consumption were in fact there to be seen. A building on Whitehall Street in Atlanta advertised both "Negro Sales" and "China, Glass, & Queensware" (fig. 25).[57] Here the market revolution was seen in toto, bringing southern white buyers both the conveniences of slave labor for market-crop production and the inexpensive consumer items one could purchase with the wealth created by slave labor. Buyers could participate in both patriarchal and bourgeois consumption. Not even abolitionists seemed to identify this as a contradiction or as an ideological problem for their own criticism. Instead, they condemned the slave trade in part by embracing other more banal forms of middle-class consumption.

Antislavery artifacts, created as personal tokens of the abolitionists' cause, married the media of illustration and material culture. One of the most telling examples of the personal and political import of such items came, fittingly, from a child. As the Philadelphia Anti-Slavery Society's newspaper reported in January 1838, the office had received a little wooden donation box. On its lid was a scene now familiar, inspired by Jesse Torre's 1817 account and made manifest in the 1836 broadside, "Slave Market of America." Chained members of a trader's coffle passed yet again in review before the United States Capitol, singing "Hail Columbia! Happy Land." Inside the box was one dollar and twenty cents. This little box, with its inspiration and purpose imprinted on its lid,

---

[57]George N. Barnard, ["Auction and Negro Sales," Whitehall St., Atlanta, Ga.], photograph, ca. Sept.-Nov. 1864, LOC, repr. in American Memory: Historical Collections for the National Digital Libaray, http://memory.loc.gov/.

had been carried around and lovingly filled by a young boy, one member of the juvenile army abolitionists were raising through their sentimental literature and moral teachings. The box linked abolitionist imagery to abolitionist purpose in a concrete way, motivating this young activist and perhaps helping him instruct others as he collected for the cause. The antislavery office, by publishing the story, hoped to complete the circle of propaganda and activism by inspiring more parents to involve their children in the cause.[58]

Some of these objects, like the coffle irons, were meant to convey the harsh reality of chattel slavery. Others, like the china plates, created a more sentimentalized approach and focused on slave families. Abolitionists used both in order to strike a chord among the viewers. A viewer would have to make an empathetic leap, moving towards a condemnation of the commodification of African Americans via the viewer's own patterns of middle-class consumption.

Antislavery writers invoked other images, notably the slave trade coffles, or gangs marching south to markets in the cotton country. While graphic images of coffles might have served abolitionist purpose, they did so only imperfectly, as travelers sighted them only fleetingly. James Silk Buckingham, a British traveler in Virginia, illustrated his travel narrative with an image of a

---

[58]Bernard F. Reilly, Jr., "The Art of the Antislavery Movement," in Courage & Conscience, ed. Jacobs, 47. The image on this box would have been similar to the one in the broadside "Slave Market of America," fig. 8 above. The story was first reported in the Philadelphia National Enquirer and Constitutional Advocate of Universal Liberty, 25 Jan. 1838.

slave coffle crossing the Rapidan River (fig. 26).[59] His artist's obvious romanticism would seem to have blunted any criticism of the slave trade, rendering African Americans exotic travelers rather than forced migrants or sentimentalized family members. George Featherstonhaugh, another Briton traveling through Virginia, was more struck by the apparent hypocracy that the slave traders would wear black hatbands in mourning for the Marquis de Lafayette, and his artist focused accordingly on the white traders rather than the slaves themselves (fig. 27).[60]

Perhaps more common in travelers' accounts were descriptions of auction scenes. Northerners had heard about these scenes via fugitive autobiographers and public lecturers, and they had been shown images of them in abolitionist propaganda since at least the 1830s. Again, however, not all travel writers were overtly abolitionist, and their observations carried mixed implications. New Englander William B. Banister kept his thought of his own southern sojourn to himself, written in his diary. Still, he conveyed the sense of incompleteness with which all such travelers witnessed the scenes of slave sale. He apparently sought out information from some of the enslaved themselves and found that "when inquired of," they "speak freely of their condition, & complain not of it, --with t[he] only exception of their liability to be sold, & to be separated." His own

---

[59]James Silk Buckingham, The Slave States of America 2 vols. (London: Fisher, Son, & Co., 1842), v. 2, 552-553. Image repr. in Robert L. Scribner, "Slave Gangs on the March," Virginia Cavalcade 3 (Autumn 1953), 10-12. Scribner also points to the scene's romanticism.

[60]George W. Featherstonhaugh, Excursion through the Slave States, from Washington on the Potomac to the Frontier of Mexico; with Sketches of Popular Manners and Geological Notices (New York: Harper & Bros., 1844), 36-39, 45-48. Image repr. in Robert L. Scribner, "Slave Gangs on the March," Virginia Cavalcade 3 (Autumn 1953), 10.

feelings ran against slavery, yet he recorded uncritically what he must have learned from the "hightoned slavery folk" he met and traveled with. "They are usually sold in families," he averred, "& it is discreditable to separate them, both to seller & purchaser." In fact, most had "liberty to choose their purchaser" if the price was agreeable. When he finally did witness an auction, in Charleston, he noted with care that one family was sold all together: "father & mother, & six or eight children," along with the mother's parents. Noting that another "family" comprised "a mother & two or three children," he added parenthetically, "where t[he] father was I know not,--perhaps a free man." One could hope. Banister also saw "two fine looking boys, about ten years old, [sold] for $750. & $800." If he wondered where their families were, he did not record his musing.[61]

The Rev. Nehemiah had perhaps less innocent motives in his obfuscation of the slave market's deprivations. Traveling south in 1854, he had ostensibly possessed antislavery leanings. Something changed his mind, however, and his book, South-Side View of Slavery became a rallying cry against the sentimentalized abolitionism of Harriet Beecher Stowe. Adams pointed especially to the partiality of northerners' views of slavery in recounting what he witnessed of the impending auction of an infant. His description of an auction fit the stereotype established by abolitionists, and, as he noted, he "could take this case, so far as I have described it, go into any pulpit," and "harrow up the

---

[61]Banister, "Diary of a journey . . . to Charleston, S.Ca.," AAS. Banister's criticism of slavery was directed mostly at the lack of opportunity it seemed to afford white labor and enterprise; he frequently contrasted the scattered settlement and "incomplete" appearance of Southern cities with the compact urbanization of the North. He also saw a contrast in labor relations, as noted above, favoring New Englanders' ostensible warmth to southern slaveholders' harshness.

feelings of every father and mother." But unlike abolitionist travelers, he said, he had waited around to hear the rest of the story, to discover the larger context which explained the sale. The child, it turned out, was being sold only as a legal way to secure the mother's master's title to the child, and thus to keep them together.[62] Adams's lesson was that northerners should to use caution in reading abolitionist materials. The images and descriptions of auction blocks do not necessarily condemn the institution.

Despite Adams' attempt to overturn abolitionists' favorite trope, it only gained currency with the sectional debate in the 1850s. The most famous auction block images date from this period, the product of British artist Eyre Crowe. Crowe toured the South in 1853 as a sketch artist for the London Illustrated News, one of the first such illustrated periodicals, which was soon joined by Harper's Weekly, Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, and others. These large-format, highly illustrated news periodicals were aimed at a mass reading audience, and Crowe doubtless had this national, even international influence in mind in crafting his images. While he produced sketches of various aspects of the sales, including a man being examined by a potential buyer and women waiting to be sold, the paper featured his auction scenes most prominently, publishing them amidst the Kansas-Nebraska controversy (figs. 28, 29).[63]

Crowe himself seemed to have had other interests, both aesthetic and

---

[62]Nehemiah Adams, A South-Side View of Slavery; or, Three Months at the South, in 1854 1854 (repr. New York: Kennikat Press, 1969), 64-65, 69; quote 65.

[63]Illustrated London News, 27 Sept. 1856, p. 315 (Richmond scene shown in fig. 28); 29 Nov. 1856, p. 555 (Charleston scene, fig. 29, repr. in Bancroft, Slave Trading, btw. 168-169).

political. Between his Richmond trip in 1853 and the Civil War, he painted two oils from sketches he had made. He turned his focus away from the spectacle of the auction block and looked instead at two moments, before and after the sale. The London Illustrated had printed a version of his sketch of slaves waiting for sale (figs. 30, 31).[64] But Crowe wanted to elaborate on his sketch in full color. Where his sketch and the newspaper etching had been rough and even caricatured, his renderings in oil were full of life and wide ranging in their subjects' demeanor (fig. 32).[65] Crowe put the auctioneers and buyers literally in the background. One trader or auctioneer loomed over the scene, but his attention was drawn elsewhere, probably to the auction block out of image, at the other end of the room, or to the doorway to the left.[66] Several other buyers hovered in the doorway, intent only on their own conversations, likely about prices or characteristics of the people being sold. In the foreground sat a group of women and children waiting for their turn on the block.

Crowe suggested strongly that the ongoing sale was not of utmost

---

[64]Eyre Crowe, "Slaves Waiting to be Sold," sketch, Richmond, Va., 3 March 1853, in Crowe, With Thackeray in America (New York: C.Scribner's Sons, 1893), 132. "Slaves Waiting for Sale, Virginia" etching based on Crowe's sketch, Illustrated London News, 27 Sept. 1856.

[65]Eyre Crowe, "A Slave Market, Richmond, Virginia," oil on canvas, private collection, in Paul M. Angle, ed., "Mystery Solved," Chicago History 4 (Summer 1957), 357.

[66]The layout of this room, with the auction block off to the left, is suggested by the position of the wall behind them and the door in rear corner. An 1860s painting thought to be based on Crowe's sketches showed a similar room, with the auction block to the left and the waiting benches to the right, but the door in the center of the rear wall. That painting also shows a screened partition for examinations, suggested by the door the trader is holding open in the rear of the Crowe painting. See Levevre J. Cranstone [d. 1867], "A Slave Market in America, 1862," oil on canvas, private collection, in Before Freedom Came: African American Life in the Antebellum South, eds. Edward D. C. Campbell Jr. and Kym S. Rice (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia: 1991), ii.

importance to all of them, balancing his subjects' expressions to indicate both the uncertainty and the ubiquity of slave auction. Two of the five women, along with two of the three children, gazed towards the front or left side of the room. One of these women seemed to gaze on without particular interest, relaxed and focusing instead on nursing her infant. The other woman, sitting at the right end of the bench, sat rather rigidly, perhaps fumbling her fingers nervously, and looked intently in the direction of the block. Perhaps she had a special interest in the person being sold. Or perhaps she was gathering up her own resolve, dreading her turn to stand before the glaring white men.

The three other women seemed oblivious to the action going on to the left. In the newspaper's version, the face of the woman in the center betrayed worry over the daughter in her lap, while the women to the left had more light-hearted expressions, looking towards the children. Crowe balanced the picture differently, giving the central figure a joyful look as she gazed on the daughter perched in her lap. The other two, receding into the shadows, seemed in fact to be posing for Crowe, holding their heads up nobly and to the side, looking away from where we might suppose the auction block stood. These women seemed fully composed, as if sitting for Crowe's portrait were their main concern at that moment.

Crowe balanced with the concerned woman to the right, but more forcefully so with the scowling man at the far right. As Crowe had originally sketched him, he sat contentedly upright (with the hat incongruously discarded on the floor); the newspaper version had cropped him out entirely. Now, in oils, the man was back and expressed only contempt at the proceedings. His new

posture and expression now explained the hat's position: the man would have to wear his new market clothes, but had jettisoned the straw hat as one more symbol of his chattel status.

Another Crowe oil painting, known as "After the Sale: Slaves Going South from Richmond" combined landscape with sentimental portraiture to produce a powerful statement on the geographic fluidity enforced on enslaved families, all under the auspices of an ostensibly free and democratic government (fig. 33).[67] At the same time, it portrayed African-American humanity only imperfectly, producing both individual human actors as well as iconic and exotic representations. The scene was a dynamic one, rife with symbols of the migration and of movement in general. The setting, judging from the perspective, was the Petersburg Railroad depot just south of the canal, not far from where Nevins had painted his scene. Crowe made references to the railroad and the canal, both symbols of progress and modern transportation. He carefully including a tiny stream or rut which seemed to flow with the regularity and order of a man-made waterway, and sections of steel rail could been seen, along with one of the water buckets used to quench track fires.[68] The people sold were caught in a chaotic moment just before departure. A throng rushed in

---

[67]Eyre Crowe, "After the Sale: Slaves Going South from Richmond," oil on canvas, CHS, repr. in Gregg D. Kimball, "Expanding the Notion: The African-American Presence in Virginia Cavalcade, 1851-1996," Virginia Cavalcade (Autumn 1996), 84.

[68]The curatorial staff at the Chicago Historical Society worked to verify the location of Crowe's setting, therefore identifying him as the artist of both "After the Sale" and "A Slave Market, Richmond, Virginia" [Slaves Waiting to be Sold]. See Angle, ed., "Mystery Solved," 353-360; and CHS correspondence with Sidney Briggs, 1957 (including Briggs's map of the area of Richmond shown), in CHS authority file #1957.27. For Crowe's own account of what he saw of Richmond's slave market, see With Thackeray in America, 126-136.

from the left, heading towards the two wagons either to join the caravan or to say good-bye to those forced to go. The scene was one of bustle and insecurity.

All this action took place within a rather bucolic and patriotic landscape, somewhat akin to Nevins's. Crowe's cityscape of Richmond portrayed the business district, and therefore more of the market hustle and bustle than Nevins did (see fig. 15). As Crowe himself later admitted, "Somehow these rough-looking storehouses and unpretending tenements are always more pleasing to the artistic sense than are the stately fabrics of more modern-looking towns"; he had chosen a perspective on Richmond which obscured the "handsome verdure-surrounded villas" emphasized in Nevins's scene.[69] Yet Crowe's scene, too, was capped by Virginia's own pantheon of democratic-republican government, Jefferson's state capitol building. Flanking the entire scene, draped subtly on the wagon confining people being shipped south, was the American flag. Whatever state authority condoned this traffic in the streets of Richmond, it was federal authority which gave approbation to the act of interstate commerce about to commence in Crowe's scene.

Crowe's painting betrayed a tension running throughout abolitionist graphic imagery. On the one hand, he had come to humanize the African-American subjects of his work, sentimentalizing them somewhat but also portraying them with certain depth. On the other hand, as evidenced in "After the Sale," he fell back on rather two-dimensional representations of African Americans as well, flattening them into exotic images or even into slaveholders'

---

[69]Crowe, With Thackeray in America, 130.

own icons.

Two figures, posed together on the left, were modeled on generic icons alternately representing fugitives from or objects of the slave slave market. Both carried bundles represented their mobility. The man was cast in an odd, two-dimensional stance, running with a hobo's bundle slung over his back. Though apparently in motion, he seemed frozen, even statuesque, his toe firmly anchored on the little pedestal of a rock. Any viewer who had read southern newspapers or seen abolitionist pamphlets would instantly have recognized this figure as the classic icon of the runaway used in advertisements and reprinted as antislavery propaganda. The runaway icon, in fact, had come to stand for more than just escapees in southern newspaper advertisement. Variations of this image came to be deployed in advertisements for slave sales as well, thus coming to represent African Americans generally, whether being sold or searched for. Some abolitionists understood this (fig. 34).[70]

The woman just behind this "runaway" man also stood apart from the rest of the crowd. Crowe rendered her dress and stance rather exotic. In fact,

---

[70]See William A. Stephens, "The Sale," number 3 in a series of cards celebrating emancipation, 1863, VHS, repr. in Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 97 (July 1989), 276; and The Anti-Slavery Record, New York, v. 3 (July 1837), cover; reproduced in Marcus Wood, "'All Right!': The Narrative of Henry Box Brown as a Test Case for the Racial Prescription of Rhetoric and Semiotics," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 107 (1998), 68. As Wood deftly points out, even Frederick Douglass found himself "imprisoned within the imagery of the runaway advertisement" on a songsheet portraying his escape (67, 70). One northern stereotyping company produced an icon portraying a slave sale, complete with a slouching and half-naked slave on the block, an auctioneer, and two potential buyers. Abolitionists claimed that the icon was used widely, though I have not seen it in any of the Virginia newspapers I have looked at. When buyers and sellers in Virginia did use an icon, they preferred the "runaway." For the "auction" icon, see The Anti-Slavery Record 2 (July 1836), 84, repr. in Lapsansky, "Graphic Discord," 213, fig. 10. In a strange twist, the same icon was used in a Confederate alphabet to represent "M" for "Man." M[arinda] B[ranson] Moore, The Dixie Primer, for the Little Folks 3rd ed. (Raleigh, N.C.: Branson, Farrar, & Co., 1863 [i.e., 1864]), repr. in Documenting the American South, http://metalab.unc.edu/docsouth/, 2000.

she resembled one of the women in W. H. Brooke's imaginative 1842 etching of a slave coffle crossing the Rapidan River (see fig. 26). She also resembled the female "runaway" icon sometimes used by southerners and published by abolitionists. The two runaway icons, male and female, were even "married" in one antislavery broadside featuring a series of such stereotypes (fig. 34).[71] Crowe paired them again to represent the chaos imposed by the slave trade.

Given Crowe's care in painting most of his other subjects as relatively well-perspectived and individuated, this departure seems intentional. Having followed abolitionist argument and read southern newspapers during his trip, he doubtless knew of the ubiquity of this symbol and its capacity to represent two distinctive kinds of migration in slavery, polar in their degrees of African-American agency: running away and being transported through sale. The fleshed-out version of the runaway icon here embodied and showed Crowe's sympathy for the plight of African Americans in slavery, always on the move. Yet at the same time, it tended to reduce the African-American experience to that mobility, as if the sentimental connection Crowe sought in his viewers could only be attained by that generic reference.

By stark contrast, Crowe painted a group of three-dimensional characters to the right, an apparent family group, with mother, father, and infant. Crowe caught his subjects in mid-story, creating an ambivalent tension for the sensitive viewer. The baby was being handed between a mother and father, but Crowe left it unclear whether the child was being taken in the cart with the mother or

---

[71]"Printers' Picture Gallery" (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1838), LOC; repr. in Macmillan Encyclopedia of World Slavery, 2 vols., eds. Paul Finkelman and Joseph C. Miller (Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1998), 49.

left behind with the father. Or, given the equanimity on both their faces, perhaps the father was to travel separately to the same destination with his family. In the end, the viewer was left wondering about the fate of that child and her parents.

Where Crowe had signalled the theme of the painting in shorthand with the iconographic figures on the left, with this family on the right, he explored the uncertainty and unknowing with which African Americans faced sale and forced migration.

Most graphic representation of African Americans and slave sales did not reach for such depth, however. With the sectional crisis of the 1850s, artists turned again to explicitly political images. With secession, antislavery artists associated the auction block explicitly with the Confederacy's cause. This new iconographic turn helped lead abolitionists in the South during the Civil War to seek out the auction blocks, dismantling and gathering instruments of the slave trade as personal souvenirs.

In the wake of "Bleeding Kansas," one Republican cartoonist returned to a theme last seen during the Missouri crisis in 1820. In an 1856 lithograph, white southern troops were seen attacking a neat village labeled "Free Soil and Fremont." Following immediately behind the troops was a chained gang of enslaved black men, pushed on by a trader or driver wielding a cat-o-nine-tails. At least now whites were doing their own fighting, but their coffle in tow revealed their interest in doing so, just as the "fighting" slave gang had in 1820.[72]

---

[72]"The Cincinnati Platform; or the Way to Make a New State in 1856" (Philadelphia: I. Childs, [1856]); copy at AAS.

With secession, the illustrated papers turned again to the auction block, now as a symbol of the Confederacy's action rather than of the United States'.[73] The Illustrated London News ran a full-page etching of another Crowe sketch, again in Richmond but now of a slave family group (fig. 36).[74] Harper's Weekly replaced the standard slave trader's flag seen in Crowe's work with the Confederate national flag, sealing the identification of the Confederacy with the slave trade (fig. 37).[75] Frank Leslie's Illustrated News, meanwhile, revisited the public jails of Washington, D. C., and told a story much like that of Fanny Jackson, the woman who had appeared on the 183s6 broadside, "Slave Market of America."[76]

These images proved powerful enough and seemed representative enough of the evils of slavery and therefore of the necessity of the war that one antiabolitionist northern newspaper, the New York Illustrated News ran its own

---

[73]It was in this wartime focus on the slave trade that "Q. K. Philander Doesticks"--Mortimer Neal Thomson--republished his lengthy and popular 1859 account of the massive slave auction of Pierce Butler's estate in Georgia. Hopping on the bandwagon of Fannie Kemble's antislavery account of her time as mistress on the Butler plantations, published London and New York in 1863, Doesticks's piece was retitled, What became of the Slaves on a Georgia Plantation?: . . . A Sequel to Mrs. Kemble's Journal. Edward J. Piacentino has explored the depths of Doesticks's sentimentalization in "Doesticks' Assault on Slavery: Style and Technique in The Great Auction Sale of Slaves, at Savannah, Georgia," Phylon 48 (Fall 1987): 196-203. On Kemble's anti-Confederate reasons for publishing her long-neglected twenty-year-old journal, see John A. Scot, ed., introduction to Francis Anne Kemble, Journal of a Residence on a Georgia Plantation in 1838-1839 (New York: Knopf, 1961), pp. xlv-liii.

[74]Illustrated London News, 16 Feb. 1861.

[75]Harper's Weekly, 13 July 1861, p. 442, repr. in Toward Racial Equality: Harper's Weekly Reports on Black America, 1857-1874, http://blackhistory.harpweek.com/.

[76]Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, 28 Dec. 1861, p. 1. Leslie's reporter and artist also visited New York's prison known as "The Tombs," providing a few similar images of dank cell interiors; see Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, 29 Nov. 1856, pp. 388-389.

auction scene, putting the most proslavery spin possible (fig. 38). Attempting to undermine the power of such a fixture in antislavery polemic, the newspaper asserted that such annual hiring markets were "attended with fun and jollity." "The happy-looking fellow on the platform before us" expressed "disappointment" only that the war had caused a depreciation in his value.[77] As with Nehemiah Adams attempt to co-opt the auction block for proslavery purposes, this one seemed doomed to fail.

More common was the assumption that the slave block represented a deprivation, especially of free labor and education. During the 1864 Campaign, a cartoon contrasted "Union and Liberty" with "Union and Slavery" (fig. 39). At left, President Lincoln shook hands with a free "Workman"; behind them children of all hues scampered happily out of a school building topped by the American flag. At right, Democratic challenger George B. McClellan shook hands with Confederate President Jefferson Davis. Behind them, a slave auction took place under the embattled Confederate colors.[78] The auction block image had gained such iconic status that no further comment would be needed. The point here was clear: the auction block represented a denial of freedom and stood for the Confederacy; McClelland's gestures of reconciliation therefore sanctioned slavery.

An 1863 broadside drew out this connection in mocking verse and a striking series of images. Entitled "The House that Jeff Built," it rehearsed all the

---

[77]New York Illustrated News, 26 Jan. 1861, p. 1.

[78]"Union and Liberty! and Union and Slavery!" (New York: M. W. Seibert, [1864]), copy at AAS.

major themes and images of the slave trade from the last several decades: family separations, "breeding," sexual improprieties, and the commercial link to southwestern agricultural expansion. The house Jeff Davis had built, of course, was the "Slave Pen" (fig. 40).[79]

This broadside concluded by picking up on a theme which would influence abolitionists' wartime and postwar appropriations of slave trade paraphernalia. In the final image, the artist fantasized about the destruction of the "House that Jeff Built," envisioning broken chains and shackles, a splintered whip and auctioneer's hammer, and ripped up sale notices (fig. 41). Abolitionists had focused on these artifacts periodically, as exemplified in Thomas Clarkson's 1808 polemic and again in the 1853 children's book, Uncle Tom's Kindred. But during the Civil War, as the slave trade was destroyed, abolitionists turned more frequently to these artifacts, seeing them as potential relics of the triumph of the war and of the cause of abolition. John Hawkins Simpson, in his 1863 polemic, Horrors of the Virginian Slave Trade, quoted Virginia Congressman John Randolph on the interstate slave market: "What are the trophies of this infernal traffic? the handcuff, the manacles, the blood-stained cow-hide."[80] Abolitionists were meanwhile picking up these trophies and taking them home.

The wartime images of auctions and slave pens served to elevate the artifacts of the slave trade to iconic status as the representative cause of the war.

---

[79]"The House that Jeff Built," lithograph (Boston: Johnston, 1863), copy at AAS.

[80]John Hawkins Simpson, Horrors of the Virginian Slave Trade and of the Slave-Rearing Plantations; The True Story of Dinah, and Escaped Virginian Slave, now in London (London: W. Bennett, 1863), 3.

When abolitionist northerners began entering the war-torn south, many immediately sought out those sites of persecution. Entering slave jails and ransacking slave traders' offices, they gathered souvenirs of the slave trade--shackles and chains, account books and letters. Carrying these instruments of the trade home from the war, these pilgrims inverted their function, converting them into validations of abolitionism and sentimental relics of their hard-fought struggle.

Abolitionists had already come to embrace the sentimental possession of tokens of their cause and had already envisioned the implements of the slave trade in a state of disarray, scattered as if for the gathering. When antislavery activists finally won the day in the midst of the Civil War, they played on the notions imbibed in travelogues and sentimental literature, traveling to the sites of the slave trade, seizing artifacts, and coveting them as relics of the holy war. By possessing the implements and sites of the slave trade in sentimental fashion, abolitionists rhetorically inverted the symbolic power of the auction block and jail, nullified the slave trade, and unified the nation. These relics validated their cause and celebrated their victories: abolition, Union, and moral sway. They were ready to reap their harvest.

On April 8, 1865, as the streets of Richmond smoldered, Massachusetts abolitionists Sarah and Lucy Chase seized their opportunity. They stood in the very jaws of slavery--Richard H. Dickinson's slave-trading house in the Confederate capital. Once a bustling business, the office on Franklin Street now stood empty. Open on his desk lay a massive ledger listing the names of hundreds of men, women, and children who had passed under Dickinson's

speculative eye. "That bloody register," as Sarah called it, represented the key to slavery's unjust power, the legal means by which slaveholders had capitalized on slaves' losses.[81] In a revelatory act of empowerment, Sarah took the book.

