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**The two-ply yarn: Slave narratives and slave owner narratives
in the Antebellum South**

Cumberland, Sharon, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1994

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THE TWO-PLY YARN:
SLAVE NARRATIVES AND SLAVE OWNER NARRATIVES
IN THE ANTEBELLUM SOUTH

by

Sharon Cumberland

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York

1994

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Abstract

The Two-Ply Yarn: Slave Narratives and Slave Owner Narratives in the Antebellum South

by

Sharon Cumberland

Adviser: Professor Joan Richardson

The subject of this study is the contest between two literatures of the Antebellum South: the Slave Owner Narratives, consisting of the fiction, non-fiction, and autobiography concerned with slave holding, and Slave Narratives, written at the instigation of northern abolitionists by fugitive slaves before the Civil War, and including related prose and fiction.

In Chapter One, "Classifying: Slave Owner Narratives as a Discursive Category," I suggest the value of using slave ownership as a criterion for organizing southern literature and juxtaposing it with the African American Slave Narrative. In Chapter Two, "Justifying: Slave Songs and the Ideological Strain," I demonstrate how both genres overlap in their use of the same cultural field, slave singing and "sorrow songs," for arguing opposing points of view. In Chapter Three, "Testifying: The Rhetoric of Persuasion," I discuss the problem of believability for literatures contending at the bar of public opinion, and the strategies used in Slave Owner Narratives to persuade politically uncommitted northerners to support slavery. In Chapter Four, "Appropriating: Pastoral and Anti-Pastoral in Douglass and Jacobs," I suggest that Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs appropriated the pastoral style of the neo-classical South to indict the plantation world in the same terms used

by slave owner narrators to idealize it. In Chapter Five, "Cross-Referencing: Plantation Characters as Fields of Contention," I use an existential interpretation of both genres to show how slaves and slave owners projected fantasy images onto each other to shield themselves from an awareness of their own unacceptable behaviors and to attribute desired functions to the opposite number.

Some of the works considered in this dissertation are Mary Boykin Chesnut, A Diary from Dixie; Frederick Douglass, The Heroic Slave and the 1845 Narrative; Joseph Holt Ingraham, The Sunny South; Margaret Johnson Erwin, Like Some Green Laurel; Harriet Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl; John Pendleton Kennedy, Swallow Barn; William Gilmore Simms, Woodcraft; and George Tucker, The Valley of the Shenandoah.

Acknowledgements

This project began in the Fall of 1990, when I took courses in the Renaissance Pastoral with Professor Patrick Cullen, and the African American Slave Narrative with Professor James DeJongh. As unrelated as these subjects appeared to be, both professors had the kindness to allow me to write a single paper exploring the presence of pastoral topoi in Frederick Douglass' 1845 Narrative. That project led me to explore the pastoral elements in antebellum southern culture, which led in turn to the idea of the interrelatedness of Slave Narratives and the category of literature I refer to as Slave Owner Narratives. I am grateful to both Professors Cullen and DeJongh for many of the ideas that developed in those two fine seminars. They have also been patient and forbearing committee members, for which I thank them.

I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Joan Richardson for guiding me through this project, and for generously coping with the demands placed upon her time by my unusual schedule. Her insights and kindly suggestions made this project much better than it would otherwise have been. In addition, her assistance in the job seeking and interviewing process afforded me invaluable support at a critical stage in my career.

Also, I would like to thank the administration and faculty of the English Program for financial, intellectual, and moral support during each stage of my progress over the past four years. It was my very great good fortune to have been assigned, on my first day at the Graduate Center, to Professor Patrick Cullen for program advisement. His interest, availability, friendship, and insight have been the chief factor in my timely and successful negotiation through the stages of this program. Every graduate student

should have such a shepherd to shelter them *sub tegmine fagi* and lead them to *labor et gloria*.

My family and friends have been enthusiastic and unstinting in their support. I would like to thank my friend and fellow classmate, David A. Goldfarb, for reading sections of this dissertation and offering valuable insights. I would also like to thank my brother, John Cumberland, for his generous proofreading. His support, along with that of Susan Cumberland, Katie Cumberland, and Linda Cumberland Simpson, has meant a very great deal to me. I would like to acknowledge my parents, John and Marie Cumberland, for their unflagging confidence and generosity. And though Herbert Holt is not alive to see this particular culmination of our work together, I wish, nevertheless, to make public acknowledgement of his powerful and empowering genius.

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Introduction

"The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together: our virtues would be proud if our faults whipped them not; and our crimes would despair if they were not cherished by our own virtues."

All's Well That Ends Well, IV.iii, 83

If the words "the South" were substituted for "our life" in the quotation above, Shakespeare's words would describe the southern dilemma: good and ill mingled so intimately that the web of its history would be meaningless without full consideration of both its crimes and its virtues. Given the nature of southern faults, it is particularly difficult to consider the southern virtues in the same project, for slavery is now understood-- as it was not understood then-- to be a crime of such proportions that any mitigating consideration of virtue may be interpreted as toleration for faults which are rejected unequivocally by civilized people today. As a result, consideration of southern virtues in the Antebellum South are relegated to separate studies of southern history or literature, and are usually the work of what Fred Hobson calls "the apologists of the school of remembrance" who see "a glory of the past not always properly captured in history," as opposed to "the critics of the school of shame"-- the Southernists who stress the burden of the southern past and its search for redemption.¹

From the time the first negro slaves were brought to Virginia in 1619

¹ An exception to this isolation of southern virtues from its crimes are accounts of the Civil War: southern officers and armies appear to be suspended from the general condemnation and accorded an admiration for their skills and courage that is denied civilians-- or even themselves, as slave holders before the war.

until their emancipation in 1863, the people who bought and sold them as commodities were changed by the association. Their stories were no longer solely their own, like those of the Puritan or the indigenous American. For while the encounter between the settlers and the native Americans worked profound and irreversible changes on them both, the taint of corruption was not woven into the transaction, unjust though it seems to us now. It was a fact, however, that even in the world of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in which it was widely agreed that slavery was the fair condition of classes of people-- whether conquered armies, captives, or chattel-- the slaver still carried the taint of the unclean. It was always a dirty business, in which those who profited from it the most kept it at the greatest remove.

But in the plantation society that developed in the American South, it was impossible to keep the association at a distance. The slave owner-- whatever else he may have been-- was caught in a perpetual web of reference to his slave, as his slave, more obviously, was trapped in perpetual reference to his owner. To imagine that these two groups of people did not have shared concerns, that they did not influence each other profoundly, that they did not owe much to each other-- however acrimonious the debt-- is to ignore a most obvious fact of human association in a single cultural setting. The character of each group, both virtues and crimes, has everything to do with the web of life in which the yarn of their cultures are mingled.

Historians have been less ignorant of this fact than literary critics. Though some schools of history have marginalized the negro in the "master" or dominant narrative, the bibliography of studies written about the effect of slave owners upon their slaves, and of slaves upon their owners, in every location and in every era in which one group of people have claimed

possession over another, runs into hundreds of citations. But literary history has been slow to acknowledge the intermingling of these two narrative "yarns" into a single web of influence, in spite of the fact that in the political crucible of the Antebellum South both slaves and owners forged narrative traditions that depended upon each other in concrete and measurable ways.

The two-ply yarn-- a thread consisting of two separate strands twisted together--is a particularly accurate trope for conveying the complexity of a literary tradition arising from the shared culture of the slaves and their owners. It describes the distinctiveness of each group-- the differences of race, culture, and history-- which existed simultaneously with the mutuality of their shared culture, a culture that developed over the two and a half centuries that slaves and owners lived together in the Antebellum South. The way in which the slaves and their owners remained profoundly separate from each other while intensely engaged in the plantation culture is reflected in that dimension of the term "yarn" which means an adventure story. This dissertation will examine the adventures-- in the original sense of venturing onto a dangerous, risky enterprise-- of both slave and slave owners as they tell their own stories. The term "yarn" arose from the the nautical tradition of spinning out stories to occupy time while spinning hemp for the ship's rigging. That it conjures up images of sailing ships-- the device of slavery from Jonah to the Middle Passage-- is as appropriate as the fact that it also implies a tall tale, sometimes outlandish or untrue-- a common accusation made by their enemies against the stories of both the slaves and their owners.

The purpose of this dissertation is to develop a critical method to evaluate and then analyze the relationship between the African American Slave Narrative and the Slave Owner Narrative. Although the African

American Slave Narrative has been recognized and studied as an historical and literary entity, the "Slave Owner Narrative" is a category of my own, which I perceive to consist of literary types that have gone by an array of other names: Plantation novels, Antebellum Southern Romance, Domestic Novels of the Old South, Cavalier Romance, Planters' diaries, Pro-slavery novels, poetry and tracts, Southern Regional Writing, and even-- in a new construction-- Romance of the Great Divide.²

It is my purpose to consider these various categories as a single unit bound by the discourse of slave holding. I believe that when the Slave Owner Narrative is constructed in this way and juxtaposed with the African American Slave Narrative, that both genres will be seen as "literatures of reference," a concept borrowed from psychology. As "behavior of reference" is that emotional state where action is not taken except in response or reference to the anticipated reaction of another, so "literature of reference" is that text in any form which is written in reference or response to another, either to attack, refute or defend. In the American South, from the letters of William Byrd of Westover in 1726 to the Post-Reconstruction literature of Thomas Nelson Page, southerners have been attempting to describe and justify the ownership of slaves to curious and-- as time progressed-- increasingly hostile outsiders. This southern defensiveness, what Hobson calls "the southern rage to explain," has been traced by scholars through the Southern Renaissance to

² See , for example, Jan Bakker, Pastoral in Antebellum Southern Romance; Damron and Mathews, No Fairer Land: Studies in Southern Literature Before 1900; Elizabeth Moss, Domestic Novelists in the Old South; Louis P. Simpson, The Dispossessed Garden: Pastoral and History in Southern Literature; William R. Taylor, Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American Character. The term "Romance of the Great Divide" was privately coined by Sacvan Bercovitch and used publicly at the 1993 MLA conference by Lawrence Buell in his discussion of antebellum literature which uses the North-South division as a marriage plot device.

the present. There has not been, however, a project which traces the origins of the literature back to originating historical events and relates southern defensiveness to the discourse of the African American slave.³ Many studies have been conducted that trace southern defensiveness to the attacks of northern abolitionists, particularly William Lloyd Garrison and Harriet Beecher Stowe, or which relate abolitionism to the African American slave experience. But a comparison of African American Slave Narratives to Slave Owner Narratives would require that pro-slavery literature be seen in a new way, as a unified type of discourse. There would then be two genres which purport to describe the same phenomena in the same place and time, using many of the same strategies, and yet arriving at very different conclusions. Once formulated, the project of comparing these two genres is undertaken with the aim of offering a fresh understanding of both African-American and Southern literature.

I. The State of Scholarship

In this last decade of the twentieth century, the African American Slave Narrative is emerging from its marginalization to become an empowered literature, setting the agenda for future cultural studies and forging new paradigms for American literature. The Slave Owner Narrative, on the other hand, has been a discredited literature almost since it was

³ Louis P. Simpson, in The Dispossessed Garden, describes the southern effort to formulate a pastoral myth to embrace slavery as a "garden of chattel" in the same way that New England framed their mission as a "garden of the covenant". The historical forces that undermined this effort left the South in a "culture of alienation"-- the fertile ground of loss and isolation that resulted in the Southern Renaissance. Though he clearly attributes southern defensiveness and literary weakness to slavery, Simpson does not analyze particular historical events in an effort to trace the process whereby southern literature was forced to polarize into pro-slavery positions.

written, being seen outside the South as empty of true feeling and propagandistic: the product of a culture that died of its own false mores. Yet both genres arose simultaneously from the historical pressures of their time and place, sharing the same subject matter and, in many cases, the same narrative style, rhetorical strategy, and sources of influence. As "literatures of reference" which arose in response to one another, they provoked each other to newer and more refined accusations and defenses, and generated traditions of Post-Reconstruction literature-- both in the Harlem Renaissance and the Southern Renaissance-- that continue to develop their individual strains today.

In spite of this clear relationship, there has been a strange mutual blind spot in the academy on the part of African American and southern scholars to take the literature of the opposite number into account. On the one hand, there has been a determined reluctance on the part of African Americanists to take the Slave Owner Narratives seriously (if they are taken into consideration at all), and on the other hand, an equal reluctance by southern literary historians to admit that the African American Slave Narrative is a product of their own political and historical imperatives. For example, the African Americanist Houston A. Baker, in The Journey Back, dismisses the Plantation genre as "one big strum on the old banjo," (25) while at the same time, The History of Southern Literature-- the most recent comprehensive study of the southern corpus-- devotes only one paragraph to the African American Slave Narrative in all its six hundred pages.⁴ Several reasons can be advanced to explain the surprising chasm between these interconnected

⁴ Louis D. Rubin, Jr., Blyden Jackson, Rayburn S. Moore, Lewis P. Simpson, Thomas Daniel Young, eds. The History of Southern Literature (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1985) 86.

genres.

First, it may be seen as "politically incorrect" to reclaim the literature of the Slave Owners, an oppressor class. While disciplines such as sociology and history have taken a traditionally detached stance toward their subject matter, literary criticism requires an espousal of material by the critic, due in part to the postmodernist idea of the impossibility of objectivity. Espousing one's material creates an obvious problem for the critic of "politically incorrect" literature: that of appearing to approve of a political and social point of view which can be deemed racist, sexist, homophobic, anti-labor, or any number of reactionary positions associated with status quo literatures of the past.

Secondly, there has been a tacit agreement among critics, even southern critics who are disposed to be more sympathetic, that a culture capable of enslaving other human beings is not capable of producing worthwhile literature-- certainly nothing that warrants analysis beyond literature as documentary evidence. It is southern critics, in fact, who attribute the failure of plantation literature to the institution of slavery. Louis P. Simpson, for example, in "The Mind of the Antebellum South," states that "even the most favorable evaluation of the intellect of the mid-nineteenth century South cannot obviate the patent truth that it failed to fulfill the promise of thought and letters exemplified by the Jeffersonian generation... fundamentally owing to the complicated connection between the power of mind and the institution of chattel slavery." (History of Southern Literature, 165) Simpson believes that the increasingly conservative society that defended its "peculiar institution" silenced innovation of all sorts, in science and technology as well as in the arts. southern writing of this period became a literature with a party line, lacking the quality of authenticity or originality

that has been traditionally associated with work of lasting value. Given New Critical and modernist assumptions that great critics study great authors and great books, there has been a natural reluctance to devote attention to a field which has been widely understood to be qualitatively deficient. As the canon is re-evaluated under the pressure of deconstructive forces, however, scholars are at liberty to reconsider neglected texts which may yield valuable insights into previously marginalized fields.

A third reason that African Americanists and Southernists have not focused on the interrelatedness of their subjects is that, until very recently, African American literary theory has distanced itself from involvement with white culture and literature, a phenomenon common to the disciplines of history and political science. In a recent article in The Journal of Southern History, Jimmie Lewis Franklin summarizes the position of African Americanists who resist the idea of "cultural syncretism" between white and black cultures: "African American theory that stresses the uniqueness of black culture or the existence of a special worldview has a close link to the ideas of self-determination and nationhood. Cultural syncretism, shared experience, and pluralism does not excite those who see self-determination as a driving force in African-American history" (8). In this view, the shared experience of oppression by African Americans has forged nationalist and Pan-African beliefs which are manifested in distinctly African American cultural expressions. In literature this idea can be seen in the studies of the broader field of African American Slave Narratives, which include 18th century forms as well as the narratives of surviving slaves gathered by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s. Theory has been focused on two main purposes: to discover the underlying structure and prosody of the form and to

discover paradigms for analyzing the unique African American voice as apart from the white or European American voice. There is a concerted effort to rediscover the African roots underlying themes and figures which may have been attributed to white influence. Consequently, projects such as this one, suggesting that Slave Narratives and Slave Owner Narratives form a two-ply yarn that transfers influence at every point of contact, might be seen to undermine the ongoing discovery of the distinctive African American voice.

In my view, the distinctiveness of the African American voice is not compromised by an understanding of what Franklin calls the cultural syncretism between black and white southerners. There is undeniable evidence that in the process of telling their stories-- as autobiographies, fiction, journalistic accounts and diaries-- both slaves and slave owners borrow material from each other, share sources, imitate narrative strategies and employ the same rhetorical techniques for similar purposes of persuasion. These exchanges create the two-ply yarn of the plantation culture without necessarily merging the distinctiveness of each of its strands. In this project I will attempt to unravel these intertwined strands to demonstrate the close family relationship between them. Though different in originating culture-- differences which contribute the distinctive qualities of each genre-- the Slave Narratives and the Slave Owner Narratives are mutually referent and should be seen together to be seen completely.

An early study, Alan Henry Rose's Demonic Vision: Racial Fantasy and Southern Fiction (1976), as well as a few studies which have emerged since 1992, indicate that scholars are beginning to search for the interrelatedness of African American culture and previously dominant literatures. Toni Morrison, in Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination

(1992) explores the function of African difference as a formative power in the creation of American identity and its manifestation in works by Willa Cather, Samuel Clemens, Edgar Allan Poe, and Ernest Hemingway. Shelley Fisher Fishkin, in Was Huck Black: Mark Twain and African American Voices (1993) uses a source study of Huckleberry Finn to demonstrate the presence of African American influence on one of the unassailable classics of canonical American literature. The most ambitious effort to date, Eric Sundquist's To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature (1993) examines a broad spectrum of 19th century works by Frederick Douglass, Charles Chesnut, W.E.B. DuBois, Melville and Twain in an effort to readjust the 19th century American canon to works that deal with race. These studies create a welcome environment for the present project, which intends to go even further in mapping the mutuality of sources and influence between African American Slave Narratives and the group of works I construct as the Slave Owner Narratives.

