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Collective Degradation: Slavery and the Construction of Race

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*Slavery and Racist Thought in the Old South: Reconsidering Race, Slavery
and Power in a Slaveholding Society*

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At the Grand Convention of 1787, the collection of slaveholding states that would become the Old South was hardly of one mind. The combination of developments and accommodations that would create the Old South over the coming decades have often received less attention from historians dedicated to the understanding of region during its late antebellum maturity than they deserve. Just as Ira Berlin and others have recently restored a strong sense of chronology, or synchronism, to the study of the experience of the enslaved with a careful look at generational change within the slave population, it is incumbent upon historians of the whole South to recapture the changing attitudes among slaveholders and common whites during the era of the Cotton Revolution in order to round out the story of “making slavery, making race” in the Old South.¹

To a remarkable degree, the story of evolving attitudes among white southerners toward

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slavery and race parallels the northern process so well-characterized by James Brewer Stewart as the emergence of “racial modernity.”² Defining racial modernity as a “reflexive disposition” on the part of whites to view race as “biologically determined, self evident, and immutable” and to define themselves as the innately “superior race,” Stewart argued that the new ideology of racial modernity which emerged in the Jacksonian North reflected a settled conviction on the part of a majority of white northerners that no amount of education, property, or paternalism could lift African Americans far enough fast enough to render them fit for civic equality in a biracial republic. According to Stewart, the ideology of racial modernity held that whites had both the authority and responsibility to define and control the relationship between two permanently unequal, subject only to the obligations of stewardship posited by increasingly hegemonic humanitarian ideals.³

If racial modernity defined blacks a permanently inferior status and denied them economic and political rights based on skin color, its flip side was the increasing tendency of white Americans to see their skin color as a source of entitlement to all the rights and privileges of citizenship. This aggressive new tendency of white Americans, regardless of class, wealth, ethnicity, or region to assert privileges and rights on the basis of skin color received substantial scholarly attention during the 1990s, when a new genre of historical scholarship, commonly known as “whiteness” studies, argued convincingly that throughout the American experience, periodic reconsiderations of race made, remade, and even “un-made” the concept of race according to specific historical circumstances and contingencies. Historically constructed rather than genetically determined, societal understandings of race necessarily change over time,

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perpetually constructed and reconstructed by complex and on-going social and political negotiations.⁴ Yet strikingly, even as the emergence of racial modernity received increasing scholarly attention and the field of whiteness scholarship burgeoned across chronological and disciplinary boundaries, the coming of racial modernity to the antebellum South, a region which by the 1830s served as home to more than ninety percent of the nation's African Americans and virtually all its slaves, and the concomitant rise of "whiteness" as a unifying ideal in a slave society, trailed behind. While a full account of the emergence of racial modernity in the early nineteenth century South lies well beyond the scope of this essay, in the following pages, I will try to identify some of the key tensions within the slaveholding South, particularly in the area of public policy toward slavery and race, and to a lesser extent between the South and outside critics of slavery, which propelled the South toward a reconsideration and redefinition of the meaning of slavery and race to the region's identity.⁵

In 1784, Joseph Clay, a Savannah merchant, told prominent Georgia politician James Jackson that "the Negro business is a great object with us, both with a View to our Interest individually, and the general prosperity of this State and its commerce, it is to the trade of this Country, as Soul to the Body...." The "planter," Clay explained, "will as far as in his power sacrifice everything to obtain Negroes," and no South Atlantic "business house" could remain financially "stable" without a share of the lucrative slave trade.⁶ Clay's portrayal of Confederation-era Savannah highlighted the South Atlantic region's lingering hunger for slave imports. So it is hardly surprising that South Carolina and Georgia delegates to the Philadelphia

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convention made keeping the international slave trade legal, at least for a time, a sine qua non of joining the new Union. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, who would later emerge as a prominent Charleston Federalist, told the Philadelphia convention that “South Carolina and Georgia cannot do without slaves” and implied that without some protection for the right to import slaves, these two southern-most states of the Confederation would not join the new Union.⁷ To secure a window of opportunity for reopening the foreign slave trade, should individual states choose to do so, South Carolina and Georgia delegates formed a momentary but momentous alliance with New England shipping interests. The South Atlantic delegates agreed to allow Congress to approve navigation laws by a simple majority rather than a two-thirds vote, sacrificing the de facto southern veto over national maritime policy. The right to block such legislation, which the South enjoyed under requirements of a two-thirds majority for approval, had long been held as crucial to the region’s agricultural export economy. New England delegates reciprocated by accepting a twenty year constitutional moratorium on any federal prohibition of the slave trade. Slaveholders in the Chesapeake joined other commercial interests in the mid-Atlantic region to denounce the Convention’s willingness to tolerate the international slave trade.⁸ “Twenty years will produce all the mischief that can be apprehended from the liberty to import slaves,” James Madison complained, and so “long a term will be more dishonorable to the American character than to say nothing in the Constitution.”⁹ George Mason, less nationalist Virginian than Madison, also recognized that allowing the slave trade to remain constitutional for so long rendered expansion of the institution, which he viewed as a “dangerous instrument” threatening the prospective republic with bloody insurrection, inevitable. “The Western people are already

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calling out for slaves for their new lands, and will fill that country with slaves if they can be got thro' S. Carolina and Georgia," Mason complained.¹⁰ Mason contrasted the Constitution's solicitude for the slave trade with its failure to present an explicit clause "that will prevent the northern and eastern states from meddling with our whole property of that kind." Mason conceded that slaves were not "a desirable property," but argued that ending slavery would "involve us in great difficulties."¹¹ Of course, South Carolina delegate Charles Pinckney, the young Charleston prodigy who later emerged as the leading Jeffersonian Republican in South Carolina viewed the possibility of slavery's continued expansion, which he believed the international slave trade fostered, with enthusiasm rather than dread. Slavery, as it expanded across space, would enhance the prospects of American farmers for independence and competency. "In a new country, possessing immense tracts of uncultivated lands, where every temptation is offered to emigration, and where industry must be rewarded with competency," Pinckney maintained, "there will be few poor, and few dependent." The "vast extent of unpeopled territory which opens to the frugal and industrious a sure road to competence and independence will effectually prevent for a considerable time the increase of the poor or discontented, and be the means of preserving that equality of condition which so eminently distinguishes us," the precocious South Carolinian concluded.¹² Thus both Pinckneys and their South Atlantic colleagues left Philadelphia well-pleased with the compromise they extracted at the Convention, a compromise which secured a constitutional guarantee that the foreign the slave trade could remain open until at least 1808, if individual states chose to permit it, while the otherwise influential Virginians found themselves outflanked by resolute delegates from South

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Carolina and Georgia.

For all its enduring power, some scholars increasingly see the Constitution's creation came not only through compromise and negotiation but also as the result of a sectional bargain over the issue of slavery, a bargain that was never put to the floor of the Convention for a series of formal votes, but emerged as a gentlemen's understanding over slavery. The unwritten constitutional bargain went something like this. Delegates concerned over the existence of slavery in a new nation rhetorically pledged by an upper South rhetorician to the notion that "all men are created equal" and "entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" sought some assurance from states heavily involved with slavery that they would work toward its eventual elimination. In return for this assurance, northern delegates agrees to do nothing to interfere with slavery where it existed and allow the states most interested in the subject of slavery guide its ultimate demise. Compromises over representation and taxation, and over the future of the international slave trade, reflected specific issues formally considered by the sitting convention, but the scope of the gentlemen's agreement stretched considerably further into an understanding of a common commitment to the new nation as a Union of equals and an understanding that slavery would be tolerated until phased out by the very white southerners whose safety and fortunes hinged so heavily on slavery.¹³

A sense of lasting obligation to the terms of the tacit compromise that created the Union spurred upper South politicians to look toward the gradual elimination for slavery, especially since Virginians had played such a large role in writing the document. The emancipationist strain among early national Virginia slaveholders ran deep and certainly predated the

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Constitution. Thomas Jefferson's passionate denunciation of slavery in Notes on the State of Virginia revealed the depth of the early republican fears about slavery. "The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submissions on the other," Jefferson lamented, "... The man must be a prodigy who can retain his manners and morals undepraved by such circumstances."¹⁴ Scholars now know that Jefferson was not such a prodigy. In the face of seemingly incontrovertible DNA evidence that Jefferson fathered at least one child (and probably more) by his slave Sally Hemings, historians can now read Jefferson's reference to the "boisterous passions" encouraged by the master-slave relationship as a measure of indirect personal confession as well as a point of larger social commentary.¹⁵ But Jefferson's rather sweeping indictment of slavery as anti-republican contained almost all of the criticisms that reverberated throughout the upper South for the next fifty years. For Jefferson, the practice of slaveholding schooled Virginians in the most unrepublican character. Masters, and indeed all white children in a slaveholding society, were "daily exercised in tyranny" and transformed into "despots" by the power of mastery and the potential, indeed the inevitability, of its abuse. Jefferson worried that either "a revolution of the wheel of fortune" or a Divine justice that "could not sleep forever" together with the "numbers" of slaves in Virginia might unleash either a slave rebellion or a bloody civil war whites and slaves. To avoid such a cataclysm, Jefferson yearned "for a total emancipation" carried out "with the consent of the masters, rather than by their extirpation."¹⁶

Jefferson retained the views outlined in his Notes on the State of Virginia, with only

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minor modification, until his death in 1826. He believed that slavery was an evil which must be eliminated, but he also believed that the evil must be eliminated gradually and in an orderly fashion, and that the elimination must be guided and paced by the very planter elite whose members would have to sacrifice their wealth and patrimony with emancipation. As he neared death, Jefferson realized that public opinion was still not ready for a general emancipation, however gradual. A general emancipation in Virginia, Jefferson reasoned, not only called for “time, patience and perseverance” but also the “revolution in public opinion which the cause requires.” He cautioned champions of emancipation to allow for the “snail-paced gait” at which the “advance of new ideas on the public mind” proceeded.”¹⁷ Yet if Jefferson counseled patience to advocates of emancipation, he also urged reluctant slaveholders to start the emancipation process sooner rather than later if they expected to control it. “Nothing is written more certainly in the book of fate than that these people are to be free” Jefferson opined, and “the South needs to act soon if It is still in our power to direct the process of emancipation peaceably” and “in slow degree.”¹⁸

Jefferson’s friend, St. George Tucker, a young professor of law at William and Mary, shared the Sage of Monticello’s interest in gradual and timely emancipation. In 1795, Tucker prepared a plan for general emancipation which he planned to submit to the Virginia legislature. “The introduction of slavery into this country,” Tucker claimed, “is at this day considered among its greatest misfortunes by a very great majority” of Virginians. Though often “reproached for an evil,” Virginians, Tucker insisted, could not have “avoided” slavery any more than “hereditary gout or leprosy.”¹⁹ But while exonerating the “present generation’ of Virginians

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from any blame for slavery, Tucker also admitted that prospects for general emancipation were at best doubtful. Tucker recognized that while many whites in early national Virginia conceded that slavery was an evil, they were nevertheless reluctant to give it up. “The malady has proceeded so far,” Tucker acknowledged, “as to render it doubtful whether any specific plan can be found to eradicate, or even palliate the disease.” Tucker saw this reluctance as the poisonous product of generations of slaveholding experience. He argued that early national Virginians had little appetite for general emancipation because “every white man felt himself born to tyrannize” while viewing blacks as “of no more importance than ...brute cattle.” Tucker knew that overcoming such “deep-rooted, and innate prejudices” might lie “beyond the power of human nature to accomplish.”²⁰ When Tucker finally submitted his detailed plan for general emancipation to the legislature in 1797, his worst fears about the Virginia’s unwillingness to address the slavery issue were realized. The Assembly politely ignored his proposal.²¹ A chagrined Tucker admitted that he had underestimated the opposition to general emancipation in Virginia. Only “actual suffering” by slaveholders, Tucker speculated, might open their ears to the “voice of reason.”²²

Just three years later white Virginians narrowly missed feeling such “actual suffering” when authorities, acting on a tip from slave informants, scotched an alleged insurrection plot in Richmond in 1800. The subsequent investigation identified the slave Gabriel Prosser as the leader of the aborted rebellion and discovered an elaborate plan for seizing Richmond, murdering the sitting governor, James Monroe, and fighting the “White People for freedom.”²³ Prompt and vigorous reprisal against the alleged insurrectionists ensued. White authorities