Rather, she would have if she could have lifted it. Instead, she contented herself with pilfering two less cumbersome account ledgers, along with a stack of Dickinson's business correspondence. And this was neither the first nor the last stop on the Chase sisters' pilgrimage. In their sojourn in the area, they visited Libby Prison--its Union captives, like the slaves, now free--and they lifted autograph documents from the offices of Union commander Ulysses S. Grant, Confederate president Jefferson Davis, and Virginia governor Henry Wise.

The collection of such mementos represented the sisters' efforts to come to grips with the enormity of the war and of the system of labor crumbling in its wake. It gave them an active and tangible connection with the unfolding of historical events simultaneously destructive and emancipatory. And, as relics, the items found their proper place within the broad American cult of sentiment through which many abolitionist had come to understand slavery.

Lucy and Sarah Chase had come to Virginia in January 1863, days after President Lincoln declared emancipation for slaves in federally occupied areas of the Confederacy. Devout Friends from a prominent Worcester family, the sisters had long involved themselves in abolition, women's rights, and other reform causes. As Friends, they opposed the war, but they sought to serve the freed men and women flocking into Union camps. Applying to the Boston

---

[81]"Bloody" used as profanity in this way connoted Christs's blood--stained with the very sins of the world.

Educational Commission, they gained posts as teachers in the embryonic schools around Hampton Roads, already in Union hands.[82]

The sisters faced a difficult situation. Their charges had been sent by army fiat from Newport News to Craney Island, a barren, twelve-acre patch of land six miles upriver from Norfolk. The freed men and women initially "look upon Craney Island as a slave-pen," the sisters wrote; they wanted to go back to their homes, now under Union occupation, or to town, where they could earn money for their labor.[83] The ex-slaves and the Quaker abolitionists made the best of things, however, and soon began lessons in reading, writing, and sewing. Eventually Craney Island was abandoned and the freed people were settled on the outskirts of Norfolk and elsewhere. The Chase sisters continued to travel about, organizing schools, teaching, visiting refugees and distributing clothing sent from the Educational Commission back home.

In their interaction with literally thousands of refugees, they heard countless stories of the slave market's deprivations. They heard accounts of husbands and wives divided by sale, of free black people being jailed and auctioned, of a woman having to make her own new dress to be sold in. Over and again they heard women say they had so many children, God knows where. They heard the rumors Confederates spread among slaves that so-called emancipators would sell the slaves to Cuba. And worse, still, they had heard

---

[82]Hampton Roads is the name for the general area where the James River opens up into the Chesapeake Bay. Henry L. Swint, introduction to Dear Ones At Home: Letters from Contraband Camps (Nashville: Vanderbilt Univ. Press, 1966), 4-5.

[83]Letter from Lucy Chase, 15 Jan. 1863, in Dear Ones At Homet, ed. Swint, 21.

confirmations of this rumor, that soldiers of the New York 99th Regiment were luring in refugees then carrying them into Confederate territory to sell.[84]

On occasion Lucy revealed her romantic notions of their venture. Strolling about the island one night, the sisters stopped in at the scattered firesides, where "picturesque groups were crooning over the embers. . . . 'Groups for a painter!'" She "Oh'd for a Darley, a Walter Brown, or a lead pencil," but finding none present, she painted the landscape with own pen.[85] One group surrounded a "pomegranite-cheeked young mother" holding a skillet over the fire:

> That out-stretched hand, grasping the long iron handle, its kindred in color, the golden steaming corn-cake, the fond and hungry children, the crackling fire, doing its best in a picturesque way, outlining each figure til it became a shining mark, the evening darkness, the desert plain, the long rows of house-deserted chimneys, the water all around and very near, and Sarah and I looking upon it all![86]

She and her sister played the role of observers here, admirers of the canvas they pictured before them. The refugees were framed in Lucy's imagination as

---

[84]Letters from Sarah and Lucy Chase, Dear Ones At Homet, ed. Swint, 42, 59-60, 96, 124-125, 127-128, 132, 161; on the N.Y. 99th, see 59, 169.

[85]By Darley, she meant Felix Octavius Carr Darley (1822 - 1888), among the most noted illustrators of novels and other books from the 1840s on. For an example of his sentimental work, see "The Squatter's Death," pen and ink, 1859/1861, in National Gallery of Art, http://www.nga.gov/.

[86]Letter from Lucy Chase, 30 Sept. 1863, Dear Ones At Homet, ed. Swint, 89.

sentimental but stock characters in a painting.[87]

Lucy's sentimentalism was tempered, however, by her daily encounters with the refugees, and she dealt with them on individual bases, responding to their unique stories and requests. Similarly, the sisters' sentimental views did not lead them to shy away from harsher aspects of the war. After touring the Crater at Petersburg, where 4,000 white and black Union soldiers had died the previous year, Lucy coolly described the trenches and earthworks, the many "obtruding feet of the dead," bodies "easily traced under a thin covering of earth," and, most gruesome, "leg bones with fragments of pantaloons adhering to them still standing in stock[ing]s and shoes."[88] She remained undaunted by such sights, but did not assimilate them into her sentimentalization of the war, its causes, or its effects.

The sisters continued to view both the war and slavery's destruction in a sentimentalized mode and sought to memorialize both through the collection of concrete mementos, tokens on which to focus their sentiment. The Confederate ironclad Virginia, rebuilt from the scuttled Merrimac, proved a popular target for souvenir gatherers. The sisters could see its hull sitting in the James just off Craney Island, the ship having been destroyed by its crew in their flight from Hampton Roads in May 1862. Dr. Brown, who ran the contraband camp on

---

[87]But later in the same letter, Lucy insisted on the individuality she saw in black faces, which she did not expect to discern. Letter from Lucy Chase, 30 Sept. 1863, in Dear Ones At Homet, ed. Swint, 94-95.

[88][Lucy Chase], 17 May [1865], in Dear Ones At Homet, ed. Swint, 159. On the battle of the crater, see Ervin L. Jordan Jr., Black Confederates and Afro-Yankees in Civil War Virginia (Charlottesville: Univ. of Virginia Press, 1995), 276-278; and James M. McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1988), 758-760.

Craney, had "kept his large family warm for some days with its iron-clad beams," and soon after the Chases arrival, he promised them each a "work-box" made from its wood. He had in fact already collected a couple of walking canes carved from the hulls of the Congress and the Cumberland, two ships sunk by the Virginia the previous March. In April 1863, Lucy wrote home that Union soldiers had been making "ornaments" from an old boiler and from their barracks doors at Norfolk, selling them as "Bits of the Merrimac." She went on to boast that "Our copper bolt and our wood were taken by Mr Kings own hands." Authenticity mattered.[89]

The Chase sisters subverted the implements of slavery to the purposes of documenting slavery's destruction. Carrying the smaller of Dickenson's incomplete account books around with her in Richmond, Sarah used the blank pages as a diary of what she witnessed there. Turning swords into plough-shares, Sarah transformed the slave trader's record-book into an abolitionist's testimonial. Turning to the first blank page of the account book, she wrote: "Taken from D & H's slave Auction House on Franklyns St Where we looked over his desk--books & papers." His large book on the desk, she noted, had recorded that on March 31, several slaves had been sold from that office. But for the April 1 entry, only the date was written--"thank God--no more was written or will ever be in that bloody register."

She had to leave this largest register, but the smaller book Sarah decided

---

[89]Letter from Lucy Chase, 20 Jan. 1863; letter from Lucy Chase, 1 April 1863; in Dear Ones At Homet, ed. Swint, 26-27, 72. On the battles of the Virginia (originally the Merrimac, and still called that by northerners), see McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 279-280, 314,-315, 373-378.

to carry with her, "to keep for myself a suggestive Memoranda of our following the troops into Richmond." She then chronicled the trip they had just made, first to City Point, where they found themselves "ransacking Genl Grants Head Quts"--taking his desk pen and several abandoned letters--then on to Rockets, the docks of Richmond, where saw her first sight of the city: "nothing left of the great Warehouses but the brick walls ragged and jagged pointing their threatening fingers to heaven--as if saying there is justice."

Although she took only sketchy notes on the trip, the book served as a keepsake and she brought it home again. The Chase sisters carried with them other, more personal reminders of their experiences during and after the war--all the letters they had written home to family from "the 'Sunny South'," which they had "recalled" and intended to read over during their trip. That the sisters would pour over the experiences teaching fugitive freedmen and women, and that Sarah would carry the trader's account book as a diary both seem to indicate that they sensed an ironic continuity between their leisure mobility and the forced and fugitive migration of African Americans.

Sarah did not write again in the keepsake of slavery until 1870, when she and Lucy took a trip to Ireland and Scotland. She undoubtedly felt the poignancy of writing in a slave trader's account book her sentiments on leaving her own loved ones, even if for a pleasure venture. From the flag staff of the ship, she and Lucy "waved as long as we could see," she wrote; discovering her friends were slipping from sight, she desperately "sprang on top of the wheel house (2 ft) and with both arms extended above my head, a hankercheif in each" hand, "stood 'till distance parted us." Calling forth an echo for her own words, she quoted a

favored verse in the margin: "The hands drop to the eyes: while the heart breathes a fervent prayer for the loved ones we leave behind."[90]

Whether Sarah felt any connection between her own chosen departure from family and the forced departures documented in the slave traders' book in which she wrote these lines, one could only speculate. But certainly her carrying the book with her on this reflective and relaxing tourist trip did indicate something of her sentimentalism towards this token of her wartime experience.

The Chase sisters were not alone in this impulse. Other northerners seized the implements of the slave market as tokens of its practical destruction. Union soldiers entering Alexandria, Virginia, had freed an old man left bolted to the floor of Horace Kephart's slave jail. They sent the man's chain and shackle to Henry Ward Beecher as a gift. One of the men, like the Chase sisters, had gathered up a handful of business letters Kephart had left scattered in his flight. The soldier passed them along to his friend Moncure Conway, an expatriate Virginian, who published them in his 1864 antislavery book, Testimonies Concerning Slavery.[91] In Conway's case, the slave traders' letters were to stand as "testimonials" to the harsh reality of slavery and to the necessity of the war for Union and abolition.

In February 1865, when antislavery war correspondents Charles Coffin and James Redpath entered Union-occupied Charleston, one of the first places

---

[90]Sarah Chase diary entries, 9 April 1865, 5 May 1870, recorded in R. H. Dickinson & Bro. Record Book [Accounts, 1855-1858], Slavery in the U. S. Collection, AAS.

[91]Moncure Conway, Testimonies of Slavery (London: Chapman and Hall, 1864; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1969), 19-26.

they sought out was "Ryan's Mart," centrally located and used by many traders.[92] The place was deserted and the iron gate was open, so the men went inside. Along one wall of stood a long table, or stage, serving as the auction block. Looking on the scene, Coffin wrote, "There were the steps, up which thousands of men, women, and children had walked to their places on the table, to be knocked off to the highest bidder." As if arriving specifically to authenticate Coffin's conjecture, a freed woman named Dinah More came in and told him she had been sold on that very table two years previous, and that her husband had been sold away from her. "The thought occurred to me," Coffin said, "that perhaps Governor Andrew, or Wendell Phillips, or William Lloyd Garrison would like to make a speech from those steps. I determined to secure them." And he did, along with several other souvenirs. With the help of a local freedman, he broke off the locks to the gate and took down the gilt letters over the doorway spelling "MART." Out front stood a pole with a gilt star on top, and Coffin himself climbed the pole and "wrenched it from its spike to secure it as a trophy." Finally, Coffin and Redpath scooped up hundreds of pieces of business correspondence in the office, letters between trader Ziba Oakes and his agents in the field.[93]

Back in Boston, they put these "relics of barbarism," as Redpath called

---

[92]Charles Carleton Coffin, The Boys of '61; or, Four Years of Fighting (Boston: Estes & Lauriat, 1881), 173-174. Frederic Bancroft, Slave Trading in the Old South (1931; repr., Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1996), 166-167, 170-171; photographs opposite 166, 170, 172. Edmund Drago and Ralph Melnick, "The Old Slave Mart Museum, Charleston, South Carolina: Rediscovering the Past," Civil War History 27 (June 1981): 138-154.

[93]Coffin, Boys of '61, 474-475. Edmund L. Drago, ed., Broke by the War: Letters of a Slave Trader (Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1991), 3-4.

them, to good use. Before a huge crowd at the Boston Music Hall, Coffin read from trader Oakes's correspondence and gleefully recounted how he and Redpath had sacked the slave mart. Finally, when William Lloyd Garrison himself strode up on the steps to the slave block, the hall erupted in "thunders of applause," the women "waving hundreds of white handkerchiefs." The "auction block" as it was often referred to, then went on a fundraising tour for the local Freedman's Aid Society. Garrison repeated the spectacle in Lowell. Frederick Douglass completed the reversal of the auction block's symbology by mounting these steps himself a few days later in Chelsea, delivering a speech under the Confederate battle flag seized by the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, in which two of his sons served. Garrison was overwhelmed by the incredible reception he received on the slave block, exclaiming "What a revolution!"[94]

Clearly this was a revolution in meaning for the symbol of the auction block--and the Confederacy for which it stood. Once viewed at a distance through language and imagery, the auction block could now be witnessed first-hand in its destruction. The dislocated "auction block" and its accompanying paraphernalia stood literally on the stage for the disembowelment of the slave

---

[94]Steven H. Deyle, "Domestic Slave Trade," Ph.D. diss, Columbia Univ., 1995, pp. 207-209. Wendell P. Garrison, William Lloyd Garrison, 1805-1879: The Story of His Life Told By His Children, 4 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co.), v. 4, 134-136. Garrison to Jacob Horton, 17 March 1865, in The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison; Volume V: Let the Oppressed Go Free, 1861-1867, ed. Walter M. Merrill (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1979), 262-263. Two of Douglass's sons, Charles and Lewis, served in the 54th Massachusetts; David W. Blight, Frederick Douglass' Civil War, 158, 170. Such slavery-related souvenir gathering appears to have been widespread during and after the war, both in the southern theater and in the North. For an example, Union soldiers removed an iron collar from a man, freeing him and keeping the collar as a souvenir, as reported in Harper's Weekly, 15 Feb. 1862, p. 108. Wilson Chinn, a freedman, posed in 1863 with a similar pronged collar, as well as an iron leg brace designed to hobble a potential runaway; at his feet were other instruments, including chain and a paddle; repr. in Macmillan Encyclopedia of World Slavery, eds. Finkelman and Miller, 256.

market, the utter dismemberment and dispersal of its various instruments, almost like a lynching. The absurd image of Garrison on the auction block underlined the absurdity of any person on an auction block, and it represented an absolute inversion and negation of the auction block's power in a very public and explicitly polemical manner.

For Garrison, however, the "revolution" he referred to was the change he had witnessed in northern white public opinion since founding the Liberator in 1831. But the Liberator had also envisioned not merely the destruction of slavery but in fact another kind of revolution. The Liberator's second and third mastheads, created respectively in 1838 and 1850, presented the transformation which emancipation was to bring. At left in each, the auction block remained the primary symbol of slavery: black families divided by white southern greed, validated by federal authority represented in the U. S. Capitol building. It the 1850 version, the Capitol flew the flag of "Slavery," while the American flag graced the auction stand. At right, each masthead envisioned emancipation, but the emphasis changed. The 1838 image showed one nuclear family in the foreground, while the rest of the scene was occupied by industrious free black laborers, all basking in the rays of freedom dawning on the horizon. Hammat Billing, who would go on to supply the images for the heavily illustrated 1853 edition of Uncle Tom's Cabin, had a different vision when he drew the 1850 masthead for Garrison. His abolition held evangelical rather than free-labor roots. No one worked in this emancipation scene; in fact, a spade and hoe lay discarded on the ground.The medallion marking the transformation featured Christ setting the captive free. Billings heightened the notion of family, featuring

an entire extended family enjoying their reunion. Behind them, the U. S. Capitol now flew the banner of "Freedom," while throngs of celebrants dance and paraded under the "Emancipation" arc topped by the American flag.[95]

Frederick Douglass had another transformation in mind, or at least his publisher did. In the 1855 edition of My Bondage and My Freedom, readers found that same slavery/freedom diptych. Slavery was again represented by the auction block, but now freedom was embodied not in celebration, but in a school building. The lesson seemed clear, and fit with increasingly prescient notions of educational and family discipline: education was to replace coercion.[96] Anthony Burns' publishers made a similar point in contrasting an image of Burns on the auction block with Burns on the lecture-hall stage (fig. 42).[97] Still a spectacle, Burns was now a subject, not an object. The coercion of the auction block had been replaced by the moral suasion of oratory.

With the arrival of the long-awaited day of emancipation, other lithograph artists picked up and extended Garrison's visions of emancipation, representing slavery, as always, by the auction block, and freedom as the family, the school, or if heightening further the replacement of corporal punishment with moral sway, the church. In Thomas Nast's famous 1865 lithograph,

---

[95]The 1850 engraving was done from drawings by Hammatt Billings, who went on to illustrate the 1853 American edition of Uncle Tom's Cabin. Second masthead of The Liberator, first used 23 March 1838; third (and final) masthead, first used 31 May 1850; repr. in Courage & Conscience, ed. Jacobs, 194, 64, respectively.

[96]See Brodhead, "Sparing the Rod."

[97]Repr. in Albert J. Von Frank, The Trials of Anthony Burns: Freedom and Slavery in Emerson's Boston (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 1998), frontispiece.

"Emancipation," several dichotomies were presented: the auction block with the Confederate flag was replaced by the church and the school, topped by the American flag (fig. 43). The paycheck took the place of the whip. Fugitives were turned into courteous workers while vengeful masters were turned into equally courteous managers; all were seen doffing their hats to one another.[98] In a celebratory lithograph featuring the text of the Emancipation Proclamation, a similar transformation was seen in four distinctive dichotomies: the whip versus the school; the auction versus the family; jail versus the home, church, and free labor; and agricultural stagnation versus commerce.[99]

Sarah and Lucy Chase witnessed the similar use of such imagery on the ground as they worked to develop schools for the freed men and women. Visiting Charleston around 1866, the sisters attended a Republican rally which came to resemble a camp meeting in its thrust. Solon Robinson, a local African-American minister, pointed to the profound transformation he marked on that site. His metaphor proved all encompassing, and Lucy felt he deserved quotation at length:

> 'I am dreaming! Will some one pinch me, pull my hair, knock me on the head. Can this be Charleston? When the last time I stood on this green in was to attend a great slave auction. Are you here to be sold? Well, I will sell you. I never separate families. I will not take a husband from hiss wife. I will not tear a child from its

---

[98]Thomas Nast, "Emancipation" (Philadelphia: S. Bott, 1865), LOC.

[99]"Emancipation Proclamation," [n.p.?], copy at NYHS.

mother's arm; but I will put you all up together. Going--- going---' Then raising his eyes and pausing a moment, he added, 'Look above for the bidder. It is the spirit of Abraham Lincoln! Oh bless God that he died for you--he has bought you all! and given you to yourselves!'[100]

The auction site had been transformed into a Republican meeting ground, the African-American participants now willingly "bought" by their liberator, their messiah, their Christ, Abraham Lincoln. Robinson seemed to play dual roles himself on the podium. He now asked rhetorically to be poked and prodded, not in examination by a buyer, but to prove himself no doubting Thomas. And, as a Republican minister of the gospel, he now mediated the "sale," the delivery of African Americans unto themselves and, not incidently, into the Republican party.

After the war, memoirs by antislavery writers testified to the concrete enactment of these kinds of reversals in the slave trade's power. Eyre Crowe, in his 1893 memoir wrote that the site on which he had witnessed the hectic departure of those African Americans in "After the Sale" had later served as Union commander Ulysses S. Grant's staging ground for his capture of Richmond.[101] Abolitionist journalist Charles Carleton Coffin wrote that he had witnessed the melee of Richmond's collapse, marked most poignant by what would have been the last trader's gang to leave the city. Robert Lumpkin, long-

---

[100]Dear Ones at Home, ed. Swint, 216.

[101]Crowe, With Thackeray in America.

time trader and jailer, had tried to get fifty men and women on the last train out, but was refused by guards who were reserving the cars for departing officials and documents. The collapse of the Confederacy meant the collapse of the slave traders' network of commerce. Most symbolically of all, in their hustle to get the train station, these African Americans, soon to be freed, trampled underfoot "millions" in Confederate promissory notes, worthless now and "thickly strewn" in the streets of the fallen capital city.[102]

Lumpkin's real estate became the object of another, still more poignant transformation after the war. When he died in 1866, Lumpkin left his entire trading compound to Mary F. Lumpkin, an African-American woman who, though enslaved, had lived with him as his wife and borne him several children.[103] The following year, when members of the American Baptist Home Mission Society were looking for facilities in which to house a freedman's school and seminary, Mary Lumpkin offered to rent them the jail property. They accepted and promptly sanctified the site with "appropriate services." The school's first headmaster, Dr. Nathaniel Colver, preached the inaugural sermon facing the jail and stressed "the different purpose to which the premises were about to be devoted." Colver apparently saw fit to conjure up the jail's haunting past in order then to cleanse it and dedicate it for the future. As the school's chronicler paraphrased the sermon, "No longer would there go up from within

---

[102]Coffin, The Boys of '61, 501-502. Lumpkin marched the people back to the jail, where Union soldiers freed them soon after. See Leon Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long (1979; repr., New York: Vintage, 1980), 168-169.

[103]Last Will of Robert Lumpkin, Richmond City, Hustings Court, Will Book 24, pp. 419-422. For more on Lumpkin and his enslaved family, see ch. 1.

those walls from broken-hearted men, torn from their families forever, an agonizing wail to Heaven. No longer would helpless wives and mothers wash those floors with their tears." The lot and jail were "no longer the 'devil's half acre' but God's half acre."[104]

While all concerned stressed the great change taking place, the missionaries and students seem to have occupied roles strangely analogous to those they had known, represented by the buildings they each occupied. The compound had consisted of a brick residence, where Lumpkin and his enslaved family had lived; two or three brick barracks buildings, where most enslaved people had been housed; and, in the middle of the lot, the jail, with bars on its windows and a "stout iron staple and whipping ring" bolted to the floor. Once the mission society took over, Dr. Colver occupied Lumpkin's residence (here Mary Lumpkin was not mentioned at all), where he "kept house with his devoted, self-sacrificing, New England wife." Readers were to gather from her regional identification that she was to bring domestic order where there had once been market chaos. The thirty or forty students, including both men and women, moved into the barracks. Completing the analogy first suggested in Frederick Douglass's imagery, the school was held in the old jail building. As Corey summed up pithily, "The regime of the lash had gone; the regime of the spelling book had come."[105]

---

[104]Charles H. Corey, A History of the Richmond Theological Seminary (Richmond: J. W. Randolph Co., 1895), 54-55, 74; quotes, 55, 77.

[105]Corey, History of the Richmond Theological Seminary , 76-77. Curiously reversing this student-chattel analogy, trader Floyd Whitehead's enslaved assistant had once referred to his enslaved transportees as "pupils." Milo Morris to Floyd Whitehead, 14 March 1837,

This was the domestic reform abolitionists had been awaiting for decades: replacing the lash with the word. The slave trade had stood against everything they were working for in their own families and society: the sentimentalization of spousal and parent-child bonds, the replacement of corporal punishment with love and moral discipline, the creation of the domestic sphere and its protection from the sullying forces of the market revolution, and the expansion of "free" labor market outside the home. The slave trade, by separating families, inflicting physical separation and punishment, denying African Americans the domestic ideal, tainting slaveholders' homes with market forces of greed, and the denial of black and white men in the South access to a free wage, stood as the antithesis of all they worked for. Not only that, but by its very nature, it facilitated the expansion of the slavery regime which they saw as inevitably undermining the stability of the Union.

They portrayed the slave trade in fundamentally geographic terms, as it simultaneously divided families across space and in that expansion threatened the Union. The zeroed in on the concrete, physical manifestations of this destructive expansionism, chiefly the auction blocks, jails, and marching coffles. In order to promulgate their arguments more effectively and even more

---

Floyd Whitehead papers, UVA. Oral evidence suggests a broad and lingering understanding of education and corporal violence as diametrically opposed forces. Black and white descendants from Middleburg plantation near Charleston, South Carolina, held contradictory interpretations of one particular building on the site. African-American oral histories held that it was a jail and whipping room, while the white family tradition held that it had been a school for the education of newly imported Africans. (It turns out to have been neither.) Kerri S. Barile, "Testing the Oral History at Middleburg Plantation, Berkeley County, South Carolina" African-American Archaeology: Newsletter of the African-American Archaeology Network Applied Archaeology and History Associates, No. 26 (Early Winter 1999), http://www.newsouthassoc.com/AfAmNewsletter.html.

surreptitiously, they seized on sentimental modes of literature, notably children's books and novels. In the illustrations and text, these works portrayed enslaved families in sentimental, domestic terms white northern readers were taken to understand. They worked at creating an empathy between their subjects and their readers.

The sentimental attachments they created, along with the concrete imagery of the sites of the slave trade, led abolitionists during the war to seize on their opportunities and visit those sites, to witness the destruction and to bring home relics, tangible proof they could possess and display. Most powerfully of all, they could even transform a site as thoroughly polluted as Lumpkin's jail, transforming it through sentimental occupation, into a site of African American learning and progress, through what they considered a more benign form of discipline, education.