To date, there have been no studies of the kind I propose, which compare the Slave Narratives with the literature of the master class in the nineteenth century South, though some work has been done on the influence of the South on black writers, such as Ladell Payne's Black Novelists and the Southern Literary Tradition (1981) and Floyd C. Watkins' The Death of Art: Black and White in the Recent Southern Novel (1970). There have been, however, many studies done on related topics: Plantation Literature, Southern Culture, Slave Narratives, and major literary figures such as William Gilmore Simms and Frederick Douglass. It is typical, however, that major studies of southern literature of the period, such as C. Hugh Holman's The Roots of Southern Writing (1972), The Dispossessed

Garden: Pastoral and History in Southern Literature (1975) and No Fairer Land: Studies in Southern Literature Before 1900 (1986) make no mention of the African American Slave Narrative. The following survey of current scholarship will demonstrate the extent to which these two genres, which developed together around the common crisis of slavery, have developed apart from each other in the academy.

Recent scholarship on the African American Slave Narrative has taken three directions: the discovery, editing and publication of unpublished narratives; the development of theory that incorporates the published narratives into the African American canon; and the literary criticism of the texts. Especially significant is the reclamation of important narratives such as Harriet Jacobs' Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (Yellin, 1987). The theoretical work of Houston A. Baker, Henry Louis Gates, Robert B. Steptoe, and John Edgar Wideman have done much to establish the presence of buried metaphorical systems in the Slave Narratives which cannot be attributed to American influences. An understanding of the architecture and rhetorical design of the narratives has been developed through many efforts of literary criticism, some of the most relevant to this project gathered in the anthology The Slave's Narrative (Davis & Gates, 1985).

Scholarship on 19th Century southern culture and literature has enjoyed a recent upsurge with the publication of such analytical works as Fred Hobson's Tell About the South: The Southern Rage to Explain (1991) along with newly gathered source material such as The Cause of the South: Selections from DeBow's Review, 1846-1867 (1992). Published studies which take the Plantation genre as a primary subject are rare; in addition to Louis P. Simpson's The Dispossessed Garden is Jan Bakker's Pastoral in Antebellum

Southern Romance (1989) and some historical texts which use Plantation novels as source material, such as William R. Taylor's Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character (1961). Other historical texts which help to define the field of southern culture are the works of Drew Gilpin Faust: A Sacred Circle: The Dilemma of the Intellectual in the Old South, 1840-1860 (1977) and an anthology, The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Old South, 1830-1860 (1981). Much more work has been done by historians in this period than by literary critics, and certain classic historical texts have a direct bearing on understanding the Plantation culture: Kenneth Stampp, The Peculiar Institution (1956); Eugene Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll (1972); David Brion Davis, The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution (1975); Robin Blackburn, The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery 1776-1848 (1988); and William Freehling, The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854 (1990).⁵

II. The Significance of an Historical Frame

The use of history in a project of this nature is essential since both the African American Slave Narrative and the Slave Owner Narrative are genres which would not have existed outside of the political imperatives that formed them. This is most clearly seen in the Fugitive Slave Narratives written before the Civil War by slaves escaping to the North. They were persuaded or assisted by abolitionists to record their accounts of slavery for the benefit of a northern audience insufficiently familiar with conditions in the South. These testimonies of ex-slaves were used to garner support for anti-slavery legislation and, ultimately, motivation for support of the Union

⁵ See appendix for survey of unpublished sources on this subject.

in the Civil War.

The Slave Owner Narratives were necessitated by two accusing forces which precipitated southern defenses: the abolitionists of both North and South, and the slaves, who had the power to account for themselves and cast guilt on their former owners. It was far more common for slave narrators such as Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, or Solomon Northup to target their owners by name and address than for a narrator like Harriet Jacobs to use an alias. And though slave owners in the South constituted fewer than six percent of the population, and those who owned large numbers of slaves fewer than one per cent, the whole region was tied into the slave economy. As described by outside observers from Alexis deTocqueville to Frederick Law Olmsted, the slave economy was the source of regional stagnation and general impoverishment among those who did not benefit directly from the sale of cotton. Consequently there was a need for the slave owner to defend his section, source of income, and style of living.⁶

The Slave Owner Narratives took three forms, accommodating the strict code of honor that governed not only the behavior of the gentry but the attitude of the section to its slave and northern critics: the first form was a literary account in novels and stories of "sojourns in the sunny South", usually narrated by visiting outsiders who are amazed and delighted to discover that the patriarchs are genteel and generous and that the slaves are happy and loyal-- better off, it is usually suggested, than the wage slaves in the

⁶ Not all historians are in agreement on this point. Kenneth Stampp in The Peculiar Institution sums up the opposing point of view by claiming "that slavery [did not] fail as a practical labor system. In that narrow sense it was a success, and it was still flourishing as late as 1860." But he adds: "In terms of its broad social consequences for the South as a whole, however, slavery must be judged a failure." It was these social consequences that were most visible to outsiders like deToqueville and Olmstead (6).

industrial North. The slave owners could not address the accusations of fugitive slaves directly because such discourse would engage the honorable southerner in a sordid contest for veracity with his own chattel. Therefore the Slave Owner Narratives used indirect fictional responses to the Fugitive Slave Narratives.

The second form of Slave Owner Narrative, however, was the direct, and often fiery, response to abolitionists, whether misguided southerners or interfering Yankees. These took the form of orations, political tracts, essay collections, and books, often addressing the political and economic conditions in the South in highly technical terms, or explaining why it was impossible for both economic and moral reasons to emancipate the slaves.

The third form of Slave Owner Narrative is the private journal or letter, which offers the only autobiographical response to African American Slave Narratives. Though written, in some cases, with an eye on history and in others with perfect spontaneity, these accounts offer an antidote to the carefully constructed public forms the slave owners used to defend and describe themselves.

Another reason for using an historical frame in this project is that the authors of the Slave Narratives and the Slave Owner Narratives considered their works to be historical documents-- messages to the future about the justice of their cause and the injustice of the opposing forces. The narratives functioned in their own times as fields of contention over the status of slavery in history, each group marshalling evidence of the criminality or acceptability of slavery in ancient and Biblical times. David Walker, in his Appeal of 1829, represented slavery as "*that curse to nations, which has spread terror and devastation through so many nations of antiquity*"(3).

James Henry Hammond, Governor of South Carolina and owner a ten-thousand acre plantation with 147 slaves, wrote in 1845 to an English abolitionist that slavery was not a source of weakness to the nation that held them: "It did not weaken Rome, nor Athens, nor Sparta, though their slaves were comparatively far more numerous than ours, of the same color for the most part with themselves, and large numbers of them familiar with the use of arms" (Faust, 178). History was invoked not only as precedent by the slave owners and as threat by the slaves, but was the source of intense interest and anxiety as future judgement or justification. In his testimonial letter to Frederick Douglass in the 1845 Narrative, Wendell Phillips applauds the emergence of a slave's voice with the anecdote of the lion: "You remember the old fable of 'The Man and the Lion,' where the lion complained that he should not be so misrepresented 'when lions wrote history.' I am glad the time has come when the 'lions write history.' We have been left long enough to gather the character of slavery from the involuntary evidence of the masters" (Gates, 252). Southern planters had cause to fear the voice of the "lions" and their abolitionist supporters. Though written in the postbellum period, when the southern cause was lost and history was being re-written by northern historians, Thomas Nelson Page expressed the historical dilemma that went hand in hand with slave ownership before the war and the slave legacy afterward: "Contemporary history is being recorded by writers organically disabled to comprehend the action of the South. It rests with the South whether she shall go down to posterity as they have pictured her-- the breeder of tyrants, the defender of slavery, the fomenter of treason... We must either leave our history to be written by those who do not understand it, or we must write it ourselves".⁷

Given the self-awareness of these texts as historical documents, and of their status as fields of contention for the right to claim past and future history, it would be most revealing to evaluate these genres as literatures within their historical frames. All of the Slave and Slave Owner Narratives under consideration, with the exception of fiction, have been studied in the past as historical documents-- though, ironically, many have been dismissed as fictional. Historians have, at certain stages of American historiography, considered the Slave Narratives biased or compromised by their political purposes, while the Slave Owner Narratives have been generally accepted as part of the historical record-- a form of racism that has not gone unremarked by present day critics.⁸ The novels of the Slave Owner Narratives, however, have been dismissed both in literary and historical circles. Literary critics have considered the antebellum southern novel inferior to the splendid fiction written in the North during the same period by the writers of New England. Historians considered the southern novel overly invented and idealized and therefore of no use-- though there have been some fine exceptions, such as William R. Taylor's Cavalier and Yankee, which was one of the first documentary works to cull historical evidence from southern fiction.

Using an historical frame, however, does not mean that I intend to evaluate the Slave Owner Narratives and Slave Narratives as historical

⁷ Thomas Nelson Page, The Old South: Essays Social and Political (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906) 363-364.

⁸ As Davis and Gates point out in their introduction to The Slave's Narrative: "No written text is a transparent rendering of 'historical reality,' be that text composed by master or slave. The slave's narrative has *precisely* the identical 'documentary' status as does any other written account of slavery... Historians who work so painstakingly to establish verifiable records have, until recently, treated [slave narratives] either with an alarmingly irresponsible naïveté, or else with a pernicious double-standard, finding 'bias' in the slave's text and 'objectivity' in that of the master"(xi-xii).

documents in the way they have been used in the past. I see them as literary texts existing in tension with the political pressures that brought them into being. From the Second Continental Congress in 1776 to the Civil War in 1861, both slaves and slave owners were attempting to resolve the complex issues of the economic and moral effects of chattel slavery on themselves and their progeny. As economic and historical events increased the number and need for slaves, as slavery became increasingly centered in the southern region of the country, and as the invention of the cotton gin removed the hope in the South of gradual emancipation in the manner that it had occurred in the North, the narrative tasks of the slaves and slave owners shifted as well. The slaves moved from longing for restoration to Africa to the resistance against African colonization-- a transformation of identity from kidnapped African to enslaved American. The owners moved from open debate and political argument about the relative merits and liabilities of slavery to a closed "party line" which stifled debate because of a perceived need for unanimity against interfering outsiders and rebellious slaves.

These shifts in the self-perception of both slaves and slave owners can be juxtaposed with specific historical moments. The co-existence of such events indicates a sea change in the relationship between slaves, owners, and outside critics. There does seem to be a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood leads on to fortune-- "fortune" in this case being a direction that either opens or closes an array of possibilities for whole classes of people. With the perspective of hindsight, one can see this fortune at work in deep changes marked by single events that carried the slaves and the southerners-- whether slaveholders or not-- to the crisis of the Civil War. Opportunities seized or missed point to equally important literary moments in which the

entwined "yarns" of slaves and slave owners effect each other by increasingly hardened and non-negotiable positions, at the same time providing each other with their major tropes, themes, and rhetorical strategies.

III. American Historiography:

Reading for Bias Toward the Slave and Slave Owner

Using an historical frame for the analysis of Slave and Slave Owner Narratives requires particular care, however, since the instability of the historical frame and the absence of a version of American history free from cultural or political bias requires that the critic proceed with caution in the selection of accounts to inform the analysis. Nathan Irvin Huggins in Black Odyssey, refers to the process of historiographical shifting, particularly as it has undermined and marginalized the status of African Americans, as "The Deforming Mirror of Truth." His claim is that white historians have been in complicity with the white Founding Fathers to create a version of American history that separates slavery from the master narrative-- "master" in this case meaning "dominant", though it is not unrelated to the use of "master" as owner of slaves. A survey of the historiography of American literature will demonstrate the validity of this claim over the preponderance of historiographical stages prior to the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s.

The most influential historian in the nineteenth century was George Bancroft, whose life spanned the century (1800-1891) and whose project it was to create what later came to be called the "Nationalist School" of American history. In this version, the American story was given a coherent shape, ultimate events were seen to have been destined by prior events, particular

Americans were valorized as heroes, and the seeds of the "American Character" discovered in its most eminent men. Bancroft's philosophy in writing his History of the United States from the Discovery of the American Continent (I, 1834) is described in Duyckink's Cyclopaedia of American Literature as "organic:" "History, in [Bancroft's] view, is no accident or chance concurrence of incidents, but an organic growth which the actors control, and to which they are subservient. The nation became free, [Bancroft] maintains, from the necessity of the human constitution and because it deliberately willed to be free... The history of America is the history of liberty" (II, 100). In addition to this impulse toward freedom-- which must inevitably meet with success due to the nobility of its cause-- Bancroft saw the unfolding of the American project as ordained by God. Sacvan Bercovitch describes Bancroft's mythic representation of American History as a merging of the sacred and secular: "[the] underlying premise of [Bancroft's History of the United States] might be termed either a secular version of sacred history or a sacral version of human progress: Bancroft assumes that God is working behind and through history, guiding mankind step-by-step toward perfection" (174).

Slaves and slavery are indeed marginalized in this account: Bancroft is not including African Americans in his definition of mankind, in the American impulse for liberty, or, by extension, in American History. On the other hand, Bancroft was criticized by some southern historians for not recognizing sectional differences among the people of the colonies-- not a surprising omission since his purpose was to discover a unified intentionality in the American search for freedom (Link & Patrick 59).

The Nationalist School was superseded by the work and influence of William Archibald Dunning, a Professor of History at Columbia University at

the turn of the century, and the author of Essays on the Civil War and Related Topics (1897). He attracted and influenced so many graduate students to his courses in Southern history, that the new generation of historians, who espoused his sympathetic views about the South, were referred to as the "Dunning School." In this version of the American story, "almost completely accepted by about 1930" and not superceded until the 1960s, the South had been deprived of its "wealth, social stability and gracious living" by the overwhelming numbers of the Union army. Northerners subsequently received financial and political security for their southern interests and were permitted to degrade the South "under the corrupt and incompetent rule of carpetbaggers, Negroes, and a small number of scalawags." The South was finally rid of this "debauchery" in the 1870s with the end of Reconstruction. Some historians claim that "the Dunning School merely gave elaborate and expert documentation to a story already generally accepted" which saw "the preservation of white Anglo-Saxon civilization against Indians, Negroes, Orientals and the new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe" a viable theme for the America of 1875-1930 (Link & Patrick 296-298).⁹

The Dunning School with its virulent southern sympathies was finally superceded in the 1960s by historians who sought an approach more

⁹ It is ironic to note that during this period in American historiography when the romantic "Lost Cause" or "Bloody Shirt" theory of the Dunning School was in its ascendancy, the reputation of Southern literature in the literary histories of Barrett Wendell, Lewis E. Gates, Brander Matthews, and George E. Woodberry was suffering total eclipse; so much so that a whole school of southern literary apologists developed in this same period to counteract the effort of northern literary historians to eliminate southerners from American literature. See the seventeen volume Library of Southern Literature, (Atlanta, 1907-1923; Edwin A. Alderman et. al. eds), the twelve volume The South in the Building of the Nation (Richmond: Southern Historical Publication Society, 1909), and Mildred Lewis Rutherford's The South in History and Literature: A Hand-Book of Southern Authors from The Settlement at Jamestown, 1607 to Living Writers (Athens, GA, 1906).

consistent with the issues being raised by the Civil Rights movement. One such historian, David M. Potter, claimed that "there would be an increasing repudiation of 'Dunning-ism,' [in part because] the doctrine of Anglo-Saxon superiority, so respectable in the 1890s, has been relegated to the dustbin" (313). The sociological approach to American history came into prominence at this time, using new methods of statistical analysis, or "cliometrics," to establish objective evidence about cultural institutions, and giving close examination to private accounts, newspapers, and popular journals to re-create the Antebellum culture. Kenneth Stampp in The Peculiar Institution (1956) uses diaries, court cases, Slave Narratives, and the popular press to describe in minute detail the entire circumstances of the slave in the South. W.E.B. DuBois, John Hope Franklin, and James McPherson began writing history from the African American point of view and demonstrating the inherent racism of historical approaches that argued the incompetence, inferiority, or degradation of the slave.

The influence of Marxism, based upon analysis of underlying economic conditions rather than the ideology of the ruling classes, was gaining prominence in the humanities at this time. Because Marxist theory is interested in the proletariat, the African American slave-- as well as the white yeoman and poor white classes-- became central figures for analysis in American history. The most prominent members of the Marxist school, Eric Foner, Eugene Genovese, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, and David Brion Davis, have focused their efforts on demonstrating that slaves developed and preserved cultures of their own, that the different rates at which the North and South were moving toward modernization was a major cause of the Civil War, that plantation economies were not the sources of wealth and

leisure that are part of the southern cliché, and that capitalism worked social changes in the North that brought irresistible pressures to bear on the agrarian society of the South.

Nathan Irvin Huggins claims that the separation of slavery as an historical discourse apart from the master narrative prevents "new and different questions" from being asked. "Our master narrative denies [slavery] place, marginalizing both the institution and African Americans. Governed by that fact, the questions will remain the same until our national history and myth can incorporate both slavery and racism" (xxxii). Although the Marxists and the sociological historians have brought slavery into the national narrative, Huggins believes that both these schools tend to blame slavery for the ills that befell the South and the nation, displacing culpability from the whites who promoted and perpetuated it onto the African Americans: a subtle and well-argued case of "blaming the victims."

The most recent shift in American historiography is a move toward cultural history with the intention of synthesizing elements of both old and new approaches. The best example of this effort is David Hackett Fischer's Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America, the first of a five volume cultural history of the United States. His approach merges the narrative of the power elite that concerned the Nationalistic School and the reconstructed history of common folk that was the focus of the sociological and Marxist schools. Fischer describes his synthesis in this way:

[It is] about both elites and ordinary people, about individual choices and collective experiences, about exceptional events and normative patterns, about vernacular culture and high culture, about the problems of society and the problem of

state. To those ends, [cultural history] tries to keep alive the idea of *histoire totale* by employing a concept of culture as a coherent and comprehensive whole. (x)

In this approach to American history, slavery is seen in the context of the British idea of "hegemonic liberty" that dominated the American South before the revolution-- freedom associated with rank and therefore available fully to the ruling class and in diminishing proportion to the classes beneath. Africans, having no status in the English social class system, had neither liberty nor claim to liberty.