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executed twenty slaves in Richmond during the fall of 1800, and, after a protracted search, Gabriel was captured aboard a ship in Norfolk, tried and put to death. For short security, Governor James Monroe increased the militia's presence in Richmond, but he still worried that plans for an extensive insurrection "may occur again at any time, with more fatal consequences, unless suitable measures be taken to prevent it."²⁴ Over the longer term, the Virginia legislature debated proposals for tighter regulation of the state's black population, slave and free, during its next several legislative sessions. In 1804, the Old Dominion legislature banned the "common practice" of permitting slaves and free blacks to gather unsupervised "at meeting houses and places of religious worship in the night." The legislative majority believed such meetings might turn "productive of considerable evil to the community."²⁵

Concerns aroused by Gabriel's rebellion also hardened white attitudes toward free blacks. As a result, the state's liberal manumission laws of 1782 faced repeated challenges from legislators eager to slow the pace of private manumissions, and perhaps even prohibit them entirely. During both the 1804-1805 and the 1805-1806 sessions of the Virginia legislature, the state's policy of allowing masters to manumit slaves at their own discretion came under sharp attack from legislators who feared that free blacks might one day "furnish the officers and around whom the slaves will rally" to sustain a rebellion.²⁶ With the specter of Gabriel's insurrection plot fresh in the minds of many white Virginians, one champion of restricted manumission charged that "blacks who are free obtain a knowledge of facts by passing from place to place in society; they can thus organize insurrection." The movement to restrict private manumission faced opposition from politicians determined to defend the rights of slaveholders to control their

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own property, even if it meant freeing slaves. These legislative debates over the state's manumission policy ended in a partial victory for both sides. Defenders of private manumission prevented restrictionists from returning control of individual emancipation to the state legislature, but while conceding the masters' right "to dispose of property freely," restrictionists gained critical support for a bill requiring all manumitted slaves to leave the state within twelve months of their emancipation or forfeit their freedom.²⁷

The crisis of fear which followed the Gabriel insurrection threat also gave new impetus to the colonization movement in Virginia. In 1801, the Virginia House of Delegates urged Governor Monroe to find an appropriate location for sending blacks deemed "obnoxious to the peace or dangerous to society." Acknowledging that the resolution emerged in response to "the conspiracy of slaves ... in this city and neighborhood last year," Monroe urged his friend and new President Thomas Jefferson to use federal authority to locate and procure land for a colony of former slaves and unwelcome free blacks. Monroe called slavery "an existing evil," but complained of "the extreme difficulty in remedying it."²⁸ But both Monroe and Jefferson recognized that colonization might emerge as the means for ultimately ridding Virginia of free blacks and reducing its slave population. After giving Monroe's request slow but serious consideration, Jefferson ultimately rejected the idea of placing a free black colony within the existing territory of the United States, and instead pondered St. Domingue as an option, noting coyly that its "present ruler might be ... willing to receive...[those] deemed criminal by us, but meritorious perhaps by him." If lower South slaveholders objected to St. Dominique or any other West Indian location on grounds that such a colony was likely to emerge as a staging ground for future efforts to incite

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insurrection in the American South, as Jefferson surmised they might, “Africa would offer a last and undoubted resort.”²⁹ Following the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, Jefferson momentarily changed his mind and recommended the Louisiana territory as a possible site for a colony. In 1805 the Virginia General Assembly formally asked its representatives in Congress to set aside a portion of the Louisiana territory as a destination for free blacks and slaves who might be deemed threats to public safety. Soon, however, deepening tensions between the young American republic and both of the two major European powers, Britain and France, delayed Virginia’s active pursuit of colonization for more than a decade.³⁰

Virginia’s post-Gabriel discussion of manumission and colonization reflected a strong consensus among the state’s white leaders that free blacks and free whites could never effectively share citizenship in a biracial republic because of the intractable white prejudice against “degraded” free blacks. In the early nineteenth century, whites in the upper South remained uncertain about whether the observed “degradation” of free blacks resulted from decades of experience living either under slavery or in close proximity to slavery or whether it was a sign of innate racial inferiority. The comparatively open-minded Jefferson suspected that blacks were innately inferior, especially in the “faculties of reason and imagination,” but he also admitted that much consideration should be given to the “differences of condition, of education, of conversation, of the sphere” in which blacks, slave and free, lived. Thus Jefferson hazarded his preliminary judgment in favor of white supremacy “with great diffidence” admitted that “further observation” was needed to firmly settle the question. Despite his own personal uncertainty,

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however, Jefferson expressed no doubt that the “Deep-rooted prejudices” against blacks on the basis of color would forever block their inclusion in a white republic.³¹ Emancipation advocate St. George Tucker also questioned the idea of innate black inferiority, but, like Jefferson, Tucker was quick to point to “deep-rooted” and innate “prejudices” of whites as an ineradicable barrier to the acceptance of blacks as equals in Virginia society. Tucker thought it misguided to impose slavery on people by nature “equally free and independent” simply because they “differ in complexion,” but he acknowledged that sentiment in Virginia advocated precisely such a policy.³² James Madison, usually judicious in all his expressions of opinion, described free blacks as “Generally idle and depraved” and worried that they “retain the bad qualities of the slaves with whom they continue to associate, without acquiring any of the good ones of the whites...,” but concluded that blacks were excluded from republican society chiefly by “by prejudices ag[ainst] their color and other peculiarities.”³³

Thus Virginia’s post-Gabriel reconsideration of race and slavery concluded with a lukewarm endorsement of a very gradual, almost glacial, approach to emancipation coupled with the removal, whether by colonization or other means, of the resulting free black population. Such a policy would gradually diminish the importance of slavery to Virginia’s economy and at the same time prevent a large free black caste from emerging as the inevitable by-product of emancipation. This carefully calibrated “whitening” of the state appealed to many Virginians with lingering reservations about slavery and yet strong aversion to a racially mixed republic as a near-perfect solution to their most vexing problems. But it was a near-perfect solution laden with so many complexities and contingencies that it defied implementation in the imperfect world of

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early nineteenth century America. Within a year of the passage of the Old Dominion's removal law, for example, three of Virginia's neighboring states, Maryland, Delaware, and Kentucky passed laws forbidding free black immigrants from settling in their states, an action later followed by a number of other states. Maryland, doubtless expressing sentiments shared by Virginia's other neighbors, bluntly groused that the Old Dominion was "vomiting" free blacks inside its borders.³⁴ Along Virginia's southern border, North Carolina, also hoping to prevent Virginia from passing its problems south, restricted the immigration of free blacks by requiring immigrants to post a substantial bond with local sheriffs.³⁵ Virginia discovered early on that "exporting" its black population, whether slave or free, to other states could prove problematic due to opposition from the recipient states and territories. But exportation, whether through sale or manumission and removal remained a potentially effective, and, in the case of sale, a profitable, method for the diminution of slavery in the Old Dominion, and hence Virginians proved slow to abandon the idea.

But Gabriel's rebellion scare had an even longer reach, as concern over possible unrest and insurrection also heightened in the South Atlantic region once news from Virginia circulated. Though the Charleston press suppressed the details of the Virginia insurrection scare, South Carolinians appeared well-appraised of events.³⁶ United States Senator Jacob Read, a Charleston Federalist, alerted Governor John Drayton that a Methodist pamphlet seeking to "promote ... emancipation" was circulating in South Carolina, along with an antislavery petition whose authors hoped to present it to the state General Assembly. Upon receiving the news from Read, Drayton stepped up patrols and issued "some instructions regarding better government of

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negroes.” While he sought to tighten laws dealing with slave control, Governor Drayton saw the conduct of free blacks as the greater problem. Sensing support for a crack down as news regarding Gabriel’s alleged intentions circulated, Drayton complained that free blacks in Charleston “are assuming some of the rights of citizenship,” (chiefly taking cases to court) and urged the legislature to end the privilege in short order. Following Virginia, South Carolina also passed a law outlawing all secret, nocturnal or “behind-closed-doors” assemblies which included slaves and free blacks, even if whites were present. The law prohibited night meetings for religious instruction, and, and thus interfered with the efforts of Methodists other evangelicals to proselytize slaves.³⁷

Moreover, as rumors of Gabriel’s revolt reverberated through South Carolina, whites discovered alleged (and probably imagined) insurrection plots in their midst. In 1802, the sighting of one slave whose absence from his home plantation was not readily explained in the heavily black Georgetown area prompted the rapid spread of rumors that an armed brigade of French-speaking Caribbean insurrectionists loomed off the coast, ready to come ashore in Winyah Bay and lead an insurrection.³⁸ The local militia investigated the complaint with skepticism but poor communication among militia leaders led Governor John Drayton to mobilize the state militia for an invasion that never occurred. Embarrassed by the launching of a full-scale mobilization based on false information, Drayton blamed the specter of St. Domingue for his hasty overreaction, citing his fear of the arrival of “French Brigands Incendiary prisoners of colour,” and Georgetown militia colonel Peter Horry initiated disciplinary proceedings against an otherwise highly-regarded young officer for failing to properly vet rumors in time to prevent mobilization

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and the concomitant fright among the Lowcountry's white population.³⁹

Yet even in 1802, as insurrection rumors filled the air and thoughts of Haiti remained vivid in the minds of white South Carolinians, voices from the first cotton belt demanded slaves. An Edgefield district grand jury complained that the ban on the foreign slave trade served as an “insurmountable Bar in the way of men of Property moving into this state, and in this way the Value of our Landed property is Reduced and the growing wealth and population of the upper Country obstructed.” A wary state legislature, still dominated by Lowcountry interests and skittish in the aftermath of the Gabriel and Georgetown scares, turned a deaf ear to such arguments. A legislative proposal to reopen the foreign slave trade was defeated overwhelmingly, 86-11, in the South Carolina House of Representatives and by voice vote in the Senate.⁴⁰ Even without the help of additional imported slaves, however, the cotton revolution expanded steadily, and in some portions of South Carolina's inner coastal plain and in the upper Savannah River valley, the boom was nearly a decade old by 1803. But the fear of Caribbean-inspired insurrection spawned by the Haitian Revolution lingered on, waxing and waning in concert with the tenor of the latest news from the Caribbean. In weighing the balance between fear of a larger slave population and the possibility of declining slave values on the one hand, and the ambitions of interior cotton growers on the other, the South Carolina legislature, dominated by the Lowcountry's white minority routinely voted to keep the international trade closed. But the balance of fear and greed against ambition and opportunity shifted dramatically, if momentarily, in 1803 when a coincidence of luck and vision brought the Louisiana territory into American possession, opening an eager new market for imported slaves. In 1803, just one year after an

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almost desultory legislative rejection of inland cotton growers' pleas for a reopened external slave trade, South Carolina politicians suddenly reconsidered the issue, a reconsideration undoubtedly prompted by the prospect of supplying slaves to the Louisiana territory.⁴¹

Alone among slaveholding states, South Carolina decided in 1803 to take advantage of the Constitution's remaining window of forbearance and reopen the international slave trade, a reopening which, according to contemporary estimates, brought nearly 40,000 new Africans into America between 1804 and 1807. This decision to reopen the trade drew sharp rebukes from other slaveholding states as well as denunciation from representatives from states where gradual emancipation was well underway. Even the SC legislature questioned the wisdom of its own action and debated closing the trade at every session during the four-year interval in which the trade was open. At the legislature's 1805 session, Governor Paul Hamilton pleaded with the legislature for "an immediate stop to this traffic." Hamilton complained that the trade was "draining us of our specie, thereby embarrassing our commercial men, and materially lessening the sale of our produce." Hamilton also warned the legislature that "in proportion as you add to the number of Slaves, you prevent the influx of men who would increase the means of defense and security." In 1805, Hamilton believed he had reason to worry about security, as rumors of insurrection swept through Columbia during the legislative session. South Carolina authorities deployed militia units and distributed weapons to guard the legislature chambers.⁴² As insurrection rumors flew wildly, New England visitor Edward Hooker reported that an innocent "Negro" was shot by patrols during the scare, and that the "town negroes were all in dreadful consternation ... fearing I suppose that they will be butchered by one party or the other." The

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House of Representatives bill which proposed closing the trade included a declaration that “the importation of slaves is ...dangerous to its tranquility and safety,” but the bill failed by a narrow margin.⁴³

Such fear of slave insurrection, and indeed, occasional confirmation of such fears by actual rebellions, such as the one that occurred along Louisiana’s so-called German Coast in 1811, remained part of life in the slaveholding South throughout the antebellum era despite the efforts of white southerners to reassure themselves that slaves in their locale were happy, docile, and unlikely to cause trouble unless provoked by incendiary outsiders. The divided mind of the early national South, with one side urging perpetual vigilance against the unthinkable horrors of insurrection while the other side assured that the benevolent nature of local slavery left area slaves peaceful and content, appeared in boldest relief in South Carolina, where arguments for the beneficence of slavery proved most profuse and where fear of the state’s emerging black majority ran deep. As the importation of slaves from Africa drew to a close in 1807, Federalist Jacob Read sounded the rhetorical alarm, pleading with South Carolina Governor Charles Pinckney to pursue a plan of militia reform that would leave South Carolina better prepared to quell slave rebellions. The “militia in its present state is not in a position to do any valuable military service,” Read complained after reviewing musters in the state’s slave majority Lowcountry. But the vigilant Read, who had warned Governor Drayton about insurgent Methodists in 1800, again saw problems not only in the state militia’s lack of preparedness, but the continued exertions of evangelicals who criticized slavery and sought to spread the gospel among slaves. “It is vain to conceal from ourselves,” Read maintained, “the fact that there are spread every where through the