The ubiquity and striking nature of these scenes must have played into the remarkable 1876 inversion of the auction scene, in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper. The full-page image on the front cover depicted a crowd admiring "The Freed Slave" statue at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition (fig. 44).[106] Several auction themes were still present: a black body bared, the pedestal placing him above the crowd so all may see, the man gesturing towards the slave (or now, towards his broken chains). The ex-slave on display, however, was a powerful figure, his manacles smashed as if by the strength of his own arms. Exotic in his African tunic, his raised head contrasted with the bowed

---

[106]Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, 5 Aug. 1876, cover.

heads of the elderly black couple behind him--"Negroes of the old type" as nostalgic white folks would have called them. The "Freed Slave's" head was up but his eyes looked straight ahead; if a viewer could stand on his level the freed man would be staring into her eyes, just as one congregants did in the left rear of the crowd. Literacy played a role here, as the freed slave held aloft a copy of the Emancipation Proclamation, and the young boy at the right was urged by his mother to read about the statue in the exhibition's guidebook.

The scene's contrasts were even more didactic. Three stages of "civilization" were present in this depiction: the African in loin cloth; the deferential, submissive older ex-slaves; and the young, bourgeois, Victorian people of color taking in the Exposition. The statue actually held two places in the progressive story: he was the noble African, and therefore stood chronically before the elderly, broken ex-slaves. Yet he was also the slave whose liberation had led directly to the possibility of the genteel people of color. Uniting the two in one icon brought it full circle. In becoming free and in becoming middle-class, these observers might also embrace their African heritage without shame.

While this image of emancipation worked to undo the auction block, others, more prevalent in the wake of reactionary white "redemption" of the South, invoked a new sentimentalism and cast freed people as nostalgic for the old ways. Harper's Weekly had unintentionally set the precedent in 1866 with its full-page cover etching entitled "The Last Chattel" (fig. 45).[107] This man, formerly legal property liable to be bought and sold, now rested from toil, free

[107]Harper's Weekly, 6 Jan. 1866, cover.

from the whip lying discarded on the ground. The ruins in the background resembled those of Richmond after the war, but in fact they represented the crumbling chimneys of the old plantation house, or perhaps of his own cabin home, a common theme in parlor and minstrel songs of the day. The man appeared thankful, his hands folded together on his cane in an attitude of prayer. Yet he also appeared wistful, his eyes gazing up as if imagining better times.

Antebellum artists and minstrel songsters had for two decades made references to the "old home place" and the "old plantation." But in the decades after the war, as thousands of African Americans migrated within and out of the South, working to claim their political, civil, and educational rights, white people tried with renewed purpose to gain some comfort from nostalgic images of the old race relations. They found this particularly in images of African-American nostalgia, scenes of black people frustrated by northern cities and attitudes supposedly contradictory to the ways of the newly imagined Old South.[108]

Some black minstrel performers and song-writers gave white audiences what they wanted. In 1878, James A. Bland, an African American born free in the North, memorialized his girlfriend's family's homeland in the wildly popular "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny," where, the lyrics went, "this old darkey's

---

[108]An illustration entitled "Way Down Upon the Swannee Ribber" featured an aged black fiddler dreaming of leisurely old times, the slaves fishing, dancing, and playing the banjo; Harper's Weekly, 28 June 1875, p. 552. An etching entitled "Virginia One Hundred Years Ago" depicted a genteel white family with their aristocratic black body servant visiting the slave quarters, where all doffed hats, bowed, and smiled ingratiatingly; drawn bySol Eytinge, Harper's Weekly, 19 Aug. 1876, p. 677. Finally, a Harper's cover in 1892 showed an old black couple gaping with glee at the sight of a possum hanging in a butcher's display stand. The background scenery placed them in New York or some other city, and the title read "A Reminder of Old Virginia"; drawn by P. S. Newell, Harper's Weekly, 10 Dec. 1892, cover. Copies of all three at NYPLS.

heart am long'd to go." The only separation in the song was death, by which the singer had lost his master and mistress; the song envisioned a reunion with the white folks in heaven, "where we'll meet and we'll never part no more."[109] Ten years later, in an advertisement for "Carry Me Back," the songsheet's Boston publisher returned almost eerily to the 1866 image from Harper's Weekly, fully exploiting and amplifying its nostalgic implications. The man in this new etching sat in a posture almost identical to the "last chattel," though more stooped over (fig. 46).[110] His clothes and shoes were equally shabby, but in a more cartoonish way, patched and tattered like a those of a minstrel performer. His wistful look was more obvious than in 1866, and now his Old South vision was realized in the upper left-hand corner. There the man in his youth went cheerfully about his business, posture erect and hoe slung over his shoulder. The fields were full, the old cabin home was standing firm, and the sun shining warmly over all.

The sentimentalization of African Americans in whites' graphic imagery had been inverted once again. The image of mother and child had emerged in abolitionist iconography by the 1830s, softened and emotionally heightened through the 1850s. These sentimentalized family bonds stood over and against the slave trade's threat to those family bonds through the force of the slave market. Released from chattel status, African Americans' mobility was more voluntary; they had stepped out of their "place" in southern society and in

---

[109]John Day Daly, A Song in his Heart: the Life and Times of James A. Bland (Philadelphia: John C. Winston Company, 1951).

[110]Advertisement for "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny" and "There's A Happy Little Home," on the back cover of Charles H. Yale, "Early in De Mornin" (Boston: John F. Perry & Co., 1881), copy at AAS.

American society. Whites now idealized the old ways, heightening images of African-American sentimentality, and moving the spotlight away from the black family and turning it rather towards the former masters and the South more generally.[111]

Sentimental imagery had proved an ally to African Americans, but it also proved a menace. As a language of loss, it could be used to mourn any perceived loss. It had helped abolitionists envision and realize emancipation by giving graphic and concrete representation to the loss of family enslaved African Americans had endured in the slave market. But in the decades after the war, whites used sentimentalized images to represent the loss of an imagined harmonious past, where black people knew their static place. When mobility had been forced by the slave market, it was African-Americans' allies who sentimentalized black families. When African-American mobility was by choice, white conservatives sentimentalized paternalistic master-slave relations. They idealized the "black and white family" proslavery apologists in the had asserted had been the reality all along, creating a new image of an Old South where indeed, there was no more parting because the slave market had been effectively erased.[112]

---

[111]Michael Tadman is currently researching post-bellum plantation memoirs, in which this newly sentimentalized portrayal of the Old South reached its fullest expression.

[112]Significantly, it was in this post-Reconstruction context that the proslavery argument finally won the day, notably among professional historians. See John David Smith, An Old Creed for the New South: Proslavery Ideology and Historiography, 1865-1918 (1985; repr., Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1991).

Epilogue: Storied Landscape

Decades after emancipation, in the depths of national depression, African Americans in Virginia continued to live in the land slavery had wrought. As these men and women grew older in the twentieth century, their stories of "slavery days" came to seem irrelevant or shameful to many of their children and grandchildren. Yet they continued to connect their own pasts to the present, linked by the landscape they shared in memory, a landscape which itself continued to bear the landmarks of slave sale. These women and men continued to tell and retell their stories--those they had witnessed and those they had heard passed down--awaiting the opportunity afforded them by the willing listeners of Virginia's Negro Studies Project.

In their exchanges with these African-American interviewers in the 1930s, formerly enslaved Virginians largely abandoned attempts to use sentimental language to understand and explain the meanings of the domestic slave trade. Sentiment had been a tool of literate culture, and these people, though frequently fully literate, were participating in an oral tradition which did not as easily incorporate sentimental tropes. Perhaps more significantly, these men and women had outlived the apex of Victorian sentimentalism and found themselves aging amidst the modern world of the twentieth century. Perhaps their language reflected that change, as they often appealed to a caustic realism rather than a sentimentalized domesticity. While autobiographers of the nineteenth century had worked to reconcile those two narrative styles, their twentieth-century counterparts appear to have given up on or rejected that attempt.

Instead, Virginia's story-tellers linked sale and separation more explicitly to masters' sexual depredations and social control. Interviewees told stories about attempted rapes ending in sale or of intended victims getting back at their perpetrators on the auction block. This bawdiness was almost completely absent in the nineteenth century written sources, in which people had tended to mask any discussion about sex in obfuscatory language. This new openness in discussing what Toni Morrison deemed slavery's "nastiness of life" may have been linked to African Americans' abandonment of nineteenth century notions of progressive social improvement in the face of segregation, disfranchisement, violence, and poverty.

As importantly, these interviewees tended often to see slavery's past in their own segregated present, linked by persistent geographic landmarks associated closely with the chaos of the slave market. These sites remained fixed in memory even thought the jails and auction blocks might be torn down. The spaces remained, haunted by the thousands of people who had pass through on their way away from their Virginia homes and families.[1]

---

[1]Tamara Giles-Vernick found a similar, though far more thoroughly developed geographic approach to history among the Banda people she interviewed in Central Africa. Banda people chronicle history spatially rather than temporally, as a series of "past places" linked mnemonically by roads and other physical landmarks. Giles-Vernick conjectures that "Banda people's continued movement and enslavement divested them of their ability to recall and transmit memories for multiple generations. At the same time, continued movement over roads provided them with a more spatial means of expressing and experiencing their connections to past spaces, knowledge, and peoples." The experience of enslaved Virginians was not identical, but it was analogous. Enslaved Virginians continually facing their own and others' removals from place to place and out of the state. Thus they frequently found spatial interpretation of events more significant than a temporal one. One crucial exception to this, of course, was emancipation, by which many Virginia ex-slaves measured their life's progress from the perspective of the twentieth century. Tamara Giles-Vernick, "Na Lege ti Gueriri (On the Road of History): Mapping Out the Past and Present in M'Bres Region, Central African Republic," Ethnohistory 43 (1996): 247-275, quotation 257-258. My thanks to Tamara Giles-Vernick for providing me with a copy and for her thoughts on interpreting oral histories.

Black Virginians understood white people's near monopoly on power, both in the past and in their own present, and this helped shape the stories they told African-American interviewers. Sarah Johnson, learning Susie Byrd's purpose in collecting oral histories, informed her that white masters had owned not only black people's lives, but their past as well: "Say you is writin' hist'ry? Lord, Lord, po' nigger ain't got much fer you to git 'cause in dem times he [be]longst to de white man. A slave ain't had no say so of his own 'til de [sur]'render come and he was sot free."[2]

A white interviewer, Mary Venable, seemed to hit it off with her subject until she pressed against the stark boundaries of her own limited understanding of slavery. As Clara Allen, born in 1859, recalled all the work older slave women used to put into making cloth--washing, carding, spinning, weaving, and sewing--Venable offered innocently that it was "a pretty good handicraft education, wasn't it?" Allen, jolted apparently into recalling painful images of old age in slavery, surprised Venable with her response. Venable wrote, "With a rush, there appears to come floods of ancient hatred for somebody or the whole white race" as Allen coldly recounted that if aged slaves failed to work, "masters would sell um to keep from buryin' um." But in the end, Venable comforted herself with her own observation of slave graves "within the enclosures of 'family graveyards'." That knowledge satisfactorily "discredited" Allen's claims, Venable noted, and reaffirmed her own image of benevolent, paternalistic black-

---

[2]Weevils in the Wheat, eds. Charles L. Perdue Jr., Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Phillips (1976; Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1994), 163. Arthur Greene gently scolded Byrd for waiting so long to document these stories about slavery, 123- 124. My thanks to Charles Perdue and Nancy Martin-Perdue for sharing their thoughts and archival materials related to the WPA interviews.

and-white families.[3]

Some African Americans avoided such wilful miscomprehension by simply refusing to talk to white people. Jennie Patterson would tell whites little, she said, "even now in dis new day an' time."[4] African-American interviewer Susie Byrd found Ishrael Massie of Petersburg an eager instructor on slavery, but at one point, after describing slave auctions and the consequent "grievin'" and "crying over de family partin'," he cut himself short. "Lord chile," he confided to Byrd, "ef ya start me I kin tell ya a mess 'bout reb times, but I ain't tellin' white folks nuthin' 'cause I'm skeer'd to make enemies."[5] Anna Harris stated categorically, "No white man ever been in my house. Don't 'low it. Dey sole my sister Kate. . . . I can't stand to see 'em." Harris's interviewer obtained no more useful information from her.[6] Ishrael Massie succinctly explained the roots of this distrust and even hatred. "Some whitefolks wuz terrible, terrible mean," he said, adding that "some of 'em wuz what ya might call medium."[7]

Some African Americans had made white friends, purposefully playing into white notions of good race relations under Jim Crow. Even when these

---

[3]Ibid., 6-8.

[4]Ibid., 205, 219-220.

[5]Ibid., 205.

[6]Ibid., 128. Rather, editor Roscoe Lewis found nothing more of use in Harris's narrative than this terse statement. We do not know anything more about the actual interview. Virginia Writers' Project, The Negro in Virginia (1940; repr. New York: Arno Press, 1969), 34.

[7]Weevils in the Wheat, eds. Perdue, Barden, and Phillips, 206.

people were frank, however, white interviewees could demonstrate selective hearing. Former slave William Yager knew Margaret Jeffries, his interviewer, as "the Judge's daughter"; indeed he knew all her family well, and gratefully welcomed her visit. He talked "proudly," she said--and with the occasional "chuckle"--of his personal and political loyalties: to his "white family" in slavery, to the Confederates during the war, and finally to the Democrats. Yager did mention that the patriarch of his "white family" sold off of "all the slaves he could" at the beginning of the war, but Jeffries neglected to follow up. She again failed to pursue her questioning when he began with difficulty to explain the fact of his white father. Yager apparently allowed the Judge's daughter leave without hearing more about these aspects of slavery.[8]

Former slaves remembered slave auctions as the most publicly painful symbol of slaveholders' power over their lives. Some stories served a generic purpose, as the one Virginia Hayes Shepherd told to her interviewers Emmy Wilson and Claude Anderson:

> Once there was a instance in Norfolk of a slave having to be sold to settle the estate. The old master and mistress had died and each one of the young folks wanted his share. No I don't remember the names, this slave woman, and her infant were brought to Norfolk and put in the slave pen. On auction day they were put on the block and sold to one of those greedy Richmond nigger traders. She begged him to buy her baby, but he refused. So the poor

---

[8]Ibid., 333-342. In her only other ex-slave interview (Annie Wallace), Jeffries did move beyond her subject's denial to learn from Wallace's son that her father was in fact white (293).

> woman just had fits right there. She couldn't stand the thought of being wrenched from her baby. But she was taken to Richmond just the same and sold down South. Now wasn't that cruel. Nothing worse could have happened to her.[9]

Shepherd clearly signaled the listener's entry into her story with "Once there was. . .," and she succinctly included most of the component images one might expect in an auction scene: the holding pen, the auction block, the slave trader, frantic mother-child separation, and, of course, sale south. Since this story recounted a sale resulting from the death of "old" master and mistress, it sidestepped the question of "good" or "bad" treatment by masters and instead focussed attention on one of the frequent and inevitable consequences of chattel slavery: the division of estate property at auction. Her failure to remember any of the names added to the generic quality of the story, as did the way she introduced the trader. In this story's only extensive use of adjectives, she called him "one of those greedy Richmond nigger traders," clearly expecting her listeners to summon up the requisite stock image. Shepherd offered in her matter-of-fact conclusion a sweeping, general indictment on the cruelties of the system. Her interviewers and editors picked up on the structure of Shepherd's story-telling, and they divided all her interview material by topic into neat episodes, this one entitled "An Auction Sale." In this case, the nonspecific quality of the story leant it its sense of truth: it was the story of any slave, anywhere.

---

[9]Ibid., 258.

By contrast, Shepherd told a far more personalized story of sale that held quite different implications. Here sale provided an enslaved woman with the means to escape her struggle with her master. And here, it was the details of the story which leant it its validity. Shepherd first introduced her protagonist by connecting her genealogically and geographically to the present: "Do you know the Wainwrights in Hampton? Well, they had a aunt who lived in Nansemont County named Diana Gaskins." [10] Shepherd described the features of Diana, the "black beauty" with care: "thin silk skin, a sharp nose, thin lips, a perfect set of white teeth and beautiful long cole-black hair." The slave was "dignity personified," while her owner, Gaskins, was anything but. As "master of all he surveyed," he "made demands" on Diana. "Of course" she fought him off, "but he wanted her and he had her" repeatedly. She sought refuge with Gaskins's wife, who "sympathized" with Diana, but feared her husband's violence.[11] Diana succeeded once in fending off his advances, and consequently Gaskins literally carted her off to Norfolk, to be "put on the block."

Here Shepherd's story took a turn; or rather Diana turnrf her own story of victimization into one of relative victory. She not only possessed beauty but also cunning. Before leaving, she "slipped around" and convinced a neighboring

---

[10]Shepherd connected several other of her story characters genealogically to the present. Blind Caroline Dean, whose Aunt Betsy bought her from master Joe Right, was the "great grandmother of the Deans that live in Hampton now." James Bowser, a free black man executed by Confederates for spying, was the grandfather of "undertaker Hale" (and she relished telling this story: "I'll bet he doesn't know this about his grandfather." Ibid., 256, 259.

[11]Contrast Diana's sympathetic mistress with "the jealous mistress" in Harriet Jacobs's narrative, for example. Harriet Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself (1861; Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press,1987), ed. Jean Fagan Yellin, 31-36.

master to buy her. His bid prevailed in Norfolk, and she accompanied him "right back to the same neighborhood." She had turned Gaskins's punishment not only into an escape, but into a sort of punishment for him. He sent her to Norfolk was to banish her from her home as well as from his sight; frustrated with his lack of ultimate control over her, sale was an expression at least of his legal control over his property in her. But he could not control the circumstances of sale. His plan backfired and he was forced to acknowledge that Diana now lived in plain sight, but out of his reach. Concluding the story, Shepherd made clear the former master's utter loss of power over Diana: "Ole Gaskins was sore, but he couldn't do nothing about it." [12]

Other Virginians described sale as the result of ongoing struggle and auction blocks as sites of contestation. Both these elements appeared together in one of Fannie Berry's stories. Berry proved Virginia Shepherd's equal, and interviewer Susie Byrd returned for several visits. Berry told the story of Sukie, who, like Diana, resisted her master's sexual demands. Assaulting her in the kitchen, the master "grabbed" her and pulled her dress down "off'n her shoulders." Sukie, "a big strappin' nigger gal" (quite unlike Diana) punched her master and pushed "his hindparts down in de hot pot o' soap" on the fire, burning him "near to death." "Holdin' his hindparts," he ran off in silence, hiding his behavior from his wife. Sukie, of course, was sold off to traders. The consequent intrusions upon her body Berry described in rapid succession: "An' dey put Sukie on de block, an' de nigger traders 'zamined her an' pinched her an'

---

[12]Weevils in the Wheat, eds. Perdue, Barden, and Phillips, 257.

den dey open her mouf, an' stuck dey fingers in to see how her teeth was." Sukie, infuriated, pulled up her dress, challenging the traders to "see if dey could fin' any teef down dere." Inverting both her master's rough disrobing of her as well as the forced exposure and prodding of the public auction, Sukie's action constituted an unveiled threat to her white male assailants. In Fannie Berry's conclusion, Sukie's master took the threat seriously, and "never did bother slave gals no mo'." The listener did not learn the fate of Sukie.[13]

Several other Virginians associated sale with sexual abuse and its progeny. Two narrators told of women sold away because they had given birth to "white" children, one woman having been caught with the master by his wife. A "'clabber-colored' gal" named Mary had the misfortune to be mistaken for her young mistress, Miss Josephine, by a white suitor; the humiliated Josephine convinced her father to "take Mary to Richmond" and dispose of her.[14]

For Robert Ellett, his "mixture of Negro-Indian-French and white" ancestry had made his family "proud, fierce, and full of pride." He told Claude Anderson that he and his brothers had grown up as "pals" with their white counterparts, even nursing at the white mistress's breast. As part of his adult education, however, his master demanded he call his white peers "master." Unwilling and unyielding, he silently endured a beating, and later overheard the master threatening to "git rid" of him and his brothers, all "too proud" to be "managed." Ellett's cousin, Rosena Libscombe, was sold south by her own white

---

[13]Ibid., 48-49.

[14]Ibid., 210, 332, 190.

father, her guardian, as a "dirty trick" on her legal owner. Her story ended more ambiguously, however, as she married her white buyer, who later successfully sued her father for her property.[15]

Although running away, defiance, and disobedience in other guises also appeared as reasons for punishment by sale, the willingness of ex-slaves to connect sale causally with interracial sex is striking. It speaks to the role sale had played in their lives as the attempted final solution to problematic social relations engendered by masters' own indiscreet wielding of power. It pinpoints masters' most flagrant abuse of social power and the ease with which the market's network allowed them to cover their tracks by ridding themselves of the living evidence of their deeds.

African Americans in Virginia remembered even more perverse effects of slave sale on slaves' family lives. Georgina Gibbs of Portsmouth had heard this story from her father. He had recounted that "dere wuz once a mastah who sold a slave woman and her son," separately. "Many years after dis, de woman married. One day when she wuz washing her husband's back she seen a scar on his back. De woman 'membered de scar. Et wuz de scar her mastah had put on her son."[16] Gibbs's father's story not only testified to the twisted effects of the slave market, but her retelling of it was calculated to create unease in the listener. She brought the listener into a scene of intimacy between a woman and her

---

15Ibid., 84-86.

16Ibid., 105. Tom Epps recounted a case between sister and brother, their mother revealing the truth and dying from heartbreak over it (89). Minnie Folkes recalled a more benign case of brother and sister living next door to each other without even knowing it (95).

husband, only to have that intimacy rendered perverse. Focusing on the tactile image of a scar, the listener was brought in contact with the horrible clue the wife had suddenly recognized. The listener had to cringe as she imagined that mother's and son's mutual horror at the realization of their deed, however innocently committed.

Unlike whites who had thoroughly dissociated slavery from the Civil War by the late nineteenth century, African Americans continued to identify the Confederacy with slavery, in both subtle and overt ways. This identification led them also to associate the late nineteenth and early twentieth cult of the Lost Cause both with their enslaved past and with their own segregated and impoverished present.

Lorenzo Ivy's association of Confederates with slave traders was a subtle one. He told his interviewer how Confederates had treated Union prisoners of war, "carrin' 'em souf from Lynchburg to dat terrible prisun in Andersunville." Confederates, he said, "brought 'bout 700 in heah from Lynchburg. Brought 'em on foot to Danville. Yessuh! Marched 'em hundreds of miles." A bit later, he described, now in the present tense but in similar language, the "droves" of traders' slaves he had witnessed. "Over de hills dey come in lines reachin' as far as you kin see," he said. "Dey walk in double lines chained tergether in twos. Dey walk 'em heah to de railroad an' ship 'em Souf lak cattle." In his imagery, these lines seemed to stretch all the way back to the home plantations; the rail line from Danville stretched all the way to the deep South. Slave traders' actions were mirrored in those of Confederates with their prisoners. Finally, his use of the present tense leant the slave trade an immediacy that must have been jarring

to the listener in 1937.[17]

Ivy, like the other interviewees, had lived through an era when white people in the South had come to eulogize the Confederacy and to forget its cause. Military monuments rose on every court house square, where auction blocks had once stood. The people who erected the statues meant for them to commemorate military action while obscuring the causes lying behind that action.[18] Far from serving uniform purpose, however, these statues, as public monuments, remained open to varying interpretation. African Americans used them to mark the events they remembered had taken place in those public squares.

For at least two interviewees, the Confederate monument in Norfolk bound Virginia inextricably to the deep south, the Confederacy undeniably to slavery, the past unforgettably to the present. In telling the story of Diana Gaskins, Virginia Shepherd located the old auction block "right down there between the Portsmouth Ferry and the Monument." Identifying the civic marker with the site of slave sales, she urged her listeners to comprehend its significance: "let me tell you one thing that Lee's Monument stands for all the devilment and cruelty that was done to the Negro during the days of slavery."[19]

17Ibid., 153.

18Kirk Savage, Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1997).

19Weevils in the Wheat, eds. Perdue, Barden, and Phillips, 257. Virginia Shepherd located this site correctly. The confederate monument was begun in 1898 and completed in 1907 on the square facing the market building, with the Portsmouth ferry landing visible just beyond. She mistakenly called it "Lee's Monument," however, when the statue depicted an anonymous Confederate soldier. W. H. T. Squires, F. E. Turin, and M. E. Bennet, Through the Years in

Charles Grandy agreed. He could not have been more emphatic on the power of the monument. Testing his interviewers, he asked rhetorically, "De man on top dar pointin' south. Know what it mean? 'Carry de nigger down South ef you wanna rule him.' White people is King over niggers! Niggers ain' got no law." Standing as a public symbol of the proslavery state's power over black people's bodies and lives, the Confederate monument served as a continuing reminder of the racist legal system in Depression-era South. Continuing his moral geography lesson, Grandy cited northern cities like Boston, Portsmouth, St. Paul, and Milwaukee, as the only places where the law respected black people's rights, concluding, "Up Norf dey's kin[d], down Souf de beat you."[20]

Former slaves connected the meanings of specific auction sites to their own living present. Cornelius Gardner identified the corner of White and Water Streets in Norfolk as the place of New Years Day sales. New Years Day, he gently scolded his interviewer, should now be celebrated as the day of freedom, a time to venerate forgotten heroes like Frederick Douglass.[21]

Auction blocks, in the described forms of tree-stumps, wooden platforms, and carved rock, marked the many crossroads of a far-flung network of exploitation. Virginia ex-slaves remembered those sites well, often locating them specifically. More than that, they located those sites in a moral geography

---

Norfolk (Norfolk, Va.: Norfolk Advertising Board, 1936 [i.e., 1937]), 39, 73, including illustrations of the site as it appeared in 1836 and 1880.

20Weevils in the Wheat, eds. Perdue, Barden, and Phillips, 115.

21Ibid., 103-104.

connecting families and traders, plantation hinterlands with market hubs, Virginia with "the South." They vested those sites with emotional power long after the auction blocks' power had abated.