What this range of historiographical points of view suggests is the potential danger of using an historical frame for the study of literature since the interpretation of events undergoes constant revision and the critic must be aware of the underlying bias at each shift. While it is true, for instance, that African Americans have been the marginalized group in the development of the "master narrative" of American history, it is also true that the South has been marginalized by the monolithic focus on New England as the source of American identity that has characterized literary studies. A cornerstone of the American master narrative as it pertains to its own superiority is the marginalization and inferiority of the South due to its "peculiar institution."

The irony in the emerging historiography of 1994 is that the "politically correct" revisionist mode which purports to advance the African American claim to a more central role in history has the effect of reinforcing southern marginalization, thus perpetuating a branch of the old master narrative. This trend is best exemplified by the conference convened to commemorate Thomas Jefferson's 250th birthday and the volume of essays that resulted from it. Jeffersonian Legacies, edited by Peter S. Onuf, has the declared

purpose of "promot[ing] genuinely fresh thinking about Jefferson and his legacy" and attempting to seek "new perspectives on the Jefferson legacy by measuring Jefferson's life and values against major concerns of the 1990s" (vii). To this end, "the list of participants did *not* include many leading scholars with established reputations as Jefferson specialists who had already had their say..." (viii). The resulting essays on aspects of Jefferson's life, such as his religious faith, publishing history and indebtedness, reflect what has come to be called the "presentist fallacy." Douglas L. Wilson, in "Thomas Jefferson and the Character Issue" defines "presentism" as "the term that historians use for applying contemporary or otherwise inappropriate standards to the past" (62).¹⁰

Of the two essays concerning Jefferson and his slaves, nowhere is the presentist fallacy more operative than in the essay by Paul Finkleman on the question of Jefferson's failure to emancipate his slaves in his will.¹¹ Referring to Jefferson as "the intellectual godfather of the racist pseudo-science of the American school of anthropology" (186) and as "blinded by negrophobia and notions of black inferiority" (195) Finkleman systematically reads history backwards in order to fault Jefferson for not thinking with a 20th century mind. He inverts the old Nationalist School ideal of finding seeds of the American character in its eminent men by attributing the common beliefs of the eighteenth century, such as negrophobia, to Jefferson alone, and by discounting the insights of Jefferson and his circle of *philosophes* based upon

¹⁰ Another description of "presentism" can be found in Fischer's preface to Albion's Seed: "Many historians think of the past as fundamentally separate from the present-- the antiquarian solution. Others study the past as prologue to the present-- the presentists solution. [Cultural history] is organized around a third idea-- that every period of the past, when understood in its own terms, is immediate to the present, [the] "immediatist" solution..." (x).

¹¹ Paul Finkelman, "Jefferson and Slavery: 'Treason Against the Hopes of the World'".

misusages of their inquiries by later scholars, thus finding seeds of racist anthropological theories and of present racial disharmony in its eminent man.

In his effort to participate in the foregrounding of African American slave history, Finkleman reinforces southern marginalization by isolating this most famous Virginian from his own social and political history, making him appear to be acting from motives of cruelty and gain rather than the complex network of cultural forces at work in post revolutionary Virginia. Douglas L. Wilson restores some balance to this debate by observing that the key question-- "How could the man who wrote that 'All men are created equal' own slaves?"-- is better "framed in more historical terms: How did a man who was born into a slaveholding society, whose family and admired friends owned slaves, who inherited a fortune that was dependent on slaves and slave labor, decide at an early age that slavery was morally wrong and forcefully declare that it ought to be abolished?" (66)

This debate over the "Jeffersonian Legacies" highlights the difficulty of discussing southern virtues in the "mingled yarn of good and ill together" which makes up the full account of Slave Owner Narratives. There are those who, like Finkleman, will declare as racist any evaluation of southern culture which determines to accept the phenomenological presentation of slave owners within the scientific, political, and economic limitations of their own time. It also highlights the phenomenon of "backgrounding" one literature as the price to pay for "foregrounding" another-- a strategy that advantages canonical works and disadvantages marginal literatures, such as African American or southern narratives, which are forced to war with one another for place in the canon. The attempt to demote Jefferson from a canonical

Founding Father to a racist slave owner is an illustration of ongoing marginalization effected through the agency of presentism. This study will demonstrate that while slaves and slave owners were indeed warring with one other in their contending narratives, it is a war that does not carry over into the academic contest over placement in the canon. If this project is successful, it will be clear that an appreciation of the Slave Owner Narratives is essential to a full appreciation of the African American Slave Narrative, which--as the academy is coming to realize-- deserves a prominent place in the American canon.

Yet the critic who uses an historical frame to consider how literary genres such as the Slave Narratives and the Slave Owner Narratives developed must be aware of the motivations governing each historiographical shift in "political correctness." In its most polarized forms-- the racist ideology of William Archibald Dunning or the trendy presentism of Paul Finkleman-- history ceases to be an environment in which literature occupies cultural space, and becomes mere propaganda. At its best and most balanced, however, history can offer to the literary and cultural critic a methodological tool to restore parity to the many voices that make up the field of American literature.

I do not wish to suggest, however, that history runs in a straight line, passing the ideological baton smoothly from one school to another. Hayden White, in "New Historicism: A Comment" cautions that:

...there is no such thing as a specifically historical approach to the study of history, but a variety of such approaches, at least as many as there are positions on the current ideological

spectrum; that, in fact, to embrace a historical approach to the study of anything entails or implies a distinctive philosophy of history; and that, finally one's philosophy of history is a function as much of the way one construes one's own special object of scholarly interest as it is of one's knowledge of "history" itself. (Veese, 302)

IV. Dissertation Summary

Having a "philosophy of history" would be characterized in literary studies as having a theoretical stance toward one's text. There has been a renewed interest over the past fifteen years in the relationship of history to literary text-- what Louis Montrose calls "the historicity of texts and the textuality of histories" (Greenblatt & Gunn, 410). The general rubric under which this renewed interest has fallen is "new historicism", or, in a more recent construction, "the poetics of culture" (Veese, 1; Greenblatt & Gunn, 392). This loose category of theoretical approaches, associated with the Renaissance scholars Louis Montrose and Stephen Greenblatt, and the Americanist Jane Tompkins among others, contextualizes literary works by using an historical moment to provide entry into the text. And while a significant shelf of books has been generated in the effort to analyze this approach and set it apart from earlier forms of historical criticism, its major contribution to current thought is a reinforcement of the postmodern blurring of disciplinary categories which authorizes borrowing ideas not only from history but from anthropology, sociology, philosophy, and the natural sciences.

The present study is a beneficiary of these loosened categories,

primarily in the use of historical events to contextualize the Slave Narratives and Slave Owner Narratives. But this study also participates in the general freedom to return to earlier models of literary criticism as a starting point, since I am using a literary historical approach that has been considered, in recent years, somewhat old fashioned. For in constructing a discursive category newly focused on a body of literature that has been studied under other rubrics, it is necessary to enumerate, re-categorize, and generalize for the sake of defining a "big picture." In the postmodern view, this style of categorization has been seen as a dubious activity since any selection of texts implies the exclusion of others and a consequent distortion at the heart of the discussion. While I am aware of this failing, I resort to the well known fact that no scholar is free-- or would wish to be free-- of a position in regard to her subject, and that the scholar's position is partially expressed in the selection of texts. In a study of this length, broad inclusion of texts relevant to the argument is impossible, and so I have left out entire categories-- such as a focus on the domestic fiction of southern women-- in order to avoid important but diversionary topics. I discuss these excluded topics and directions for future study in my conclusion.

In Chapter One, "Classifying: Slave Owner Narratives as a Discursive Category," I will demonstrate the value of using slave ownership as a criterion for organizing Southern literature and juxtaposing it with the African American Slave narrative. In so doing, I will focus on the historical moment of 1832, when the Virginia Legislature attempted to emancipate their slaves in the wake of Nat Turner's rebellion. The reasons for their inability to arrive at a practicable emancipation scheme, and, more importantly, their conviction that they had taken a significant step *toward*

such a scheme, which came to nothing, sheds essential light on the differences between southern writing before and after 1832, and the subsequent development of Southern literature over the balance of the century. I will describe what I consider to be three generations of Slave Owner Narratives: the first generation from 1729 to 1832, when the problem of slavery was identified and discussed openly; the second generation from 1832 to 1865, when the political issue of slavery polarized the nation in such a way that pro-slavery arguments became the rallying point in the South around which all southerners-- slave holders or not-- had to gather in order to be seen as loyal to southern rights; and the third generation from 1880-1920 when the school of nostalgic "plantation" literature developed on the basis of the romantic childhood memories of southerners too young to experience firsthand the devastating realities of either slavery or the Civil War.¹²

In Chapter Two, "Justifying: Slave Songs and the Ideological Strain," I will demonstrate how the Slave Owner Narratives and the Slave Narratives overlap in their use of the same cultural field for the purpose of arguing opposite points of view. By analyzing the interpretation of slave songs as justification for slavery, I attempt to show that the slave owners took one stance in their public fiction and another, more melancholy and realistic, in their private writing. I then discuss the slaves' own use of their "sorrow songs," to express the power of their own voices and to show how they contested the slave owners' misinterpretations of slave singing as a representation of happiness and well being.

In Chapter Three, "Testifying: The Rhetoric of Persuasion," I will discuss the problem of believability for literatures contending at the bar of

¹² The missing period, 1866 to 1880, represents the post war period in which most antebellum southern literary figures ceased to write and the new generation had not yet emerged.

public opinion. While slaves could muster testimonials from northern abolitionists as to the veracity of their stories, slave owners could not be seen in direct competition with their slaves for the support or belief of the undecided public. The code of southern honor did not permit any admission of wrong doing, nor would a slave owner directly address the accusations of a slave. As a consequence, two strategies developed to allow the slave owner to testify before the court of public opinion: a spurious "scientific" argument about the inferiority of negroes, and a literary trope-- the "necessary outsider"-- which afforded the southern voice the opportunity to address the slavery issue in a controlled way consistent with the southern code of honor. The slave narrators were not in a position to fight off the "scientific" arguments since they could not muster their own scientists or sociologists to refute them, although in the postbellum Jim Crow era, former-slave narrators make subtle use of the "necessary outsider" to turn the pro-slavery/anti-negro argument back upon itself.

In Chapter Four, "Appropriating: Pastoral and Anti-Pastoral in Douglass and Jacobs," I will suggest that Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs appropriated the pastoral style of the neo-classical South: Douglass, as he developed his prophetic voice in the fight against slavery, and Jacobs, as she created an anti-Arcadia to protect herself and her children. The relationship of Slave Narrative to the pastoral can be seen as an inversion of pastoral topoi, in which the *locus amoenas* for Douglass is the city of New Bedford to which he escapes rather than the country (plantation) of hard labor. Jacobs, in escaping from a licentious master, lives in an alternative no-place from the Arcadia of the plantation: a tiny attic that functions as an anti-Arcadia that spares her life for the time it takes to escape with her children to freedom. In

both cases, the slave narrators appropriate a white literary discourse to indict the plantation world in the terms that have been used by slaveowner narrators to idealize it.

In Chapter Five, "Cross-Referencing: Plantation Characters as Fields of Contention," I will use an existential interpretation of both genres to show how slaves and slave owners projected fantasy images and counter-images onto each other to shield themselves from an awareness of their own unacceptable behaviors and to attribute desired functions onto their opposite number. For instance, slave owner narrators tend to characterize the most prominent women in the plantation household as the Sainted Matriarch and the Mammy, while the same individuals are seen in the slave narratives as the Heroic Slave Mother (instead of the Mammy), and the Mean Mistress (instead of the Sainted Matriarch). The actual plantation mistress contains both poles of saintedness and meanness within her personality, but the slave owner narrators cannot acknowledge any unkindness on her part, and so substitute her Mean Mistress counter-image with the Mammy counter-image from the opposing race. Likewise, a slave narrator will not portray the Heroic Slave Mother as an accommodating Mammy, and so substitutes the Mean Mistress into the text of the Slave Narrative. These patterns-- Gentleman Planter/Licentious Master; Heroic Slave/Uncle; Scion/Vitiated Man; Belle/Spoiled Child; Tragic Mulatto/Concubine-- can be seen throughout both genres, and illustrate the tightly entwined strains of influence in the slave and slave owners' yarns about themselves and their cultures.

I will conclude with a consideration of how this refocus of the African American Slave Narrative and of Southern literature as the Slave Owner Narrative will enable new studies about their overlapping cultural fields and

the influence these exerted on their story telling. This will amount to an enumeration of all the areas I was unable to consider in this project, but which might bear fruitful consideration in later studies. As both genres are discovered and re-discovered by ensuing generations of scholars, it will become more important to understand why they have been considered marginal, and what claim they have to less marginalized participation in the American canon. Jane Tompkins in Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of Fiction 1790-1860 (1985), uses a reconsideration of Hawthorne to demonstrate that the idea of a "classic" is illusory. What appears to be the artifact of a dominant aesthetic is, she says, a text which changes for each generation of readers:

For classic texts, while they may or may not have originally been written by geniuses, have certainly been written or rewritten by the generations of professors and critics who make their living by them... Rather than being the repository of eternal truths, they embody the changing interests and beliefs of those people whose place in the cultural hierarchy empowers them to decide which works deserve the name of classic and which do not. (37)

Tompkins claims for herself a position in the cultural hierarchy which will enable her to rewrite the canon-- not based on an academic one-upsmanship, but based on cultural discoveries that are being made now about the need for inclusiveness in literary study. New discoveries are made in every era no matter how subjectively they are documented.

This is an important point for the project at hand, because the voices I

intend to place in the foreground are not only those of the African American slave-- an enterprise that would be acceptable to the most conservative -- but also the voices of those who enslaved them-- an enterprise that may be problematic for the most liberal. But if marginalized voices are necessary to construct the cultural network of signs which yield meaning to the text of an age, then one cannot eliminate voices because they are politically objectionable to present sensibilities. Far from intending to canonize Slave Owner Narratives, it is my intention to demonstrate that their interrelatedness with the African American Slave Narrative is a critical element in the interpretation of a literary field which merged the cultures of each race together in a "two-ply yarn." I will not focus upon the estranged or uncanny in the accepted New Historicist style, but will describe well known histories such as Nat Turner's Rebellion of 1831, and the emancipation efforts of the Virginia Legislature of 1831-1832, because it was these dramatic events that brought the deep changes which produced and formed the narratives under consideration.

Chapter One

Classifying: Slave Owner Narratives as a Discursive Category

"I say that we are no better than our judges in the North, and no worse. We are human beings of the nineteenth century and slavery has to go, of course. All that has been gained by it goes to the North and to Negroes. The slave owners, when they are good men and women, are the martyrs. I hate slavery."

Mary Boykin Chesnut,

November 28, 1861

A Diary from Dixie (164)

When Mary Chesnut wrote these words in her journal, it was already clear that the "War of Rebellion" was not going to end in ninety days, as most southerners had thought at the outset. Though the Confederate army had fought off the invasion of Virginia at the Battle of Manassas (Bull Run) in July, the Union had established an effective blockade and the realities of war were setting in. Mary Chesnut was a realist who had inside information on Confederate prospects because her husband was *aide-de-camp* to Jefferson Davis. While others were gloating over the southern victory, she worried that it "lulls us into a fool's paradise of conceit" (164). The irony of risking everything for southern nationhood so that the institution of slavery could be preserved, so that southerners-- rather than northerners-- could decide how best to eliminate an institution that was economically marginal and morally dubious, was not lost upon her. She was not alone in thinking that the slave owners were the villified martyrs in the North-South scenario--

allowing for the important proviso, however, that the slave owners "are good men and women," i.e. that they were not cruel to slaves.

These private observations would not have been made publicly by any southerner in the thirty years prior to Mary Chesnut's diary entry of 1861. The public stance, since 1831, had become unified support for the southern right to deal with its "peculiar institution" in any way it saw fit. Some of the literature that I am proposing to categorize as "Slave Owner Narratives" argues this point vehemently and in racist terms. Other versions of the literature present an idealized vision of plantation life meant to reassure outsiders that slave owners are, indeed, "good men and women," and that the condition of the African American is improved by the benefits of slavery. Reading these works from the perspective of the 1990s requires a constant mental adjustment, because if the work is at all engaging, one quite naturally suspends disbelief and is drawn into a world that operates on principles counter to those one cherishes. If the work is at all persuasive, one must hold back from it, maintaining an inner monologue that runs parallel to the text, which says: "This was their *hamartia*; this is an idealized construct; this is what the war was about." The art of the narrative, with all its persuasive rhetoric, works to undermine the resistance of the reader-- whether in 1854 or 1994-- and we can begin to appreciate why it took so long, and why it took a war, for the abolitionists' point of view to override the general confusion of ideas and the average northerner's reluctance to think ill of fellow Americans. One need only read the Lincoln-Douglas debates, or to follow Lincoln's cautious handling of emancipation to realize how ambivalent the entire nation was about slavery. But however engaging the most artful Slave Owner Narratives are in their public mode, their private dimension-- the journals and personal

letters-- offer an important corrective to the public impression that the South was monolithic in its belief in slavery as a "positive good." Mary Chesnut spoke for many southerners when she said "I hate slavery."

The following discussion will consider some of the difficulties of locating the discourse of slave holding in a creative relationship with other canons, the necessity of the neologism "Slave Owner Narrative," and the characteristics of the narratives as they evolved from the earliest discussions in the eighteenth century to the post-Reconstruction nostalgia literature of the early twentieth century.