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state the religious and other enthusiasts who are preaching very dangerous doctrines and inciting in our black population sentiments that must lead to fatal results which nothing but their want of a common head & someone daring enough to make the attempt and in a degree capable of directing their measures prevents their carrying int a most sanguinary execution.” Read concluded that only by the militia and “a due execution of the patrol laws can we be saved.”⁴⁴

Yet while such fears of a repeat of St. Domingue never receded far from the minds of Lowcountry planters, Upcountry leaders often downplayed such fears. As a young War Hawk attempting to prepare the southern mind for a war to defend export staples, Upcountry Congressman John C. Calhoun questioned the impact of “the disorganizing effects of French principles” on the southern slave population. “I cannot think our ignorant blacks have felt much of their baneful influence.” Calhoun opined in 1811, “ I dare say not more than one-half of them ever heard of the French Revolution.”⁴⁵ Whether or not those whites living in black majority parishes or districts in his home state found Calhoun’s claim that no more than half of their slaves had heard of the French Revolution and its call for “liberty, equality, and fraternity” reassuring or alarming remains unknown, but throughout the antebellum era South Carolina remained convinced of the benefits of perpetual slavery and stayed perpetually alert for the first hint of insurrection. In the lower South, slavery had indeed twisted the conventional Jeffersonian wisdom. Eternal vigilance became the price of slavery.

In 1807, President Jefferson and Congress had moved quickly to insure that a law banning the international slave trade would be in place at the earliest moment allowed by the Constitution. Across the slaveholding South, the Congressional prohibition on the foreign slave trade signaled

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a turning point in the way masters and other southern whites conceived of the institution of slavery, even though this turn toward a new conceptualization of slavery was already well underway when the African trade was finally banned in 1808. As a generation of slavery scholars, led by Eugene Genovese, have argued, the paternalist ethos among slaveholders emerged in part directly from the pattern of resistance and accommodation, and resistance to accommodation and still further accommodation to resistance that characterized the day-to-day reality of the master-slave relationship. The daily, ongoing negotiations between masters and slaves, negotiations which took place in the most uneven context of power and terror, but negotiations compelled nonetheless by both the master's thirst for profit and the slaves desire to play some role in shaping their everyday existence, created room for maneuver on the part of slaves and the need for some measure of paternalism for masters.⁴⁶ As early as 1800, William Moultrie, a Lowcountry planter, Revolutionary war hero, and two-time governor of South Carolina, stated the case for practical paternalism succinctly. Moultrie claimed that in "the part of the country where I live, there is great moderation & [i]ndulgence given to slaves...." He argued that such kindness was "for the best in the end" because it rendered slavery "[m]ore satisfactory and profitable." "[W]hat you may think you lose in making small crops you amply make up for by the [i]ncrease and long life of your slaves," Moultrie contended. No better rationale for paternalism was required. Moultrie also contrasted such paternalistic conduct favorably with the treatment of slaves in earlier decades. He recalled that slaves had formerly received as many as fifty lashes "for not doing what was called their task...when it was perhaps impossible for them to do it."⁴⁷

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In a stimulating recent book, Jeffrey Young has argued convincingly that the idea of master-slave relations characterized by paternalism “had been foreign to the vast majority of eighteenth century planters,” who had both “despised and feared” their slaves and never viewed the ideal of plantation domesticity as an intellectual mooring for their society.⁴⁸ During the first two decades of the nineteenth century, paternalism as a social ideal gained increasing acceptance among slaveholding whites. To be sure, the paternalistic ideal was hardly the reality of plantation and farm life in the slaveholding South of the early nineteenth century. Especially in the lower South, the cotton boom and the rapid expansion of slavery produced as much cruelty, as much, if not more, disruption of slave family and community life, and as much tension between masters and slaves as ever, but as the ideal of paternalism advanced, southern slaveholders conceived of themselves and explained themselves to the rest of the world through the prism of paternalism and domesticity. As Young pointed out, between 1800 and 1815 southern “slaveowners established an ideological defense of slavery” that centered on the concept of “domestication.”⁴⁹ Coupled with the end of the foreign slave trade, paternalism helped make slavery into a truly “domestic institution,” as Jacksonian and late antebellum southerners frequently styled it, and enshrined a form of “domesticity” as the core of the region’s justification for slaveholding. This ideology not only empowered the slaveholder, making him master of exterior worlds, large or small, depending on the scope of his property, but also master of his own household, where white dependents, including spouses, children, and extended families looked to the master, the head of the household, for both protection and comfort in return for loyalty and obedience.⁵⁰

No matter what label is placed on the reconceptualization of slavery which occurred

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during years from 1800-1820, or even how the evolution of paternalism is understood or explained, a new consensus emerged among slaveholders about the preferred characterization of the master-slave relationship during this era. And, quibbles aside, that consensus emerged around an ideal best and most readily defined as the paternalist ideal. By the early nineteenth century, the emerging paternalistic ideal as understood by white slaveholders consisted of four main conventions. First, slaves must be recognized as fellow human beings, regardless of their presumed degree of inferiority, the “uncivilized” condition of their native African society, and any perceived limitations on their potential. Thus it was incumbent upon whites, and especially upon Christian and republican whites, to recognize the humanity of slaves and treat them accordingly. Second, based on the common humanity of master and slave, the day-to-day governance of a slave population should be conducted along the same lines that male household heads governed their white families, that is, with a combination of fairness and firmness, a balance of affection and discipline, and that this familial treatment would produce the master’s preferred form of subordination among slaves: willful obedience. Paternalism would render slaves more manageable, slave labor more efficient, and slave unrest more uncommon. Third, paternalism required stewardship, most commonly Christian stewardship, which included not only practicing the “golden rule” with respect to the treatment of slaves, but also regular and systematic efforts to teach slaves Christianity and improve their “morals” generally. Finally, paternalism required the paternalist to show some larger scope of humanitarian concern, not simply in the daily treatment and provisioning of slaves, or even in the nurture of slave families and religion, but also in the acceptance of a broader social responsibility for making slave society

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work humanely as well as profitably.⁵¹

Indeed, within a few years after the ban on the foreign slave trade, few southern observers doubted that the need to cultivate a family atmosphere which encouraged longevity and reproduction among slaves hastened the rise of “paternalism” as the popular construct for understanding slavery in the South, and perhaps even as an elusive ideal for its day-to-day management. In 1815, South Carolinian William Johnson, a US Supreme Court Justice, Carolinian, summed up these views well. Johnson argued that the “interest of the owner is to obtain from his slaves labor and increase” and that intelligent owners knew that neither could “be expected without due attention to their health and comfort, or without bestowing upon their offspring the care which infancy and childhood” required. Johnson deemed “sufficient food and clothing” essential to effective labor, but the jurist also asserted that effective masters went further, offering not just the necessities but also “[j]ust treatment, a kind word, and a little extra indulgence or gratification.” Such paternalistic practices, Johnson maintained, “produce wonderful effects” including the “return of affection and fidelity [from slaves].”⁵² Johnson also argued that if anyone needed an extra reason for benevolence, “they too will see in the propagation of their slaves the only resource for future wealth.” The “fear of the lash” Johnson explained, could compel only “reluctant services,” but paternalism could nurture a “generous motive for obedience” among slaves and inspire work performed with “alacrity and affection.” Where the slave “is treated indeed as a bondsman but still as a man--where, whilst respect and a faithful discharge of the duties assigned him are exacted in the one hand, on the other he is treated with kindness, humanity and encouraging benevolence,” Johnson explained, paternalism found

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fulfillment. Johnson admitted that all masters were imperfect paternalists, flawed, as the judge styled it, by a “too frequent readiness to yield ourselves up in passion in our treatment” of slaves.

But he credited slaves with a special endurance, one that often led slaves to water the “fresh grave of a master with the bitterest tears.” To critics of paternalism, Johnson replied that “the experiment” was at least worth trying, although he cautioned that “a favorable result ought not to be hastily expected, for their [slaves’] uncultivated natures must be gradually wrought upon.” But when a well-implemented regimen of paternalism has taken hold, Johnson predicted, “the Christian... will often see more to be envied in the life of the slave than in that of the master.”⁵³

By the time Congressional debates over the admission of Missouri as a slave state erupted in 1820, leading politicians from the lower South had become well-versed in the rhetoric of paternalism, and they offered an affirmative defense of the slaveholder as paternalist in response to the northern condemnation of the institution that occurred during the Missouri crisis. For the most part, white southerners still pulled up short of calling slavery a positive good, but they did not hesitate to characterize the master-slave relationship, and indeed the entire set of social relationships surrounding slavery, in paternalistic terms. To be sure, the use of the ideology of paternalism as a defense for slavery as it existed in the South at the time of the Missouri controversy did not necessarily reflect an emerging consensus among southern slaveholders around the paternalist ideal, much less that slaveholders actually practiced the paternalism they preached to their northern critics in any systematic manner, but it did reveal the centrality of the idea of paternalism, especially as defined and explained by the teachings of evangelical Christianity, to the slaveholders’ evolving understanding of their society and its place in the

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world.

During the Missouri debates, criticisms from northern senators concerning the inhumanity of slavery, drove Georgia senator Freeman Walker to counter that such commentary relied on “erroneous impressions in relation to the treatment of slaves.” Walker declared that slaves in the South were “far from being in that state of intolerable vassalage which some gentlemen seem to believe,” and contended that southern slaves “are well clothed, well fed, and treated with kindness and humanity.”⁵⁴ North Carolina Senator Nathaniel Macon, the laconic and determined Old Republican, also defended slavery as a cultivator of domesticity. Macon invited northern senators to “go home with me, or some other Southern member, and witness the meeting between the slaves and their owner, and see the glad faces and hearty shaking of hands.”⁵⁵ The upper South’s Richard Johnson of Kentucky also turned to paternalism to defend the conduct of slaveholders. Slaves, Johnson argued, “were trained to industry” and compensated by “kindness and humanity.” Using the emerging familial metaphor, Johnson declared that the slave’s “master is his guardian.” The slave enjoyed “the rights of conscience” and worshiped God “as he chooses”. As proof of the latter proposition, Johnson offered the observation that “quite as great portion of them become believers... and are admitted into the communion of the Christian church” as were whites.

Moreover, growing Christian sentiment in slaveholding communities offered slaves protection from the cruelty of the occasional harsh master. “No man among us can be cruel to his slave,” Johnson avowed, “without incurring the execration of the whole community.”⁵⁶ Yet both Walker and Johnson remained careful not to claim that slavery was anything other than a long-standing problem which white southerners tried the best to meliorate to the extent circumstances would

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allow. The “evil [slavery], if it be one, already exists,” Walker argued, “It has taken deep root in out soil, and I know of no means of extirpating it.” Johnson also denied that southerners in Congress were trying to “justify the abstract principle of slavery” but rather merely sought to defend their honor as slaveholders saddled with the responsibility of doing their best to manage a “necessary evil.”⁵⁷

No other southern defender of slavery sounded as quite as aggressive or confrontational a tone as South Carolina’s Senator William Smith, the redoubtable champion of the movement to reopen the African slave trade in 1803. In a variety of speeches to the Senate during the Missouri controversy, Smith moved, albeit tentatively, away from the assumption, made explicit in Richard Johnson’s remarks, that slavery remained a “necessary evil.” Instead, Smith took issue with the much-quoted denunciation of slavery penned by Thomas Jefferson in his Notes. Smith reformulated Jefferson’s claim that “the whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions” into a paternalist claim that “the whole commerce between master and slave is patriarchal.” In fact, Smith argued, southern slaves were “so domesticated, so kindly treated by their masters” that southerners worried little about insurrection. Rather than living in a state of “constant alarm” or “constant danger,” Smith maintained, abolitionists could not “excite one among twenty [slaves] to insurrection.” Nor, in Smith’s view, did observations of slavery breed arrogance and despotism in young whites as Jefferson feared. With black children as “constant associates,” Smith argued young whites developed such affection for young slaves that “in thousands of instances there is nothing but the shadow of slavery left” when whites and their youthful slave companions reached adulthood.⁵⁸

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Smith's sweeping contradiction of Jefferson's contention that slavery was unrepugnant provided a positive sanction for slaveholding that seemed to shock his northern listeners, who heard Smith's remarks as a bold departure from previous southern defenses of slavery as a necessary evil. Smith certainly never explicitly called slavery a positive good, but he did offer an aggressive defense of paternalism, of a "patriarchal" commerce between master and slave. A robust application of paternalism, Smith contended, effectively meliorated whatever "evil" rested inherently in slavery.