Charles Crawley knew an auction block had stood "right here in Petersburg on the corner of Sycamore Street an' Bank Street." He testified that he had "seen dem young'uns fout an' kick lak crazy folks" when sold: "chile it was pitiful to see 'em." Recalling the sorrow, he told Susie Byrd, had "brung a sad feelin' up in me."[22] Robert Williams had witnessed sales on Ninth Street in Lynchburg, and remembered auctioneers "plumping" and pulling women's bare breasts to prove them profitable potential mothers.[23] Robert Ellet remembered that masters had sent slaves in droves from Essex, Middlesex, King and Queen, and Glouster Counties to an auction site "one mile below" King William Court House, where they were sold "jes' like you sell sheep, cattle, and horses."[24]

These local sites stood as hubs, connecting Virginia homeplaces with deep-south destinations. Sis Shackleford, echoing Ivy, told Claude Anderson about coffles headed south, her story centering on a slave jail. Standing at Five Forks Depot in Lunenberg County, the jail itself served as a depot for slaves embarking for southern markets. The poetry of her remembrance evokes the painful rhythm of the business described:

Had a slave-jail built at de cross roads wid iron bars 'cross de

---

22Ibid., 79.

23Ibid., 325-326.

24Ibid., 85.

> winders. Soon's de coffle git dere, dey bring all de slaves from de jail two at a time an' string 'em 'long de chain back of de other po' slaves. Ev'ybody in de village come out--'specially de wives an' sweethearts and mothers--to see dey solt-off chillun fo' de las' time. An' when dey start de chains-a clankin' an' step off down de line, dey all jus' sing an' shout an' make all de noise dey can tryin' to hide de sorrer in dey hearts and cover up de cries an' moanin's of dem dey's leavin' behin'. Oh, Lord![25]

Shackelford's spoken remembrance held all the power of a lament. The jail's salient features bore crosses--its location was "at de cross roads," and its windows were crossed with bars. Slaves emerged from their confinement two-by-two and merged into the long, faceless coffle, a chattel version of the animals in Noah's ark. Suddenly spectators appeared, along with waves of "wives an' sweethearts and mothers" who came, alliteratively, "to see dey solt-off chillun fo' de las' time." The final sentence slowly unfolded its length, freighted with the multiple, alliterative actions taking place: chains clanking; stepping, singing, shouting; hiding heartfelt sorrows; covering cries; moaning, making noise--the cadence echoing the footsteps of the people plodding off on their long, sad journey. Shackelford's final exclamation was at once a cry of sympathy, a lamentation, an appeal, a moral declaration of judgement upon the entire affair. It was Shackelford's own testament to the truth of her story, her amen to her own prayer.

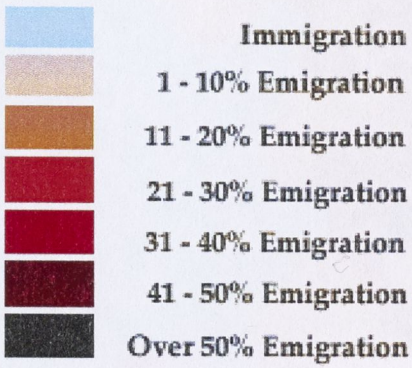
25Ibid., 253.

Appendix 1: Maps

For sources, method, and notes, see notes for Appendix 3.

Key for maps 1-7: Decennial Net Migration Rates for Slaves:

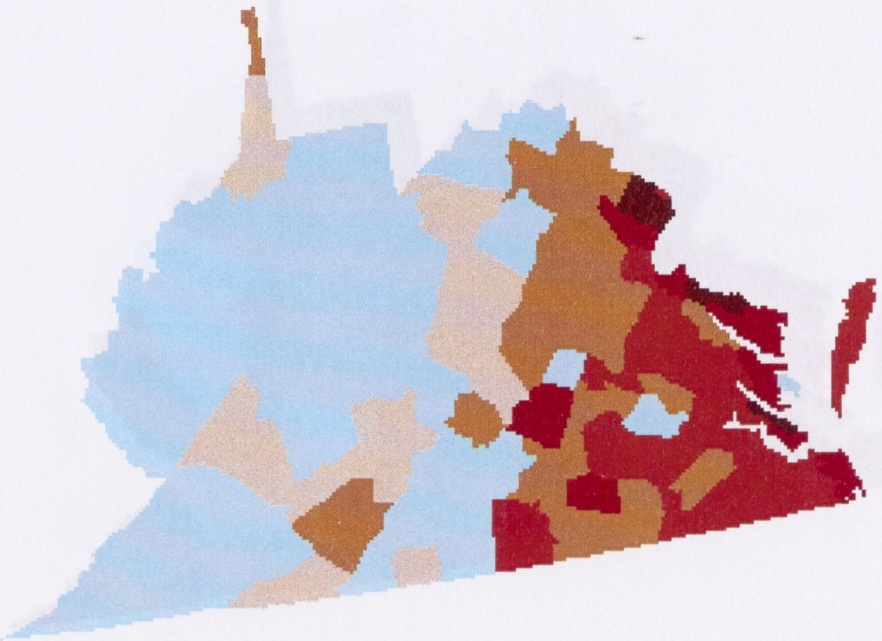
Migration Rate
(% of Initial Population)



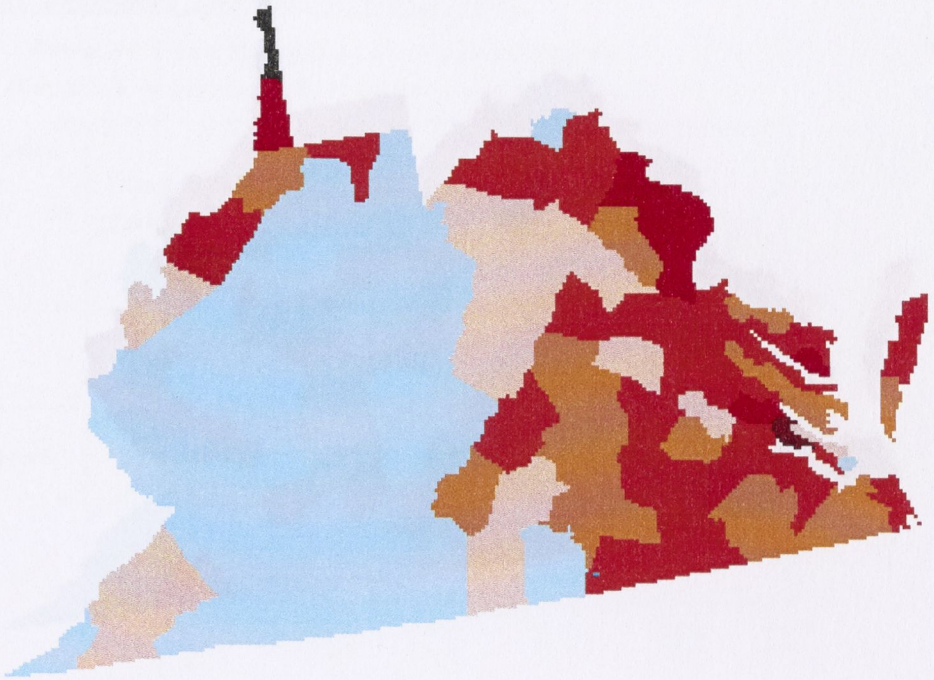
Map 1: 1790-1800

Map 2: **1800-1810**

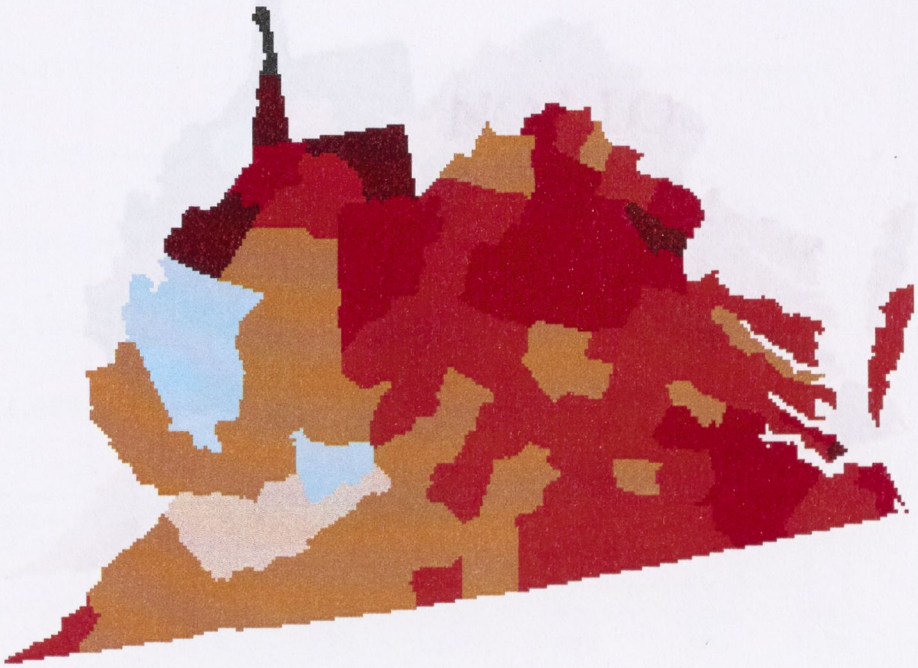
Map 3: **1810-1820**



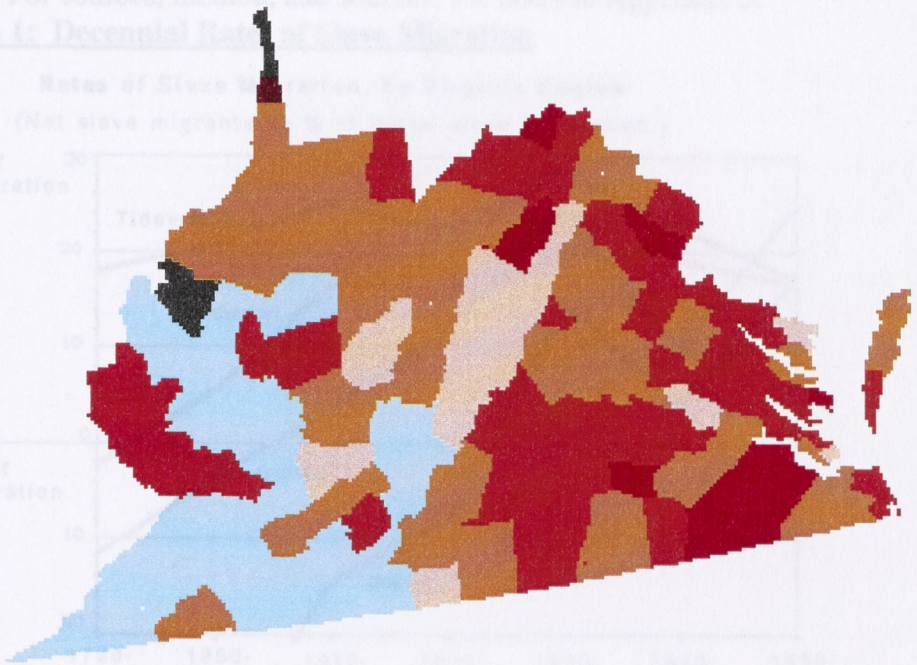
Map 4: **1820-1830**



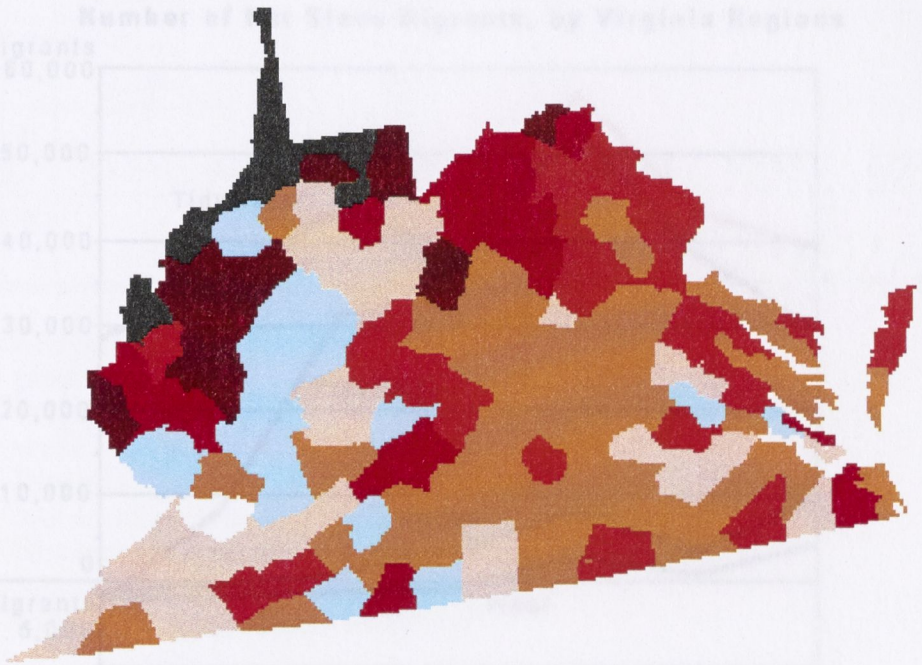
Map 5: **1830-1840**



Map 6: 1840-1850



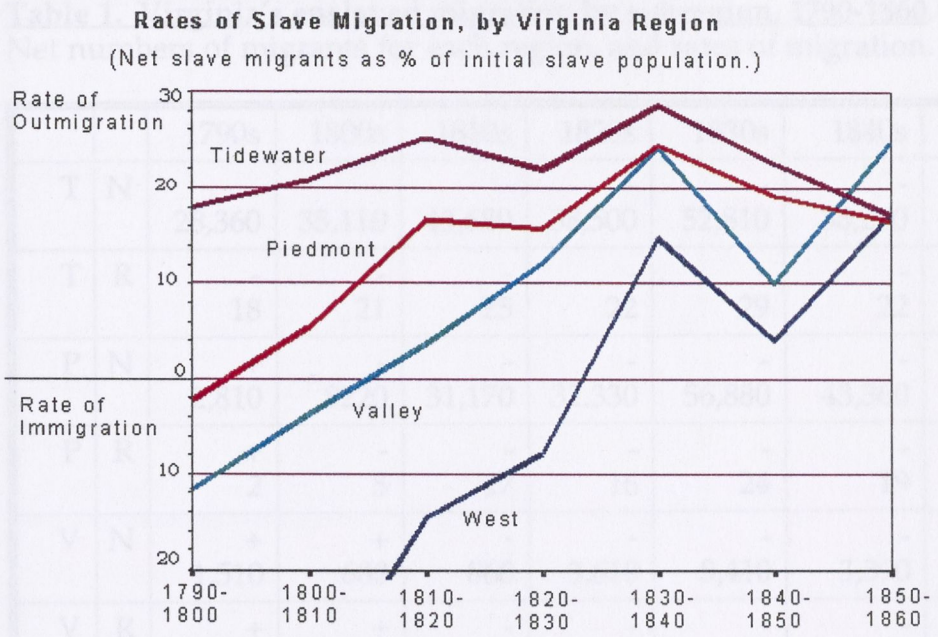
Map 7: 1850-1860



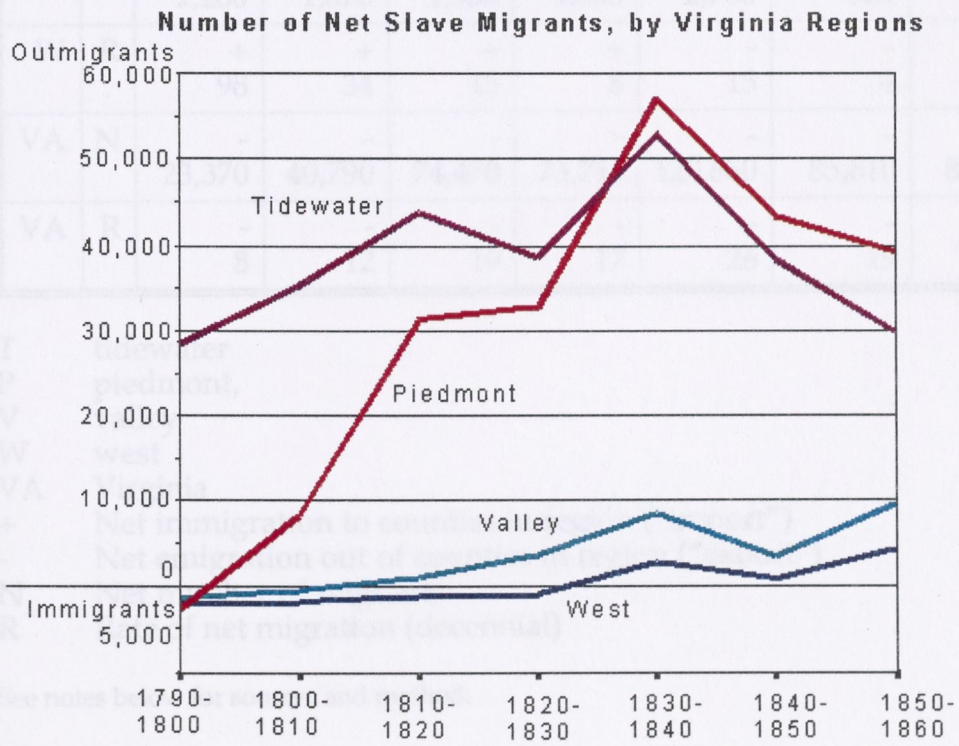
Appendix 2: Graphs

For sources, method, and sources, see notes to Appendix 3.

Graph 1: Decennial Rates of Slave Migration



Graph 2: Net Numbers of Slave Migrants per Decade



Appendix 3: Tables

Table 1. Virginia's enslaved migration by subregion, 1790-1860.[1]
Net numbers of migrants for each region, and rates of migration.

		1790s	1800s	1810s	1820s	1830s	1840s	1850s
T	N	- 28,360	- 35,110	- 43,680	- 38,500	- 52,810	- 38,260	- 29,740
T	R	- 18	- 21	- 25	- 22	- 29	- 22	- 17
P	N	+ 2,810	- 8220	- 31,170	- 32.330	- 56,880	- 43,360	- 39,080
P	R	+ 2	- 5	- 17	- 16	- 24	- 19	- 16
V	N	+ 1,510	+ 680	- 860	- 3,610	- 8,410	- 3,390	- 9,550
V	R	+ 12	+ 4	- 4	- 12	- 24	- 10	- 25
W	N	+ 2,260	+ 1,870	+ 1,330	+ 1,050	- 2,760	- 800	- 4210
W	R	+ 98	+ 34	+ 15	+ 8	- 15	- 4	- 17
VA	N	- 23,370	- 40,790	- 74,470	- 73,710	- 120,860	- 85,810	- 82,570
VA	R	- 8	- 12	- 19	- 17	- 26	- 19	- 17

T tidewater
P piedmont,
V valley
W west
VA Virginia
\+ Net immigration to counties in region ("import")
\- Net emigration out of counties in region ("export")
N Net number of migrants
R Rate of net migration (decennial)

See notes below for sources and method.

Table 2. Virginia's share of total interstate enslaved emigration, 1790-1860.[2]

	Total	VA	VA % of Total
1790s	49,511	22,767	46.0
1800s	65,791	41,097	62.5
1810s	123,386	75,562	61.2
1820s	154,712	76,157	49.2
1830s	284,750	118,474	41.6
1840s	183,902	88,918	48.4
1850s	250,728	82,573	32.9
1790-1860	1,112,780	505,548	45.4

Total = Total net export from all net exporting states.
VA = Virginia net export.
VA % = Proportion of total exports coming out of Virginia.

See notes below for sources and method.

Table 3: Changing destinations of enslaved Virginians, 1790-1860.[3]

Each net importing state's share (percentage) of the total interstate slave immigration for each decade.

	1790s	1800s	1810s	1820s	1830s	1840s	1850s	1790 - 1860
NC	9	**	**	**	**	**	**	<1
SC	10	9	2	**	**	**	**	1
KY	51	38	16	**	**	**	**	6
GA	15	16	9	12	4	11	**	7
TN	16	32	16	20	2	3	**	8
LA	*	2	17	11	10	16	11	11
MS	*	3	7	13	35	28	19	21
AL	*	*	29	35	34	9	4	19
AK	*	*	1	1	4	10	19	8
FL	*	*	1	2	2	3	5	2
MO	*	*	4	7	8	6	3	5
TX	*	*	*	*	*	15	40	11
Tot	101	100	102	101	99	101	101	98

Total percentages do not always add to 100 due to rounding.

** Net exporting state.
* No numbers available (state not yet organized).

See notes below for sources and method.

Table 4. Virginia agricultural yields.

	1840	1850	1860
Tobacco	73,347,106	59,385,411	123,908,313
Corn	35,468,567	35,154,310	38,230,009
Oats	12,451,092	10,179,144	10,186,720
Wheat	10,108,656	11,212,577	13,079,636

Note: Tobacco is measured in pounds; all other crops in bushels. Yields are for census collection year only and cannot accurately indicate the trend for years in between.

Source: U. S. Census, Agricultural schedules, 1840, 1850, 1860. Figures calculated by summing all county totals. Some discrepancy exists between these figures and the totals given in census report.

Notes to tables 1, 2, 3.

1 To avoid the appearance of a precision impossible through available data and methods, I have rounded numbers off to the nearest ten and rounded rates off to the nearest percentage point. Rates of migration for each subregion represent the number of net migrants for the decade as a percentage of the total enslaved population at the beginning of that decade. This method inflates the rate slightly. I calculated estimates of each Virginia county's net number of enslaved migrants first, then summed them into their respective subregions, following closely the regional boundaries in Alison Freehling, Drift Toward Dissolution: The Virginia Slavery Debate of 1831-1832 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1982), xvi, map 1; 14, map 2. I used the growth-rate method described in Bancroft, Slave Trading in the Old South, ch. 18, and in Tadman, Speculators & Slaves, appx. 2, 3, and "Slave Trading in the Ante-Bellum South: An Estimate of the Extent of the Inter-Regional Slave Trade," American Studies 13 (Aug. 1979): 195-220. As the base or "natural" growth rate, I used a South-wide "natural" growth rate, calculated from federal census figures, but only for those states for which enslaved population was actually reported for both ends of each decade. Thus, my "natural" growth rates differ from those in Tadman, Speculators & Slaves, p. 12, table 2.1. My South-wide decennial rates of natural increase for each decade were as follows: 27.0% (1790s), 27.0% (1800s), 30.0 (1810s), 30.5 (1820s), 24.0 (1830s), 26.5 (1840s), 23.4 (1850s). Since the natural growth rates I used tend to be more conservative than Tadman's, so do my estimates of Virginia's export numbers. I summed each county's net migration into regions, then summed those regions to get Virginia's total net export. Together, these factors account for the differences between my estimate of Virginia's total and Tadman's. Except for the 1790s and 1830s, mine are more conservative.

Note that net migration underrepresents actual migration. For example, the number of immigrants moving into a net exporting state would mask an equal number of emigrants leaving. Moreover, within net exporting regions and states, some counties were net importers, and vice versa. Net exporting areas did not necessarily decline in enslaved population; if natural increase remained above the export rate, the enslaved population would still increase. Virginia's enslaved population as a whole declined only in the 1830s, when the export rate

exceeded the natural growth rate.

Figures calculated from U. S. Census figures available from ICPSR and double-checked against published editions. For method, see Tadman, Speculators and Slaves, 225-227, and "Slave Trading in the Ante-Bellum South: An Estimate of the Extent of the Inter-Regional Slave Trade," American Studies 13 (Aug. 1979): 195-220. Bancroft, Slave Trading in the Old South, 384-386; Kulikoff, "Uprooted Peoples," 168-171.

2 Total export represents migration from net exporting states to net importing states only. These figures do not measure migration from one importing state to another, from one exporting state to another, or within any state. Virginia export represents net migration out of the state. Migration within the state is not measured. The final row shows Virginia's export as a percentage of total from all net exporting states. Figures calculated from Tadman, Speculators and Slaves, table 2.1, p. 12. Figures measure migration from net exporting states to net importing states, including both planter migration and commercial slave trading.

Again, they do not measure intrastate migration, migration between two net exporting states, or migration between two net importing states. The growth-rate method which yields these figures leaves a slight difference in total net imports and total net exports. Tadman's figures calculated from federal census returns. For his method, see Speculators and Slaves, Appx. 1, and "Slave Trading in the Ante-Bellum South: An Estimate of the Extent of the Inter-Regional Slave Trade," American Studies 13 (Aug. 1979): 195-220. See also, Bancroft, Slave Trading in the Old South, 382-406.

3 This table assumes that the destinations of Virginia's slaves followed the pattern of the total interstate migration. In practice, Virginia planters and traders may have acted more selectively in their destinations, but these patterns would be difficult to ascertain with the data currently available. Total percentages here do not always add to 100.0 due to rounding. Total interstate imports do not quite match total interstate exports (in Table 1) due to the methods of estimation. In states that had become net exporters (**), some areas within would still see importation; see Tadman, Speculators and Slaves, 7, fig. 1.1. Figures calculated from Tadman, Speculators and Slaves, 12, table 2.1. Figures measure migration from net exporting states to net importing states, including both planter migration and commercial slave trading. Again, they do not measure intrastate migration, migration between two net exporting states, or migration between two net importing states. The growth-rate method which yields these figures leaves a slight difference in total net imports and total net exports. Tadman's figures calculated from federal census returns. For his method, see Speculators and Slaves, Appx. 1, and "Slave Trading in the Ante-Bellum South: An Estimate of the Extent of the Inter-Regional Slave Trade," American Studies 13 (Aug. 1979): 195-220. See also, Bancroft, Slave Trading in the Old South, 382-406.