I. The importance of marginalized literature
as source material to other canons

"Literary history assumes, as part of its own justification, that the knowledge it provides about texts conduces to better understanding and appreciation of them. It would be paradoxical and, for most literary historians, dismaying if, after they had related texts to their time and place, the texts left them cold."

David Perkins, Is Literary
History Possible? (38-39)

Perkins is describing the sympathy aroused in a literary historian during the process of selecting and describing texts deemed sufficiently important to place at the center of study. The narrative literary history, according to Perkins, offers a sequence of varied texts to the reader, and "[s]ince most of the texts noticed in a literary history are thought to have considerable merit as literature, a literary historian is under an obligation to feel and express this" (39).

Perkins does not assume that the literary historian is selecting canonical works alone-- those with which it is "safe" to feel sympathy. He considers the possibility that the critic may be working with marginalized literatures, and therefore has a political purpose which embraces both the objective of expanding the canon and the objective of presenting unrecognized works that have been ignored due to flaws in the canonical criteria, rather than flaws in the work itself. The marginalized work must have "considerable merit" because it would be "paradoxical" and "dismaying" for a literary historian to work with texts that "left them cold." Sensational Designs by Jane Tompkins is a good illustration of Perkins' thesis, because she devotes part of a literary history to the productions of popular women novelists of the 19th century (Hawthorne's "damned mob of scribbling women"). "It is morally and politically objectionable, and intellectually obtuse," she states, "to have contempt for literary works that appeal to millions of people simply *because* they are popular" (xiv). Tompkins finds value in these works and presents them to the reader as unfairly excluded from the canon because of an elitist criterion. When the criterion of elitism is corrected, she believes, the works will be recognized as having literary value and will be included in the canon.

But what of a marginalized literature that is not contending for a place in the literary canon based upon literary merits? David Perkins does not imagine the situation of a literary historian who works with marginal material because it has historical importance to literature, rather than literary importance to literature. He postulates that the impulse to write literary history is located in feelings of passion; he wonders "whether literary histories are shaped by the pleasures of aggression and other emotional

gratifications" (33). If one accepts the premise that the literary historian is motivated by the aggressive joys of attacking the canon or the proprietary joys of rescuing an unfairly suppressed body of literature, no space is left for the literary historian who is *not* promoting her subject out of a passionate espousal of its hitherto unrecognized virtues. If "a literary historian is under an obligation to feel and express" her belief in the literary merits of her subject, one must automatically eliminate subjects which are valuable to literature for reasons other than the so-called "literary."

No one imagines that an historian who writes about the Holocaust, the Ku Klux Klan, or slavery, is necessarily a supporter of the historical forces that gave rise to those events or institutions. Yet Perkins articulates a widespread assumption that the *literary* historian, unlike the historian, is unable to detach herself from her subject matter and has no desire to do so. Objectivity-- which is no more available to the historian than to the literary historian-- is somehow granted in the former case and denied in the latter. While all types of historian must view the past through the distorting lens of the present, the historical past appears to have a degree of stability that is not granted the literary past. Innumerable books can be written about the causes and events of the Civil War, for instance, without prompting debate about whether or not the Civil War occurred.¹ A novel, however, while an unmistakable artifact of the past, can "not occur." in a sense, if it is not seen to have value. It will be lost-- as Moby Dick or the poems of Emily Dickinson were lost-- until some literary value is attached to it. If no value is attached to it beyond its time, it

¹ This raises the question of the neo-conservative movement which denies the historical reality of the Holocaust. The problem seems to me to be psychological rather than historical since to deny the Holocaust in the face of indisputable physical evidence amounts to political psychosis rather than historical debate.

will remain lost to literature, though not to history.

This presents a problem for the literary historian who finds value in a marginalized literature that provides important source material for later literary developments. The literary material that comprises the Slave Owner Narratives is problematic because it forms the discourse of slave holding. Yet this body of work had significant influence on literatures we consider valuable today, because of its widespread presence in its culture, its popularity over several generations in the South, and its engagement in the central issues of its day. While a good deal of it is compelling in its capacity as human accounts during trying times, and while some of it even possesses "literary value," the universal acceptance and promotion of slavery that characterizes it certainly leaves the literary historian of the late twentieth century cold.

If one does not accept the premise that any work presented to the reader as significant in literary history must have "considerable merit," then it is neither "paradoxical" nor "dismaying" to analyze such work without espousing it for the canon. One could present the counter-argument that the Slave Owner Narratives would not then be considered "literary," but would be substantially historical and documentary in nature. To make that argument one would also have to acknowledge that the category "literature" is based upon taste rather than the criteria of types, since the Slave Owner Narratives are novels, stories, poems, diaries, essays, and sermons-- forms that are considered "literary" if they happen to be written from a point of view considered acceptable by current standards.

The body of literature which has been known for its pro-slavery stance, which I construct as Slave Owner Narratives, is a sufficiently large and varied corpus to prompt an array of responses in anyone who reads widely in it.

With one or two exceptions, Slave Owner Narratives will not rival either the standard canon or emerging literatures for a place on the shelf of important books. It will, however, shift the perception of many important books in the African American and Southern Renaissance canons-- and possibly the canon of the western frontier.² For this reason alone it is worth the effort-- indeed, the effort is essential-- to study this literature in order to make progress in our understanding of all the other literatures which overlapped or grew out of it. The specific project of this dissertation is to demonstrate the relationship between the Slave Owner Narrative and the African American Slave Narratives, but this is only one consideration of the influence of a discourse which has been at the heart of what could arguably called the central American debate.

II. The topical focus of the term "Slave Owner Narrative"

Accepting the premise, then, that a literary historian can work with marginal material because it has historical importance to literature, rather than "literary" importance to literature, and that the literary historian is not required to espouse the point of view of the material in order to locate its worth, the question becomes "Why coin the term 'Slave Owner Narrative'?" Why not use the name 'pro-slavery' which is equally general and which describes the literature as well? The answer is two-fold: one historical and one literary.

The historical answer is that the literature under consideration represents many complex southern points of view regarding slavery starting

² Kay Ferguson-Ryals, in her paper "Reconstructing the Old South in the New West" (unpublished) suggests that popular post-Reconstruction novelists such as Owen Wister (whom I would characterize as being in the Slave Owner Narrative tradition) exerted traceable influence on the emerging literature of the West.

from the earliest letters of William Byrd in the 1720's through the turn of the twentieth century with the nostalgic school of "plantation writers" like Thomas Nelson Page. For the first one hundred years of this discourse, as we shall see, the Slave Owner Narratives were not pro-slavery at all. Until the watershed year of 1831 when circumstances caused the South to rally around slavery as a "positive good," slavery was a recognized evil, described in the dire terms of disease and witchcraft-- as "infection" or "incubus." Its ill effects on the initiative and morals of the slave owners were widely recognized and described in public forums. And long past the time southerners had presented a unified face of public support for slavery to the outside world, the private voices of slave owners continued to complain bitterly about the burdens of the institution, as Mary Boykin Chesnut complained in the quotation above. The term "pro-slavery," then, misrepresents the complicated attitude southerners had at every stage of the acquisition, expansion, and emancipation of slaves and slavery.

The literary reason for constructing a new term, "Slave Owner Narrative," rather than retaining labels such as "plantation literature," is that the new term places the focus squarely on the central issue-- slave holding-- rather than cultural side-issues which have the effect of marginalizing slavery as a southern concern. The term "plantation literature," for instance, points to the pastoral motif of the planter in his *locus amoenas*, with all its claims to idealized classicism as seen at Monticello or in the "Gone with the Wind" stereotype, as the central concern or import of this literature. The slave is reduced to an adornment to gracious living and a signifier of the racial superiority of the planter class. And while this image is precisely the

one slave owners wish to create, it eliminates the complexities of racial tension, guilt, and defensiveness belonging to the genre.

Other terminology is equally misleading. "Antebellum Southern Romance" not only suggests that the slave owner discourse is confined to the romantic novel-- ignoring the array of genres which participated in the discussion-- but also suggests that slave owner discourse is limited to the antebellum period, which incorrectly focuses on the nineteenth century. It was the eighteenth century discourse begun by Byrd and expanded by Jefferson which established the terms of the argument, and the post-Reconstruction literature in the Slave Owner Narrative tradition, from the nostalgia for the "old negro" in Page and Joel Chandler Harris, to the overt racism of Thomas Dixon which made the slave owner narrative tradition relevant to the racial debate of the present time.

"Domestic Novels of the Old South" and "Southern Regional Writing" are terms which locate the work geographically, while the prefix "Old" strongly implies "slavery times." But the terms "domestic" and "regional" both serve to reduce the cultural field to something almost excusable due to its limited range-- the concerns of women writers and the marginalized region of the South itself. "Regional" has always had a slightly dismissive connotation, given the centrality of the New England canon in the American Renaissance configuration. Any term which minimizes the region and, with it, the centrality of slavery to the concerns of the nation, misrepresents the Slave Owner Narratives. Likewise, the most recently proposed term, "Romance of the Great Divide," which refers to the division between North and South rather than the continental divide, focuses on the tension between cultures rather than slavery, which in this construct would find slavery less

central than the difference in cultural folkways between regions.

One of the most interesting terms encountered in southern literature is "Cavalier"-- matched with "romance" when discussing a certain type of novel, or "tradition" when describing the planter class. Although it, too, deflects the focus of the discourse away from slavery, it highlights one of the most important historical and sociological attributes of those who produced the Slave Owner Narratives. The word "Cavalier" refers to the Royalists who immigrated to Virginia in the wake of the English Civil War, and who brought with them the aristocratic values of the predominately southern counties of England from which they came. David Hackett Fischer, in Albion's Seed, describes the Cavalier migration to Virginia as the work of Sir William Berkeley, governor of the Virginia colony from 1642 to 1676, who encouraged many of the Royalist elite to found new estates in the new world. The "distressed Cavaliers" formed what came to be known as the First Families of Virginia, and established social and religious mores distinctly different from those of the Puritan migration which fled from eastern England to the American New England a generation earlier. The characteristics for which the term "Cavalier" became a sign were a heightened concept of personal honor, a *noblesse oblige* that called for open-handed generosity to both peers and subordinates, and a rejection of manual labor as ungentlemanly-- balanced by a concept of leisure which approximates the pastoral topos of *otia*. The culture brought to Virginia in the Cavalier migration established a type of English aristocracy at the top of southern society, so that membership in the "topping families" became the objective to which the large number of indentured servants and yeomen, who were part of the Cavalier migration, could aspire.

The "Cavalier Romance"-- such as William Gilmore Simms' Woodcraft (1854) or Mary Johnston's To Have and to Hold (1899)-- is a form of antebellum and postbellum fiction that focuses directly on this aristocratic ideal through setting, character development, and the sort of dashing, adventurous plot that becomes an aristocratic gentleman whose *otium* is interrupted by the unpredictable elements of the new world: indian raids, ladies in distress, ambush by "scamps" and "varmints," and-- a favorite subject-- the Revolutionary war with its marauding British army. The term "Cavalier Romance" is very efficient in conveying the aristocratic values which characterize the originating type of the southern gentleman. Given this point of view, slaves in the Cavalier Romance are represented as the necessary serving class for a nobleman, and as a source of comic relief-- slaves taking the role of the mechanicals or light people of Elizabethan drama.

Consequently, the term "Cavalier" signifies an essential formation in the Slave Owner Narratives, but the category is more descriptive of the slave owner than of slavery. And while this may seem to be a reasonable focus for a discourse which takes the slave owner as its subject, is is too one-sided for a category focused on slaveholding, which must focus on the slave as much as the slave owner. Slave owners themselves did not see slaves as their central defining characteristic, but considered themselves far more determined by their British ancestry than by their servants. The term "Cavalier", then, represents the romantic ideal of the slave owner, but is as a consequence too detached from the institution that supported the planter class to embrace what is most central in a discourse on slave holding.

If we accept the term "Slave Owner Narrative" as sufficiently focused, the question then becomes "Why 'narrative'? " Given the fact that each item

one could include in the category has its own genre-- story, poem, sermon, essay-- governed by the rules of that genre, why create a category so broad that virtually anything would fit into it as long as some sympathy for slavery is expressed? This would imply that the criteria for inclusion was not literary but political, sociological, historical, or economic. The works to be considered as "Slave Owner Narratives" were often produced for the sole purpose of influencing the politics of the day, to preserve an economic system, to describe the plantation society to outsiders, and, in the postbellum era, to justify and preserve southern honor in the face of history.

The conspicuous answer is that "narrative" is the term given to the African American slaves' accounts of their lives in slavery and their flights to freedom. Since one of my purposes is to draw an homology between this body of written productions and those written in the same setting but from the slave owners' point of view, and to demonstrate the ways in which I find these works to overlap in style, source, and influence, it serves my purpose to make the neologism sound as much like the established term as possible.

The appropriateness of the the term "narrative" goes beyond critical strategy, however. Gerald Prince observes that narratives are told in a great variety of media, from written and oral forms to music, painting, ballet, comic strips and so on. He goes on to point out that the nature of narrative is extremely flexible-- going, for example, from novel to screen, from story to ballet, from song to theatrical work, from poem to symphony-- and that therefore a narrative must be considered apart from the instability of its form: "the narrative component of a narrative text can and should be studied without reference to the medium in which it occurs" (524). This points to the primacy of discourse as the unifying strain in any given category.³ Although

a great deal of attention has been paid, and will be paid here, to the structures of both types of narrative with the intention of discovering their interrelatedness, the validity of the categories can be predicated upon the concept of narrative as a body of discourse.

This concept also supports the form-inclusiveness of the category, since Slave Owner Narratives were not produced in the uniform fashion that characterizes the Slave Narratives. As James Olney has demonstrated, the six thousand extant slave narratives are "fitted to a pre-formed mold, a mold with regular depressions here and equally regular prominences there-- virtually obligatory figures, scenes, turns of phrase, observances and authentications-- that carry over from narrative to narrative and give them as a group the species character that we designate by the phrase 'slave narrative'" (151). Olney attributes this uniformity to the "template" of questions northern abolitionists used to elicit accounts from the fugitive slaves that could be used to further the agenda of the anti-slavery cause. Slave Owners, on the other hand, did not have a unifying organization. There was a tremendous variety of opinion among southerners about slavery, from the "Fire-eaters" on the extreme right who saw slavery as a positive good, to the southern abolitionists on the extreme left who saw slavery as an insidious evil. The Slave Owner Narratives reflect this ambivalence and the tension between private expression in letters and journals and public expressions

³ Prince discusses the tension between form and content as an unresolvable issue for narratologists who wish to integrate the two organizing principles of narrative: "One principle emphasizes the primacy of event over meaning, that is, insists upon event as origin of meaning; the other stresses the primacy of meaning and its requirements, that is, insists upon event as the effect of a will to meaning. The first principle emphasizes the logical priority of story over discourse; the second emphasizes the reverse and makes story the product of discourse... Each principle functions to the exclusion of the other, but, paradoxically, both are valid and necessary to the deployment of narrative, its impact, its force" (527).

which change in intensity and defensiveness over time. The difference in the range and variety of narrative forms between the Slave Narratives and Slave Owner Narratives reflects the polarities between the slaves' cause, with its monolithic sense of justice, and the fragmented, troubled response toward slavery by a body of people who were never uniformly convinced-- as the slaves were-- of the justice, or even the terms, of their cause. The monolithic patriotism of the Confederate cause exhibited during the war should not be confused with the deep sense of ambivalence that surrounded the southern discourse on slavery, which can be more clearly understood if seen in the context of events in which the problem was confronted head-on. The last time such a confrontation took place openly in the South was in 1831, when Nat Turner's rebellion in Southampton County, Virginia prompted the Virginia Legislature to consider some of the same emancipation schemes that had eliminated slavery from the northern states.

III. Virginia Slave Owners and the Events of 1831-1832

"There is nothing more sickening to us as a native Virginian, than the idea that our noble State is forever to be saddled with the incubus of slavery."

Editorial, Norfolk and Portsmouth *Herald*,

December 9, 1831 (A. Freehling 125)

On January 25, 1832, after two months of impassioned debate in the Virginia Legislature, and of intense and widespread discussion among the citizenry and in the press, one hundred and thirty-one men cast their ballots to decide whether or not Virginia would rid herself of slavery once and for all. In 1832 slavery was still an American-- not a solely southern-- problem.⁴

All thirteen colonies had held slaves, and it had only been four years earlier, in 1827, that the last slaves were released in New York, while the last slaves were held in Connecticut until 1848 and in New Jersey until 1860.⁵ The emancipation of slaves, which began in Vermont in 1777, had spread slowly southward down through the colonies, and Virginia was geographically the next in line.

The emancipation of slaves in the northern colonies was effected by *post nati* ordinances-- the declaration that individuals born after a certain date were free. Called "gradual emancipation" because slaves were thus trickled slowly into the general population as they achieved their twenty-first or twenty-fifth birthdays, slave owners had time to prepare for the financial and practical adjustments required by the loss of labor and assets, while the more benevolent owners were able to prepare their slaves for freedom. Although Vermont outlawed slaves in its constitution in 1777, and Massachusetts effectively eliminated slavery by judicial sanctions in *Commonwealth vs Jennison* in 1783, the balance of colonies passed gradual emancipation ordinances in the last two decades of the eighteenth century: Pennsylvania in 1780; Connecticut in 1784; Rhode Island in 1784; New York in 1799 and 1817; and New Jersey in 1804.⁶ In spite of the fact that the

⁴ One indication of that there was a strong sense of slavery as an American problem is the reaction of northerners to the Nat Turner rebellion. Not only did the Union army send troops to help put the rebellion down, but the *Columbus Ohio State Journal* of October 20, 1931 agreed with a southern suggestion that it "would be right and expedient, after the National Debt shall have been paid, to apply the surplus revenue to the general emancipation of the slaves, and their removal beyond our territorial limits... We believe that the people of these United States ought no longer to shut their eyes to the dreadful evils of slavery, and the consequences which, sooner or later, must inevitably result from it" (Foner, 78).