Just two years after Smith's defense of paternalism, the new paternalist approach to slave management came under internal attack in the months immediately following Charleston's savage response to rumors of a slave insurrection allegedly organized by free black Denmark Vesey.⁵⁹ A lengthy memorial from the citizens of Charleston summed up popular complaints well. It emphasized the failure of the "advantages" offered by paternalism to produce "satisfaction and affection" among slaves and observed that whites had been repaid for their kindness with the creation of an insurrection plot "comparable to the worst West Indian atrocities." These citizens called for tighter restrictions on slaves who hired out away from their masters, legislation banning blacks from the "mechanical arts" (unless these slave mechanics worked under the direct supervision of their masters), the end of importation of slaves from the upper South, and severe penalties for anyone who taught slaves to read and write. This petition branded slaves an "enemy in bosom of the state" but rather than calling for an end of the peculiar institution or even a continued amelioration of its harshest features, the petitioners offered a direct indictment of paternalism and argued that force was "the only principle that can maintain slavery."⁶⁰

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Almost immediately, advocates of paternalism, led by the increasingly influential southern clergy, mounted a passionate rebuttal. Richard Furman, leader of South Carolina's Baptists, quickly defended paternalism against the increasingly formidable criticisms from civil authorities who viewed religion and leniency in the treatment of slaves as key factors in the development of slave unrest. A master, in Furman's view, served as "the guardian and even father of his slaves," and "[slaves] become part of his family, (the whole, forming under him a little community) and the care of ordering it, and of providing for its welfare, devolves on him." Thus, Furman explained, "what is effected, and often at a great public expense, in a free community, by taxes, benevolent institutions, bettering houses, and penitentiaries, lies here on the master...." The Charleston-based divine insisted that a "just and humane master, who rules his slaves and provides for them, according to Christian principles" should "rest satisfied that he is not in holding them, chargeable with moral evil, nor with acting...contrary to the genius of Christianity." Furman conceded that laws to prevent and punish insurrection were necessary in a slave society, but he also emphasized the need "on the other hand" for laws "to prevent them [slaves] from being oppressed and injured by unreasonable, cruel masters, and others." Furman also defended the Christian mission to the slaves against critics who blamed evangelism, among with the slave literacy it encouraged, for the Vesey plot. If slaves received their instruction "from right sources," Furman argued, "they will not be in danger of having their minds corrupted by sentiments unfriendly to the domestic and civil peace of the community."⁶¹

As the idea of paternalism gained strength in the lower South, the colonization movement,

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gained new momentum in the upper South with the founding of the American Colonization Society in 1816. While whites in the upper South remained uncertain whether slavery had rendered blacks “unfit” for freedom or the alleged racial inferiority of blacks had rendered them ready subjects for slavery, whites virtually believed that the color of both slaves and free blacks would always serve as a badge preventing both their recognition as citizens or their progress as denizens in a white republic. Whites, like Jefferson, who were unwilling to admit their own prejudice on the subject, could readily attribute the overweening prejudice to society at large, absolving themselves from individual responsibility. Thus no matter the strength of the misgivings about slavery harbored by whites in the upper South, and given the absolute size of the region’s slave population, most whites could not envision any systematic plan of emancipation, even of the most gradual nature, which was not also accompanied by the removal of free blacks from upper South society. Old-line Federalist Charles Fenton Mercer predicted that colonization would wipe “from the character of our institutions the only ‘blot’ which stains them.”⁶² At the opposite end of Virginia’s partisan spectrum, Old Republican John Taylor of Caroline also endorsed colonization, calling slavery a “misfortune to agriculture” but predicting a bloody confrontation between blacks and whites if slaves were freed in large numbers and allowed to remain in Virginia. “If England and America would erect and foster a settlement of free negroes in some fertile part of Africa, it would soon subsist by its own energies,” Taylor surmised in an optimistic assessment of colonization prospects his 1813 *Arator* essays, and “slavery might then be gradually reexported, and philanthropy gratified...”⁶³ The Virginia legislature quietly endorsed the idea of colonizing free blacks in 1816, and when American

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Colonization Society held its first national meeting in Washington in 1817, it elected Virginia's Bushrod Washington as the society's first president, and the names of many prominent Virginians, including James Madison, John Marshall, James Monroe, and John Tyler, appeared on the membership rolls.⁶⁴ In neighboring Maryland, Robert Harper pleaded the case for colonization, insisting that skin color condemned blacks to "hopeless inferiority and degradation" and presented an impassable barrier to "social equality." Harper complained that free blacks too often lived as paupers "at the expense of the community" and retained the ability to stir resistance among slaves. Harper also contended that the presence of a black working class in Maryland, slave and free, led whites to see "labour as a badge of slavery" hindered the formation of a reliable class of free white laborers in the state..⁶⁵ Maryland formed a state chapter of the ACS in 1817, and in both its 1817-1818 and 1818-1819 sessions, the Maryland legislature unanimously endorsed the principle of colonization.⁶⁶

Yet even with the dominant political tradition and the prevailing economic trends in the upper South favored colonization, the movement's champions confronted serious, and perhaps insurmountable, practical difficulties. Even the modest plans for colonization required finding locations for colonies, raising money to pay for the transportation of free blacks, finding funds to subsidize the operation of the colonies in their critical early years, and persuading reluctant free blacks to go voluntarily. Additionally, upper South leaders who favored compensated emancipation confronted the even more daunting task of raising funds to compensate masters. Upper South colonizationists recognized the scope of these problems, but championed the cause nonetheless. Indeed, most colonizationists in the upper South supported removal not because

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they viewed it as an efficient and decisive method for ending slavery, but because they perceived it as a prudent measure for a gradual “whitening” the upper South. Sincere opponents of slavery hoped the colonization movement, whatever its short-term effectiveness, would help generate momentum toward general emancipation at a future date. And whites in no hurry to end slavery supported colonization as a means of marginally “whitening” the region by removing a portion of its existing free black population and newly manumitted slaves.⁶⁷

In the lower South, the advent of the ACS received at best a lukewarm reception. Lower South supporters of colonization saw the movement almost exclusively as a means of reducing the size of its free black population and removing the trickle of slaves freed by private manumissions rather than as means of either reducing slavery’s importance to the region or as a modest beginning to a strategy of gradual emancipation. Nevertheless, the Society attracted some favorable attention and a few subscribers from every lower South state. In South Carolina, modest but symbolically important subscriptions were received from such unlikely and disparate donors as Charlestonian Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, an aging Lowcountry Federalist, and William Smith, the aggressively proslavery Upcountry Republican.⁶⁸ In Georgia, where favorite son and presidential aspirant William Crawford served a national vice-president of the ACS, the Society opened a handful of local auxiliaries. But in Georgia the Society functioned largely as a vehicle for returning illegally imported slaves to Africa. In 1817, the Georgia legislature passed a statute which directed the governor to turnover all slaves illegally imported into the state to the Colonization Society for repatriation to Africa, provided the Society could reimburse the state for any expenses incurred by taxpayers. At least thirty or forty slaves were colonized under this law

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during its first five years of operation.⁶⁹ Alabama largely ignored the ACS's early activities, but in Mississippi and Louisiana, colonization received significant support for a number of wealthy planters, especially from those in the Natchez hinterland, where interest in reducing the area's growing free back population sustained the movement. But state and local auxiliary chapters were not organized in these lower South states until years later. As the Georgia legislature explained retrospectively, at the time of "the first establishment of the Colonization Society," whatever support the organization developed in the lower South emerged "from the general impression in the Southern states" that its object "was limited to removal" of the "free people of color and their descendants and none other."⁷⁰ To the extent whites in the lower South suspected the Society wanted a broader emancipation, it was either ignored or sharply criticized. By 1820, lower South whites focused on how to acquire and control the slaves they needed to sustain their staple economy, not on how to phase out slavery or reduce its centrality to the region's economy.

Faced with a combination of general indifference or outright hostility from the lower South in addition to the financial and logistical challenges posed by colonization, many upper South politicians also supported the idea of "diffusion," the notion that slavery should be allowed to expand because the institution weakened as it expanded into new areas, as a practical means of gradually "whitening" their region and perhaps setting slavery on the road to eventual elimination. Diffusionists advanced the seemingly anomalous argument that while slavery remained a definite evil, it was an evil whose consequences proved less deleterious when it was allowed to expand and more harmful when it was confined or restricted.⁷¹ The diffusion

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argument appeared as early as the 1798 Congressional debate over the expansion of slavery into the Mississippi territory, when Virginian John Nicholas, who publically labeled slavery a “misfortune,” argued against excluding slavery from the southwestern territory on grounds that allowing slavery to expand westward would “spread the blacks over a large space, so that in time it might be safe to carry into effect the plan which certain philanthropists have so much at heart [emancipation].”⁷² Nicholas’ fellow Virginian and Jeffersonian William Branch Giles agreed that diffusion diluted the evils of slavery, and argued that diffusion of the slave population across space would yield an “amelioration” in the overall the condition of slaves by “lessening their numbers” in the older slaveholding states and “spreading them over a large surface of country.” Many of slavery’s harsher aspects, Giles concluded, resulted from slaves being “crowded together” in only a few states.⁷³ Kentucky’s John Breckinridge echoed these sentiments a few years later. “I wish our negroes were scattered more equally not only through the United States but through our territories,” the Bluegrass senator observed, “so that their power might be lost.” The “power” of the enslaved that Breckinridge feared most was that of insurrection. Worried that “our slaves at the South will produce another St, Domingo,” Breckinridge believed that diffusion would “disperse and weaken the race—and free the southern states from a part of its black population, and of its danger.”⁷⁴ Of course an aging Thomas Jefferson gave the idea of beneficent diffusion its most formidable endorsement during the Missouri crisis of 1820-1821. Jefferson declared that the “diffusion” of slaves “over a greater surface would make them individually happier,” and he insisted diffusion would “proportionally facilitate the accomplishment of their [slaves] emancipation by dividing the burthen on a greater number of coadjutors.”⁷⁵ In

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Jefferson's view, the spreading of slaves across a broad southern space would encourage an eventual emancipation by thinning the concentration of slaves and dispersing the financial sacrifice and social risks ultimately involved in emancipation. With the foreign slave trade closed, James Madison agreed that "an uncontroled dispersion of slaves now in the U.S. was not only best for the nation, but most favorable to slaves, also both as to their prospects for emancipation, and as to their condition in the meantime." Madison argued that since the importation of African slaves was prohibited, "a diffusion of those in the Country, tends at once to meliorate the actual condition, and to facilitate their eventual emancipation."⁷⁶

In several respects diffusion represented a thoroughly Jeffersonian remedy to the problem of slavery in early national America. By spreading the peculiar institution across time and space, diffusion purchased security for the expansive republican vision of the Jeffersonians at the expense of ideological purity. Just as the movement of the white population into the territory acquired through the Louisiana Purchase nurtured independence through expanding possibilities for yeoman self-sufficiency despite the irritation of Jeffersonian constitutional scruples involved, diffusion reduced the danger of insurrection by dispersing potentially dangerous concentrated slave populations and promoted paternalism and humane treatment by sending slaves to the richer soils of new territories even as it extended the geographical reach of an institution Jefferson yearned to banish from the republic. Additionally, diffusion facilitated the possibility of emancipation at some distant date by insuring that slaves comprised a smaller percentage of the overall population in any given state than would otherwise have been the case.⁷⁷ While public arguments in favor of diffusion often focused on the advantages expansion offered slaves in terms

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of treatment, living conditions, and prospects for future emancipation, in practice, the policy of diffusion served the interests of the upper South's whites, and especially its slaveholders, well by encouraging the westward expansion of slavery. Diffusion insured a market for the surplus slaves from old tobacco states and thus provided upper South slave owners with a means of both divesting themselves of expensive labor and recouping the capital they had invested in slaves. It facilitated the development of promising western lands, where upper South investors often held large speculative interests, and it helped protect, at least for a time, the political clout of slaveholding states in Congress through the creation of additional slave states. In other words, Jeffersonian Republicanism, not unlike the Sage of Monticello himself, could advocate the eventual end of slavery in the American republic while insisting that any steps toward this end, however tentative, be taken under the direction of slaveholders, largely in their interest, and at their preferred pace. And, again paralleling Jefferson's personal handling of the matter, any steps toward general emancipation, no matter how slow and halting, involved only a minimum financial sacrifice by slaveholders, or better still, no sacrifice at all.⁷⁸