Appendix 4: Abolitionist Images

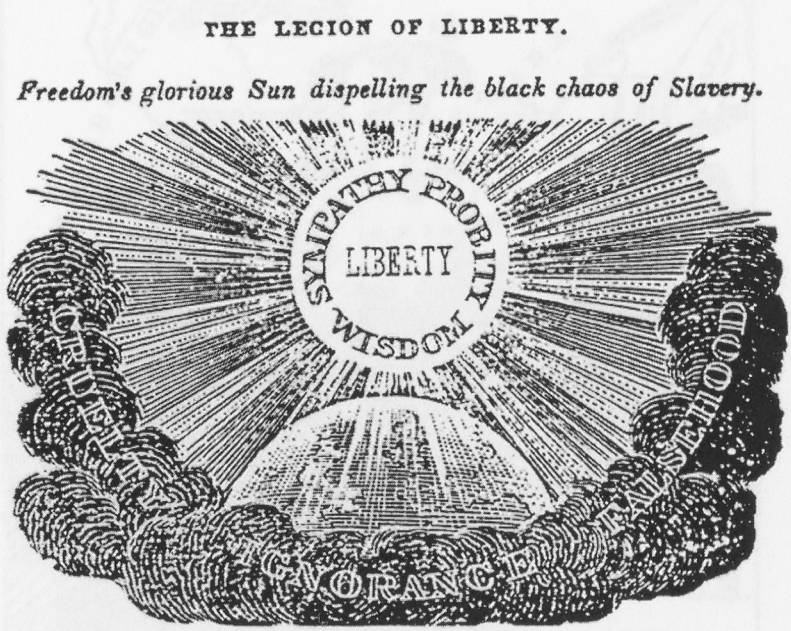
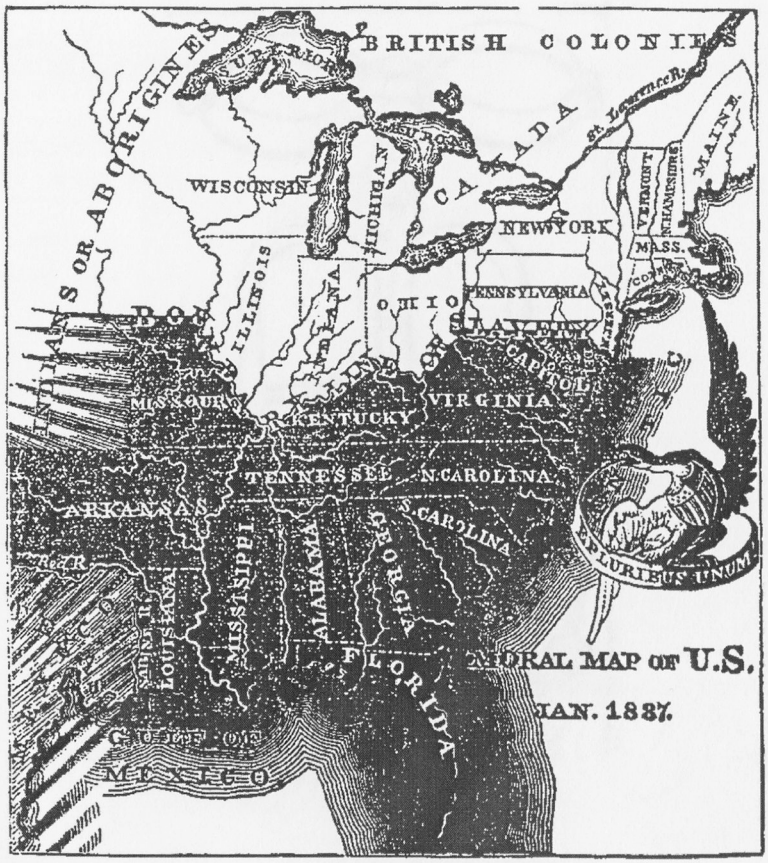


Fig. 1

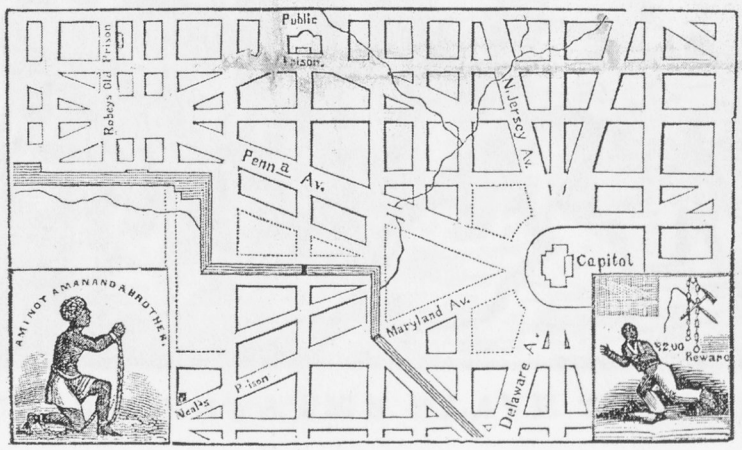
Fig. 2



Slavery is a dark spot on the face of the nation! —*Lafayette.*

Fig. 3

THE RESIDENCE OF 7000 SLAVES.



PART OF WASHINGTON CITY.

Fig. 4

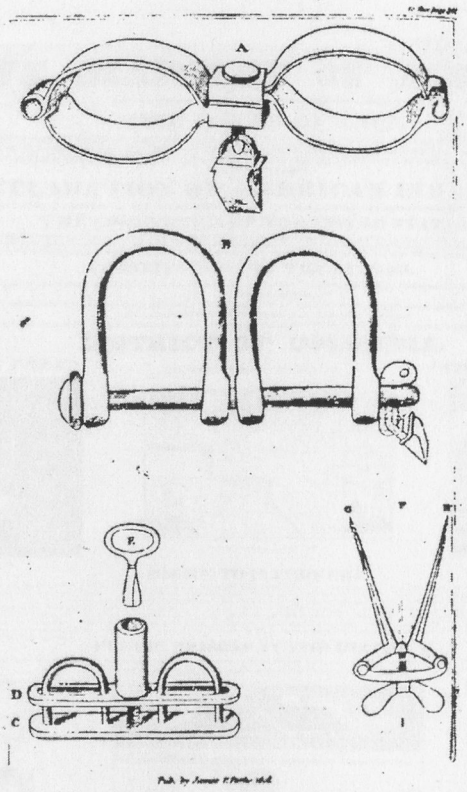


Fig. 5

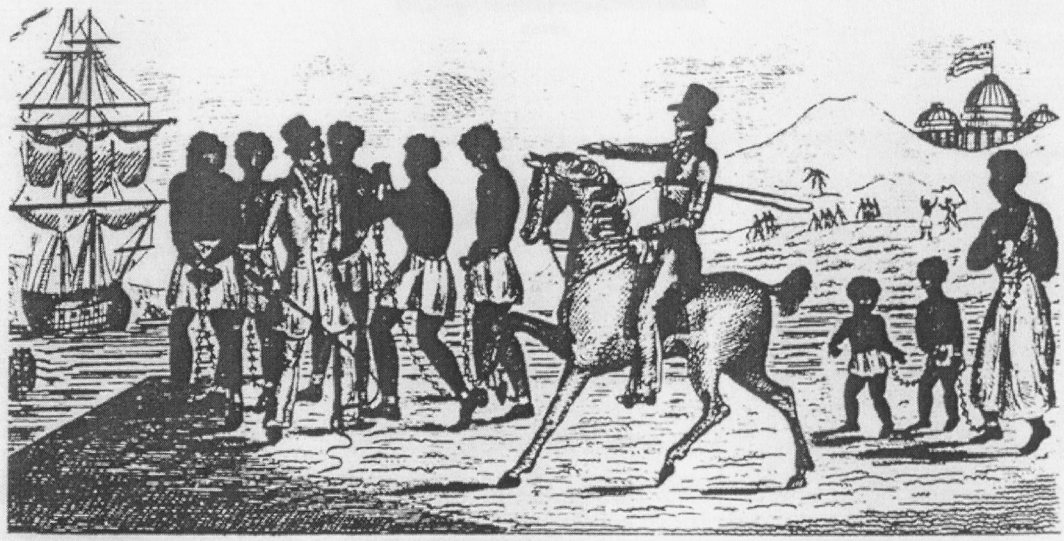


Fig. 6

SLAVE MARKET OF AMERICA.

THE WORD OF GOD.

"ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER YE WOULD THAT MEN SHOULD DO TO YOU, DO YE EVEN SO TO THEM, FOR THIS IS THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS."

"AND THEY SIGHED BY REASON OF THE BONDAGE, AND THEY CRIED, AND THEIR CRY CAME UP UNTO GOD BY REASON OF THE BONDAGE, AND GOD HEARD THEIR GROANING."

"THUS SAITH THE LORD, EXECUTE JUDGMENT IN THE MORNING, AND DELIVER HIM THAT IS SPOILED OUT OF THE HANDS OF THE OPPRESSOR, LEST MY FURY GO OUT LIKE FIRE, AND BURN THAT NONE CAN QUENCH IT, BECAUSE OF THE EVIL OF YOUR DOINGS."

THE DECLARATION OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

"WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO BE SELF-EVIDENT;—THAT ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL; THAT THEY ARE ENDOWED BY THEIR CREATOR WITH CERTAIN UNALIENABLE RIGHTS; THAT AMONG THESE ARE LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS."

THE CONSITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES.

"THE CITIZENS OF EACH STATE SHALL BE ENTITLED TO ALL THE PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES OF CITIZENS OF THE SEVERAL STATES."—Article 4, Section 2.

"CONGRESS SHALL MAKE NO LAW ABRIDGING THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH OR OF THE PRESS, OR OF THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE PEACEABLY TO ASSEMBLE, AND TO PETITION THE GOVERNMENT FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES."—Article 1, Amendment.

"CONGRESS SHALL HAVE POWER TO EXERCISE EXCLUSIVE LEGISLATION, IN ALL CASES WHATSOEVER, OVER SUCH DISTRICT (NOT EXCEEDING TEN MILES SQUARE) AS MAY, BY CESSION OF PARTICULAR STATES AND THE ACCEPTANCE OF CONGRESS, BECOME THE SEAT OF GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES."—Article 1, Section 8.

CONSTITUTIONS OF THE STATES.

"EVERY CITIZEN MAY FREELY SPEAK, WRITE, AND PUBLISH HIS SENTIMENTS ON ALL SUBJECTS, BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ABUSE OF THAT LIBERTY." *Constitutions of Maine, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Tennessee, Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and Missouri.*

"THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IS ONE OF THE GREAT BULWARKS OF LIBERTY, AND THEREFORE SHOULD NEVER BE RESTRAINED."—*North Carolina.*

"THE LIBERTY OF THE PRESS OUGHT TO BE INVIOLABLY PRESERVED."—*Maryland.*

"THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IS ONE OF THE GREAT SAFEGUARDS OF LIBERTY, AND CAN NEVER BE RESTRAINED BUT BY DESPOTIC GOVERNMENTS."—*Virginia. Other States nearly the same.*

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

"THE LAND OF THE FREE."

THE RESIDENCE OF 7000 SLAVES.

"THE HOME OF THE OPPRESSED."

RIGHT TO INTERFERE.

PUBLIC PRISONS IN THE DISTRICT.

Built by Congress with $15,000 of the Peoples money, perverted from the purposes for which they were built, and used by Slaveholders for the confinement of refractory Slaves, by licensed Slave-dealers as depots for their victims, and by kidnappers for the imprisonment of Free Negroes, to get and hold as per their jail fees.

FACTS.

FACTS.

FACTS.

PRIVATE PRISONS IN THE DISTRICT, LICENSED AS SOURCES OF PUBLIC REVENUE.

"For a license to trade or traffic in slaves for profit, whether as agent or otherwise, four hundred dollars."—The Register to deposit all moneys received from taxes imposed by this act to the credit of the Canal Fund."—Act to provide a revenue for the Canal Fund, approved July 4th, 1828.—Vide Laws, p. 456.

"CASH FOR 200 NEGROES."

"CASH FOR 400 NEGROES."

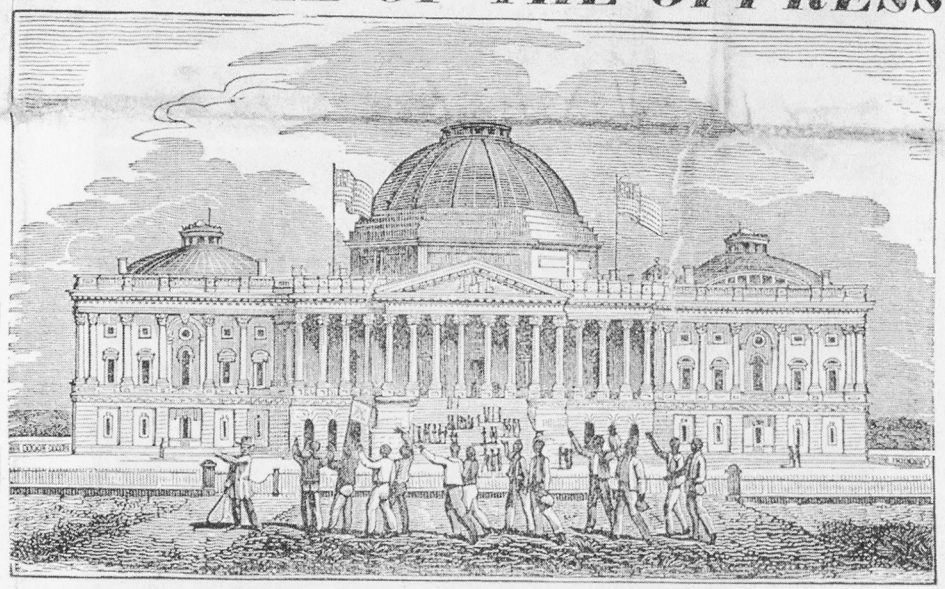
People of the United States, Congress alone possesses the constitutional power to legislate for the District of Columbia—yet one-hundred and sixty-three of your representatives are striving to perpetuate in the Capital of your Republic this system of robbery, cruelty and despotism. *House of Representatives, 5th February 1836.*—Certain petitions and memorials respecting the Abolition of Slavery in the District of Columbia were referred to a Select Committee with instructions to report, "That in the opinion of this House Congress ought not in any way to interfere with Slavery in the District of Columbia."—Yeas 163—Nays 47.—The following are the Yeas

Adams,	Ben. Harrison,	Ingham,	Pearce,	Gillet,	Mann,	Wardwell,	Bronson,	Mann,	M'Kim,	Claiborne,	M'Comas,	Semmes,	Pettigrew,	Rogers,	Heister,	Sprigg,	Garland,	Barton,	Shields,	French,	White,	Krause,	Semmes,	Casey,	
Fairfield,	Bean,	Jabez,	Cambreling,	Huntington,	Pope,	Ely, Jr.	Fry, Jr.	Weir,	Tweed,	Coles,	Mason,	Bynum,	Rencher,	Stanly,	Coffee,	Chapman,	Dudley,	Standifer,	Grayson,	Williams,	Kilgore,	Bunn,	Mac.	
Hall,	Burke,	Phelps,	Chapin,	Lansing,	Reynolds,	Chittenden,	Vanderpoel,	Whittlesey,	Noyes,	Craig,	Mercer,	Conner,	Shepard,	Coffin,	Chapman,	Ripley,	Hendersen,	Allen,	Harlan,	Chaney,	Patterson,	Davis,	Reynolds.	
Jarvis,	Cushman,	Tracy,	Crocker,	Lee,	Ingersoll,	Sickels,	Richardson,	Sutherland,	Thomas,	Dromgoole,	Morgan,	Doherty,	Shepperd,	Cromelien,	Lansing,	Speight,	Johnson,	Boyd,	Howard,	Hunter,	Spangler,	Hannegan,	Wagner.	
Mann,	Pierce,	New York.	Doubleday,	Leonard,	Sutton,	Noble,	Hubley,	Wagner,	Washington,	Garland,	Patton,	Graham,	Williams,	Hopson,	Lyon,	Martin,	Johnson,	Bell,	Howard,	Hunter,	Bates,	Kincaid,	Ashley,	
Potts,	Wicks,	Barton,	Efner,	M'Kim,	Taylor,	Connecticut.	Klingensmith,	Pennsylvania.	Hopkins,	Venable,	Rives,	Hawkins,	Owens,	Martin,	Bell,	Lea,	Calhoun,	Johnson,	Howell,	Bates,	Thompson,	Lane,	Harrison.	
Smith,	Connecticut.	Boden,	Forlin,	Mann, Jr.,	Turrill,	Anthony,	Lyttle,	Howard,	Beale,	Johnson,	Robertson,	M'Kay,	Manning,	Toucy,	Calhoun,	Beach,	Beach,	Mercy,	Chambers,	Underwood,	Jones,				
		Haley,	Reed,	Fuller,	Morris,	Vanderpoel,	Ash,	Logan,	Jenifer,	Loyall,	Talliaferro,	Montgomery,	Pinckney,	Cleveland,	Claiborne,										

Published by the American Anti-Slavery Society, 144 Nassau-street, New-York, 1836.

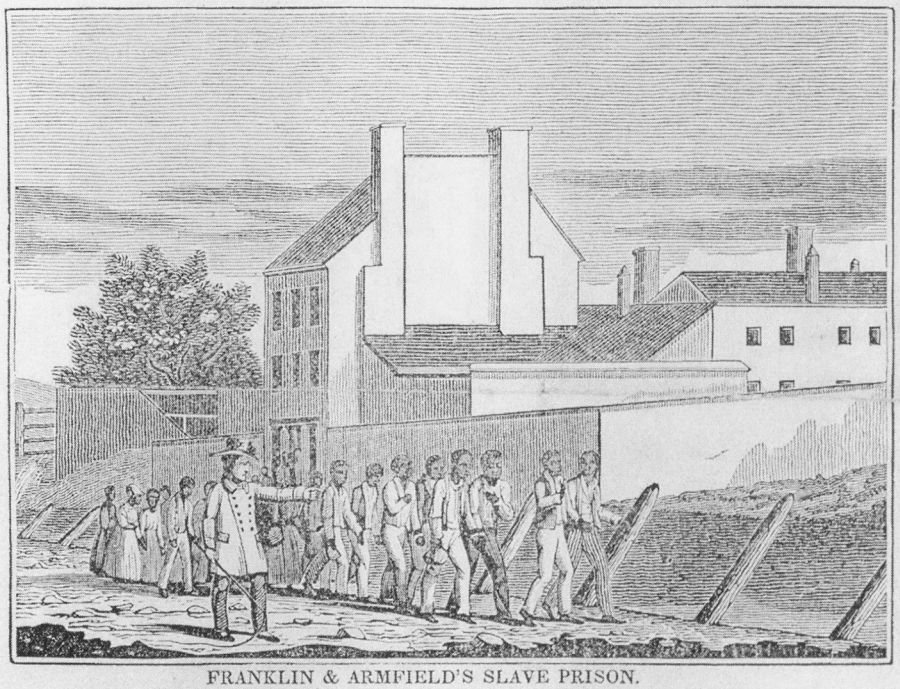
Fig. 7

"THE HOME OF THE OPPRESSED."



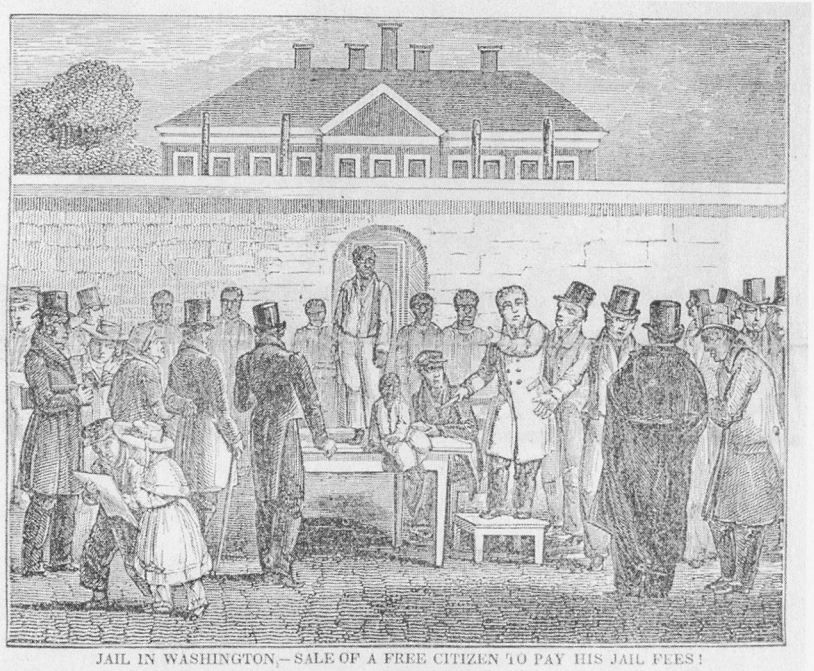
CAPITOL OF THE UNITED STATES. "HAIL COLUMBIA."

Fig. 8



FRANKLIN & ARMFIELD'S SLAVE PRISON.

Fig. 9



JAIL IN WASHINGTON.—SALE OF A FREE CITIZEN TO PAY HIS JAIL FEES!

Fig. 10

VIEW OF THE INTERIOR OF THE JAIL IN WASHINGTON.—FANNY JACKSON.

Fig. 11

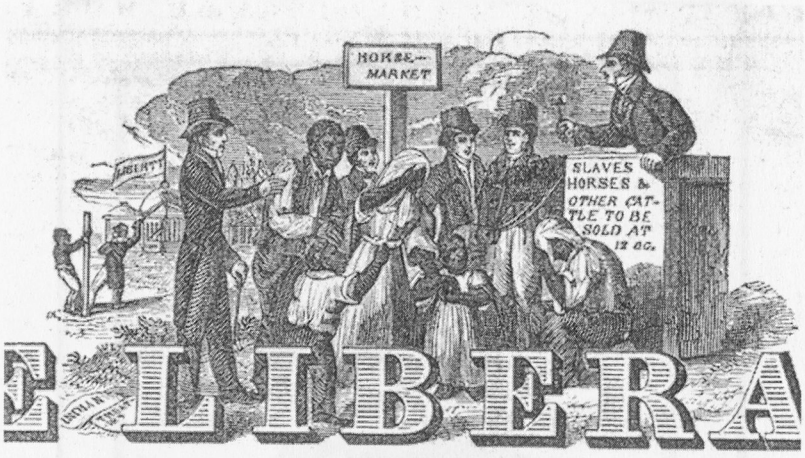
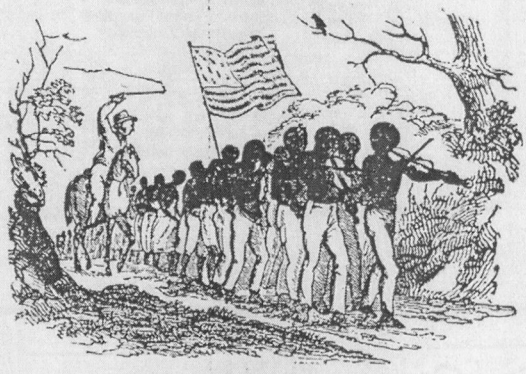


Fig. 12

THE

ANTI-SLAVERY RECORD.

VOL. I. FEBRUARY, 1835. NO. 2.



HOW SLAVERY HONORS OUR COUNTRY'S FLAG.

[From Rankin's Letters.]

"In the summer of 1822, as I returned with my family from a visit to the Barrens of Kentucky, I witnessed a scene such as I never witnessed before, and such as I hope never to witness again. Having passed through Paris in Bourbon county, Ky. the sound of music (beyond a little rising ground) attracted my attention, I looked forward, and saw the flag of my country waving. Supposing that I was about to meet a military parade, I drove hastily to the side of the road; and having gained the top of the ascent, I discovered (I suppose) about forty black men all chained together after the following manner; each of them was handcuffed, and they were arranged in rank and file. A chain perhaps 40 feet long, the size of a fifth-horse chain, was stretched between the two ranks, to which

Vol. I. 2

A gang of slaves being taken into the deep South for sale in New Orleans

Fig. 13

THE
AMERICAN ANTI-SLAVERY
ALMANAC,
FOR
1843.

BEING THE THIRD AFTER BISSEXTILE, OR LEAP YEAR;
AND UNTIL JULY 4th, THE SIXTY-SEVENTH
OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE
UNITED STATES.

Oh, hail Columbia! Happy land!
The cradle land of Liberty!
Where none but negroes bear the brand,
Or feel the lash of slavery.

Then let the glorious anthem peal! ...ves"—
And drown, "Britannia rules!!!"—
Strike up the song that men ...lon slaves!!" DR. MADDEN.
"Columbia rules thr...

COMPI... BY L. M. CHILD.

NEW-YORK:
Published by the A...rican Anti-Slavery Society, 143 Nassau street, New-York; 25 Cornhill, Boston; and 31 North Fifth street, Philadelphia.