⁵ William W. Freehling discusses the phenomenon of northern slavery at length in *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay 1776-1854* (New York: Oxford UP, 1990).

presence of tobacco and cotton had slowed the steady spread of emancipation at the Virginia border, it was not unreasonable to suppose that if the Old Dominion followed suit and freed her slaves, that the general hatred of slavery-- a feeling widespread throughout the United States-- might have led to continued emancipation in the lower states, and in the banning of slavery from the territories.

The debate in the Virginia Legislature pitted members from Virginia's lush eastern plane-- the mild and fertile Tidewater and Piedmont regions-- against members from the idyllic central Valley, lying west of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and the Trans-Allegheny, lying further west between the Allegheny mountains and the Ohio River. The fate of Virginia's slaves, and of the children of Virginia's white planters and yeomanry, rested largely upon geography rather than ideology. For the gentleman planters, whose year-round crops of tobacco and cotton depended upon slave labor, resided in the eastern plane, while the yeomanry-- independent farmers who worked smaller holdings with family and hired labor-- lived across the mountains, primarily in the Trans-Allegheny, and to a lesser extent in the Central Valley.

The issue for these Virginians was not the moral burden of negro servitude. This argument was promoted by the northern abolition movement which used it as its primary claim for the immediate emancipation of slaves in the United States. William Lloyd Garrison had founded his abolitionist newspaper, *Liberator*, a year earlier on January 1, 1831, stating that he would be "as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice" (Thomas, 3). Garrison professed concern for the souls of southern planters, claiming that "They will surely be destroyed if they do not repent"

⁶For a discussion of emancipation in the colonies, see David Brion Davis The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution 1770-1823 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1975) 23-36.

(Thomas 132). But these moral threats held no water for the people of Virginia and their legislators. Far from debating the emancipation of their slaves out of concern for the condition of their souls, the Virginians were stung by the accusation that any of their actions were in reference to northern pressures. The editor of the Richmond *Enquirer* summed up their position-- which was already implied by the absence of moralization in the emancipation debates: "We despise the sickly philanthropy which at a distance, weeps at what it does not comprehend" (Freehling, 128).

In fact, Virginians blamed northerners for imposing the "poisoned chalice" of slavery upon them in the first place (Freehling, 138). Their belief that it was the British slave trade and the receptiveness of New England merchants who opened the new continent to slavery, who cursed both the North and the South with a dependence upon negro bondage. And although the seven northern states of the original thirteen colonies had passed gradual emancipation laws to free their own slaves, they had been motivated not by moral issues but by the same economic issues that influenced the Virginia debates in the winter of 1831 and 1832.⁷ The North had been gradually shifting its economic base from the year-round cash crops which make slavery viable, to seasonal farming and industry, which make the support of slaves a financial liability. So for the northerners to take the high moral ground over their southern neighbors, given their own culpability in developing the slave presence on the continent, and their own shift of economic bases that allowed them to free themselves of the negro slave

⁷ A distinction should be made between laws that ended the slave trade and laws that ended slavery itself. The imposition of controls upon the slave trade were not always motivated by the desire to rid the colonies of slavery, but to limit the flood of slaves into the country, thus preserving the value of those already present.

without unacceptable losses, was a like a blow upon a wound-- especially since many slave owners in the North had sold their slaves down South rather than manumit them, thus preserving their own wealth and increasing the southern problem. Garrison's newly aggressive flank of the abolition movement, which imposed moral guilt on a section faced with dire financial consequences the North had already solved, forged the enduring image of the "Hypocritical Yankee."

The Virginians who met in the Legislature during the winter of 1831-1832 did not need outsiders to tell them that slavery was causing severe problems to the state. Seven years before Alexis deToqueville made his famous observations about the difference in industriousness between the Kentucky and Ohio sides of the Ohio river, George W. Summers, a Trans-Allegheny delegate, described the enervating effect of slavery on his fellow Virginians. DeTocqueville was to observe of the typical southern man that "living in idle ease, he has the tastes of idle men... Slavery therefore not only prevents the white men from making their fortunes but even diverts them from wishing to do so" (347-8). Summers, referring to his fellow Virginians, claimed that the presence of slaves:

exercised a 'pernicious influence' on whites' 'manners and character.' Slaveholders' sons, aware of their superiority to 'degraded negroes' entered the world with 'miserable notions of self-importance' and 'unbridled temper.' Slaveholders and non-slaveholders developed 'habits of idleness' and 'fondness for luxuries' and labor became "dishonorable' because associated with slaves." (Freehling, 157)

William Henry Brodnax, a moderate from the Valley, spoke without

objection from the floor when he posed this rhetorical question: "Is there one man in Virginia who does not lament that there was ever a slave in the State... Does any man doubt that slavery is an evil?" He went on to state clearly the changes that slavery had imposed upon Virginia in only two generations:

'slavery in Virginia is an evil... a mildew which has blighted... every region it has touched... Originally the first-rated state in the union,' Virginia has gradually been 'razed to the condition of a third-rate state.' No longer does she 'lead the councils and dictate the measures of the federal government.' And who can deny that slavery is 'principally' responsible for the desolation of much of Virginia's once-fertile lands and for emigration of 'many of her most valuable citizens? (Freehling, 141)

There were no people more aware of the evils and dangers of slavery than the slaveholders themselves-- an awareness that stretched back to the founding of the nation. Brodnax was conjuring the ghost of Thomas Jefferson, the most illustrious of Virginia's forefathers who "led the council and dictated the measures of the federal government." Jefferson was well known to have deep reservations about the institution of slavery for many of the the same reasons that were being cited in the Virginia Legislature of 1831-1832. He articulated these reservations forty years earlier in Notes on the State of Virginia (1787): "There must doubtless be an unhappy influence on the manners of our people produced by the existence of slavery among us.... For in a warm climate, no man will labour for himself who can make another labour for him. This is so true, that of the proprietors of slaves a very small proportion indeed are ever seen to labour." But as Jefferson continued his thought, it is

clear that his reservations had as much in common with the moral reservations of the Garrisonians of later generations than with the economic reservations of his own legislative offspring:

And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of people that these liberties are the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep for ever: that considering numbers, nature and natural means only, a revolution of the wheel of fortune, an exchange of situation is among possible events: that it may become probable by supernatural interference! The Almighty has no attribute which can take side with us in such a contest. (163)

The pernicious undermining of the desire to work was a major concern among the Virginians of 1831-1832, but Jefferson's fear of God's justice was largely appropriated by northern abolitionists.⁸ For although slavery was blamed for the depletion of soil by tobacco and cotton crops, for the retardation of Virginia's development of industry, for the freezing of assets into non-appreciable form, for the loss of white artisans who emigrated west due to slave competition, and for the almost insoluble problem of finding an emancipation plan that would not cause financial ruin for both slaveholders and taxpayers, Virginians did not believe that they were in God's bad graces

⁸ Jefferson's observation that the wheel of fortune could turn and effect an "exchange of situation" by inverting the relationship of slave to master is reflected in an anti-slavery verse stamped on "free sweets" sold by the Philadelphia Friends:

If slavery comes by color, which God gave,
Fashion may change, and you become the slave. (Thomas 119)

for their treatment of the slaves. They believed that they were morally responsible for their slaves; that in spite of the ruin and degradation the presence of slaves had brought upon the state, that it was irresponsible to free the slaves-- even with compensation-- unless the slaves were in some measure prepared for freedom, and had a place to go.

It was true that the slaves were unprepared for freedom. They had few independent skills and nowhere other than plantations to practice them. There was no place in the United States of 1832 that could accommodate Virginia's 470,000 slaves if they were suddenly-- or even gradually-- converted into freedmen. And since a universal characteristic of the Americans of 1832 was negrophobia-- a fear of free negroes living in their midst-- it was unlikely that the Virginia legislature would pass any plan for emancipation that did not include the exportation of manumitted slaves. Though the North was as negrophobic as the South, northern slave owners had years, under the *post nati* rules, to convert their slaves to capital and to remove them from their surroundings by selling them into the South. The Virginians had no place to send the slaves except further South, which was only a temporary solution, or to Liberia or other newly established colonies in Africa.

There was good reason for Virginians to fear the negroes in their midst-- both free and slave-- in the winter of 1832. Nat Turner had led his rebellion through the Tidewater county of Southampton only four months earlier. In a county where very few farmers owned more than three or four slaves, and where there was no need for overseers, the slaves and their masters worked together in the fields. As Eric Foner observes in his account of Nat Turner's rebellion, "Virginians prided themselves on the claim that

slavery there was much less harsh than on the large plantations of the deep South." Nat Turner himself had said that he "had no cause to complain" of the treatment he received from his owner." It is easy to understand," says Foner, "why Virginians would find a slave rebellion completely inexplicable" (3). On the other hand, the slave narrator Harriet Jacobs, speaking with heavy irony about her masters, finds it "Strange that they should be alarmed [by Turner's rebellion] when their slaves were so 'contented and happy'" (63).

Within forty-eight hours Turner had recruited over sixty slaves and had murdered fifty-five white people. Since these were predominately the wives and children of small farmers, Virginians had even less understanding of how slave goals could be achieved by rebellion, or how retribution could be taken on a population that seemed particularly innocent of perpetuating slavery. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, the first Union officer to command a black regiment, was also the first historian to write a balanced account of Turner's rebellion; and though tinged by northern sympathies, his description probably captures the sense of strangeness produced by the slaves' sudden shift in loyalty: "On every plantation [Turner] found recruits: those dusky slaves, so obsequious to their master the day before, so prompt to sing and dance before his northern visitors, were all swift to transform themselves into fiends of retribution now; show them sword or musket and they grasped it, though it were an heirloom of Washington himself" (Foner, 133).

There is very little evidence that the slave owners grasped the idea that slaves desired independence in terms of human freedom. Turner's rebellion only convinced the slave owners that they had been remiss in their leniency and that the natural kindness of the southerners combined with the insidious influence of Yankees encouraged slaves to rebellion. Governor John Floyd of

Virginia wrote to the Governor of South Carolina that "I am fully persuaded the spirit of insubordination which has, and still manifests itself in Virginia, had its origin among, and emanated from, the Yankee population... but most especially the Yankee pedlars and traders..[who began] telling them that all men are born free and equal...that the white people rebelled against England to obtain freedom; so have the blacks a right to do so"(Foner, 59).

The debate in the Virginian Legislature, therefore, had very little to do with human freedom, unless it involved the liberation of slave owners from the onerous duties of controlling slaves who they believed were restrained from their natural savagery by force of bondage. The *Richmond Liberator*, in response to the Emancipation Proclamation of 1862, articulated the fear that drove the Virginia Legislature of 1832 to consider emancipation as a device to rid themselves of slaves: "Released from authority, [the negro] is at once a savage; and the very ignorance which drives him to his own destruction, stimulates him to the darkest excesses. How was it in Southampton in 1831, when Nat Turner engaged in the work to which Lincoln now invites? Not satisfied with murdering the few men who fell into their power, they massacred even the babe in the cradle" (Foner 140). One of the most remarkable entreaties to the Virginia Legislature on this point was a petition from 260 women in Augusta County which appealed to the "manly reason" of the legislators to emancipate the slaves because they believed "the slaughter of our sisters and little ones... was but a partial execution of a widely projected scheme of carnage." The women were afraid that the slaves they kept in their households would rise against them, that "the bloody monster that threatens us is warmed and cherished on our own hearths" (Foner, 95). In fact, as William Freehling has observed, the "Virginia Antislavery Debate"

is a misnomer: "A better title would be the Virginia Deportation Debate. The issue was less how to liberate slaves than how to move blacks elsewhere-- most often to slavery elsewhere," since any *post nati* scheme would give slave owners opportunity to sell slaves to the few remaining slave markets (195). The Cavalier value of *noblesse oblige* might protect some slaves from harsh treatment by those owners who cherished their aristocratic heritage, but it did not go so far as to invest the bondsmen and bondswomen with human rights.

What is curious about the debates is the compromise that the Virginia legislators negotiated, divided as they were along geographical lines, between the interests of the gentleman planters residing in the eastern plane, whose need for slave labor caused them to minimize the implications of the Nat Turner rebellion, and the independent farmers across the mountains in the Central Valley and Trans-Allegheny, who feared the spread of slave insurrections and could afford to replace their slaves with hired labor. The motion for an immediate emancipation plan was defeated by seventeen votes-- which would not have happened if the planters of the eastern plane had not had a disproportionate number of ballots for their population. Even the planters, however, looked forward to the eventual shift from cash crops to wheat and corn, which would allow them to eliminate slave labor over time. As a consequence, the antislavery "Bryce Preamble" was passed, which stated that slavery was an evil, and that Virginia should at once begin to colonize free blacks and manumitted slaves to "show the world that Virginians looked forward to final abolition of slavery... and that we will go on, step by step, to that great end" (Freehling, 148). There was a strong feeling both in the legislature and in the press that Virginia had taken a step toward

emancipation that could not be foresworn. T.J. Randolph, Thomas Jefferson's grandson and a delegate from the Piedmont, wrote to his wife that "Friends of abolition have gained all that they asked... you may rest assured that a revolution has commenced which cannot go backward... Silence is the greatest bulwark to slavery. Public opinion has broken this silence" (Freehling, 165).

Randolph could not have anticipated the effect that a pamphlet written by William and Mary professor Thomas Dew would have on the citizens and future legislatures of Virginia. The idea of political "spin," so familiar in the 1990s, was no less powerful in Virginia in 1832. Entitled Review of the Debates in the Virginia Legislature, Dew attacked the antislavery arguments that had led to the passing of the Bryce preamble and suggested that it would take one-third of the state's revenue to deport free blacks and manumitted slaves. And while William W. Freehling is correct in his assertion that Dew made enough demurs about the unchristian spirit of slavery to "prove that *all* Virginians in the 1830s... hoped the Upper South would someday contain no more slaves-- and only the white race," Dew's widely distributed pamphlet is correctly recognized as the literary moment that reflected-- if not caused-- the shut-down of public debate about slavery in the South, and the beginning of the project to fabricate a mask of the "Sunny South" turned resolutely toward northern critics (W. Freehling, 195).

IV. The Generations of Slave Owner Narratives

"...a race of people differing from us in colour and habits, and vastly inferior in the scale of civilization, have been increasing and spreading-- 'growing with our growth, and strengthening with our

strength'-- until they have become entwined with every fibre of society... Can these two distinct races of people, now living together as master and servant, ever be separated?"

Thomas R. Dew,

"Abolition of Negro Slavery",

American Quarterly Review, XII (1832)

What constitutes a "literature of reference" is the inescapable presence of the other in a consideration of oneself. The slave owners were unable to tell their stories apart from their slaves, because the African American slave had "become entwined with every fibre of society," and was, consequently, an intimate part of the Slave Owner narrative. It was at this point that the problem of slavery ceased to be an American problem and began to be a uniquely southern problem. Subsequent efforts by the Virginia Legislature to follow through on their plan to colonize freedmen was defeated in part because of Dew's conviction that colonization in Liberia would submit the freed slave to slaughter by African tribes and death by fever. Given the double bind of negrophobia that would not allow freed slaves to live with whites, and *noblesse oblige* that would not allow the planter to dump slaves in Liberia knowing they would not be able to survive, the only solution, according to Dew's influential pamphlet, seemed to be to embrace slavery as destiny, to understand it as a positive good for both slave and master.

This was not, of course, the only solution. John Hartwell Cocke was a Virginia planter whose commitment to the abolition of slavery took a practical turn. In defiance of Virginia law, he educated the most likely slave families on his plantation in mechanical and survival skills as well as

literacy, and financed their settlement in Liberia for the thirty years it took them to become firmly established. The experiment, which yielded the only set of letters from colonized slaves in Liberia, was sufficiently difficult on the Skipwith family-- the manumitted slaves Cocke sent to Monrovia-- to convince Cocke, who had helped found the American Colonization Society in 1817, of the impracticality of colonization. In the process, however, Cocke had been ostracized and even, in 1835, beaten by an enraged slave owner who felt that Cocke's anti-slavery position was undermining southern unity (Miller, 32). Cocke's attempt to disentangle the entwined fibres of slave and master was one of the few practical demonstrations that the South was dealing with a gordian knot which would-- eventually-- yield only to the sword. The fact that the Virginia Legislature could pass the Bryce preamble in 1832, appropriating money to settle freedmen in Liberia, and that Cocke could be severely beaten for using his own resources to do so only three years later, attests to the dramatic about-face that occurred in the South as it refused any further attempt to unwind the two-ply yarn.⁹

What historians call the "Great Reaction" of the 1830s-- the hardening of the pro-slavery position that eventually led to war-- is the beginning of what I consider the second generation of Slave Owner Narratives. The first generation, comprising the century from William Byrd to Thomas Dew, is that body of literature which wrestled with the presence of the slave on American soil while there was still time to resist the importation of slaves and to separate the southern cultural yarn from that of the African. The

⁹ William Freehling describes later emancipation projects inspired by the Virginia Antislavery Debates: those of Maryland in 1832 and Delaware in 1847 and 1860. Maryland (where Frederick Douglass was child-slave in Baltimore) decided to colonize freedmen to Liberia, but, like Virginia, could not get any of them to go. The Delaware emancipation bill failed by one vote in 1860 (197-209).

second generation, comprising the thirty years from Thomas Dew to Mary Chesnut, is the antebellum literature that critics have decided is so compromised by the slavery debate as to eliminate it from any presence in the American canon. The third generation of Slave Owner Narrative, the nostalgic reconstruction of the Old South comprising the forty years from the end of Reconstruction, around 1880, until the beginning of the southern Renaissance in 1920, must be rightly called the "Slave Owner Tradition" since it is written after emancipation. It consists of a highly popular and romanticized version of the Cavalier and plantation South. Its worst exemplars, such as Dixon's The Clansmen (1905), veer off into a racist literature supporting the American jingoism and white supremacy of its day. In its most popular exemplars, such as Margaret Mitchell's Gone With the Wind (1935) it perpetuates an array of southern stereotypes which present slavery as a quaint artifact of the Old South. Though this dissertation will not encompass it, there is fourth generation of Slave Owner Narrative tradition, which is the Southern Renaissance itself-- that generation of authors who grew up reading Thomas Nelson Page's Two Little Confederates the way other children read Huckleberry Finn, who developed an image of his or her heritage that embraced the nostalgic plantation fantasy along with white guilt for the institution of slavery, and wrote to justify or expiate the southern crimes and virtues. Each of these generations of Slave Owner Narrative has its own particular task in the discourse of slave holding.¹⁰

¹⁰ Louis P. Simpson, in The Dispossessed Garden, recognizes roughly the same periodic stages as I do, but discusses them in terms of the southern pastoral reaction against the powers of modernity as they deal with stages of alienation from the industrialized North. The role of slaves and slavery in Simpson's discussion is limited to the need for southern men of letters to "defend its singular historical situation" which deflects from their ability to establish the South as a "novel civilization" with quality literature of its own.