The relative effectiveness of colonization and diffusion as methods of minimizing slavery's importance and "whitening" the region remained a source of serious debate and disagreement in the upper South throughout the early national era. Even those individuals most firmly committed to diminishing slavery often disagreed over the best combination of means toward that end. Moreover, any plan to phase out slavery drew sharp dissent from portions of the upper South where slavery was most firmly entrenched. While generally not prepared to argue

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that slavery was a positive good, slaveholders from Tidewater and Southside Virginia, the Northside tobacco belt of North Carolina, a few plantation counties in southern Maryland and Delaware, and the Bluegrass region of Kentucky remained in no hurry to see slavery end, and perhaps thought it never would. But, on the whole, upper South whites answered the crucial questions about slavery by deciding that the institution was, over the long term, incompatible with republicanism, public safety, and even the prospects for sustained economic development in the region. Yet even as they conceded the problems slavery presented to their society, upper South whites they also rejected the idea of a free biracial society and looked to remove blacks, whether slave or free, from the region. Still, despite internal conflict and confusion, and the inevitable complications arising from any effort to address the problem of slavery, whites in the upper South tended to agree on the need to gradually wean the region from its reliance on slave labor, either by phasing out slavery entirely or, as seemed more feasible, by significantly reducing both the number of slaves in the region and the importance of slaves to the area's economy. Over time, a loose and uneasy consensus emerged in the upper South around the idea of diminishing the importance of slavery very gradually through individual manumission and colonization, the sale of slaves to other parts of the South, and the resulting spread or diffusion of slaves across a wider territory. In sum, they supported the expansion of slavery (and hence the diffusion of slaves), the colonization of willing free blacks and any newly freed slaves, and an active interstate slave trade to provide the most financially attractive option for diminishing slavery in the Upper South: the sale of slaves to the cotton South. Together these policies stood as the upper South's tentative plan for the gradual elimination of slavery. Yet it stood more as the fig leaf behind which

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Virginians could stand to proclaim their fidelity to the understood constitutional compromise than as an actual plan of emancipation. And for many in the upper South, it seemed enough of a program to convince them that they stood as opponents of slavery. Ideologically, upper South whites disowned slavery even as they carefully protected their right to own slaves.⁷⁹

Lower South whites generally supported the westward expansion of slavery, but only for some of the same reasons articulated by upper South diffusionists. They supported the expansion of slavery because it opened new opportunities for slaveholder entrepreneurship, kept the value of slave property high, and protected whites from highly-concentrated slave majorities rather than because they wanted to diffuse the ill-effects of slavery over a larger area and facilitate emancipation in the long run. Usually careful not to sound too eager or enthusiastic about the expansion of slavery in their public pronouncements, the actions, if not the rhetoric, of lower South politicians of the era revealed their reluctance to see the expansion of slavery restricted in meaningful ways. Georgia senator Freeman Walker skillfully maintained the delicate balance required of the apologetic expansionist in his remarks during the Missouri debate. Sounding very much like an upper South diffusionist, Walker argued in 1820 that the “restriction” of slavery would “deteriorate the condition of whites more than it would ameliorate the condition of slaves.” Since “the poison cannot be entirely destroyed, the political physician would recommend that it be scattered and disseminated through the system, so as to lose its effects,” Walker analogized, “the more widely then, this evil is diffused, (paradoxical as it may seem,) the less fatal will be its effects.” The diffusion of slavery hardly guaranteed the amelioration of slave life, but it certainly enhanced white security. If slaves “should ever do us harm,” Walker explained, “it will be by

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their dense population: when they can act in concert on short notice.” Sensitive to the views of his opponents, Walker remained willing to rest his public case for the expansion of slavery on the idea of diffusing an evil rather than enlarging a “positive good.”⁸⁰ The strongest argument for slavery as a “positive good” emerged not from the cautious rhetoric of politicians but from thousands of white planters and lesser slaveholders who regularly voted with their feet and resources as they moved to Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana with their slaves, and often looked to purchase even more slaves upon arrival. With few exceptions, by 1820, lower South whites were still seeking to embrace slavery, albeit on their own terms, rather than puzzling over how to extricate themselves from it.

With the lower South’s economic future increasingly tied to slavery, and its leaders more outspoken in defending the South’s holding of slaves, the lower South grew more suspicious of the colonization movement, which it now saw as a possible threat to slavery rather than as a useful instrument for the removal of free blacks. During the 1820s, slaveholders in heavily black areas around Natchez advocated colonization as the solution to the growth of a potentially troublesome free black population in the region. In 1827, the Woodville Republican, traditionally the voice of southwestern Mississippi planters, took up the cudgels for colonization, praising the efforts of the ACS and urging the formation of a Mississippi chapter. But the newspaper’s campaign attracted sharp criticism from readers. One writer complained of the ACS’s efforts to obtain financial assistance from Congress as antithetical to the prevailing state’s rights sentiments in the Mississippi, and predicted that if Congress established a precedent by legislating on a

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matter so closely related to slavery, it would soon consider calls for a general emancipation.⁸¹

Apart from Mississippi, Georgia was the only lower South cotton state to exhibit significant interest in the early colonization movement. The activity of the ACS received a mixed reaction in Georgia, where Crawford's involvement with the ACS gave the organization a modicum of credibility. Few Georgia whites contemplated a general emancipation, no matter how gradual or voluntary, but the colonization movement gained a tenuous foothold in the state as a means of reducing the state's existing free black population and insuring the removal of any slaves subsequently manumitted by willing masters. By the middle of the 1820s, the ACS's official organ, the African Repository, enjoyed a small but healthy circulation in Georgia at least four local auxiliaries of the Colonization Society existed in the state, including one in the yeoman-dominated upper Piedmont county of Jackson. Founded in 1825 through efforts of Joel Early, brother of one-time Georgia Governor Peter Early, the Jackson County Auxiliary, heralded colonization as "one of the greatest National and Christian enterprises" and supported the colonization of as many free blacks as possible and such slaves as "may be by their respective owners from time to time emancipated." Yet Georgia's hillcountry colonizationists clearly viewed their movement as a means of "whitening" the already white Georgia Upcountry.⁸² Colonization made little headway in neighboring Alabama, with its sizeable hillcountry, despite the energetic efforts of James G. Birney, a Kentucky native who moved to Huntsville to publish a colonization newspaper. After months of effort, the usually optimistic Birney admitted a "deadness to the subject of African Colonization" in Alabama arising from pandemic white fears that the Society might one day interfere with slavery rather than continue its focus on the

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colonization of free blacks. With the promise of cotton profits driving their calculations, many lower South whites decided their region would flourish with slave labor and suffer without it and distrust and dislike of the colonization movement spread with the success of the fleecy staple.⁸³

As the lower South came to suspect colonization as a harbinger of abolition, many upper South politicians still saw colonization as one means of reducing the burden of slave labor on the region's economy while simultaneously "whitening" its demography. At the macroeconomic level, slavery appeared more of a drain than a boon to the upper South economy. Virginia saw itself trailing free labor Pennsylvania and Ohio in improvements and saw the prodigious profits from slave labor coming only from the southwest as Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana joined the cotton economy. Fearing economic stagnation, the upper South valued colonization as one means of diminishing slavery's importance, a means they wanted to keep viable until the course of slavery's, and the region's, future emerged with more definition. By the early 1820s, ACS auxiliary societies flourished in counties and towns across the Old Dominion. In 1825, the Richmond auxiliary praised the ACS's efforts, claiming that the success of Liberia had proven to even "the most skeptical" that the ACS could establish a "permanent and flourishing colony" for free people of color and needed only state and federal aid to enjoy more widespread success. Just to the south, in North Carolina, the Raleigh chapter of the ACS continued to thrive well into the 1820s. Raleigh Register editor John Gales, an emigrant with strong French republican leanings, gave strong and frequent support to the idea of colonization, sometimes putting himself at odds with North Carolina slaveholders. Slavery, Gales wrote in 1825, "is an evil, a great evil, but one imposed on us without our consent..." and one he refused to concede "irremediable,

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hopeless, and perpetual,” though Gales agreed that the state must accept it temporarily on the “broad plea of necessity.” Through colonization, Gales maintained, the Old North State could trade its whole slave population for half as many whites and emerge “among the foremost in the race of active improvements now running in most of the free states.” Both Gales and the Register took criticism for this pro-colonization stance, but the newspaper continued to actively support the movement until 1830.⁸⁴ But even as North Carolina’s small but loyal band of colonizationists continued their efforts, leading politicians criticized colonization as a threat to slavery. As early as 1825, Nathaniel Macon, the former Speaker of the United States House and the elder statesman of North Carolina politics, observed that, whatever their expressed intent, the multiplication of “colonizing societies” nurtured the “spirit of emancipation” in the slaveholding states, and distinguished North Carolina jurist William Gaston, a quiet supporter of colonization, admitted to a friend that he was “reluctant” to speak publicly in its favor, even if the movement was restricted to the removal of free blacks, because he knew that many black-belt planters suspected colonization as a disguised forerunner of abolition.⁸⁵ Thus the sharpening disagreement over the value of the colonization movement widened the gap between upper and lower South on a matter directly related to slavery.

While Virginia native Jesse Burton Harrison had doubtless overstated the case when he asserted in 1832 that almost “all masters in Virginia assent to the proposition that when the slaves can be liberated without danger to ourselves, and to their own advantage, it ought to be done,” he nonetheless expressed a sentiment common in the upper South but deeply feared by the lower South, where the various whitening strategies of their northern slaveholding neighbors prompted

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growing concern.⁸⁶ At least one out-of state newspaper attributed Virginia's continued lively interest in colonization to growing lower South concerns that Virginia and other upper South states were simply "exporting" the problem of slavery to their region through the domestic slave trade. One out-of-state newspaper claimed that "Virginia would long since have found her negroes a burden, had it not been for her continued exports," and predicted that as southern states "enacted laws against importation" such profits might slow. The newspaper admitted that such laws were often "badly" observed when first passed, but predicted that they would "assume strength in time."⁸⁷

Without question, by the 1820s, the sale of slaves to the cotton South had emerged as the most practical strategy for weakening the grip of slavery on the upper South, and as the internal slave trade flourished, it remained a source of tension between upper and lower South. From the writing of the Constitution in 1787 until the closing of the foreign slave trade in 1808, upper South politicians consistently opposed the international trade, much to the chagrin of slave-hungry lower South planters and farmers. The upper South's steady opposition to the importation of foreign slaves centered not only on its desire to slow the growth of its own slave population, but also on a desire to limit the supply of slaves available to other staple-growing regions, thus enhancing the value of upper South slaves in the domestic slave trade. Indeed, the upper South viewed the interstate slave trade as a vital safety-valve for venting its burgeoning "surplus" slave population in a profitable manner and as a key to its emerging "whitening" strategy, as Thomas Dew bluntly explained in his widely-circulated commentary on the Virginia slavery debates of 1832. The lower South, though divided internally on the wisdom of importing more slaves from

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overseas, had nevertheless favored keeping that option open to individual states for as long as possible. Once the foreign trade ended, however, the lower South knew it could acquire the slaves it wanted from the upper South through the interstate trade, but it worried about the upper South sending troublesome and even incendiary slaves south through the trade and about draining itself of precious capital. Thus the issue of the internal slave trade remained a pivot point between upper and lower South throughout the Jacksonian era. Any practical hope of fulfilling the upper South's desire to diminish slavery's importance in the region hinged on the lower South's deepening involvement in an institution that, within the slaveholding states, became increasingly less localized and more sectional by the year, as the cotton revolution and the slave trade did their steady work.⁸⁸

The lower South wanted to buy slaves yet questioned the motives of upper South sellers. Moreover, despite its intensifying involvement with the cotton economy, every report of a slave insurrection, real or imagined, underestimated or exaggerated, prompted the states of the lower South to reconsider state policies on matters related to the control of the slave and free black populations. Central to these periodic reevaluations loomed the perennial question of how best to regulate the interstate slave trade. Virtually every state in the lower South formally considered the need for better control of its slave and free black population in the years following the aborted Denmark Vesey rebellion in Charleston in 1822. Alabama debated the desirability of limiting or closing the interstate slave trade throughout the 1820s. Under terms of the state's 1819 constitution, Alabama residents or legal immigrants could import slaves for their own use, but