Fig. 14

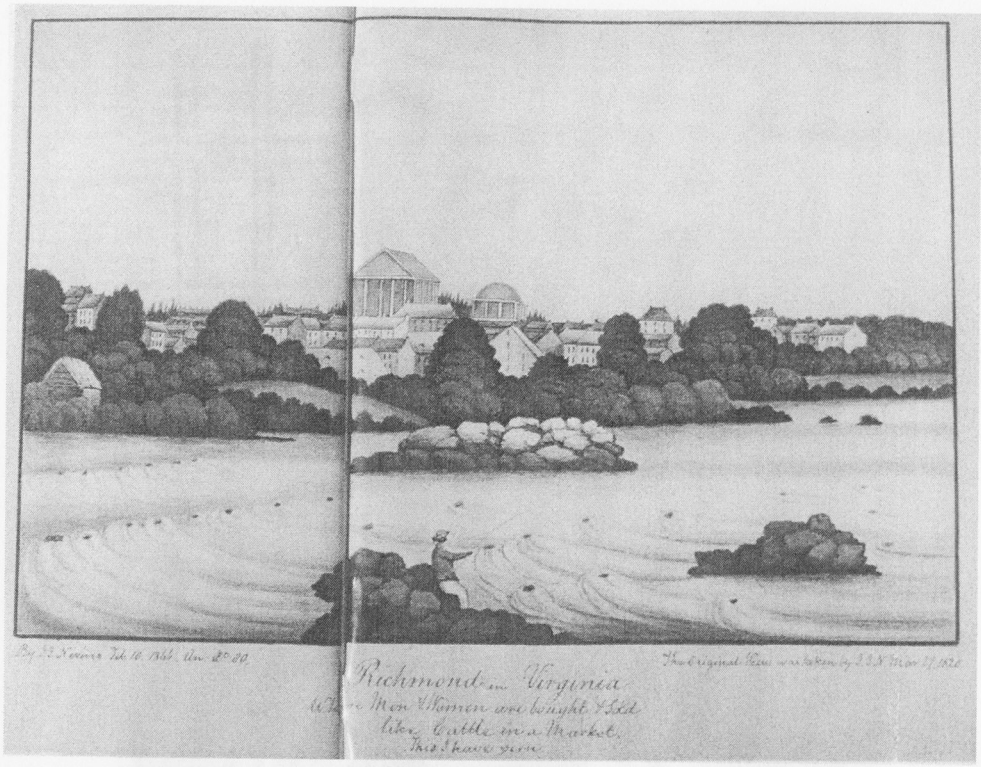

Richmond in Virginia
Men & Women are bought & Sold
like Cattle in a Market.
This I have seen

Fig. 15

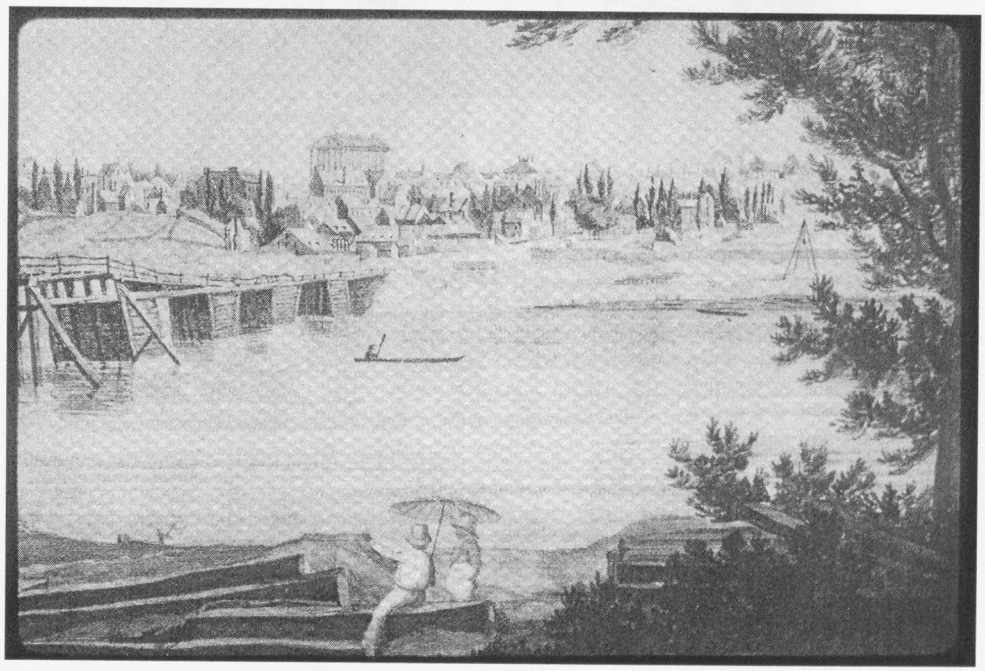


Fig. 16

SEE PAGE 23.

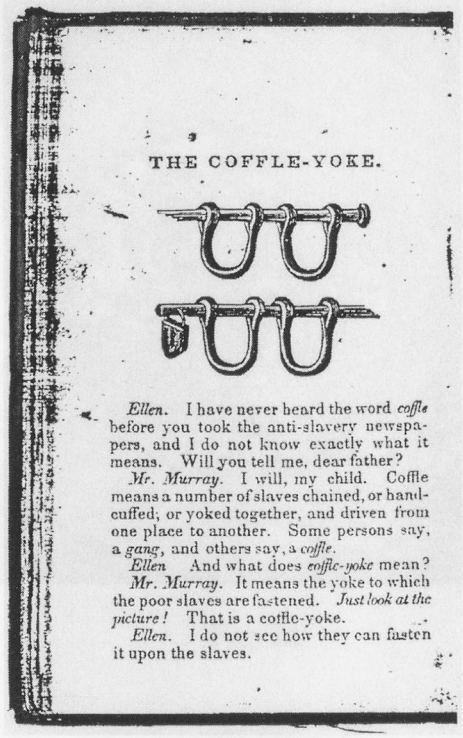
Fig. 17

Fig. 18

Fig. 19

Fig. 20

Fig. 21



THE COFFLE-YOKE.

Ellen. I have never heard the word *coffle* before you took the anti-slavery newspapers, and I do not know exactly what it means. Will you tell me, dear father?

Mr. Murray. I will, my child. Coffle means a number of slaves chained, or handcuffed; or yoked together, and driven from one place to another. Some persons say, a *gang*, and others say, a *coffle*.

Ellen And what does *coffle-yoke* mean?

Mr. Murray. It means the yoke to which the poor slaves are fastened. *Just look at the picture!* That is a coffle-yoke.

Ellen. I do not see how they can fasten it upon the slaves.

Fig. 22

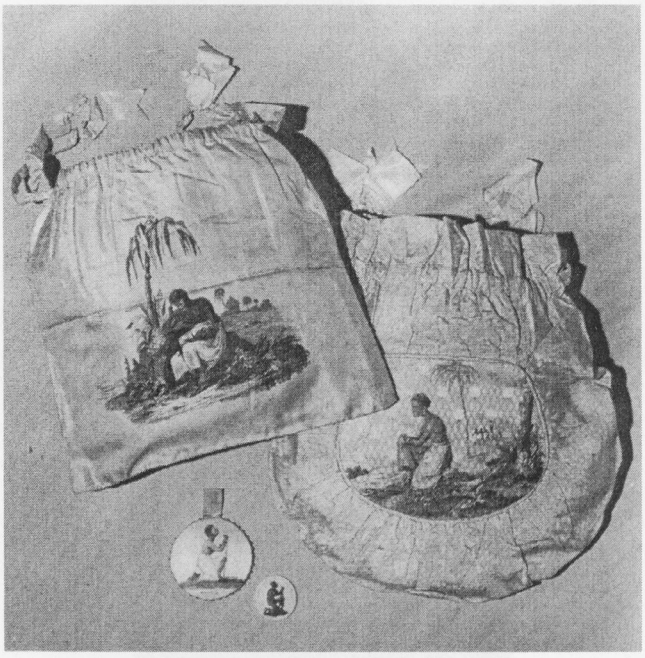


Fig. 23

Fig. 24

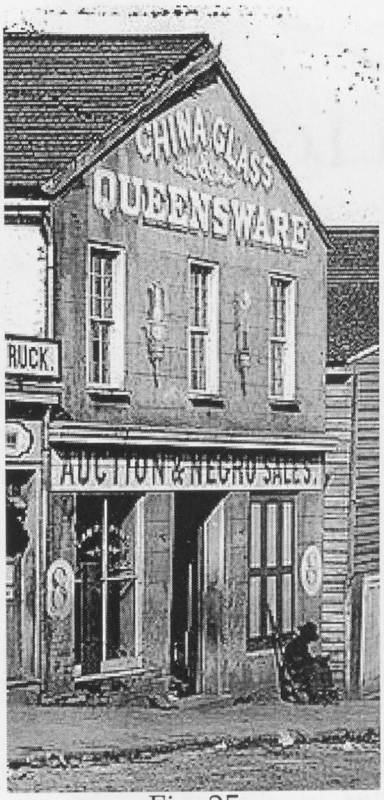


Fig. 25

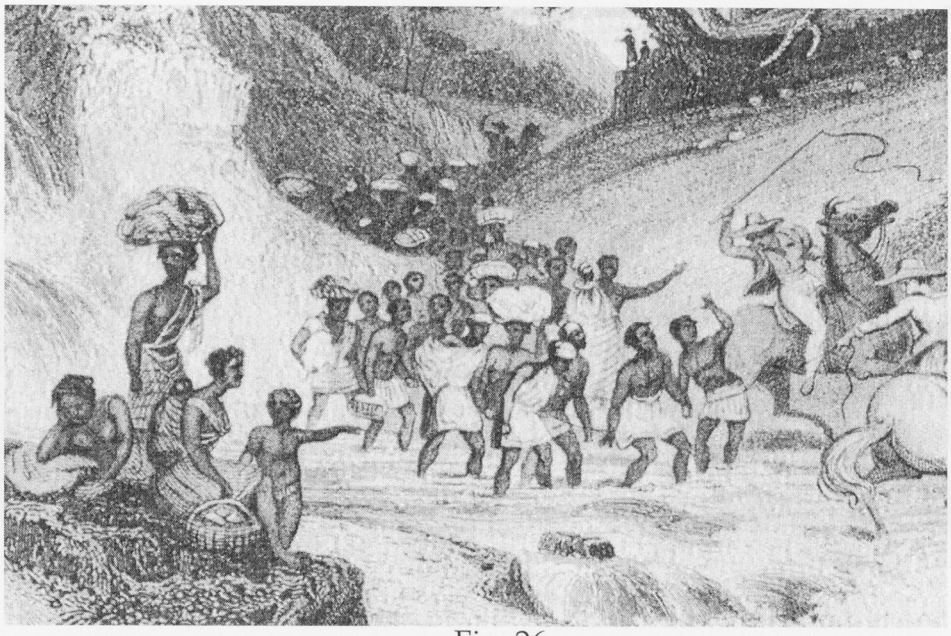
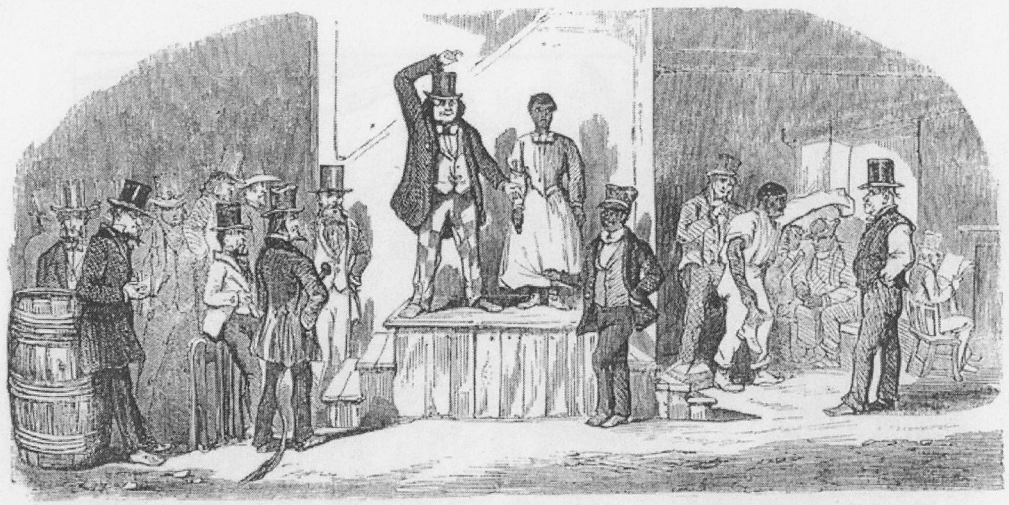


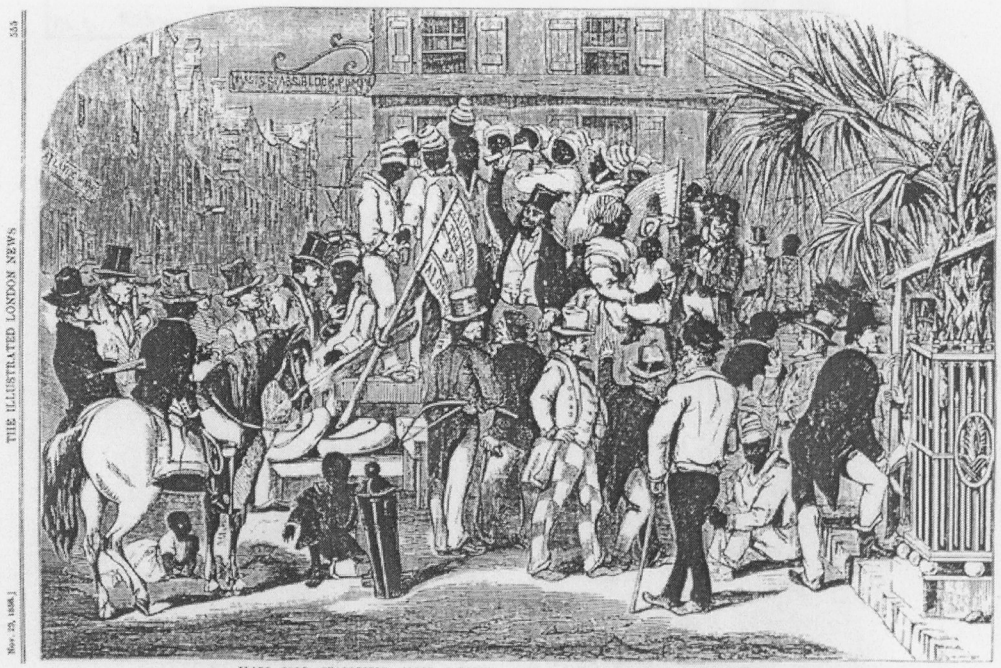
Fig. 26

Fig. 27



SLAVE AUCTION AT RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

Fig. 28



SLAVE SALE, CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA, FROM A SKETCH BY ETHE CROWE

Fig. 29

IN THE RICHMOND SLAVE MARKET

Fig. 30

SLAVES WAITING FOR SALE, VIRGINIA.

Fig. 31

Fig. 32

Fig. 33

THE
ANTI-SLAVERY RECORD.
Vol. III. No. VII. JULY, 1837. Whole No. 31.

This picture of a poor fugitive is from one of the stereotype cuts manufactured in this city for the southern market, and used on handbills offering rewards for runaway slaves.

THE RUNAWAY.

To escape from a powerful enemy, often requires as much courage and generalship as to conquer. One of the most celebrated military exploits on record, is the *retreat* of the ten thousand Greeks under

Fig. 34

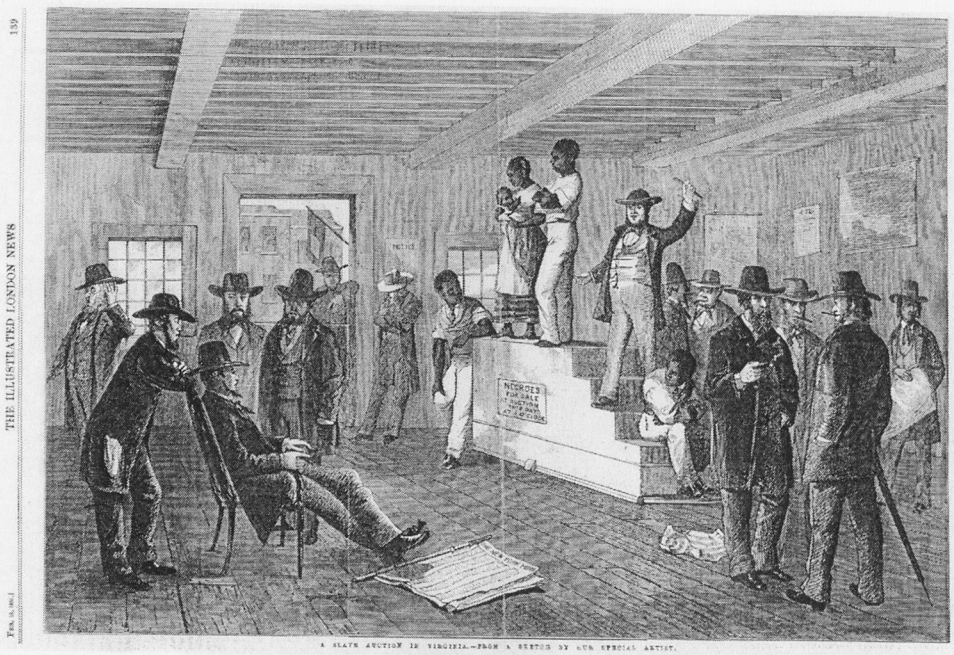
V. The Indissoluble Tie.

His faithful wife, taking heed of the scriptural doctrine, that "they twain shall be one flesh," and obedient to the Divine injunction, "whom God hath joined," &c., is preparing to fulfil her nuptial vow, and follow her husband, "for better or worse."

VI. Insult added to Injury.

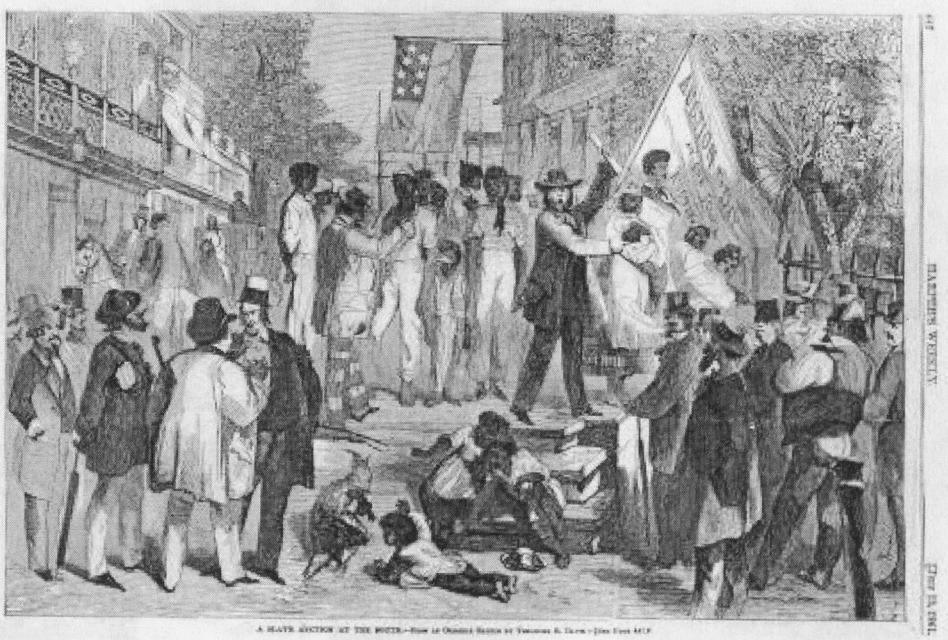
Various devices are employed to heap contumely upon this exercise of his inalienable rights.

Fig. 35



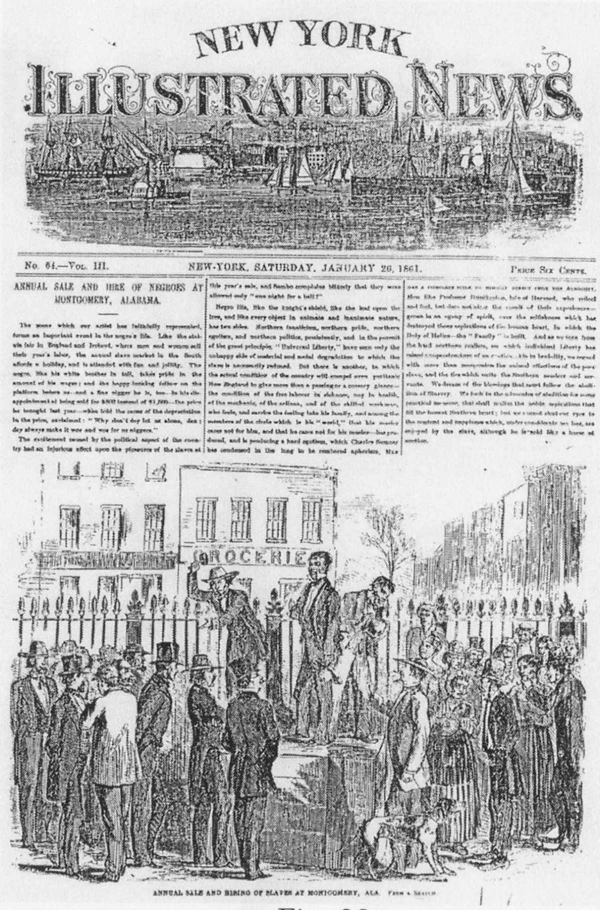
A SLAVE AUCTION IN VIRGINIA.—FROM A SKETCH BY OUR SPECIAL ARTIST.

Fig. 36



A SLAVE AUCTION AT THE SOUTH.—[See also Original Design by Thomas R. Dawe.]—[See Page 445.]

Fig. 37



NEW YORK ILLUSTRATED NEWS.

No. 64.—Vol. III. NEW-YORK, SATURDAY, JANUARY 26, 1861. Price Six Cents.

ANNUAL SALE AND HIRE OF NEGROES AT MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA.

The scene which our artist has faithfully represented, forms an important event in the negro's life. Like the statute fair in England and Ireland, where men and women sell their year's labor, the annual slave market in the South affords a holiday, and is attended with fun and jollity. The negro, like his white brother in toil, takes pride in the amount of his wages; and the happy-looking fellow on the platform before us—and a fine nigger he is, too—in his disappointment at being sold for $800 instead of $1,000—the price he brought last year—when told the cause of the depreciation in the price, exclaimed: "Why don't dey let us alone, den; dey always make it wus and wus for us niggers."

The excitement caused by the political aspect of the country had an injurious effect upon the pleasures of the slaves at this year's sale, and Sambo complains bitterly that they were allowed only "one night for a ball!"

Negro life, like the knight's shield, like the leaf upon the tree, and like every object in animate and inanimate nature, has two sides. Northern fanaticism, northern pride, northern egotism, and northern politics, persistently, and in the pursuit of the great principle, "Universal Liberty," have seen only the unhappy side of material and social degradation to which the slave is necessarily reduced. But there is another, in which the actual condition of the country will compel even puritanic New England to give more than a passing or a cursory glance—the condition of the free labourer in sickness, say in health, of the mechanic, of the artisan, and of the skilled workman, who feels, and carries the feeling into his family, and among the members of the circle which is his "world," that his master cares not for him, and that he cares not for his master—has produced, and is producing a hard egotism, which Charles Sumner has condensed in the long to be remembered aphorism, Man has a [illegible]. Men like Professor [illegible], late of Harvard, who reflect and feel, but dare not show the result of their experience—groan in an agony of spirit, over the selfishness which has destroyed those aspirations of the human heart, in which the Holy of Holies—the "Family"—is built. And as we turn from the hard northern realism, on which individual liberty has raised a superstructure of an [illegible] to [illegible], we regard with more than [illegible] the natural affections of the poor slave, and the ties which unite the Southern master and servants. We dream of the blessings that must follow the abolition of Slavery. We look to the advocates of abolition for some practical measure, that shall realize the noble aspirations that fill the honest Northern heart; but we cannot shut our eyes to the content and happiness which, under considerate [illegible], are enjoyed by the slave, although he is sold like a horse at auction.