V. The First Generation of Slave Owner Narrative: 1729-1832

Louis D. Rubin, in his preface to The Literary South, states that "The economic, political and cultural differences that produced... sections indistinguishable as South and North were more than two hundred years in the making. To expect to find much that will be recognizable as 'Southern' in the early literature of the region that ultimately became known as the American South is therefore very dubious" (3). This point of view suggests that the Englishmen who settled America in its colonial days were an undifferentiated group who did not display cultural distinctions until formed by their different environments in the New World. David Hackett Fischer has taught us otherwise, identifying four large waves of English-speaking immigrants who came to these shores from England "carry[ing] across the Atlantic four different sets of British folkways which became the basis of regional cultures in the New World." Furthermore, Fischer states, "By the year 1775 these four cultures were fully established in British America" (6). Two of these waves were religious migrations: the Puritans from east England to Massachusetts from 1629 to 1640, and the Friends from the North Midlands of England and Wales to the Delaware Valley from 1675 to 1725. But the two waves of migrations that settled the southern regions were political and economic refugees: the Royalist elite and indentured servants from the south of England to Virginia from 1642 to 1675, and the massive numbers of English-speaking people from the borders of North Britain and Northern Ireland to the Appalachian backcountry (Pennsylvania to Georgia) from 1718 to 1775.

Far from recognizing these distinctive groups, American literary historians have treated the Puritan migration as though it were the only cultural foundation for American literature. One can hardly imagine the preface for a volume on "the Flowering of New England" beginning with an assertion like Louis D. Rubin's about the South: "To expect to find much that will be recognized as [northern] in the early literature of the region that ultimately became known as the American [North] is therefore very dubious." Part of the difficulty in defining the origins of the Slave Owner Narrative is the general blankness-- even from southern scholars like Louis D. Rubin and Louis P. Simpson-- about early southern culture and the literature it produced. What is worse, these scholars seem to accept the cultural dominance of the Puritan heritage and its "flowering" into the American Renaissance, and the counter-assumption that the task of the southern scholar is to explain why the South did not produce anything to equal their northern brothers.

The discoveries of cultural history and the ongoing attempt at the present time to reconsider the American literary canon point the way toward a new understanding of colonial literature expressive of fully formed cultures. In the South, the works of John Smith, Robert Beverley, William Byrd II, Ebenezer Cooke, Thomas Jefferson, and a veritable troop of poets writing in the neo-classical mode create a vivid impression of a culture utterly distinct from the New England clerisy. Southern colonial literature is distinctive because of its worldliness, structural formality, and humor-- the latter a combination of London-style satire and American backwoods wit, often resulting from the confrontation between the backwoodsman and the English gentleman. Southern colonial literature is, in fact, a great deal more

fun to read than the dour religiosity of John Winthrop, William Bradford, and Jonathan Edwards, and more closely related in style and sophistication to its British counterparts-- Samuel Pepys, William Congreve, Samuel Butler, Jonathan Swift, Henry Fielding and Alexander Pope. It is as if Joseph Andrews were set aground in bear country-- the humor and absurdity is never lost on the southern immigrant because it is never overwhelmed by religious anxiety. William Byrd, like Samuel Pepys, describes his prayers in the same journal entry as he describes his whore and his dinner.

How, then, do these characteristics form the foundation of the Slave Owner Narrative? Given the scarcity of slaves in early Virginia, Maryland and Carolinas, Southern literature in this period is far more concerned with indigenous peoples than with Africans. The presence of "the other" is the Native American, whether the "salvage" of John Smith or the "poor Indian" of William Byrd. Though described in all their barbarity and strangeness, there is a strain of attraction for the Native American that is never manifested for the African, in part because of the colonists' fascination with the Native Americans' distinctive cultures and powerful independence, matched with a lesser degree of color difference. William Byrd believed that the English settlers should have intermarried with the Indians as a method of simultaneously populating the country and converting the natives, "for if a Moor may be washt white in 3 Generations, Surely an Indian might have been blancht in two." Byrd goes on to argue that "All nations of men have the same natural dignity, and we know that very bright talents may be lodged under very dark skin. The principal difference between one people and another proceeds only from the different opportunities of improvement" (Lauter, 544, 553).

This tolerance does not bear up, however, when the African slave begins to appear as a problem in the late eighteenth century. Never having seen the African in his native place, surrounded with the tribal dignity that framed the Native American, the early slave owner floundered for a way to describe and think about his chattel. Chattel slavery was an institution that had not existed in Europe and therefore had no precedent in the peasant, the yeoman, or even the serf-- who was attached to the land, but who did not carry a monetary value on his or her head. Simpson observes this struggle going on in William Byrd's letters to his aristocratic friends back in England. While the slaves are sparse in number and as much a curiosity on the plantation as they would be in London, they are "bondsmen and bondswomen" to his "patriarch"-- "nor indeed is their Labour any other than Gardening & less by far that what the poor People undergo in other countrys" (22). But when the slaves begin to increase through importation because of the demands of tobacco farming, the effect of chattel slavery begins to be noticed, and the classic complaint that troubled the Virginia legislators a century later was made by Byrd to the Earl of Egmont in 1736: Slaves "blow up the pride and ruin the industry of our white people, who, seeing a rank of poor creatures below them, detest work for fear it should make them look like slaves" (20).

The key word here is "rank." When the Cavaliers and indentured servants migrated from southern England to the American South, they brought with them a sensitivity to rank that was not a factor in the religious migrations of the Puritans and the Friends. It was not only the presence of the slave, but the willingness of the southern English-- coming from the most intensively hierarchical section of a class-conscious nation-- to see slaves as

permanently ranked by their race to the lowest position in society. And while the northern colonies all held slaves at this time, and were assisted by the colder climate, seasonal crops, and developing interest in industry to emancipate their slaves, they were also assisted by a religious egalitarianism that reinforced the Enlightenment ideals at work on everyone in the eighteenth century.

Thomas Jefferson epitomizes the Enlightenment ideal in America, and typifies the highest level of scientific and philosophical knowledge that was attainable in his time. In Notes on the State of Virginia he makes a comparison of the three varieties of human species, *Homo sapiens Americanus* (Native American), *Homo sapiens Europaeus* (European), and *Homo sapiens Afer* (African). Given the outlandish stories reported about the New World, Jefferson does well to confine his conclusions to observable facts, regardless of how those "facts" may seem to us now to be undermined by a faulty concept of physical science or by false assumptions.¹¹ For instance, Jefferson's doubt that the negro is educable rests in part upon the observation that "many have been so situated, that they might have availed themselves of the conversation of their masters," not imagining that the negro might feel resentment or have other priorities. He observes of the writing of Ignatius Sancho that his "imagination is wild and extravagant, escapes incessantly from every restraint of reason and taste," an observation which could as

¹¹ Daniel J. Boorstin, in The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson, describes the world of scientific inquiry that was centered in the American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia, founded by Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Benjamin Rush, Thomas Paine, Joseph Priestly and Charles Wilson Peale. Taking advantage of the natural riches of a new continent, their purpose was to catalogue and describe everything they found. Prodigies of description and consequent discussions were made, which frame Jefferson's observations in Notes as the best science of his time rather than unfounded or idle speculation.

easily be said of Byron by a neo-classicist of Jefferson's conviction (140).

What is important to the discourse of slave holding is not Jefferson's inconclusiveness about the status of the *Afer* in comparison to the *Americanus* or the *Europaeus*, but the fact that the discussion was taking place openly among the American and European *philosophes* in widely circulated letters and, later, in Jefferson's book. Jefferson and his circle were a long way away from fear of the opinion of outsiders; they had no sense of southern nationhood as apart from American nationhood, no sense that the negro was overpowering or out of control (though Jefferson felt that whites and emancipated blacks could not live together due to "deep rooted prejudices entertained by the whites; ten thousand recollections, by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained"), and no sense of sectional animosity, though the sections had wrestled for control of the American agenda during the Revolutionary war, and the southerners had succeeded in keeping all reference to slavery out of the Declaration of Independence (137). There was still a sense that America was new, and that there was time for solutions to be discovered for America's problems through the insights of science, philosophy, and political negotiation-- even a problem that loomed as large as slavery.

VI. The Second Generation of Slave Owner Narratives: 1832-1865

"Mr. Barton was a specimen of that class of old fashioned persons, (the Virginia gentleman,) which is now fairly extinct. They were remarkable for their urbanity, frankness, and ease; a nice sense of honor; a hatred of all that was little or mean; more fond of hospitality than show; great epicures at table; great lovers of Madiera wine, of

horses and dogs; free at a jest, particularly after dinner; with a goodly store of family pride, and a moderate portion of learning; never disputing a bill, and seldom paying a debt, until, like their Madiera, it had acquired age; scrupulously neat in their persons, but affecting plainness and simplicity in their dress; kind and indulgent, rather than faithful husbands, deeming some variety essential in all gratifications of the appetite. There was enough frankness and ease in their courtesy, to prevent disagreeable restraint in others, and so much warmth in their hospitality, as to insure gratitude and good will. The luxurious and social habits in which they were educated, gave them all that polished and easy grace, which is possessed by the highest class in Europe. Indeed, the higher classes of society, every where, have the same manners, which are the joint result of their leisure, education, the cultivation of social pleasures, and above all, a high sense of self-respect."

George Tucker, The Valley of the Shenandoah, or
the Memoirs of the Graysons, 1824

Mr. Barton is the perfection of a type that could appear anywhere in the Slave Owner Narratives from the eighteenth century to the Southern Renaissance. It is curious, then, to note that Tucker refers to him, in 1824, as "now fairly extinct." If this Virginia gentleman was on the wane in 1824, who replaced him? And how is it that his replacement bears such a strong resemblance to the original that the stereotype of the southern planter, the "Old Colonel" on his portico sipping whisky and listening to his darkies singing in the field, whose family pride and sense of honor do not prevent him from maintaining a mistress, probably a beautiful mulatto? To our

unrefined modern eyes, these southern gentlemen seem close enough to fulfill the same function in Southern literature. The difference, however, is significant to the transition between the first and the second generations of Slave Owner Narrative.

The plot of the The Valley of the Shenandoah concerns the Graysons, an old Virginia family who lose their estate by mismanagement and excessive debt, and have to lower themselves to selling off their negroes to pay their debts. This is the opposite situation from the Cavalier, William Byrd, who increased his estate four-fold when the colony was young, the land fertile, and great fortunes were to be had. But it sounds very much like Thomas Jefferson, whose excessive debt and depleted soil was fairly typical of old Virginia families at the turn of the nineteenth century. Many of the old aristocracy were losing their estates and having to sell them to anyone who could afford to buy. Jefferson died in 1826 and his slaves and estates were sold only two years after Tucker wrote his morality tale.

Who were the *nouveau riche* who bought the estates of the old aristocracy and set themselves up as southern gentlemen? Charles Joyner, in his article "Cultural Interaction in the Old South" points out that "there was more than one acculturation process going on in the Old South. Not only were African and European cultures converging and modifying each other, but a variety of European cultures-- English Scottish, Scotch-Irish, Welsh, French, German, and Spanish, in particular-- were converging and modifying each other in the Old South" (Ownby, 12). There was a rising middle class of ambitious immigrants, part of the Appalachian backcountry migration of 1718 to 1775, who did not have the expensive tastes, aversion to labor, and open-handed *noblesse oblige* of the Cavalier. The sub-plot of the The Valley of the

Shenandoah concerns the Fawknerns, a Scotch-Irish family who, as Donald Noble notes in the preface, "pay strict attention to business, sign no notes for others, and, although they cannot resist some ostentation to declare their prosperity to the world, generally live modestly and avoid gambling and other vices" (xxii). And while Tucker "recognizes their virtues," what they lack is the urbanity, unselfconsciousness, and natural authority of the aristocrat. They are imitation Cavaliers. As Noble observes, "The rich are merely rich; it will be generations before they can assume cultural or political leadership" (xxiii). The implication is that the old ruling class was losing power in Virginia just as the most critical moment in the history of the southern debate over slavery was about to begin.

The slavery debate takes place in the the pages of The Valley of the Shenandoah--argument by argument-- eight years before it reaches the floor of the Virginia Legislature. Through the literary device of the "necessary outsider," which will become a major motif of the second generation Slave Owner Narrative, a young man from New York plies the young Grayson with leading questions about slavery: "Don't you feel, Edward, when riding over these vast domains of yours, something like a feudal baron?...There is something very fascinating now confess it, Edward, in this unlimited control." (Since it is 1824, the New Yorker is a slave owner, too-- but his father owns "a little farm, in Dutchess county, on which he worked four to five slaves." The issue, for the outsider, seems to be rank and degree rather than morality). Edward dismisses this selfish love of power as inconsistent with the responsibility of an honorable slave holder:

We, of the present generation, find domestic slavery established among us, and the evil, for I freely admit it to be an evil, both

moral and political, admits of no remedy that is not worse than the disease. No thinking man supposes that we could emancipate them, and safely let them remain in the country; and no good or prudent man would run the risk of renewing the scenes which have made St. Domingo one general scene of waste and butchery..." (62)

The passage continues, raising and dismissing every argument for colonization either on the North American continent or in Africa. Edward sadly concludes that "since we cannot confer on them or restore to them... some of those rights which we ourselves so highly prize, without endangering not only these, but every other we possess, we must even set down contented, and endeavour to *mitigate* a disease which admits of no *cure*" (62). Tucker suggests that the problem of slavery, insoluble as it is, can only be managed by aristocratic southerners who see it for the tragic responsibility it has become. Only an outsider, or, it is implied, the moneyed but uncultured middle class would see it as exercising the "unlimited control" of a "feudal baron." Significantly, young Edward Grayson is murdered at the end of the novel while trying to take revenge on none other than the New Yorker, who has ravished and abandoned Grayson's sister. The Cavalier and his values are dead, leaving the helpless South to be raped by the irresponsible and power-hungry North.

The Valley of the Shenandoah was not successful in its day and sold so few copies that it is not credited as the first of the "plantation novels," an attribution associated with John Pendleton Kennedy's Swallow Barn, which it predates by eight years, or William Gilmore Simms' Woodcraft. But it makes

a finely tuned transition between the first two stages of Slave Owner Narratives: the first generation, which openly debates the evils of slavery without anticipating the intransigence of the problem, and the second generation, which must, perforce, idealize in public that which it cannot be rid of. The Valley of the Shenandoah anticipates the 1832 Virginia Slavery Debates and is, with them, the last of the Slave Owner Narratives to discuss slavery openly and negatively, while at the same time introducing many of the themes that will prove to be characteristic of the Slave Owner Narrative as it solidifies into its most characteristic antebellum form.

The period between the Virginia Debates and the Civil War saw the most intensive development of this genre, not only because of the need to show a unified face to the outside world, but because of the aggressiveness of abolitionist attacks-- particularly Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Fugitive Slave Narratives. Many literary responses were made to Uncle Tom's Cabin, for instance, including Hentz's The Planter's Northern Bride, Grayson's "The Hireling and the Slave," and Eastman's Aunt Phillis's Cabin. As the West opened up to the ambitious immigrant who could buy land for \$1.25 an acre, and as the South lost more and more of its white laborers to western migration, the planter became increasingly invested in reassuring outsiders about the benevolence and necessity of slavery in order to maintain its labor force.

John Pendleton Kennedy's Swallow Barn, or A Sojourn in the Old Dominion (1832) purports to be the account of a New Yorker (again-- New York was the favorite source for the "representative northerner") who visits his distant cousin at "Swallow Barn," an "aristocratical old edifice" which sits on the James River. It is in the sketchbook style of Irving's Bracebridge Hall,

representing the southern squire as quaint, charming, and old fashioned. What is significant in terms of the transition to the second generation of Slave Owner Narrative is not only the introduction of motifs that will persist in the southern mystique-- the "charming disarray" of the landscape, homes and slave quarters; the transition from the *otia* of the Cavalier to the languid heat-induced leisure of the planter-- but the description of "The Quarter" which is a meditation prompted, once again, by leading questions from the outsider, on the "parasitical nature" of the negro, and his dependency on the white race, which is "a present and insurmountable impediment to that most cruel of all projects-- the direct, broad emancipation of these people..." (454). And far from being power-hungry and murderous, the northern outsider is-- in a very different twist on the device as presented by George Tucker-- happily enlightened and reassured by all that he sees: "The contrast between my preconceptions of their condition and the reality which I have witnessed, has brought me a most agreeable surprise" (452).