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popular pressure to regulate the activity of slave traders produced annual legislative initiatives on the subject. Crafted primarily to prevent the importation of “undesirable or troublesome” slaves from other states, these laws also protected the investments of existing slaveholders while keeping the state from growing “too black.” Late in 1826, the Alabama legislature passed an outright ban on the importation of slaves for sale or hire. Stiff penalties for violators were included. But the teeth were removed from this legislation during the General Assembly’s 1832 session, and the slave trade flourished with little governmental interference thereafter.⁸⁹ In Louisiana, where the sugar-growing parishes had long relied heavily on slave labor, the Red River cotton boom and the slaves who made it possible raised scattered alarms about the size and proportion of the state’s slave population. As Louisiana planters incurred staggering debts while enlarging their slave holdings, the state prohibited the interstate slave trade (excluding residents and immigrants) in 1826 for a period of two years in an effort to slow the outflow of private capital from the state as well as to control the growth of the state’s slave population. But, under public pressure from staple growers, the legislature repealed the restriction on slave importation a year early in 1828. In 1829 Louisiana again tried to insure itself against becoming a dumping ground for the troublesome slaves from both the upper South and other older staple-growing states by establishing a “character” test for imported slaves.⁹⁰ In a climate of renewed fear of insurrection following the news of the Turner revolt in 1831, Louisiana Governor Andre Roman called a special session of the legislature in 1831 to secure the state against threats to white security. At the special session, the legislature again banned the activity of professional slave traders, allowing only citizens and immigrants who intended to settle permanently in Louisiana to

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bring slaves into the state, and required even these citizens and immigrants to appear before parish judges to explain their intentions in detail.⁹¹ Louisiana planter J. S. Johnston applauded the new restrictions, predicting that if the slave trade was effectively “suppressed for a time” Virginians and other slaveholders in the upper South would “be obliged to emigrate.” Virginia would then “feel the difference between selling slaves for money and having them carried away by her own people,” a shift in migration patterns that “will be as beneficial to us [Louisiana] as it will be injurious to her [Virginia],” Johnston surmised.⁹²

In neighboring Mississippi, where the extensive early participation in the first cotton boom by planters and farmers in the Natchez hinterland established slavery early in the states’ territorial history, public officials had long shown concern about white safety in area’s with high proportions of slaves and free blacks. In fact, Mississippi’s original state constitution, approved in 1817, gave its legislature the “full power to prevent slaves from being brought into this State as merchandise” but guaranteed immigrants the right to bring slaves along when they arrived to settle in the state, but Mississippi’s first assembly of legislators chose to regulate the interstate trade rather than eliminate it. In 1822, the Mississippi legislature, influenced by reports of the Vesey scare, revived a lapsed territorial practice and adopted a “character test” for imported slaves. The character test statute required either the slave traders or prospective buyers to procure character references for the slaves in question from two freeholders in the slaves’ previous area of residence. Designed to prevent the “dumping” of troublesome or rebellious slaves from other parts of the South and slow the work of slave traders, this regulation did not apply to either Mississippi residents or immigrants who intended to settle permanently in Mississippi. In 1825,

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the legislature enhanced its regulation of the interstate slave trade by imposing a tax of 2.5 percent on all slaves purchased at auction in the state, but loud public outcry against this tax prompted the legislature to lower the surcharge to one percent the following year. Still, despite taxes and regulation, demand for slaves grew as new lands in central and northern Mississippi opened for settlement.⁹³

In 1828, Mississippi Governor Gerard Brandon, complained that the state had become a “receptacle for the surplus black population of the Middle States,” exciting “uneasiness in the minds of many of our fellow-citizens.” Brandon also blamed slavery for the wide gap between the rich and poor in Mississippi and argued that the increasing number of slaves in the state discouraged white immigration. As a remedy, Brandon proposed limiting the growth of slavery in Mississippi by closing the interstate slave trade altogether. But while a number of white Mississippians in heavily black southwestern portion of the state shared Governor Brandon’s fear that an emerging black majority might be roused to rebellion by dissatisfied slave imports or ambitious free blacks, the legislature imposed no additional restrictions on the interstate slave trade until news of the Nat Turner rebellion reached the region in 1831, rendering visions of servile insurrection tangible. Against this backdrop of rebellion, Mississippi’s 1832 Constitutional Convention considered further regulation of the interstate slave trade. A coalition of Natchez area planters and piney woods’ whites passed a provision giving the legislature the power to prohibit the introduction for slaves “as Merchandise” after March 1, 1833, though Mississippi citizens and immigrants were guaranteed the right to import slaves for their own use until at least 1845. The new constitutional restriction sought to regulate the slave trade and

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prevent the “dumping” of troublesome slaves into Mississippi by impecunious or alarmed planters in other slaveholding states.¹⁰⁰

But displeasure with the constitutional ban on the interstate slave trade surfaced immediately after the convention as the opening Choctaw and Chickasaw lands of northern and central Mississippi reinvigorated demand for slave labor in the state, and instead of fleshing out the constitutional prohibition on the slave trade with statutory penalties at its 1833 session, the Mississippi legislature promptly reversed the state’s course on regulation of the slave trade and approved by the necessary two-thirds margin a proposed amendment repealing the new constitution’s ban on the interstate slave trade and submitted the amendment to the people for approval at the upcoming fall elections. As the campaign unfolded, most Mississippi observers expected the amendment to pass easily. The conservative Natchez Courier, though formerly an advocate of “the interdiction of this trade,” endorsed the amendment because the newspaper held “no hopes” that the legislature could draft an “effective” restriction law that would be “respected” by citizens.¹⁰¹ When the votes were cast in November 1833, the amendment won a strong plurality of those voting on the question, 4531 in favor and 1093 against, but it failed to receive the majority of all votes cast in legislative elections required by the constitution. The unexpected failure of the amendment left Mississippi’s policy towards the interstate slave trade confused. The next legislature failed to muster the two-thirds majorities needed to submit the amendment lifting the ban to voters again, and instead revived the old policy of taxing slave purchases, approving a 2.5 percent levy on gross sale price. Thus while the supreme law of Mississippi prohibited the importation of slaves as merchandise after March 1, 1833, the legislature imposed no sanctions on

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violators and instead taxed the presumably unconstitutional trade. In face of such contradictions, slaves poured into Mississippi in record numbers over the next five years.¹⁰²

Thus the prolonged controversy over the slave trade revealed fundamental contradictions in the minds of lower South whites as late as the early 1830s. With the lower South's cotton economy expanding westward at a furious pace, slavery provided the labor essential to sustained economic growth in the region. At the same time, the growth of the region's slave population, whether through natural increase, importation from overseas, or by emigration and sale from the upper South, heightened white anxiety about the dangers, including but not limited to insurrection, of living in a slaveholding society, especially where a larger and larger proportion of the population was enslaved. Thus, as staple profits rolled in and slave majorities emerged in many counties, lower South whites found the perennial tension between greed and fear, between opportunity and anxiety, a very tangible public policy dilemma, especially at moments when the occasional insurrection scares gripped southern communities. Even as most lower South whites yearned for enough slaves to bring cotton riches to their region, they also fretted over the dangers associated with a growing black population and debated proposals for modulating the region's still-volatile racial demographics. As the occasional insurrection scares ebbed, however, the drive for flowing cotton profits usually prevailed, and the region grew ever more deeply enmeshed in the slave economy.

Thus, while the lower South grew more involved in maintaining but regulating slavery, the upper South remained interested in plotting slavery's gradual geographic reconfiguration, if not its ultimate demise. Ironically, the domestic slave trade unified southern interests even

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though it emerged from different subregional aspirations. The upper South needed the trade as an outlet for its surplus slaves every bit as much as the lower South wanted the trade to supply the cotton revolution's demand for slave labor. But at another level, the internal slave trade revealed the conflicting interests of the upper and lower South. The upper South's interest in supplying the lower South's demand for slaves grew in part from its to reduce its dependence on, and hence its commitment to, slavery as the basis for republican society, while the lower South hunger for slaves reflected an intensifying commitment to slavery both as a labor and a social system. In the realm of politics, this led to differences over how to defend slavery and over the potential danger emanating from abolitionist criticism. At least prior to the rise of immediatism in the early 1830s, and to an extent thereafter, the upper South remained inclined to portray slavery as a temporary evil that the region sought to end at its own preferred pace. The lower South grew more interested defending slavery as an acceptable means of maintaining republican independence and opportunity in a manner consistent with Christian morality, and with turning all challenges to slavery away with ferocity and dispatch.

The reconfiguration of slavery desired by the lower South was not a demographic one but an ideological one, one which understood slavery not as a violation of the republican faith but its safeguard, not as an economic scourge on southern society but as the foundation of its wealth and stability, and not as a moral blot on a Christian society but as the great humanitarian effort of the southern people to lift Africans from what whites conjured as the primitive pagan society of their homeland to a higher standard of material comfort and an exposure to Christianity in the slaveholding South. By the time northern abolitionists launched their petition campaign of the

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late 1830s, many lower South champions of slavery were ready to reply with an affirmative defense, and predictably, South Carolina's John C. Calhoun proved willing to take a leading role in such a defense. During the late 1830s, while speaking against the reception of a series of such abolition petitions presented to Congress, Calhoun praised slavery unequivocally as "a great political institution, essential to the peace and existence of one-half this Union." A "mysterious Providence had brought together two races, from different portions of the globe, and placed them in nearly equal numbers in the Southern portion of this Union," and there they "were inseparably united, beyond the possibility of separation," Calhoun asserted, brushing aside colonization in a single phrase. Experience, Calhoun maintained, suggested that slavery had "secured the peace and happiness of both [races]." Under slavery, the "inferior" race had "improved" and "attained a degree of civilization never before attained by the black race in any age or country." Under "no other relation," the South Carolina senator asserted, could roughly equal numbers of blacks and whites "co-exist together."¹⁰³

Such affirmative defenses of slavery still made upper South skin crawl, however, as the tradition of apologetic defenses of a necessary evil confronted the bold assertion of slavery as a positive good. A telling vignette illustrating the upper South's reluctance to abandon its old ground of disowning slavery while owning slaves in the face of the lower South's evolving ideological reconfiguration of slavery emerges from an impromptu exchange on the floor of the United States between moderate Virginia senator William Cabell Rives, a self-styled Madisonian, and Calhoun, the self-styled political strategist for the lower South. As the Senate debated the handling of petitions related to slavery, Virginia's Rives rose to express his "pain and

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mortification” that northern senators even raised the issue of abolition in the chamber. Rives pleaded with them “to let the subject alone—not to invade the peace of the firesides of their brethren” by “an aggression upon their dearest interests.” During his remarks, Rives averred that while he defended slavery as an “existing institution,” he differed from Calhoun over the issue of “slavery in the abstract.” Calhoun injected that he had never defended “slavery in the abstract” but rather “slavery as existing where two races of men, of different color, and a thousand other particulars, were placed in immediate juxtaposition.” Following up, Calhoun asked the Virginian if he considered slavery a “good.” Rives declared that to the contrary, he believed slavery was a “a misfortune and an evil in all circumstances, though in some, it might be the lesser evil.” Calhoun answered Rives, arguing that a comparison of the social experiments underway in both North and South might reveal that “the defense of human liberty against the aggressions of despotic power had been always the most efficient where domestic slavery was found to prevail.” In any case, Calhoun refused to “admit” slavery an evil, instead, he insisted, “It was a good—a great good.” Calhoun, however, quickly qualified his assertion. He had not “pronounced slavery in the abstract a good” but rather defended slavery as “a good where a civilized race and a race of a different description are brought together.”¹⁰⁴

Rives countered and that he “did not believe slavery to be a good, either moral, political, or economical” even though he was “willing to perish in the last ditch in defense of the constitutional rights of the South.” But Rives proceeded to remind the Senate that “it never entered” the minds of the founders who laid the “foundation of the great and glorious fabric of free government” to contend that “domestic slavery was a positive good—a great good” and he

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denounced the positive good doctrine of Calhoun as a “new school” of proslavery thought.