ANNUAL SALE AND HIRING OF SLAVES AT MONTGOMERY, ALA. FROM A SKETCH

Fig. 38

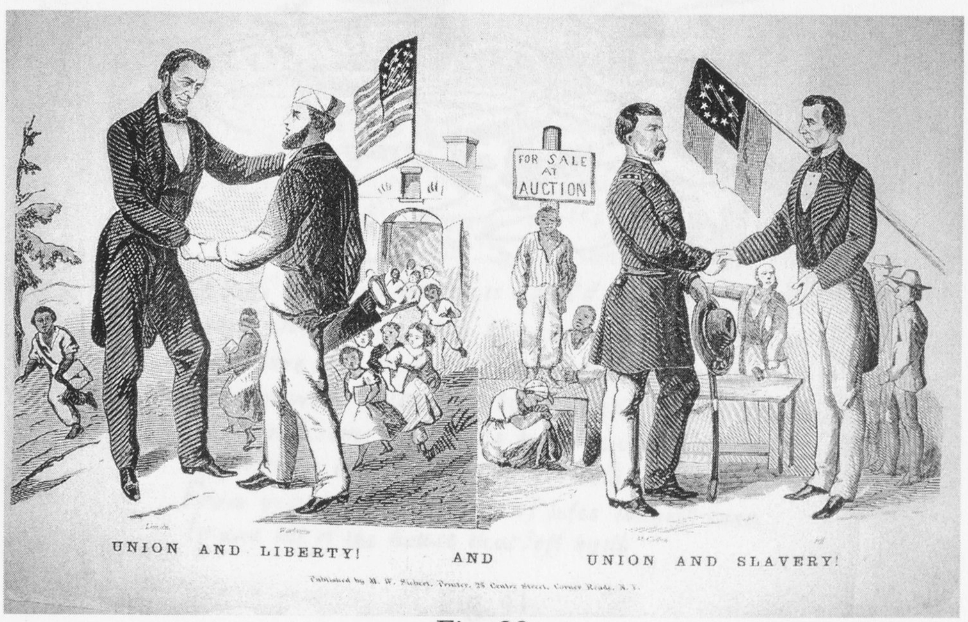


Fig. 39

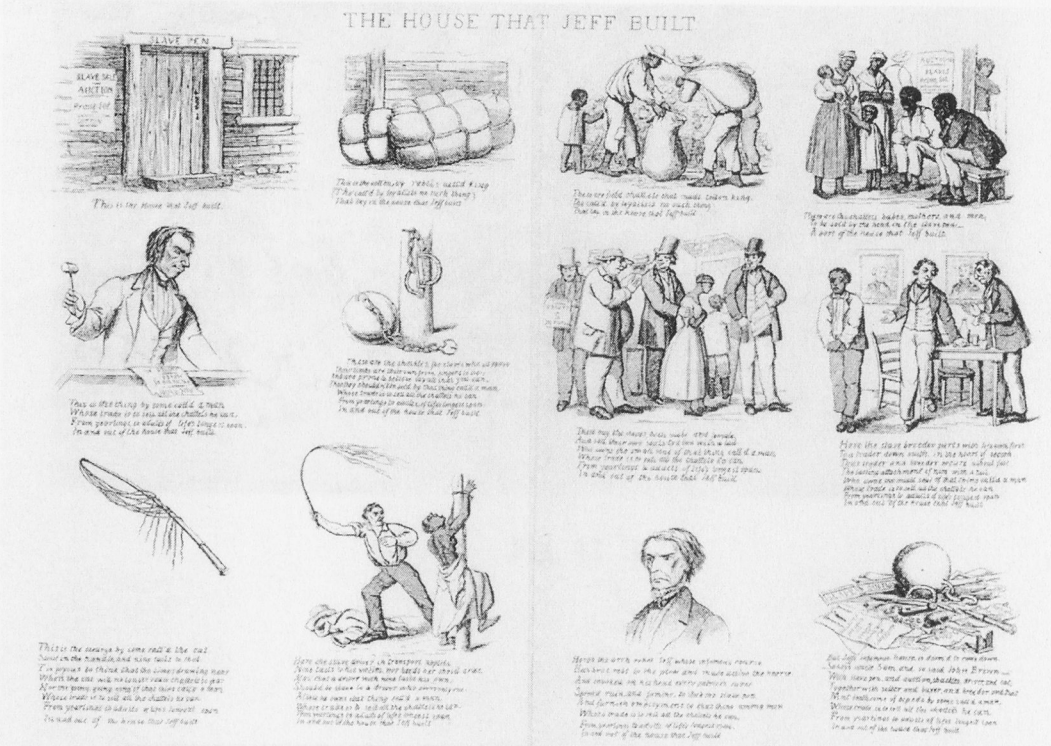
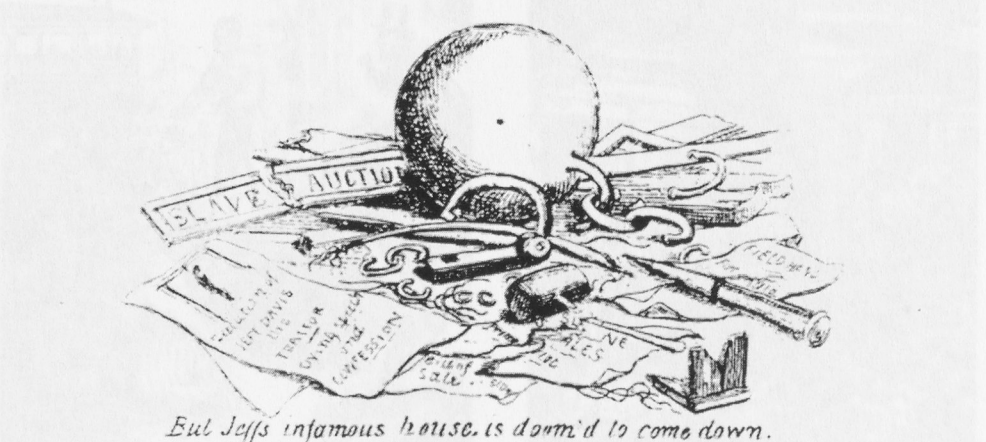


Fig. 40



But Jeffs infamous house is doom'd to come down.
—So says uncle Sam, and so said John Brown.—
With slave pen, and auction, shackles, driver, and cat,
Together with seller and buyer, and breeder and that
Most loathsome of bipeds by some call'd a man,
Whose trade is to sell all the chattels he can.
From yearlings to adults of lifes longest span
In and out of the house that Jeff built

Fig. 41

Fig. 42

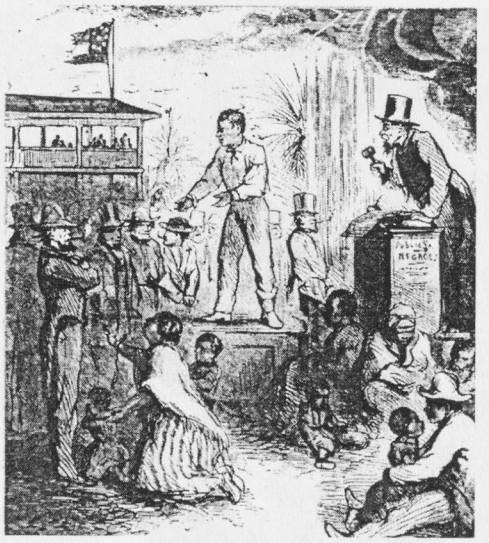


Fig. 43a

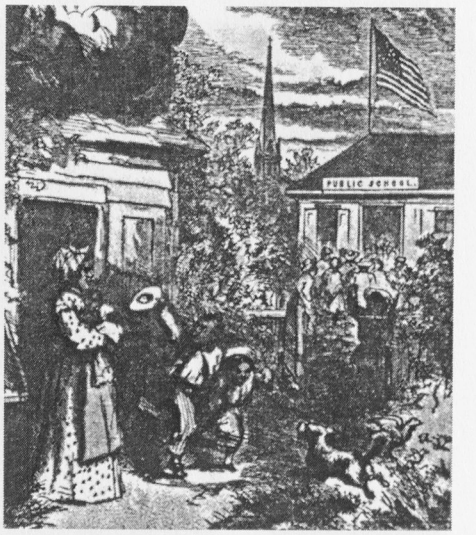
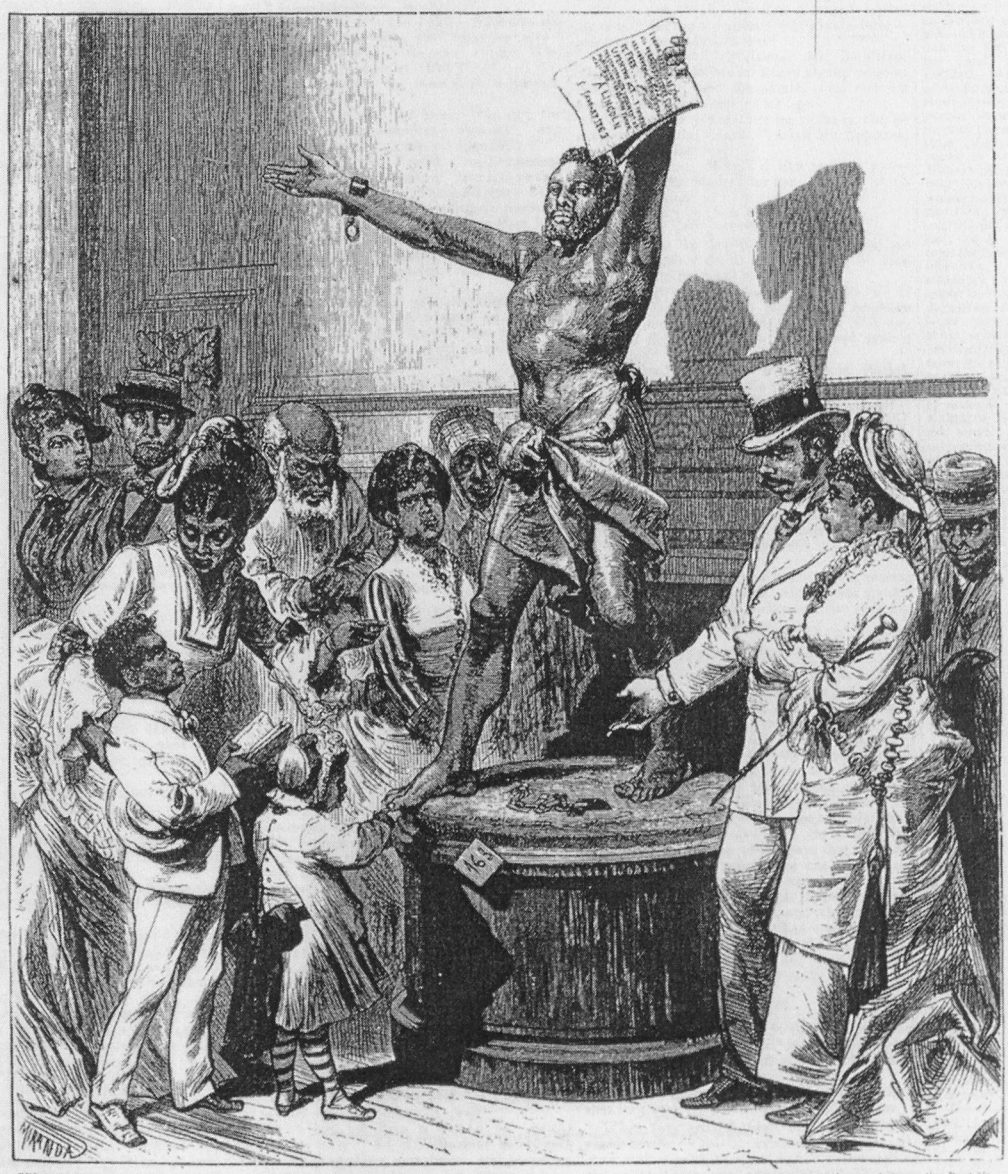


Fig. 43b

FRANK LESLIE'S
ILLUSTRATED
NEWSPAPER

No. 1,088.—Vol. XLII.] NEW YORK, AUGUST 5, 1876. [Price, 10 Cents.



PHILADELPHIA, PA.—THE CENTENNIAL EXPOSITION.—THE STATUE OF "THE FREED SLAVE" IN MEMORIAL HALL.—From Sketches by our Special Artists. See Page 376.

Fig. 44

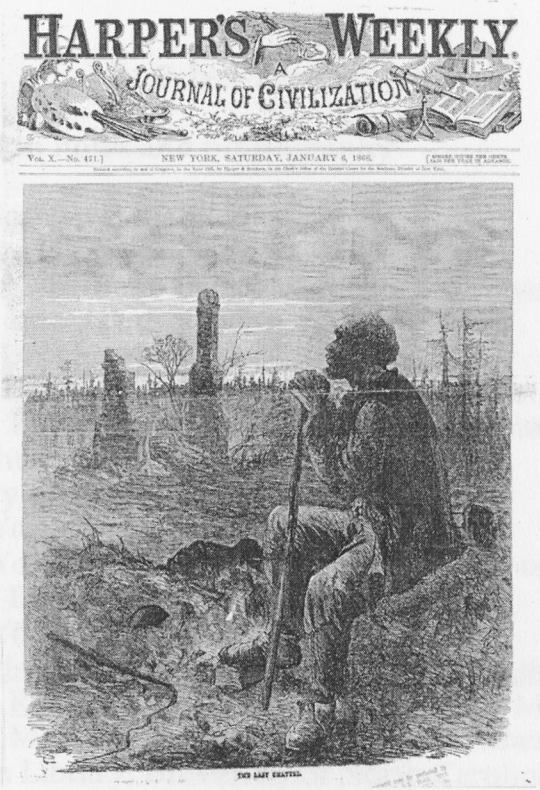

HARPER'S WEEKLY.
A JOURNAL OF CIVILIZATION
Vol. X.—No. 471.] NEW YORK, SATURDAY, JANUARY 6, 1866.
THE LAST CHATTEL.

Fig. 45

TWO PLANTATION MELODIES! STANDARD AND POPULAR!
CARRY ME BACK TO OLD VIRGINNY.
SONG AND CHORUS. WORDS AND MUSIC BY JAMES A. BLAND. 40.
THERE'S A HAPPY LITTLE HOME.
SONG AND CHORUS. WORDS AND MUSIC BY HARRY WOODSON. 40.
BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY JOHN F. PERRY & CO., 16 WEST STREET,
4 doors from Washington.
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.
"GOLDEN SLIPPERS," introducing the ever popular melody of "In the Morning by the Bright Light," beautifully transcribed by Alfred E. Warren. Price, 50 cents. Sent post-paid.

Fig. 46

Select Bibliography

Abbreviations used in notes and bibliography

AAS	American Antiquarian Society
CHS	Chicago Historical Society
DAS	Hypertext edition in Documenting the American South, http://metalab.unc.edu/docsouth/.
DU	Duke University
HBS	Baker Library, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University. Harvard Business School)
HU	Houghton Library, Harvard University
LVA	Library of Virginia
NYPL	New York Public Library, Main Branch
NYPLS	New York Public Library, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture
NYHS	New York Historical Society
RASP	Records of Ante-Bellum Southern Plantations from the Revolution through the Civil War. Microfilm. Frederick, Md. : University Publications of America, 1985- .
UNC	Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
UVA	Special Collections, Alderman Library, University of Virginia
VHS	Virginia Historical Society
VT	Special Collections, Newman Library, Virginia Tech
W&M	Swem Library, College of William and Mary

Secondary Sources

Andrews, William L. To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986.

Aptheker, Herbert. American Negro Slave Revolts. 1943. Reprint. New York: International Publishers, 1983.

Ayers, Edward L. Vengeance & Justice: Crime and Punishment in the 19th-century American South. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Baker, Houston A., Jr. "Autobiographical Acts and the Voice of the Southern Slave." In The Slave's Narrative, edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Charles T. Davis. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Bancroft, Frederic. Slave Trading in the Old South. 1931. Reprint. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996.

Bardaglio, Peter. Reconstructing the Household: Families, Sex, and the Law in the Nineteenth-Century South. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press,

1995.

Barnett, Todd H. "Virginians Moving West: The Early Evolution of Slavery in the Bluegrass." Filson Club Historical Quarterly 73 (July 1999): 221-248.

Berlin, Ira. Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Berlin, Ira, and Philip D. Morgan. Introduction to Cultivation and Culture: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas, edited by Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993.

Boime, Albert. The Art of Exclusion: Representing Blacks in the Nineteenth Century. Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990.

Boulton, Alexander O. "The Architecture of Slavery: Art, Language, and Society in Early Virginia." Ph.D. diss., College of William and Mary, 1991.

Brawley, Lisa C. "Fugitive Nation: Slavery, Travel, and Technologies of American Identity, 1830-1860." Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1995.

Brodhead, "Sparing the Rod: Discipline and Fiction in Antebellum America." In Culture of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Brown, Gillian. Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Burstein, Andrew. The Inner Jefferson: Portrait of a Grieving Optimist. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1995.

Campbell, Edward D. C., Jr., and Kym S. Rice. eds. Before Freedom Came: African American Life in the Antebellum South. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia: 1991.

Cashin, Joan E. "Landscape and Memory in Antebellum Virginia." Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 102 (Oct. 1994): 478-500.

----------. A Family Venture: Men and Women on the Southern Frontier. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994.

Censer, Jane Turner. North Carolina Planters and Their Children, 1800-1860. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984.

Chambers, Douglas Brent. "'He Gwine Sing He Country': Africans, Afro-Virginians, and the development of slave culture in Virginia, 1690-1810." Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1996.

Cody, Cheryl Ann. "Sale and Separation: Four Crises for Enslaved Women on the Ball Plantations 1764-1854." In Working Toward Freedom: Slave Society and Domestic Economy in the American South, edited by Larry E. Hudson Jr.. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1994).

----------. "Naming, Kinship, and Estate Dispersal: Notes on Slave Family Life on a South Carolina Plantation, 1786 to 1833." William And Mary Quarterly 39 (Jan. 1982): 192-211.

Conrad, Alfred H., and John R. Meyer. "The Economics of Slavery in the Antebellum South" In Did Slavery Pay? Readings in the Economics of Black Slavery in the United States, edited by Hugh G. J. Aitken. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1971.

Cornelius, Janet Duitsman. "We Slipped and Learned to Read: Slave Accounts of the Literacy Process, 1830-1865." Phylon 44 (Sept. 1983): 171-186.

Craven, Avery O. Soil Exhaustion as a Factor in the Agricultural History of Virginia. 1926. Reprint. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965.

Crawford, Stephen C. "Quantified Memory: A Study of the WPA and Fisk University Slave Narrative Collections." Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1980.

Davis, David Brion. The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975.

Decker, William Merrill. Epistolary Practices: Letter Writing in America before Telecommunications. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Dew, Charles. Bond of Iron: Master and Slaver at Buffalo Forge. New York: W. W. Norton, 1994.

Deyle, Steven H. "Irony of Liberty: Origins of the Domestic Slave Trade." Journal of the Early Republic 12 (Spring 1992): 329-337.

----------. "The Domestic Slave Trade in America." Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1995.

----------. "Competing Ideologies in the Old South: Capitalism, Paternalism, and the Domestic Slave Trade." Paper presented to the American Historical Association Annual Meeting, 10 January 1999.

Drago, Edmund, and Ralph Melnick, "The Old Slave Mart Museum, Charleston, South Carolina: Rediscovering the Past." Civil War History 27 (June 1981): 138-154.

Dubois, W. E. B. The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1738-1870. 1896. Reprint. New York: Schocken Books, 1969.

Dunaway, Wilma A. "Diaspora, Death, and Sexual Exploitation: Slave Families at Risk in the Mountain South." Appalachian Journal 26 (Winter 1999): 128-149.

Ellis, Clifton Coxe, "Building Berry Hill: Plantation Architecture in Antebellum Virginia." Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 2000.

Egerton, Douglas R. "Markets without a Market Revolution: Southern Planters and Capitalism." Journal of the Early Republic 16 (Summer 1996): 207-221.

Escott, Paul D. Slavery Remembered: A Record of Twentieth-Century Slave Narratives. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979.

Faust, Drew Gilpin. A Sacred Circle: The Dilemma of the Intellectual in the Old South, 1840-1860. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977.

Fede, Andrew. "Legal Protection for Slave Buyers in the U. S. South: A Caveat Concerning Caveat Emptor." American Journal of Legal History 31 (Oct. 1987): 322-358.

Finkelman, Paul. Slavery and the Founders: Race and Liberty in the Age of Jefferson. Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1996.

Fischer, David Hackett, and James C. Kelly. Bound Away: Virginia and the Westward Movement. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000.

Fisher, Philip. Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Fleischner, Jennifer. Mastering Slavery: Memory, Family, and Identity in Women's Slave Narratives. New York: New York University Press, 1996.

Flemma, Thomas J. "Gradual Emancipation and the Fifth Amendment: The Extrajudicial Precedents of Due Process in the Dred Scott Case." M.A. thesis, University of Virginia, 1994.

Fogel, Robert W., and Stanley L. Engerman. Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery. 1974. Reprint. New York: W. W. Norton, 1989.

----------. "The Slave Breeding Thesis." In Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery; Technical Papers, edited by Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman. New York: W. W. Norton, 1992.

Fort, James Bruce. "The Politics and Culture of Literacy in Georgia, 1800-1920." Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1999.

Foster, Francis Smith. Written By Herself: Literary Production by African American Women, 1746-1892. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.

Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth. Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988.

Freehling, Alison. Drift Toward Dissolution: The Virginia Slavery Debate of 1831-1832. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982.

Freehling, William. The Road to Disunion, Vol. I: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

----------. The Reintegration of American History: Slavery and the Civil War. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

French, Scot. "Remembering Nat Turner: The Rebellious Slave in American Thought, 1831 to the Present." Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, May 2000.

Freudenberger, Herman, and Jonathan B. Pritchett. "The Domestic United States Slave Trade: New Evidence." Journal of Interdisciplinary History 21 (Winter 1991): 447-477.

Gardner, Eric Scott. "After Uncle Tom: The Domestic Dialogue on Slavery and Race, 1852-1859." Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 1996.

Garrison, Wendell Phillips. William Lloyd Garrison, 1805-1879: The Story of His Life Told By His Children. 4 vols. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1889.

Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism. New York: Oxford University Press: 1988.

Genovese, Eugene D. Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made. 1972. Reprint. New York: Vintage Books, 1976.

----------. A Consuming Fire: The Fall of the Confederacy in the Mind of the White Christian South. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998.

----------. Slaveholders' Dilemma: Freedom and Progress in Southern Conservative Thought, 1820-1860. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992.

Giles-Vernick, Tamara. "Na Lege ti Gueriri. (On the Road of History): Mapping Out the Past and Present in M'Bres Region, Central African Republic." Ethnohistory 43 (Spring 1996): 247-275.

Greenberg, Kenneth S. Masters and Statesmen: The Political Culture of

American Slavery. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985.

Gross, Ariela. "Pandora's Box: Slavery, Character, and Southern Culture in the Courtroom, 1800-1860." Ph.d. diss., Stanford University, 1996.

Gutman, Herbert G. Slavery and the Numbers Game: A Critique of *Time on the Cross*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975.

----------. The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925. New York: Pantheon Books, 1976.

Halttunen, Karen. "Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American Culture." American Historical Review 100 (April 1995): 303-334.

Haskell, Thomas L. "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility." In The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation, edited by Thomas Bender. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

The Image of the Black in Western Art. Foreword by Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow. New York: Morrow, 1976-. 4 vols.

Issac, Rhys. Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790. 1982. Reprint. New York: Norton, 1988.

Johnson, Walter. Soul By Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Jones, Howard. "The Peculiar Institution and National Honor: The Case of the Creole Slave Revolt." Civil War History 21 (March 1975).

Jordan, Ervin L. Black Confederates and Afro-Yankees in Civil War Virginia. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1995.

Kett, Joseph F., and Patricia A. McClung. "Book Culture in Post-Revolutionary Virginia." Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 94 (1984): 97-147.

Kilbourne, Richard Holcombe, Jr. Debt, Investment, Slaves: Credit Relations in East Feliciana Parish, Louisiana, 1825-1885. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995.

Kimball, Gregg D. "'The South as It Was': Social Order, Slavery, and Illustrators in Virginia,1830-1877." In Graphic Arts & the South: Proceedings of the 1990 North American Print Conference, edited by Judy L. Larson. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1993.

----------. "Place and Perception: Richmond in Late Antebellum America." Ph.D.

diss., UVA, 1997

Kirby, Jack Temple. Poquosin: A Study of Rural Landscape and Society. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995.

Kulikoff, Allan. "A 'Prolifik' People: Black Population Growth in the Chesapeake Colonies, 1700-1790." Southern Studies 16 (1977): 391-428.

----------. "Uprooted Peoples: Black Migrants in the Age of the American Revolution, 1790-1820." In Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution, edited by Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983.

----------. Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986.

Lapansky, Phillip. "Graphic Discord: Abolitionist and Antiabolitionist Images." In The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America, edited by Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.

Lebsock, Suzanne. Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860. New York: W. W. Norton, 1984.

Lewis, Charlene Marie. "Ladies and Gentlemen on Display: Planter Society at the Virginia Springs, 1790-1860." Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1997.

Lewis, Jan. The Pursuit of Happiness: Family and Values in Jefferson's Virginia. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Malone, Ann Patton. Sweet Chariot: Slave Family and Household Structure in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992.

McColley, Robert. Slavery and Jeffersonian Virginia. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964)

McInerney, David J. "'A State of Commerce': Market Power and Slave Power in Abolitionist Political Economy." Civil War History 37 (June 1991).

McKee, Larry. "The Ideals and Realities Behind the Design and Use of Nineteenth Century Virginia Slave Cabins." In The Art and Mystery of Historical Archaeology: Essays in Honor of James Deetz, edited by Anne Elizabeth Yentsch and Mary C. Beaudry. Ann Arbor: CRC Press, 1992.

Mintz, Steven. A Prison of Expectations: The Family in Victorian Culture. New York: New York University Press, 1983.

Mitchell, Robert D. Commercialism and Frontier: Perspectives on the Early Shenandoah Valley. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977.

Monaghan, Jennifer. "Reading for the Enslaved, Writing for the Free." Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 108 (1999).

Morgan, Edmund S. American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia. New York: Norton, 1975.

Morgan, Lynda. Emancipation in Virginia's Tobacco Belt, 1850-1870. Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1992.

Morgan, Philip D. Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Morris, Thomas D. "'Society is Not Market by Punctuality in the Payment of Debts': The Chattel Mortgages of Slaves." In Ambivalent Legacy: A Legal History of the South, edited by David J. Bodenhamer and James W. Ely. Jackson: University of Mississippi, 1984.

----------. Southern Slavery and the Law, 1619-1860. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

Morris, Christopher. "The Articulation of Two Worlds: The Master-Slave Relationship Reconsidered." Journal of American History 85 (Dec. 1998): 982-1007.

Moss, Elizabeth. Domestic Novelists in the Old South: Defenders of Southern Culture. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992.

Neiman, Fraser D. The "Manner House" Before Stratford. Discovering Clifts Plantation; a Stratford Handbook. Stratford, Va.: n. p., 1980.

----------. "Domestic Architecture at the Clifts Plantation: The Social Context of Early Virginia Building." In Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture, edited by Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986.

Niemtzow, Annette. "The Problematic of Self in Autobiography: The Example of the Slave Narrative." In The Art of Slave Narrative: Original Essays in Criticism and Theory, edited by John Sekora and Darwin T. Turner. [Macomb, Ill.]: Western Illinois University, 1982.

Noe, Kenneth W. Southwest Virginia's Railroad: Modernization and the Sectional Crisis. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994.

Norton, Mary Beth; Herbert G. Gutman; and Ira Berlin. "The Afro-American Family in the Age of Revolution." In Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution, edited by Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983.

Nudelman, Franny. "Harriet Jacobs and the Sentimental Politics of Female Suffering." English Literary History 59 (Winter 1992): 939-964.

Oakes, James. The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders. New York: Knopf, 1982.

----------. Slavery and Freedom: An Interpretation of the Old South. New York: Knopf, 1990.

Olney, James. "'I Was Born': Slave Narratives, their Status as Autobiography and as Literature." In The Slave's Narrative, edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Charles T. Davis. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Olwell, Robert. "'A Reckoning of Accounts': Patriarchy, Market Relations, and Control on Henry Laurens's Lowcountry Plantations, 1762-1785." In Working Toward Freedom: Slave Society and Domestic Economy in the American South, edited by Larry E. Hudson Jr.. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1994.

Osofsky, Gilbert. Introduction to Puttin' On Ole Massa: The Slave Narratives of Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Solomon Northup. New York: Harper and Row, 1969.