Simms' Woodcraft, or Hawks About the Dovecote (1854) refines the Slave Owner Narrative in its romance form by being an historical novel set in post-Revolutionary War times, and offering the re-imagined Cavalier in all his urbane and aristocratic assurance, though somewhat down-at-the-heels due to British plundering. The lasting charm of Simms-- because of all antebellum southern authors he is the most valued for his literary gifts-- is that he restricts his proselytizing to essays and writes exciting and humorous novels, albeit from the slave owner's perspective. The characters of Captain Porgy and his slave Tom walk the delicate line between satirical humor and affectionate nobility, demonstrating a mutual dependency that suggests the inextricable bond between slave and master. In its most famous passage, Tom

refuses to be manumitted in a gesture that, chameleon-like, seems to be both dependency and control:

Tom.. received the gift of himself, from Porgy, which he cunningly rejected. "No! no! maussa, " he cried, with a sly shake of the head, "I kain't t'ink ob letting you off dis way. Ef I doesn't b'long to *you*, *you* b'longs to *me*! You hab for keep dis nigger long as he lib; and him for keep you." (509)

Is this an example of the affection slave owners universally claim (after 1832) that the slaves have for "ole' massa an' ole' missus"? Or is it a devious observation on the nature of bondage-- that the chain is attached at both ends: the enslaver is enslaved? This unresolved ambivalence which figures through Simms' best work is what places his *oeuvre* in the forefront of the antebellum southern canon, and which makes his contribution to the Slave Owner Narrative more welcome for its complexity.

Not to be slighted are the private diaries and letters of slave owners which are an important corrective to the public mask displayed to outsiders by novelists, essayists and poets. The massive collection of letters written by the family and friends of Reverend Dr. Charles Colcock Jones of Liberty County, Georgia gathered under the title Children of Pride by Robert Manson Myers combines to create as complete a picture as one can imagine of a large slave owning family, the patriarch of which was a Presbyterian minister known nationwide-- and even worldwide-- for his mission to the negro slaves. A very slender collection of letters, written by Margaret Johnson Erwin of Mississippi and collected under the title Like Some Green Laurel, creates a sharp portrait of an independent heiress who hated slavery as much as she hated Harriet Beecher Stowe. Well connected in both northern and southern

society, her accounts of Mississippi plantation life, and the ostracism she underwent at the hands of her own family and society when she freed her slaves in 1858, are as painful as her confrontations with Mrs. Stowe are delightful:

I was greatly put out by that Stowe woman-- having to sit and listen to her air her views about matters of which she knows nothing, nothing at all... it was at Elsie's and SHE cornered me knowing I was southern. But I think she met her match and was completely astounded when I agreed with her on the slave question. She was somewhat set back when I told her that I think the question is only made worse by the meddling on the part of busybodies. H.S. was quite cool for the rest of the afternoon and I am afraid I may have embarrassed Mrs. Spangler, among others who were present. I think, most of them knowing my firmness and directness, they expected me to pull a gun from my reticule and shoot that jenny" (60).

Another important private narrative is the plantation journal of Thomas B. Chaplin, owner of Tombee plantation on St. Helena Island, South Carolina, which has been edited with a biography by Theodore Rosengarten under the title Tombee: Portrait of a Cotton Planter. Chaplin's story of inexorable ruin through mismanagement, misguided generosity, and bad luck tells in fact what George Tucker described in fiction-- the downfall of man trained to live a life of leisure in a time that called for ingenuity and hard work.

VII. The Third Generation of Slave Owner Narrative: 1880-1920

"...then they knew there was bound to be a war, and that it must be very wicked. They almost felt the 'invader's heel,' and the invaders heels were invariably spoken of as 'cruel' and the heel was described as of 'iron' and was always mentioned as engaged in the act of crushing. They would have been terribly alarmed at this cruel invasion had they not been reassured by the general belief of the community that one Southerner could whip ten Yankees, and that, collectively, the South could drive back the North with pop-guns. When the war actually broke out, the boys were the most enthusiastic of rebels, and the troops in Camp Lee did not drill more continuously nor industriously.

Thomas Nelson Page Two Little Confederates, 1888

The "boys" in the quotation are Frank and Willy who live at Oakland near Court-house Road in Virginia. That vague address and the tone of their child's-eye view of war places them at around eight and ten years old in 1861. In the course of this engaging book for youngsters, one can catch an occasional glimpse of an anxious mother or a weeping aunt, but by and large it is full of young boys, slave and free, and the old family retainer, Uncle Balla--a literary relation of Uncle Remus-- who practice their imperfect woodcraft in an effort to track down Yankees and put rabbits on the table. The closest anyone comes to danger is when Frank runs into some Union soldiers who try to frighten him into giving them directions. When Frank faints the soldiers feel such remorse that they offer him a five-dollar gold piece, and Frank becomes the "little hero" of Oakland.

We can be grateful that Thomas Nelson Page wrote a children's book based upon his own childhood memories of plantation life, because it

operates as a watermark for his prolific career as a best-selling author and pseudosociologist of the "Old South." It reminds us of how much Page could have known about the world he so confidently re-created for his audiences, both North and South, who were possessed of a strong desire for plantation fiction and representations of the "old negro." He had a child's knowledge: the protected, cosseted life of the heir to a once grand estate run by slaves he would never own and ruined by a war he never witnessed. He was emblematic of the desire of an entire nation when he conjured up in his fiction and essays the imaginary South he wanted to own: not the messy, adult South struggling to reconcile economy, politics and morality, but the child South with its complexities removed; a playground South with kindly enemies and "Uncle Balla" ever ready to carry the "chirrun" on his back.

The reverse side of this happy construct, however, is the equally simplistic world of Thomas Dixon, whose tributes to Jim Crow society in his notorious trilogy, The Leopard's Spots (1902), The Clansmen (1905), and The Traitor (1907) abandon any semblance of the real world by creating negro characters as cartoonish in their beastliness as Uncle Balla is in his endless delight to serve. Dixon offers a caricature of the Cavalier, forgetting the "urbanity, frankness, and ease... nice sense of honor...a hatred of all that was little or mean" of Tucker's Virginia gentleman for the "defeated Cavalier" who is haunted by "the shadow of the freed Negro, transformed by the exigency of war from a Chattel to be bought and sold into a possible Beast to be feared and guarded. Around this dusky figure every white man's soul was keeping its grim vigil" (5). This extravagant fear may be related emotionally to Tucker's young planter, Edward Grayson, who believes that conferring rights on the negroes will endanger "every other we possess." But Dixon's

returning soldier seems, incredibly, to have lost all relationship or knowledge of the culture entwined with his for two hundred years. While this is not unthinkable-- witness the white astonishment in response to Nat Turner's Rebellion-- it is not confirmed in the contemporary accounts of returning soldiers or families. Both Nelson's and Dixon's fantasy versions of the South incorporate distortions typical of the third generation of the Slave Owner Narrative tradition that developed after Reconstruction.

But what of the great silence surrounding southern writers from the end of the war in 1865 to the end of Reconstruction around 1880?. Those who survived the fighting-- poets Henry Timrod, Sidney Lanier, and Hamilton Hayne, novelist William Gilmore Simms, were too weakened by their injuries or deprivations to live long afterward. The next wave of productions in the Slave Owner Narrative tradition had to wait for children to grow up and recreate the lost world of their childhoods-- not only Thomas Nelson Page and Thomas Dixon, but Joel Chandler Harris, George Washington Cable, and Opie Read. Later southern writers, including the Richmond school of Ellen Glasgow, James Branch Cabell, and Mary Johnston, were connected to slavery times through the reminiscences of grandparents and old soldiers, and constructed a version of the South based upon pride, hearsay, and a detachment from the automatic patriotism and nostalgia of an earlier generation.

As the "New South" emerged at the turn of the century with the call to abandon sectional hostilities and to embrace modernity, the comic possibilities of the clash between the Old Colonel and his courtly ways and the racy "New South" hurrying into the 20th century to make up for lost time, were most present to Ellen Glasgow, whose satire The Romantic Comedians

(1926) locates old and new values in a May-December marriage of disastrous consequences. Glasgow employs the ironic voice of one familiar with the foibles of the South, placing her more in the tradition of William Byrd and William Gilmore Simms, with their clarity and humor, than with the nostalgic creators of a slave-owning South that has very little to do with the complex people who struggled to know how to think and what to do about the "other" they had imported into their midsts.

No survey can touch upon every significant motif and trend in a genre, especially since the three generations of Slave Owner Narrative considered here cover two centuries and a full list of forms, from private letters to public speeches. Many of these works, and others not yet mentioned, will be considered in more detail in the following chapters.

Chapter Two

Justifying: Slave Songs and the Ideological Strain

"But the corn songs of these humble creatures would please you still more; for some of them have a small smack of poetry, and are natural at expressions of kind and amiable feelings-- such as, praise of their master, gratitude for his kindness, thanks for his goodness, praise of one another, and, now and then, a little humorous satire."

George Tucker The Valley of the Shenandoah (117-118)

"I have often been utterly astonished, since I came to the north, to find persons who could speak of the singing, among slaves, as evidence of their contentment and happiness. It is impossible to conceive of a greater mistake. Slaves sing most when they are most unhappy."

Frederick Douglass
Narrative, 1845 (263)

"We went in the afternoon to the Negro church on the plantation...they broke out into one of those soul-stirring Negro camp-meeting hymns. To me this is the saddest of all earthly music, weird and depressing beyond my powers to describe."

Mary Boykin Chesnut, October 16, 1861
A Diary from Dixie (149)

Singing was one region of the slave's inner life that was beyond the

control or manipulation of the slave owner. Immune not only to the rigors of confinement and labor, but to the behavioral control that could be exercised over speech-- the rigid proscriptions against "answering" or talking back-- singing was available to the slave as a private, individual realm of selfhood. For the white planter, however, the singing he overheard was only available as a phenomenon of slave behavior that could be interpreted to reinforce his ideological position on slavery in general. Singing, for the slave owner, fell into the same category with other discretionary behaviors of slaves such as dancing, adding adornments to clothing, naming children (to the extent they were permitted), and accepting the personal beliefs of religion or superstition. All of these discretionary areas were interpreted by the slave owner as evidence of the primitive, childlike, or imitative behavior of slaves; the Slave Owner Narratives are rife with examples of amused, condescending accounts of the slaves' irrational superstitions, belief in "hoo-doo" and conjuring, childlike love of ribbons and over-bright colors, and efforts to imitate the "quality," as in a passage from Joseph Holt Ingraham's The Sunny South, in which the narrator describes a slave baptism:

'What is his name?' asked a clergyman who was to baptize, taking in his arms a little inky ball of ebony infancy with a pair of white, shining eyes. 'Alexander de Great, massa!' I saw a smile pass from face to face of the reverend gentlemen in the chancel. The babe was duly baptized. 'What name?' he demanded of another Congo papa. 'General Jackson, massa!' and by this name the little barbarian was duly made a Christian. (69)

The scene continues, reveling in the joke of slave grandiosity as the children are given such names as Walter Scott, Napoleon Bonaparte, Potiphar,

Pharoh, and Apollo Belvedere: names which-- in their awareness of history and literature-- reveal the white slave owner's projection of humor onto the slave rather than any credible scene of real slaves on a real plantation. The damning smile which passes "from face to face" in judgement of the "Congo papas" as they exercise choice on behalf of their "little barbarians" contains within it the conviction of white supremacy that stands ever ready to mock and be amused by whatever slave behavior falls beyond the control of the slave owner. This white "name-calling" indicates the presence of a frustration underlying the slave owner's relationship with the slave that is as revealing as the "naming-giving" process they ridicule. The slaves' determination to maintain inner lives through private choice eluded all efforts of the slave owners to gain ultimate control, and defied any claim slave owners made that the slaves were true chattel or beasts of burden. Thus by imagining a scene in which slaves show their own inferiority-- their imitative natures which cause them to name their children after white heroes or literary figures, and their lack of a culture of their own which would provide them with black heroes after whom to name their children-- the slave owners are in fact dramatizing their own effort to control their slaves through "name-calling," as if by "naming" them absurdities-- "Congo papas," "little barbarians," and "inky balls of ebony infancy"-- they can diminish the slaves to the level of chattel or of infantile primitives. "They are children, primitive children," wrote Margaret Johnson Erwin in 1863, "and a hundred years will not take care of that" (129).

Yet there seem to be few examples-- if any at all-- of slave owners mocking slave singing or finding evidence of childishness in either their sorrow songs or "frolics." Instead, they used this evidence of the slaves'

individual expression to project a belief in the slaves' happiness and contentment. This uncharacteristic restraint indicates an odd respect for slave singing, as though to acknowledge the complete lack of imitation in a form of music that was beyond the understanding of the slave owner. For while slave owners might appropriate the singing as evidence for their self-justification of the slave system, and appropriate the musical cadences and themes as blackface minstrelry and "Ethiopian songs" like "Old Black Joe," they could not appropriate the slaves' own meaning.

In his chapter about "The Sorrow Songs" in The Souls of Black Folk, W.E.B. DuBois says that the songs in which "the slaves spoke to the world" are "naturally veiled and half articulate." And while there is undoubtedly some witness to happiness in the songs, he is emphatic about their fundamental character:

[N]ot all the South, though it rose from the dead, can gainsay the heart-touching witness of these songs. They are the music of an unhappy people, of the children of disappointment; they tell of death and suffering and unvoiced longing toward a truer world, of misty wanderings and hidden ways. (207)

DuBois is settling, once and for all, the antebellum argument between the slaves and the slave owners about the significance of slave singing. The dramatic image of "all the South" rising from the dead in a futile effort to gainsay the slaves, as though the witness of the dead-- who have a greater stake in telling the truth than the living since they have already arrived at the place of judgement-- is not sufficiently powerful to eradicate the truth of the sorrow songs. In them reside the evidence that contradicts the claims of "all the South" for all time that the slaves were ever justly or appropriately

enslaved. They testify to the future existence of a "truer world" in which there are no slaves, and in which African Americans are recognized in their true personhood.

Slave singing has a unique power in the shared cultural field of plantation life-- to provide the slave with an inviolable region of selfhood and to prompt the slave owner to a particular effort of justification for slavery. The argument over slave singing signals-- by its presence in both genres of narrative-- not only opposite ideological positions but especially provocative portals into the texts. Each claim made about slave singing, whether by slave or slave owner, whether in a public forum or a private journal, typifies the genre in which it is made.

In the following discussion I will suggest that the literary character of the the Slave Owner Narratives can be approached through an examination of George Tucker's use of the "corn songs." Tucker's appropriation of slave singing is a typical device used in Slave Owner Narratives to convince the reader that the narrator's assessment of his or her relationship with slaves is representative of "all the South," while at the same time revealing the slave owners' need for the good opinion of their slaves as corroboration of their good opinion of themselves. Since Tucker wrote The Valley of the Shenandoah prior to the propaganda campaign that persisted in the South from 1832 to the onset of the Civil War, I will juxtapose his early text with a full-blown realization of the Slave Owner Narrative-- Ingraham's The Sunny South-- examining the text for those characterizations of the negro that reinforce the slave owner's need to create an imaginary construction of plantation life and slavery that justifies his position and relieves his conscience against the claims of northern abolitionists and the sorrow songs

themselves.

As the texts of Tucker and Ingraham will make clear, the seductive and exotic image of the "Sunny South" placed a difficult burden on the slave narrator. The northern reader, whose opinion was being solicited by both the slave and the slave owner, had historical and emotional reasons to be sympathetic with white planters in addition to the well-known economic reasons. The Old Dominion had provided America with many of her greatest statesmen, and strong family ties bound North and South together as eastern families migrated to the southern frontiers. Slave Narrators, like Frederick Douglass, could make inroads against white solidarity only when adhering to the successful abolitionist formulas in their autobiographical accounts of slavery. I will suggest that Douglass, in an effort to avoid the restrictions of the formulaic slave narrative and to speak more authentically about the significance of the slave voice as an "index of the soul," turned to fiction in The Heroic Slave. The novel form allowed him the personal freedom to describe the full range of feeling experienced by slaves without seeming to reinforce the slave owner's claims that any expression of happiness proved the slaves' contentment.

Finally, I will call upon the private voice of Mary Boykin Chesnut to give a sense of the slave owners' inner lives, which were as constrained from public expression as were the slaves' inner lives. For if singing was the only arena the slaves had to express freely their innermost feelings, the private journal was the only arena the slave owners had to express theirs, since they were forced by southern loyalty and racial solidarity to show a confidence in the "cause" of slavery that many of them-- perhaps the majority-- did not feel. Mary Chesnut, by virtue of her privacy, was able to hear the sorrow in the

sorrow songs that few of her fellow slave owners could hear, or, if heard, could not admit was present in the songs of "these humble people."