Claiming the great tradition of “Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Marshall, the brightest names of my own state” in “lamenting the existence of slavery as a misfortune and evil to the country”

Rives refused to join Calhoun in contending “that slavery is a positive good; that it is inseparable from the condition of man,...and that it is even an essential ingredient in republican government.”¹⁰⁵

But if Rives stood in 1837 as a latter day exemplar of a legitimate upper South “antislavery” tradition, Calhoun articulated an emerging lower South belief that racially-defined slavery for blacks served as the best guarantor of democracy and opportunity among whites. Like the many similar proslavery arguments which followed, Calhoun expressed the lower South’s growing acceptance of skin color, or “whiteness,” as the basis for citizenship, a position already reflected in the bulk of the many state constitutions written during the Jacksonian era.¹⁰⁶ With his defense of slavery based on race and white egalitarianism, Calhoun had both embraced the emerging southern version of racial modernity and reversed the Jeffersonian formulation of slavery as a threat to republican values. Jefferson, and others following in his foot steps, saw racial separation, to be achieved in North America by colonization, as the key to self-rule for both races. Whites could enjoy republican government on the new American continent and repatriated blacks could help establish racial self-government for blacks on African soil. As Peter Onuf has argued, Jefferson never doubted black capacity for self-government, but his prejudice lead him to deny the possibility of a biracial republic of equals in the United States.¹⁰⁷ Calhoun, speaking

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more than a decade after Jefferson's death and with a longer and closer view of the impact of the cotton revolution on the lower South, saw the enslavement of blacks as the lasting foundation for the white freedom. For Calhoun, and much of the lower South, racial slavery replaced racial separation as the key to the future of republican liberty. Moreover, where Jefferson thought slavery corrupted the republican character by imbuing whites with a penchant for aristocratic mastery, Calhoun believed slavery protected republican society by freeing common whites from the fear of abject dependency generated by free-labor capitalism and insulated propertied whites, including yeoman as well as planter, from the threat of proletarian revolution and reprisal. From the 1790s to the 1830s, from Jefferson to Calhoun, from upper South to lower South, the white construction of slavery in the South had been completed. Once seen as the root of corruption and hypocrisy in republican society, racial slavery was acclaimed the surest foundation of an egalitarian republicanism crafted for whites only.¹⁰⁸ In his remarks, Calhoun expressed a growing lower South faith in an ideology which identified the expansion of freedom and opportunity for one race with the sustained oppression and exploitation of another. At least in the civic realm, that white independence and opportunity was best sustained by the enslavement of blacks emerged as the dominant ideology of the late antebellum South. Whatever reservations about white egalitarianism flourished among the Old South elite in private, and however much the social order they defended remained bore the scars of gross inequality and social stratification, the egalitarian strain of "herrenvolk republicanism" became the prevailing political ideology of the so-called region, if for no other reason than its ability to win support among common whites for the slaveholding order.¹⁰⁹

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In 1837, Calhoun's defense of slavery as a positive good, though doubtless shared by many Southside Virginians, still jarred Rives, the protege of Jefferson and Madison, and other upper South moderates, who continued to express the position that slavery must be seen as a necessary and temporary evil. Like Rives, the upper South as a whole declined to embrace slavery as a positive good, still hoping to "whiten" itself through some combinations of methods. Yet, just as Rives, the colonizationist and ever-so-gradual emancipator, joined Calhoun, the bold defender of slavery as a positive good, in seeking an effective defense against the abolition petitions and literature steadily emanating from proliferating antislavery enclaves in the North, the upper South shared the lower South's desire to control the future of slavery in the region in the face of growing outside criticism. As late as 1857, Rives believed that slavery could still gradually disappear "under the influence of a humane and enlightened public opinion" in the South, but if and only if "national agitation" of the issue "could be made to cease."¹¹⁰ As Drew McCoy noted, it took the Civil War itself to persuade Rives to reconsider Calhoun's argument and find it plausible. In a letter to a Richmond newspaper penned in 1863, with the carnage of war swirling around him, Rives admitted that, after observing the "operation of what is called free society" in the North for the previous twenty years, it would be "a blind and unreflecting man, indeed, who has not been brought to the question of the practicability of maintaining Republican Government, with universal suffrage, in any community where domestic servitude does not exist."¹¹¹ The upper South followed Rives on his tortured journey toward risking all on behalf of slavery. Perpetually unable to find a solution to the "problem" of slavery, the upper South ultimately, and reluctantly, threw its weight behind the lower South cause only when forced to

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choose sides in a bloody civil war. The divided minded of the Old South came belatedly and tenuously together just before its proud but horribly flawed society succumbed to the ringing battle cry of freedom raised by enslaved blacks and blue-clad Union soldiers of both races.

1. Ira Berlin, Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), especially 358-365.

2. James Brewer Stewart, "The Emergence of Racial Modernity and the Rise of the White North, 1790-1840," Journal of the Early Republic 18 (Spring 1998): 181-217.

3. Stewart, "The Emergence of Racial Modernity," 183, footnote 2; see also James Brewer Stewart, "Modernizing Difference,": The Political Meanings of Color in the Free States, 1776-1840," Journal of the Early Republic 19 (Winter 1999): 691-712.

4. For the seminal argument on race as a social construction, see Barbara J. Fields, "Ideology and Race in American History," in J. Morgan Kousser and James McPherson, eds. Region, Race and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 143-178. For an introduction to whiteness scholarship, see David R. Roediger, The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class (London, 1991); Alexander Saxton, The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth Century America (New York, 1990); Noel Ignatiev, How the Irish Became White (New York, 1995); Michael Goldfield, The Color of Politics: Race and the Mainsprings of American Politics (New York, 1997); Cheryl Harris, "Whiteness as Property," Harvard Law Review 106 (June 1993): 1709-1791 among many others. For an insightful critique of whiteness studies as a genre, see Eric Arneson, "Whiteness and the Historians' Imagination," International Labor and Working Class History 60 (Fall 2001): 3-32.

5. For an examination of the role of "whiteness" and the rise of racial modernity in the realm of southern politics, see Lacy K. Ford, Jr., "'Making the White Man's Country' White: Race, Slavery and State Building the Jacksonian South," Journal of the Early Republic 19 (Winter 1999): 713-737, which focuses on how the idea of racial modernity shaped the writing of southern state constitutions in the Jacksonian era. Overwhelmingly, white southerners tended to define race in terms of skin color, though they clearly saw color as reflective of underlying attributes. Somewhat remarkably in a region where race and racial-slavery loomed so large, based, white southerners (at least outside of Louisiana) spent relatively little time defining race, resting content to presume race was generally revealed by color. In a sense, white southerners on the whole

viewed race very much like modern courts have viewed pornography, they knew it when they saw it. A full consideration of this issue must await another essay.

6. Joseph Clay to James Jackson, 16 February, 1784, in Elizabeth Donnan, ed., Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade to America, vol. 4, (Washington. D.C.: Carnegie Institution, 1935), 630-631.

7. On Charles C. Pinckney's quote, see Max Farrand, ed., The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787, vol.2, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1911), 371. For the younger Charles Pinckney's motion to postpone the final closing of the trade, see the same volume, 415-416. After the convention, Madison confided to Jefferson that "South Carolina and Georgia were inflexible on the point" of the slave trade. See James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, October 24, 1787, in Robert Rutland, et al, eds. The Papers of James Madison, vol. 10 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 206-219, at 214.

8. Clinton Rossiter, The Grand Convention (New York, 1966), 217.

9. Farrand, ed., The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787, vol.2, 415-416.

10. Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787 Reported by James Madison (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987), Bicentennial edition, with an introduction by Adrienne Koch, 503-504.

11. Ibid.

12. Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787, 181-187; see also Farrand, ed., Records of the Federal Convention, vol. 1, 398, 400.

13. For an introduction to some of the issues related to Jefferson's views and actions on slavery, Paul Finkelman, "Jefferson and Slavery: 'Treason Against the Hopes of the World,'" in Peter S. Onuf, Jefferson's Legacies (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1993): 181-224.

14. Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, ed. William Peden (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954),

15. Annette Gordon-Reed, Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemmings: An American Controversy (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1997); Peter S. Onuf, "Every Generation Is an "Independent Nation": Colonization, Miscegenation and the Fate of Jefferson's Children," William and Mary Quarterly 57 (January 2000): 153-170.

16. Jefferson, Notes, 162-163.

17. Thomas Jefferson to James Heaton, May 20, 1826, in Merrill Peterson, ed., The Writings of Thomas Jefferson (New York, 1984), 1516.

18. Jefferson, Autobiography, in Ibid., 44.

19. St. George Tucker to Jeremy Belknap, January 24, 1795, in Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1877, vol. 3, 191-192.

20. Ibid.

21. For good overviews of Tucker's efforts on behalf of emancipation, see Robert McColley, Slavery in Jeffersonian Virginia (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964), 132-136, and Alison Goodyear Freehling, Drift Toward Dissolution: The Virginia Slavery Debate of 1831-32 (Baton Rouge; Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 90-96.

22. St. George Tucker, "Queried Relating to Slavery in Massachusetts," in Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1877, vol. 3, 428.

23. For the most thorough overview of Gabriel's Rebellion and its aftermath, see Douglas R. Egerton, Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800-1802 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

24. James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, in Stanislaus Hamilton, ed., The Writings of James Monroe, vol. 3, 208-209.

25. "An Act Further Declaring What Shall Be Deemed Unlawful Meetings of Slaves," January 24, 1804, Virginia Statutes at Large, vol. 3, 108. See also McColley, Slavery in Jeffersonian Virginia, 107-111.

26. Freehling, Drift Toward Dissolution, 113-115.

27. The Statutes at Large of Virginia, vol. 3, 251-253.

28. James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, 1801, in Stanislaus Hamilton, ed., The Writings of James Monroe, vol. 3, 208-209, 232.

29. Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 1805, quoted in Phillip Slaughter, The Virginian History of African Colonization (Richmond, 1855), 1-4.

30. Egerton, Gabriel's Rebellion, 147-178.

31. Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia,

32. St. George Tucker, "Queried Relating to Slavery in Massachusetts," in Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1877, vol. 3,

33. James Madison, "Answers to Questions Concerning Slavery," c. 1823, in Gaillard Hunt, ed., Writings of Madison, vol. 9, 134.

34. T. Stephen Whitman, The Price of Freedom: Slavery and Manumission in Baltimore and Early National Maryland (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1997).

35. John Hope Franklin, The Free Negro in North Carolina, 1790-1860 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1943), 41-45.

36. Mark D. Kaplanoff, "Making the South Solid: Politics and the Structure of Society in South Carolina, 1790-1815 (PhD. Dissertation, Cambridge University, 1979), 50-75; Henry William DeSaussure to John Rutledge Jr, Feb 17, 1802 and July 12 1803, John Rutledge, Jr. Papers, Southern Historical Collection, UNC-Chapel Hill (SHC).

37. Message of Governor John Drayton, November 25, 1800, Governor's Messages, 1795-1805, South Carolina Department of Archives and History (SCDAH), Columbia, SC.

38. Howard A. Ohline, "Georgetown, South Carolina: Racial Anxieties and Militant Behavior, 1802," South Carolina Historical Magazine 73 (July 1972): 130-140.

39. Message of Governor John Drayton to SC Senate, December 3, 1802, Governor's Messages, 1795-1805, SCDAH; Statement of Governor Drayton, South Carolina, c. 1802, Daniel Parker Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

40. Grand Jury Presentments, 1802, Edgefield District, Legal System, South Carolina Department of Archives and History (SCDAH), Columbia, SC; Patrick S. Brady, "The Slave Trade and Sectionalism in South Carolina, 1787-1808," South Carolina Historical Magazine 38 (November 1972): 601-620.

41. For a stimulating recent perspective on South Carolina's reopening of the slave trade, see Jed Handelsman Shugerman, "The Louisiana Purchase and South Carolina's Reopening of the Slave Trade in 1803," Journal of the Early Republic 22 (Summer 2002): 263-290.

42. Message of Governor Paul Hamilton, November 25, 1805, Governor's Messages, SCDAH; see also Charleston Courier, December 1, 1806 for Governor Charles Pinckney's plea to the legislature to close the trade.

43. "Diary of Edward Hooker, 1805-1808," in American Historical Association Annual Report, vol. 1, (1896), 881-885.

44. Jacob Read to Charles Pinckney, 18 June, 1807, Charles Pinckney Papers, SCL.
45. Annals of Congress, Dec 12, 1811, col.. 480.
46. See Eugene D. Genovese, The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Society and Economy of the Slave South (New York: Pantheon, 1965), The World The Slaveholders' Made: Two Essays in Interpretation (New York: Pantheon, 1969), Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made (New York: Pantheon, 1974), with Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983). For assessments, placing paternalism in historiographical context, see Mark M. Smith, Debating Slavery: Economy and Society in the Antebellum South (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Peter Kolchin, American Slavery, 1619-1877 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993); and Peter J. Parish, Slavery: History and Historians (New York; Harper and Row, 1989).
47. Undated letter of William Moultrie, c. 1800, Moultrie Papers, SCL.
48. Jeffrey Robert Young, Domesticating Slavery: The Master Class in Georgia and South Carolina, 1670-1837 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999),
49. Ibid.,
50. Stephanie McCurry, "The Two Faces of Republicanism: Gender and Proslavery Politics in Antebellum South Carolina," Journal of American History 78 (March, 1992):1245-1264.
51. For an early conceptualization of paternalism, see George M. Fredrickson, The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914 (New York, 1971),
52. William Johnson, Nugae Georgicae: An Essay Delivered to the Literary and Philosophical Society of Charleston, South Carolina, October 14, 1815 (Chaleston: J. Hoff, 1815), 34-37.
53. Ibid.
54. "Speech of Freeman Walker of Georgia, January 19, 1820," Annals of Congress, 16th Congress, 1st Session, 1819-1820, 163-164.
55. "Speech of Nathaniel Macon of North Carolina, January 20, 1820," Annals of Congress, 16th Congress, 1st Session, 1819-1820, col. 226.