Painter, Nell Irvin. "Of Lily, Linda Brent, and Freud: A Non-Exceptionalist Approach to Race, Class, and Gender in the Slave South." In Half Sisters of History: Southern Women and the American Past, edited by Catherine Clinton. Durham: Duke University Press, 1994.

----------. Soul Murder and Slavery. Waco, Tx.: Baylor University Press, 1995.

----------. Sojourner Truth: a Life, a Symbol . New York : W.W. Norton, 1996.

Parish, Peter J. Slavery: History and Historians. New York: Harper & Row, 1989.

Patterson, Orlando. Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Peterson, Arthur G. Historical Study of Prices Received by Producers of Farm Products in Virginia, 1801-1927. Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics of the United States Department of Agriculture, [1929].

----------. "Wheat and Corn Prices Received by Producers in Virginia, 1801-1928." Journal of Economic and Business History 2 (Feb. 1930): 382-391.

Piacentino, Edward J. "Doesticks' Assault on Slavery: Style and Technique in The Great Auction Sale of Slaves, at Savannah, Georgia." Phylon 48 (Fall 1987): 196-203.

Pritchett, Jonathan. "Quantitative Estimates of the United States Interregional Slave Trade, 1820-1860." Paper presented to the Social Science History Association Annual Meeting, 21 November 1998.

Redford, Bruce. The Converse of the Pen: Acts of Intimacy in the Eighteenth-Century Familiar Letter. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

Reilly, Bernard F., Jr. "The Art of the Antislavery Movement." In Courage and Conscience: Black and White Abolitionists in Boston, edited by Donald M. Jacobs. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.

Robert, Joseph C. The Tobacco Kingdom: Plantation, Market, and Factory in Virginia and North Carolina, 1800-1860. Durham: Duke University Press, 1938.

----------. The Road to From Monticello: A Study of the Virginia Slavery Debate of 1832. In Historical Papers of the Trinity College Historical Society, ser. 24. Durham: Duke University Press, 1941.

Rose, Willie Lee. "The Domestication of Domestic Slavery." In Slavery and Freedom, edited by William W. Freehling. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.

Rothman, Adam. "The Domestication of the Slave Trade in the United States." Paper delivered at the Conference on Domestic Slave Trades, Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery and Abolition, October 1999.

Royall, William L. A History of Virginia Banks and Banking Prior to the Civil War. New York: Neale Publishing Co., 1907.

Russell, Thomas D. "Sale Day in Antebellum South Carolina: Slavery, Law, Economy, and Court-Supervised Sales." Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1993.

----------. "South Carolina's Largest Slave Auctioneering Firm," Chicago-Kent Law Review 68 (1993): 1241-1282.

Ryan, Mary. Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Sale, Maggie. The Slumbering Volcano: American Slave Ship Revolts and the

Production of Rebellious Masculinity. Durham: Duke University Press, 1997.

Sanchez-Eppler, Karen. "Bodily Bonds: The Intersecting Rhetorics of Feminism and Abolition." In The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth Century America, edited by Shirley Samuels. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Schafer, Judith K. "'Guaranteed Against the Vices and Maladies Prescribed by Law': Consumer Protection, the Law of Slave Sales, and the Supreme Court in Antebellum Louisiana." American Journal of Legal History 31 (Oct. 1987): 306-321.

Scribner, Robert L. "Slave Gangs on the March." Virginia Cavalcade 3. Autumn 1953): 10-13.

Sellers, Charles. The Market Revolution : Jacksonian America 1815-1846. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Sharp, Henry Kerr. "An Architectural Portrait: Prospect Hill, Spottsylvania County, Virginia." M.A. thesis, University of Virginia, 1996.

Simmons, J. Susanne. "They Too Were Here: African-Americans in Augusta County and Staunton, Virginia." M. A. Thesis, James Madison University, 1994.

Sklar, Kathryn Kish. Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity. New York: W. W. Norton, 1976.

Smith, John David. An Old Creed for the New South: Proslavery Ideology and Historiography, 1865-1918. 1985. Reprint. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991.

Smith, Daniel Blake. Inside the Great House: Planter Family Life in Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Society. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980.

Smith, Valerie. Self-Discovery and Authority in Afro-American Narrative. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1987.

Spengler, Joseph J. Spengler, "Malthusianism and the Debate on Slavery." South Atlantic Quarterly 34 (Apr. 1935): 170-189.

----------. "Population Theory in the Antebellum South" Journal of Southern History 2 (Aug. 1936): 360-389.

Stampp, Kenneth M. The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South. 1956. Reprint. New York: Vintage Books, n.d.

Stanley, Amy Dru. "Home Life and the Morality of the Market." In The Market

Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880, edited by Melvin Stokes and Stephen Conway. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996.

Starnes, George T. Sixty Years of Branch Banking in Virginia. New York: Macmillan Co., 1931.

Stealey, John E., III. The Antebellum Kanawha Salt Business and Western Markets. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1993.

Stephenson, Wendell Holmes. Isaac Franklin: Slave Trader and Planter of the Old South; with Plantation Records. University, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1938.

Stevenson, Brenda. "Distress and Discord in Virginia Slave Families, 1830-1860." In In Joy and In Sorrow: Women, Family, and Marriage in the Victorian South, edited by Carol Bleser. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

----------. Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Stowe, Steven M. Intimacy and Power in the Old South: Ritual in the Lives of the Planters. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.

Sutch, Richard. "The Breeding of Slaves for Sale and the Westward Expansion of Slavery, 1850-1860." In Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere: Quantitative Studies, edited by Stanley Engerman and Eugene Genovese. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975.

Sweig, Donald M. "Reassessing the Human Dimension of the Interstate Slave Trade," Prologue: the Journal of the National Archives 12 (Spring 1980).

----------. "Northern Virginia Slavery: A Statistical and Demographic Investigation." Ph.D. diss., College of William and Mary, 1982.

----------. "Alexander Grigsby: A Slavebreeder of Old Centerville?" Fairfax Chronicle, published by the Office of Comprehensive Planning, Fairfax, Va.. July 1983): 1-3.

Sydnor, Charles S. Slavery in Mississippi. 1933. Reprint. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966.

Tadman, Michael. "Slave Trading in the Ante-Bellum South: An Estimate of the Extent of the Inter-Regional Slave Trade." American Studies 13 (Aug. 1979): 195-220.

----------. Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South.

Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989.

----------. "Key Slaves and the Poverty of Paternalism." Paper presented to the American Historical Association Annual Meeting, 10 January 1999.

Terry, Gail S. "Sustaining the Bonds of Kinship in a Trans-Appalachian Migration, 1790-1811: The Cabell-Breckinridge Slaves Move West." Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 102 (Oct. 1994).

Tise, Larry. The Proslavery Argument: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701-1840. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987.

Tracy, Susan J. In the Master's Eye: Representations of Women, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Antebellum Southern Literature. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995.

Tyler-McGraw, Marie, and Gregg Kimball, In Bondage and Freedom: Antebellum Black Life in Richmond, Virginia. Richmond: Valentine Museum, 1988.

Upton, Dell. "White and Black Landscapes in Eighteenth-Century Virginia." In Material Life in America, 1600-1860, edited by Robert Blair St. George. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988.

Vlach, John Michael. Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

Vlach, Robert. "Snug Little Houses." In Gender, Class, and Shelter, edited by Elizabeth C. Cromley and Carter L. Hudgins. Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, Vol. 5. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995.

Von Frank, Albert J. The Trials of Anthony Burns: Freedom and Slavery in Emerson's Boston. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Wahl, Jenny B. "The Juridisprudence of American Slave Sales." Journal of Economic History 56 (Mar. 1996): 143-169.

Wallenstein, Peter. "Flawed Keepers of the Flame: The Interpreters of George Mason." Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 102 (April 1994): 229-260.

Wates, Wylma. "Precursor to the Victorian Age: The Concept of Marriage and Family as Revealed in the Correspondence of the Izard Family of South Carolina." In In Joy and In Sorrow: Women, Family and Marriage in the Victorian South, 1830-1900, edited by Carol Bleser. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Watson, Harry L. "Slavery and Development in a Dual Economy: The South and

the Market Revolution." In The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880, edited by Melvin Stokes and Stephen Conway. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996.

Webber, Thomas L. Deep Like the Rivers: Education in the Slave Quarter Community, 1831-1865. New York: Norton, 1978.

Weiner, Marli F. Mistresses and Slaves: Plantation Women in South Carolina, 1830-1880. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998.

West, Emily. "Surviving Separation: Cross-Plantation Marriages and the Slave Trade in Antebellum South Carolina." Journal of Family History 24 (April 1999): 212-231.

----------. "The Debate on the Strength of Slave Families: South Carolina and the Importance of Cross-Plantation Marriages." Journal of American Studies 33 (1999): 221-241.

Wexler, Laura. "Tender Violence: Literary Eavesdropping, Domestic Fiction, and Educational Reform." In The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America, edited by Shirley Samuels. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

White, Deborah Gray. Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South. New York: W. W. Norton, 1985.

Wiggins, Sarah Woolfolk. "A Victorian Father: Josiah Gorgas and His Family." In In Joy and In Sorrow: Women, Family and Marriage in the Victorian South, 1830-1900, edited by Carol Bleser. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Willis, John C. "From the Dictates of Pride to the Paths of Righteousness: Slave Honor and Christianity in Antebellum Virginia." In The Edge of the South: Life in Nineteenth-Century Virginia, edited by Edward L. Ayers and John C. Willis. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991.

Wood, Marcus. "'All Right!': The Narrative of Henry Box Brown as a Test Case for the Racial Prescription of Rhetoric and Semiotics." Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 107 (1998): 65-104.

Woodson, Carter G. The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861. 1919. Reprint. Salem, N.H.: Ayer Co., 1986.

Wright, Conrad. "The Development of Railroad Transportation in Virginia." Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1930.

Wyatt-Brown,Bertram Southern Honor: Ethics & Behavior in the Old South. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.

----------. "Modernizing Southern Slavery: The Proslavery Argument Reinterpreted." In Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward, edited by J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.

Yeates, Marian. "Domesticating Slavery: Patterns of Cultural Rationalization in the Antebellum South, 1820-1860." Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1996.

Young, Jeffrey. Domesticating Slavery : The Master Class in Georgia and South Carolina, 1670-1837 . Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

Primary Sources

Collections of Documents and Images

Africans in America: America's Journey through Slavery, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/.

American Memory: Historical Collections for the National Digital Library, http://memory.loc.gov/.

Berlin, Ira, and Leslie S. Rowland, eds. Families and Freedom: Documentary History of African-American Kinship in the Civil War Era. New York: New Press, 1997.

Blassingame, John, ed. Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977.

Breeden, James O., ed. Advice Among Masters: The Ideal in Slave Management in the Old South. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press,1980.

Campbell, Edward D. C., Jr., and Kym S. Rice. eds. Before Freedom Came: African American Life in the Antebellum South. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia: 1991.

Documenting the American South, http://metalab.unc.edu/docsouth/.

Drago, Edmund L., ed. Broke by the War: Letters of a Slave Trader. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991.

Exploring Amistad at Mystic Seaport, http://amistad.mysticseaport.org/.

Faust, Drew Gilpin, ed. The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press,

1981.

Jacobs, Donald M., ed. Courage and Conscience: Black and White Abolitionists in Boston. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.

Merrill, Walter M., ed. The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison; Volume V: Let the Oppressed Go Free, 1861-1867. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1979.

Miller, Randall, ed., Dear Master: Letters of a Slave Family. 1978. Reprint. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990.

Records of Ante-Bellum Southern Plantations from the Revolution through the Civil War. Microfilm. Frederick, Md. : University Publications of America, 1985-.

Rose, Willie Lee, ed. A Documentary History of Slavery in North America. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Starobin, Robert, ed. Blacks in Bondage: Letters of American Slaves. New York: Franklin Watts, 1974.

Sterling, Dorothy, ed. We Are Your Sisters: Black Women in the Nineteenth Century. 1984. Reprint. New York: W. W. Norton, 1997.

Swint, Henry L., ed. Dear Ones At Home: Letters from Contraband Camps. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1966.

Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture: A Multimedia Archive, http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/utc/.

Valley of the Shadow: Two Communities in the Civil War, http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/vshadow2/.

Woodson, Carter G., ed. The Mind of the Negro as Reflected in Letters Written During the Crisis, 1800-1860. 1926. Reprint. New York: Russell and Russell, 1969.

Manuscripts

AAS
Chase Family Papers.
William B. Banister Journal. AAS.
R. H. Dickinson Papers, Slavery in the United States Collection.
Richard Barnes Mason Papers, AAS
Lucretia Cargill Carter Sibley Papers.

CHS

Artifact authority files.
Hector Davis account book.
L. C. Roberts auction book.
"Slavery" MSS folder, CHS.

DU (RASP)
Joseph Dickinson Papers.
James A. Mitchell Papers.
D. M. Pulliam Papers.
Francis Everod Rives Papers.
William A. J. Finney Papers.
Floyd Whitehead Papers.

HBS
R. G. Dun and Co. Collection.

HU
Paul Pascal and Bernard Raux Papers.

LVA
Silas Omohundro Papers.

NYHS
"Manifests of negroes, mulattoes, and persons of color." Slavery Collection.

NYPL
H. Templeman Account Book.
Elizabeth Van Lew Papers.

UNC
Rice Ballard Papers.

UVA
Austin Brockenbrough Papers.
Austin-Twyman Papers.
Brockenbrough Papers.
Floyd Whitehead Papers.
Harris-Brady Papers.
Hooe-Harrison Papers.
James A. Mitchell Papers.
Morton-Halsey Papers.
Mutual Assurance Society. Declarations. Microfilm.
Robert Randolph Papers.
Shepherdstown, West Virg
Silas and R. H. Omohundro Account Book.
Southside Virginia Papers.
Tayloe Family Papers.

John McCue Papers

W&M (RASP)
Austin-Twyan Family Papers.

African-American Autobiographical and Biographical Works

"A Slave's Story." Putnam's Monthly Magazine 9 (June 1857): 614-620

[Aaron], The Light and the Truth of Slavery: Aaron's History. Edited by anonymous "abolitionist of Leominster." Worcester, Ma.: for Aaron, [ca. 1847].

[Abraham. Life narrative.] In Jon F. Sensbach, A Separate Canaan: The Making of an Afro-Moravian World in North Carolina, 1763-1840. (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Adams, John Quincy. Narrative of Life of John Quincy Adams When in Slavery and Now as a Freeman. Harrisburg, Pa.: Sieg, Printer, 1872.

Albert, Octavia V. Rogers. The House of Bondage; or, Charlotte Brooks and Other Slaves. New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1890. Reprint. Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1972.

Anderson, Thomas. Interesting Account of Thomas Anderson, A Slave, Taken from His Own Lips. Edited by J. P. Clark. n.p., 1854.

Ball, Charles Ball, Slavery in the United States: A narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball, a Black Man, who Lived Forty Years in Maryland, South Carolina and Georgia, as a Slave. 3rd ed., Pittsburgh: J. T. Shryock., 1854.

Barrett, Philip. Gilbert Hunt, the City Blacksmith. Richmond, Va.: James Woodhouse, 1859.

Bayley, Solomon. Narrative of Some Remarkable Incidents in the Life of Solomon Bayley, Formerly a Slave in the State of Delaware, North America, Written by Himself, and Published for His Benefit; to Which are Prefixed a Few Remarks by Richard Hunard. Edited by Richard Hunard. London: P. Youngman, 1825.

Biography of London Ferrill, Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Colored Persons, Lexington, Ky. Lexington, Ky.: A. W. Elder, 1854.

Brown, John. Slave Life in Georgia: A Narrative of the Life, Sufferings, and Escape of John Brown, A Fugitive Slave. Edited by I. A. Chamerovzow. 1855. Reprint. Edited by F. N. Boney. Savannah: Beehive Press, 1991.

Brown, Henry Box. Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown, Written by Himself. Manchester: Lee and Glynn, 1851.

Davis, Noah. A Narrative of the Life of Rev. Noah Davis, a Colored Man; Written by Himself, at the Age of Fifty-Four. Baltimore: John F. Weishampel, Jr., 1859. Reprint. Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1969.

Drew, Benjamin, ed. A North-side View of Slavery; The Refugee, or, The Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada Related by Themselves. Boston: Jewett, 1856. Reprint in Four Fugitive Slave Narratives, edited by Robin W. Winks. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969.

Drumgoold, Kate. A Slave Girl's Story: Being an Autobiography of Kate Drumgoold. Brooklyn, N.Y.: n.p., 1898. Repr. in Six Women's Slave Narratives. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Eliot, William G. The Story of Archer Alexander from Slavery to Freedom, March 30, 1863. Boston: Cupples, Upham and Co., 1885.

Fedric, Francis. Slave Life in Virginia and Kentucky; or, Fifty Years of Slavery in the Southern States of America. Edited by Charles Lee. London: Wertheim, Macintosh, and Hunt, 1863.

Fields, [Cook]. "Observations" [1847] in Mary J. Bratton, ed., "Fields' Observations: The Slave Narrative of a Nineteenth-Century Virginian." Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 88 (Jan. 1980): 79-93.

Grandy, Moses. Narrative of the Life of Moses Grandy, Late a Slave in the United States of America. London: C. Gilpin, 1843. Boston: O. Johnson, 1844. Reprint in DAS.

Grimes, William. Life of William Grimes, the Runaway Slave; Written by Himself. New Haven: the Author, 1825.

Hayden, William. Narrative of William Hayden, Containing a Faithful Account of His Travels for a Number of Years, Whilst a Slave, in the South; Written by Himself. Cincinnati: the Author, 1846.

Hughes, Louis. Thirty Years a Slave, From Bondage to Freedom; the Institution of Slavery as Seen on the Plantation and in the Home of the Planter. Milwaukee: South Side Printing Co., 1897. Reprint in DAS.

Jacobs, Harriet A. Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl; Written by Herself. Originally edited by L. Maria Child. 1861. Reprint. Edited by Jean Fagan Yellin. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987.

Joseph, John. The Life and Sufferings of John Joseph, a Native of Ashantee....

1848.

Joseph, John. The Life and Sufferings of John Joseph, a Native of Ashantee. 1848.

Keckley, Elizabeth. Behind the Scenes; or, Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House. New York: G. W. Carleton & Co., 1868. Reprint. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

McPherson, Christopher. A Short History of the Life of Christopher McPherson, Alias Pherson, Son of Christ, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Richmond, Va.: the Author, 1811. 2nd ed. Lynchburg, Va.: 1855.

Northrup, Solomon. Twelve Years a Slave 1853. Reprint. Edited by Sue Eakin and Joseph Logsdon. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968.

Parker, John P. His Promised Land: The Autobiography of John P. Parker, Former Slave and Conductor on the Underground Railroad. Originally edited by Frank M. Gregg. Edited for publication by Stuart Seely Sprague. New York: W. W. Norton, 1996.

Perdue, Charles, Jr.; Thomas E. Barden; and Robert K. Phillips; eds. Weevils in the Wheat. 1976. Reprint. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994.

Randolph, Peter. Sketches of Slave Life: or, Illustrations of the "Peculiar Institution". Boston: the Author, 1855.

----------. From Slave Cabin to the Pulpit: The Autobiography of Rev. Peter Randolph; The Southern Question Answered; and Sketches of Slave Life. Boston: J. H. Earle, 1893.

Simpson, John Hawkins. Horrors of the Virginian Slave Trade and of the Slave-Rearing Plantations; The True Story of Dinah, and Escaped Virginian Slave, now in London. London: W. Bennett, 1863.

Stearns, Charles. Narrative of Henry Box Brown, Who Escaped from Slavery Enclosed in a Box 3 Feet Long and 2 Wide. Written from a Statement of Facts Made by Himself. Boston: Brown and Stearns, 1849.

Stevens, Charles E. Anthony Burns: A History. Boston: J. P. Jewett, 1854.

Steward, Austin. Twenty-Two Years a Slave & Forty Years a Freeman. Rochester, N.Y.: W. Alling, 1857. Reprint in DAS.

Veney, Bethany. The Narrative of Bethany Veney, A Slave Woman. Worcester: G. H. Ellis, 1889. Reprint in DAS.

Washington, Booker T. Up From Slavery: An Autobiography. New York: Doubleday & Co., 1901. Reprint in DAS.

Watson, Henry. Narrative of Henry Watson, a Fugitive Slave, Written by Himself. Boston: B. Marsh, 1848.

White, George. A Brief Account of the Life, Experiences, Travels, and Gospel Labours of George White, an African; Written by Himself, and Revised by a Friend. New York: J. C. Totten, printer, 1810.

White, William S. The African Preacher: An Authentic Narrative. Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1849.

[Wickham, Elizabeth Merwin]. A Lost Family Found; An Authentic Narrative of Cyrus Branch and His Family, Alias John White of Manchester, Vermont. [Manchester, Vt.]: n.p., 1869. Copy at AAS.

Periodicals

The American Anti-Slavery Almanac. Copies at AAS.
Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper.
Harper's Weekly.
Illustrated London News.
The Liberty Almanac. Copies at AAS.
New York Illustrated News.
North-Western Liberty Almanac. Copies at AAS.
Pawtucket Record and Free Discussion Advocate. Copies at AAS.

Virginia Newspapers

Abingdon Democrat.
Abingdon Virginian.
Alexandria Gazette.
Alexandria Gazette & Virginia Advertiser.
Charlottesville Jeffersonian Republican.
Charlottesville Review.
Charlottesville Virginia Advocate.
Fredericksburg Weekly Advertiser.
Leesburg Daily Mirror.
Leesburg Washingtonian.
Leesburg Democratic Mirror.
Leesburg Washingtonian.
Lexington Valley Star.
Lynchburg Virginian.
Lynchburg Daily Virginian.

Martinsville Gazette.
Norfolk and Portsmouth Herald.
Richmond Enquirer.
Richmond Daily Dispatch.
Staunton Spectator.
Staunton True American
Warrenton Whig.
Warrenton Weekly Whig.
Warrenton Republican.
Warrenton Flag of '98.
Warrenton Republican.
Warrenton Virginia Gazette.
Washington [D. C.] Intelligencer.
Washington [D. C.] Union.
Wellsburg Herald.
Williamsburg Virginia Gazette.

Miscellaneous

Adams, Nehemiah. South-Side View of Slavery. 1854. Reprint. New York: Kennikatt Press, 1969.

Bolling, Phillip A. Speeches of Phillip A. Bolling (of Buckingham) in the House of Delegates of Virginia, on the Policy of the State in Relation to Her Colored Population. 2nd ed. Richmond: Thomas W. White, 1832.

Bourne, George. Picture of Slavery in the United States. Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838.

Buckingham, James Silk. The Slave States of America 2 vols. London: Fisher, Son, & Co., 1842.

Clarkson, Thomas. The History of the Rise, Progress, & Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade, by the British Parliament 2 vols. Philadelphia: James Parke, 1808.

Coffin, Charles Carleton. The Boys of '61; or, Four Years of Fighting. Boston: Estes & Lauriat, 1881.

Conway, Moncure. Testimonies of Slavery. London: Chapman and Hall, 1864. Reprint. New York: Arno Press, 1969.

Corey, Charles H. Corey, A History of the Richmond Theological Seminary. Richmond, Va.: J. W. Randolph Co., 1895.

Crowe, Eyre. With Thackeray in America. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1893.

Dew, Thomas], "Abolition of Negro Slavery." American Quarterly Review 12 (Sept. 1832), 207-208.

Douglass, Frederick. The Heroic Slave, A Thrilling Narrative of the Adventures of Madison Washington, in Pursuit of Liberty. In Autographs for Freedom. Edited by Julia Griffiths. Boston: Jewett & Co., 1853.

Featherstonhaugh, George W. Excursion through the Slave States, from Washington on the Potomac to the Frontier of Mexico. New York: Harper and Bros., 1844.

Follen, Elizabeth Lee Cabot. Sequel to "The Well-Spent Hour"; or the Birth-Day. Boston: Carter and Hendee, 1832. Copy at AAS.

Hall, Marshall. The Facts of the Two-Fold Slavery of the United States, Carefully Collected During a Personal Tour in the Years 1853 and 1854. London: Adam Scott, n.d.

Hundley, Daniel R. Social Relations in Our Southern States. New York: Henry B. Price, 1860.

The Legion of Liberty! and Force of Truth, 2nd ed.. New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1843; repr. New York: Arno Press, 1969.

Lewis Miller: Sketches and Chronicles: The Reflections of a Nineteenth Century Pennsylvania German Folk Artist. Introduction by Donald A. Shelley. York, Pa.: Historical Society of York County, 1966.

Little Eva: the Flower of the South. New York: Philip J. Cozans, n.d. Copy at AAS.

New Hampshire Anti-Slavery Convention Proceedings. Concord, N.H., 1834. Copy at AAS.

Opie, Amelia. The Negro Boy's Tale; a Poem by Amelia Opie; to which is added, The Morning Dream, &c. &c. &c.. New York: Samuel Wood & Sons, [1829?]. Copy at AAS.

Palfrey, John G. The Inter-State Slave Trade, Anti-Slavery Tracts, No. 5. New York: American Anti-Slavery Society [1855].

Smith, Margaret Bayard. American Mother; or, The Seymour Family. Washington, D.C.: Davis & Force, 1823. Copy at AAS.

Smith, E., ed. Uncle Tom's Kindred, or The Wrongs of the Lowly; Exhibited in a Series of Sketches and Narratives, v. 1. Mansfield, Oh.: E. Smith, for the

Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America, 1853. Copy at AAS

Still, William. The Underground Railroad: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters, &c. 1871. 2nd ed. Philadelphia: People's Publishing, 1879.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher, Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin. Boston: John P. Jewett, 1854.

Torrey, Jesse. A Portraiture of Domestic Slavery in the United States: . . . Including Memoirs of Facts on the Interior Traffic in Slaves, and on Kidnapping. Philadelphia: Jesse Torrey, 1817.