56. "Speech of Richard Johnson of Kentucky, February 1, 1820," Annals of Congress 16th Congress, 1st Session 1819-1820, col 350.

57. "Speech of Freeman Walker of Georgia, January 19, 1820," Annals of Congress, 16th Congress, 1st Session, 1819-1820, col. 174; "Speech of Richard Johnson of Kentucky, February 1, 1820," Annals of Congress 16th Congress, 1st Session 1819-1820, col. 347.

58."Speech of William Smith of South Carolina, January 26, 1820," Annals of Congress, 16th Congress, 1st Session, 1819-1820, col. 259-275, especially 268-269.

59.A provocative recent inquiry into the much-studied Vesey insurrection scare is Michael P. Johnson, "Denmark Vesey and His Co-Conspirators, Part I " William and Mary Quarterly 58 (October 2001): 915-976.

60. "Memorial of the Citizens of Charleston to the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of South Carolina, 1822," in the "Slave Conspiracies and Crime" section of U. B. Phillips, ed., Plantation and Frontier Documents (Cleveland: A. H. Clark Co., 1909), vol. II, 103-116.

61. Richard Furman, Exposition of the Views of the Baptists relavtive to the Colored Population of the United States in A Communication to the Governor of South Carolina (Charleston, SC: A. E. Miller, 1823).

62. Charles Fenton Mercer to John Hartwell Cocke, April 19, 1818, John Hartwell Cocke Papers, Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

63. John Taylor, Arator; Being a Series of Agricultural Essays, Practical and Political: in Sixty-four Numbers, sixth edition (Petersbug, VA: 1818), 48. On Taylor, see Robert Shalhope, John Taylor of Caroline: Pastoral Republican (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1980).

64. Robert Staudenraus, The African Colonization Movement, 1816-1865 (New York :Columbia University Press, 1961), 23-35.

65. Robert G. Harper, A Letter from Gen. Harper, of Maryland, to Elias B. Caldwell, Esq., Secretary of the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Colour, in the United States, with thier own consent (Baltimore, 1818).

66. Staudenraus, The African Colonization Movement, 70-74.

67. For an excellent discussion of the colonization movement in the upper South, see Freehling, Road to Disunion, 121-210; for a perceptive examination of the issue focuses on Virginia, Alison G. Freehling, Drift toward Dissolution, especially 82-288. Despite the alleged

impracticality of colonization, consideration of gradual emancipation accompanied by colonization continued in fits and starts well into the Jacksonian period, and the idea of colonizing free blacks, even in the absence of any accompanying program of emancipation, gaining considerable support among the upper South's erstwhile defenders of slavery during the same period.

68. Smith and C. C. Pinckney both subscribed to the ACS in 1819. Pinckney recanted his endorsement shortly after the Missouri debates as the mood toward the ACS in Charleston soured quickly. Staudenraus, The African Colonization Movement, 71-75.

69. Ruth Scarborough, The Opposition to Slavery in Georgia Prior to 1860 (New York: Negro Universities Press, reprint ed., 1968), 192-206. Staudenraus, The African Colonization Movement, 53-56, 74-77.

70. Acts of Georgia, 1827, 194-203.

71. For broader introductions to the concept of diffusion, see Freehling, Road to Disunion, 150-157; McColley, Slavery in Jeffersonian Virginia, 173-175; and McCoy, The Last of the Fathers, 265-274.

72. Annals of Congress, 5th Congress, 2nd Session, 1797-1799, col. 1310.

73. Ibid., Col. 1309-1312.

74. Everett S. Brown, ed., "Documents: The Senate Debate on the Breckinridge Bill for the Government of Louisiana, 1804," American Historical Review 22 (January 1917): 340-364. The Breckinridge quotations can be found on pages 354 and 345.

75. Thomas Jefferson to John Holmes, April 22, 1820, in Paul Leicester Ford, ed., The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, vol. 10 (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1899), 157-158.

76. James Madison to James Monroe, February 23, 1820, and James Madison to Marquie De Lafayette, November 25, 1820, in Gaillard Hunt, ed., The Writings of James Madison, vol. 9 (G. P. Putnam's and Sons, 1910), 23-26 and 35-41. Once the Congressional restriction of 1808 effectively limited the size of the slave population, Madison maintained that the expansion of slavery into new areas, and hence diffusion, or "the interior dispersion of slaves," emerged as the better policy for ameliorating and weakening slavery. For an overview of Madison's views on diffusion, see Drew R. McCoy, The Last of the Fathers: James Madison and the Republican Legacy (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 265-276.

77. Drew R. McCoy, The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 196-208.

78. The puzzle for historians remains that of determining whether champions of diffusion were short-sighted, disingenuous, or some combination of the two, when they maintained that allowing slavery to expand would weaken the institution's grip on southern society. Doubtless some advocates of diffusion were disingenuous, or more charitably, adept at fashioning a political argument whose logic they may have themselves doubted. Yet at least some advocates of diffusion, including Jefferson and Madison, gave every indication of believing that a policy of diffusion would in fact, over the long term, persuade white southerners of the practicality as well as the desirability of a general emancipation. Arguably diffusionists of this stripe simply underestimated the sweeping impact of the cotton boom on the lower South, the seemingly insatiable appetite for the slaves that boom spawned among white farmers, the strength and reproductive capacity of slave families, and the astuteness of masters in encouraging family increase. Still, even the best-intentioned diffusionists knew that whatever its overall impact, the expansion of slavery over a larger space left upper South slaveholders in a better position for continued profits from an active internal slave trade and a labor force whose size and flexibility better suited their emerging needs.

79. On the concept of "disowning slavery" and how the process worked during gradual emancipation in New England, see Joanne Pope Melish, Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and Race in New England, 1780-1860 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

80. "Speech of Freeman Walker of Georgia, January 19, 1820," Annals of Congress, 16th Congress, 1st Session, 1819-1820, col. 173-175.

81. Woodville Republican, August 4, 11, and 18, 1827. For an overview of colonization activity in Mississippi, see Charles Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi (New York: D. Appleton, 1933), 203-238. Key members of the Natchez elite remained confident that free blacks could be removed without setting the region on a slippery slope toward abolition. Dr. Jon Ker, a prominent Natchez physician and planter and a key supporter of colonization, privately observed that "all men of sound judgment and sober reflection" agreed that "as to slaves, neither the Society nor our Government can in the remotest degree meddle with them."

82. The African Repository, vol. 3, 370; Scarborough, The Opposition to Slavery in Georgia Prior to 1860, 199-205.

83. James Birney to Ralph Gurley, December 1832, in the Letters of James G. Birney, vol. 1, 20-21.

84. Raleigh Register, June 11 and 18, 1819, and May 6 and 20, July 1, 1825. For an overview of the colonization movement in North Carolina, see John Hope Franklin, The Free Negro in North Carolina, 1790-1860 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1943), 199-210.

85. William Gaston to Charles Fenton Mercer, 12 January, 1828, William Gaston Papers, SHC..

86. Jesse Burton Harrison, "Abolition Question," American Quarterly Review (December 1832): 1-48. For biographical information on Harrison, see Michael O'Brien, All Clever Men, Who Make Their Way: Critical Discourse in the Old South (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press), 55-57.

87. Such interest in colonization, however, flourished along side intense opposition to the movement, especially from Southside planters.

88. Thomas Dew, "Abolition of Negro Slavery," American Quarterly Review 12 (1832): 189-265. A few months later, the essay was reprinted in pamphlet form as Review of the Debate in the Virginia Legislature of 1831 and 1832 (Richmond: T.H. White, 1832). A modern print of the original essay can be found in Drew G. Faust, The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860 (Baton Rouge, 1981), 21-78.

89. James B. Sellers, Slavery in Alabama (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1950), 172-177.

90. This section draws heavily on my "Making the 'White Man's Country' White: Race and State Constitutions in the Jacksonian South," 717-737; H. E. Sterkx, The Free Negro in Antebellum Louisiana (Rutherford, NJ, 1972), 285-315; Joe Gray Taylor, Negro Slavery in Louisiana (Baton Rouge, 1963), 21-58; Garry B. Mills, The Forgotten People: Cane River's Creoles of Color (Baton Rouge, 1977), 192-217; Ira Berlin, Slaves Without Masters, 108-132.

91. Taylor, Negro Slavery in Louisiana, 41-47.

92. J. S. Johnston to Thomas Butler, March 12, 1832, Butler Family Papers, LSU.

93. Winbourne Magruder Drake, "The Framing of Mississippi's First Constitution," Journal of Mississippi History 29 (April, 1956): 79-110; Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi, 162-165; Edwin A. Miles, Jacksonian Democracy in Mississippi (Chapel Hill, 1960), 41-42; Oscar B. Chamberlain, "The Evolution of State Constitutions in the Antebellum United States: Michigan, Kentucky, and Mississippi" (Ph.D., University of South Carolina, 1996), 89-123.

100. Brandon quoted in Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi, 161-162; Charles Sydnor, "The Free Negro in Mississippi," American Historical Review 32 (July, 1927): 769-788; Winbourne Magruder Drake, "The Mississippi Constitution of 1832," Journal of Southern History 23 (August, 1957): 354-370..

101. Natchez Courier, 23 August, 1833.

102.Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi, 164-171; Natchez Courier, November 15, 1833. One contemporary estimate placed the growth of the slave population between 1830 and 1837 at 74,000, a substantial portion of which entered Mississippi through the activity of slave traders. See United States Reports, 1841, 15 Peters (40):449-517, especially 481-489, and Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi, 164-170.

103.John C. Calhoun, "Further Remarks in Debate of His Fifth Resolution," in Clyde N. Wilson, ed., The Papers of John C. Calhoun, vol. 14, (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1981), 80-86, quotations taken from 85-86. Slavery undergirded republicanism so successfully, Calhoun explained, because it muted "the conflict which can take place between labor and capital," which rendered "free institutions" so "difficult" to maintain in "all wealthy and highly civilized nations" where slavery did not exist. "Every plantation is a little community with the master at its head, who concentrates in himself the united interests of labor and capital, of which his the common representative," Calhoun asserted. These "small communities aggregated," Calhoun continued, "make the State in all, whose action, labor and capital is equally represented and perfectly harmonized." But, in Calhoun's view, the abolitionist agitation which threatened slavery had "produced one happy effect at least." It had "compelled the South to look at the nature and character" of slavery and "correct many of the false impressions that even we had entertained in relation to it." "Many in the South," Calhoun continued, "once believed that it [slavery] was a moral and political evil,"but, such "folly and delusion" were "gone," Calhoun asserted, as white southerners now saw slavery "in its true light" as "the most safe and stable basis for free institutions in the world."

104.For the full exchange, see Register of Debates, 24th Congress, 2nd Session, cols. 717-724. For a perceptive overview of Rives' career, see McCoy, Last of the Fathers, 323-369.

105.Ibid.,col. 720-723.

106.See Lacy K. Ford, "Making the 'White Man's Country' White: Race and State Constitutions in the Jacksonian South," Journal of the Early Republic 19 (Winter 1999): 713-737.

107.Peter S. Onuf, "'To Declare Them A Free and Independent People': Race, Slavery and National Identity in Jefferson's Thought," Journal of the Early Republic 18 (Spring 1998): 1-46.

108.For a more detailed analysis of Calhoun's thought on slavery as the economic foundation of a white republic, see Lacy K. Ford, Jr., "Republican Ideology in a Slave Society: The Political Economy of John C. Calhoun," Journal of Southern History 54 (August, 1988): 405-424.

109. I used the term, "herrenvolk republicanism" previously in "Making the 'White

Man's Country' White: Race and State Constitutions in the Jacksonian South," 736; it is derived from George M. Fredrickson, The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914 (New York, 1971), 1-164, which applied the concept of "herrenvolk democracy" to the Old South, and Freehling, The Road to Disunion, especially 147-148, which prefers "egalitarian republicanism." For a more detailed account of the concept in one state, see Lacy K. Ford, Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

110. William Rives to John Winthrop, March 5, 1857, quoted in McCoy, Last of the Fathers, 355.

111. Rives letter to Richmond Whig, January 26, 1863, Rives Papers, LC. See also McCoy, Last of the Fathers, 352.