I. George Tucker and the Demise of the Cavalier Family

In the last chapter a quotation was cited from George Tucker's novel, The Valley of the Shenandoah (1824), that depicted the archetypal southern gentleman and gave an account of plantation life that describes the erosion of the old Cavalier planting class and its replacement by the rising middle class that lacked Cavalier values. Since his novel was written almost a decade before the key year of 1832 when southern writers began to present a unified front to the outside world about the benevolence of slavery, we can assume that his audience was intended to be primarily southern. Tucker was distinctive for speaking candidly about southern institutions, and was presenting a morality tale to his fellow planters. It is unlikely, therefore, that his vision of happy slaves singing songs in praise of their master is part of the southern propaganda campaign that came after 1832. Although Tucker's account is fictional and-- within the framework of that fiction-- presented to an outsider from the North, we can nevertheless accept Tucker's experience as he relates it, since, unlike later Slave Owner Narratives, Tucker does not have to paint a rosy picture of the "Sunny South" for northerners or abolitionists. Indeed, he paints a rather grim and despairing picture of mismanagement and ruin, which was the purpose of his story. In this context, his account of the slave singing has an air of sincerity-- if not authenticity-- because there seems to be no reason for him to romanticize an otherwise realistic picture. The picture of the happy slaves singing their corn songs in praise of the master must, then, have been Tucker's own experience

which he used in his novel.¹

The Slave Owner Narrative, at this early stage of its development, established a major theme which would persist in the genre throughout the antebellum period and into the nostalgic phase of "plantation novel" that developed in the postbellum period-- that of the slave as a member of the planter's own family. In a paternalistic system, it was important that the discipline and demands of the white "father" be contextualized as the loving care that all parents exert over their children. What became a literary theme was, for many in the South, an historical fact: there is significant documentation from both slaves and outside witnesses of the generosity and benevolence of many slave holders.² While this in no way minimizes the cruelties that are widely documented and reported by slaves, a great deal of slave behavior is incomprehensible if the fact of charity toward slaves by slave owners is ignored. Elizabeth Keckley, while still in slavery in 1838, sent a letter to her mother asking her to "Give love to all the family, both white and black" (Blassingame, 21). In another private letter, Margaret Johnson Erwin wrote to her friend Carrie Wilson in 1859 that "My great depression is over the death of Nettie, the slave girl I brought from Kentucky and who throughout my whole life has been my closest friend: she was indignant with me only once-- when I told her she was free. I shall never forget her look when she said 'So's you no longer wants me?' I did so 'wants' her, and I hope I was able to prove it in this past, brief year" (97). The psychological frame for this love, which might include a discussion of contemporary hostage studies

¹ Tucker served as a United States Congressman from Virginia for three terms and then as a Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Virginia. In 1845 he freed his slaves and moved to Philadelphia. (*Shenandoah*, xv-xvi)

² See John W. Blassingame *Slave Testimony* and B.A. Botkin, *Lay My Burden Down*.

which have found that the longer hostages are held the more they begin to identify with their kidnappers, would be part of another project. For the present purposes, it is sufficient to note that this love between slaves and slave owners is documented on both sides, and provides an historical base for a literary theme that slave owner narrators cultivated increasingly during the nineteenth century because they believed it expressed not only their best intentions but their rights: even northerners knew that the law did not permit the forceful dissolution of families. If slaves could be seen as family members, the audacity of the claim that they should be freed would be recognized as being as unreasonable as outsiders taking one's children away.

The emphasis on the family relationship of slaves to their masters governs Tucker's selection of the *particular* corn-shucking songs that he cites in the novel-- those that praise the master-- because the involuntary betrayal of the slaves at the end of the novel by their sale at auction is made all the more ironic. The self-destruction of the Grayson family culminates in the sale of the plantation and the slaves, who are the repositories of the family history. As the family portraits are inventoried by the auctioneer, the old slaves, Bristow and Aggy, reminisce over each picture, recounting to their young, dispossessed mistress the family's weddings, births and great occasions:

[The auctioneer] took an inventory of all the slaves, stock, and farming utensils, as well as the furniture, an operation in which he was assisted by old Bristow and Aggy, to whom it seemed more painful than to himself... 'That,' said the old woman, 'was my old master's mother, counsellor Grayson's eldest daughter. I remember the day she was married as well as it was

yesterday. Don't you remember, old man, that Governor Dunwoody was at the wedding?' 'I believe I do,' says the old man;' and that was your aunt Betty, that married counselor Nelson. She opened the ball at the Raleigh, with Lord Botetourt, and they all said it was the grandest minuet that was ever seen.'

(II. 47)

In this passage, Tucker exercises the techniques that typify his work and establish strategies that later Slave Owner Narratives will either expand upon or adapt as the literary contest between North and South becomes more intense. The "you" in the corn song passage ("... the corn songs of these humble creatures would please you...") is the "necessary outsider" who is at once a character in the novel visiting from up North as well as the reader, who is literally "outside" the novel and is visiting from the "real" world upon which the conditions in the fictional world are meant to have an impact. The outsider cannot believe that the slaves voluntarily sing songs "of kind and amiable feelings-- such as praise of their master, gratitude for his kindness, [and] thanks for his goodness" unless certain facts are understood: that the slaves have no resources for providing for themselves; that they require a benefactor for survival; that they have had the unexpected and unwarranted luck to be in the hands of a good and generous benefactor; that they themselves are "amiable" and "kind" beings who can appreciate their luck. With these facts implied, the outsider is then able to understand that "family" relationships imply responsibility rather than blood connections (though the obvious presence of blood relationships were not remarked upon in southern literature until the 1860s).³

³ Harriet Jacobs, in Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (1861) was the first slave narrator to

Aggy and Bristow are presented to the reader as elder statesmen in the slave branch of the family. If they were not identified as Africans and slaves, the reader could not know it from their diction: they speak perfect English, without so much as a contraction or the common rendering of "massa" for "master." Taken out of context, one might think that the references to "old master" were those of a student to a professor held in high esteem. Tucker is remarkable for the absence of negro dialect in his novel, a technique which elevates all the slaves to linguistic equals and invests them not only with dignity but with clarity of thought. Because they are so clearly understood, without the barrier of broken English between them and the reader, they are not only more trustworthy as witnesses, but they are entrusted with more weighty information to convey to the reader.

Tucker's use of *ekphrasis* presents us with portrait pictures within the picture scene of the Grayson mansion: the portraits of "counsellor Grayson's eldest daughter," and "your aunt Betty, that married counsellor Nelson" are described emotionally rather than materially. Though "the grandest minuet that was ever seen" gives us a clue that the ladies are probably painted in high eighteenth century style: powdered wigs, deep *décolletage*, silk and old lace. We see the grandeur of the Grayson household in the awe and pride of the old people who have remembered the splendid family wedding and the ball at the Raleigh "as if it was yesterday." Aggy and Bristow address one another as "old man" and "old woman," in the affectionate tones that imply long marriage rather than the unsanctified ersatz marriage that was available to

describe the sexual dilemma of the female slave. Mary Boykin Chesnut, in the various versions of her diary written from the outset of the Civil War, is the first slave owner narrator to remark on the open secret of mulattoes on plantations: "Any lady is ready to tell you who is the father of all the mulatto children in everybody's household but her own. Those, she seems to think, drop from the clouds." (21)

slaves. The implication that these old people are themselves the matriarch and patriarch of the family and that these portraits depict their own ancestors creates an oddly unstable visual effect in the mind's eye. Three people gaze affectionately on a lovely old Reynolds-style portrait-- the young Grayson daughter in her antebellum curls and crenolines, and a handsome old couple at her side. But the old couple, who must certainly be well dressed themselves (or are they?) keep shifting in color from black to white. When Aggy says "my old master's mother" we see her brown skin and dark hair, but when she turns to Bristow and says "Don't you remember, old man, that Governor Dunwoody was at the wedding?" as if the Governor had done them a personal favor not to be forgotten these past fifty years, we see a fine old lady in white cambric with a marked resemblance to the lady in the portrait at which she gazes. It is no wonder that it is more painful to the old couple to see the household breaking up than it is to the auctioneer, who is a friend of the Grayson family. This subtle confusion of races in Bristow and Aggy sums up the merging over the generations of slave and slave owners which results in a blended family. The terrible consequence of this merging of interests is that when the slaves are sold down the river, the family itself is sold away: its history, its ancestors, and its memories. Like Moses' curse on Pharaoh, whatever is done to the slaves is executed on the slave owners. Thus the irony of old Bristow and Aggy helping the auctioneer to take inventory "of all the slaves, stock, and farming utensils" comes full circle: the property must take inventory of itself because the tragedy of mismanagement that will cause the demise of the Grayson household has made "things" of them all, both black and white.

Tucker's representation of the contentment and well being of the

slaves singing their corn songs is seen in the light of later events, to be a chimera-- the slaves were no more secure than were the portraits of the matriarchs on the mansion wall. The plantation life, then, is presented as dangerously unstable, while the corn songs are presented in the pastoral tradition of *epedeixis*-- songs of praise or dispraise. The master has not saved them from the auction block, or from losing the cloak of humanity that had been thrown around them allowing them the illusion that they were fully human when, in fact, they were inventoried and auctioned off with the stock and farming utensils. Events show that the slaves' praise for their master's generosity, kindness, and goodness was undeserved, and the corn songs stand, at the end of the novel, as ironic dispraise. Tucker has used the slaves' singing as a measure of their membership in the plantation family, but since The Valley of the Shenandoah traces the tragic demise of the family, the ties which unite the races join them together in ruin.

II. Joseph Holt Ingraham's Image of the "Sunny South"

The strategies that Tucker developed to warn his fellow Virginians about the waning of the Cavalier class were taken up by slave owner narrators after 1832 to construct an ideological vision of the South that would convince the politically neutral northerner that slavery was a benign institution upon which the national welfare depended. The later effort was assisted by a popular perception of slavery in the North that was at once fascinatingly alien and charmingly sentimental. As nineteenth century popular writing was intrigued with the sanctity of motherhood, children, and the home, so the benevolent southern patriarch was seen to be caring for the childlike negro in his plantation home. It was an exotic version of domestic responsibility, but

as long as the metaphor of the family was maintained, the northern popular imagination understood it. The image of negroes singing as a measure of their contentment was a reassuring picture that slave owners could build upon in subsequent fiction.

Typical of white sentimentality surrounding slave singing is a letter in *De Bow's Review* in which a visiting northerner, using the pseudonym "Viator," describes an evening spent with a generous planter who has given him shelter for the night.⁴ The planter is in mourning for an old slave retainer who is being buried that evening, after all the neighborhood slaves have had the opportunity to gather. The master and his guest stand on the piazza and watch a torch light procession of 150 negroes marching four deep to the negro burial ground. A gigantic black preacher leads the funeral singing, which the visitor describes:

The southern negroes are proverbial for the melody and compass of their voices, and I thought that hymn, mellowed by distance, the most solemn and yet the sweetest music that had ever fallen upon my ear...I shall return to my northern home, deeply impressed with the belief that, dispensing with the *name* of freedom, the negroes of the south are the happiest and most contented people on the face of the earth. (Paskoff and Wilson, 57)

This extraordinary conclusion-- almost a *non sequitur*-- that freedom is

⁴ Vol. XX (February, 1856), pp. 218-21. J.D.B. De Bow published the most influential commercial journal in the South from 1846 to 1867. Published in New Orleans, it was directed toward the interests of both planters and small farmers, advocating southern rights and providing a platform for social, commercial, cultural and political interests. It was so identified with the southern cause that it could not survive in Reconstruction, reminding former readers that the cause was lost (Paskoff, 1-8).

merely a "name" when individuals are at liberty to sing hymns and bury their dead— derives from the mystical quality of slave singing, as though the "melody and compass" of their voices which freely range over a distance are somehow equivalent to their physical beings: they must be as free as their voices. There was a sentimental nineteenth century belief in the ineffable quality of music— its power to transport the soul— that was described in the second verse of a poem by the ever-popular Longfellow, "The Arrow and the Song:"

I breathed a song into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For who has sight so keen and strong,
That it can follow the flight of a song? (467)

Longfellow's song, which, in the third verse, is "found again in the heart of a friend," is as free as the air, can travel anywhere, and is as invisible as the spirit it is meant to represent— that quality of uniqueness which we share with our friends. Singing did not simply move the nineteenth century listener, but functioned as a mysterious agent of release from the physical body. It is not surprising that "Viator" uses the term "compass" to describe not only the vocal range of the slave voices but to suggest the twelve points of a compass where the song can travel, where "No sight [is] so keen" that it can follow. Nor is it surprising that that the popular idea of the transporting power of song should be applied to the slaves. Every school child in antebellum America could recite "The Arrow and the Song," and most young ladies could play "On Wings of Song" on the spinnet. "Viator" and most other people with middle class values projected what they believed were

universal qualities onto slave singing. While it was still recognized as uniquely African, the slave singing was song nevertheless, and subject to popular confidence in its liberating value.

Northerners were also influenced by popular fiction, such as John Pendleton Kennedy's Swallow Barn, or a Sojourn in the Old Dominion (1832 and 1854) and Joseph Holt Ingraham's The Sunny South, or The Southerner at Home (1860) which reinforced the fascinating "otherness" of the South, along with its Cavalier tradition of courtliness, courtesy, and open-handedness. The tremendous popularity of Sir Walter Scott, whose death in 1832 did nothing to diminish the wide circulation of Ivanhoe, The Heart of Midlothian, Kenilworth, and the "Waverly Novels," fueled the general interest in wild and romantic landscapes presided over by lordly aristocrats. Thus Kennedy describes the slave's quarters in Swallow Barn as a collection of hovels which "formed an exceedingly picturesque landscape" and which "were embowered under old and majestic trees...the rudeness of their construction rather enhanced the attractiveness of the scene" (449).

But it was the model of the aristocrat in his romantic English landscape that formed Joseph Holt Ingraham's version of the Slave Owner Narrative in The Sunny South. Ingraham sets his plantation in an English rather than a Scottish landscape because the western frontier of Tennessee, where his novel takes place, "bears a striking resemblance to that in the best part of England." In this epistolary novel, which is less a plotted story than a series of detailed sketches, the charming young narrator, Kate Conygnham, has come from Massachusetts to Colonel Peyton's baronial estate ("the planters here count their estates rather by miles than acres") as a governess to his daughter. Tucker makes an unabashed effort to persuade northern readers that life in

the South is not only fair to the slaves but an exotic and necessary balance to the plain and colorless society of the pilgrim North. In addition to making Kate an articulate and observant narrator, Ingraham gives her a guilt-free appetite for the *accoutrements* of wealth, enabling the reader to take pleasure in the luxuries that northerners think of as self-indulgent and indolent:

How differently brought up are we Yankee girls from the Southern girls, who never do anything themselves, being always attended by a shadow of a little negress, or an ancient mammy! For my part, I find it very pleasant:— 'Eda, a glass of water;' or, 'Eda, bring me a book from the parlor below;' or, 'Eda, hand me my fan;' or, 'Eda, a dozen other things.' Oh, it is very convenient; and I do believe a Northern girl in these circumstances, will, in a year, render herself more helpless than even a Southerner to the manor born. (53)

The characterization of slavery in The Sunny South contains less of the corn shucking of field hands and images of farming and cotton picking that Tucker foregrounded. Instead of a male outsider who can be expected to take an interest in plantation management and animal husbandry, Ingraham has provided a young woman who is focused on the trappings of luxury.

Through her eyes, slaves are seen as supernumeraries who manage every detail of a large and complicated estate while waiting upon its aristocracy "hand and foot." Tucker's theme of the blended family in a dangerous and unstable world is transformed into a household with a rigid hierarchy of slaves that is meant to underpin the stability of plantation life. The image of the "shadow of a little negress or an ancient mammy" spans generations, suggesting an eternal and ageless quality to the presence of slaves, but at the

same time suggesting an exclusivity that offers the slave "shadow" only to those who belong. In Ingraham's version of the South, the slaves have lost the status they had in Tucker as equal members of the family-- however illusory it was-- and have moved firmly into the background. In this luxurious world, made possible by elaborate service, one can abandon oneself to pleasure because it is clearly outside the accustomed range of things, yet still retains the familiarity and authority of Old England. The reader, it is implied, may indulge in the pleasures of the seraglio as long as they are served up in an English bower.

A direct appeal is made to the North, though not to northern men, in Kate's declaration that "I do believe a Northern girl in these circumstances, will, in a year, render herself more helpless than even a Southerner to the manor born." This ambiguous statement characterizes Kate's double-edged voice which manages to seduce and chastise at the same time. She has declared herself at the outset a "Yankee girl" from the "Pilgrim Lands," which sets the Puritan work ethic and plain dress of her ancestors in opposition to the aristocratic leisure and fancy dress of the indolent South. Kate implies that the northern sense of superiority founded upon busy industriousness will quickly dissolve in the presence of Eda, the willing shadow who flies to perform the least task or to satisfy the most transient whim. What is seductive about Kate's "Eda, do this or that" sequence is that the tasks requested and performed are all menial, as though there are no other chores worth performing. We forget Aggy and Bristow, who were essential members of the Grayson family because of their ability to remember the family history. It does not occur to us, in this tantalizing fantasy of eager service, that Kate cannot say "Eda, take a letter," or "Eda, prepare the math lessons for next

week." Ingraham's fantasy of the exotic South is of a perpetual vacation where the business of life must come to a standstill, and the slaves perform the southern equivalent to peeling grapes and waving fans. Like all seductions, it promises more than it can fulfill, since the promise of leisure contains a hidden curse of boredom.

Knowing that northern sensibilities will not tolerate idleness in the workforce-- however much they may be seduced with the fantasy of aristocratic leisure-- Ingraham's version of the slaves' "Quartier" at Overton Lodge, the Peyton mansion, is both exotic by its comparative opulence to the humbly romantic "quarters" of Swallow Barn, and neatly industrious, as though the "African village" were a collection of New England cottages:

...the "Quartier" or African village of the estate, the Negropolis of the slave population [is] composed of some thirty dwellings, white-washed, one story high, arranged on two streets that follow the margin of the pond. Each cottage is neat and comfortable, with a small garden patch behind it; and in front are rows of shade trees for the whole length of the street, growing near enough to each house to afford shade to the roofs (29).

This picture of contentment reads like Blake's vision of "England's green and pleasant land"-- the American recreation of an Agrarian utopia unspoiled by the "dark Satanic mills" of the industrial North. Though Colonel Peyton is far too grand to stroll through his Negropolis, the pastoral topos of the overhanging boughs-- like the hovels "embowered under old and majestic trees" at Swallow Barn-- represent the protection of the patron *sub tegmine fagi*-- at once the symbol of benevolence and aristocratic power.⁵ Ingraham

manages to have his world both ways: leisure without boredom, productivity without industry. He has abandoned Tucker's realism and the suffering that goes with it for the "Sunny South"—where the only shadows cast are the eagerly servile slaves.

This function of the negro culture in Ingraham's novel, as shadowing to the master's "real" life, provides three dimensionality to the picture scene. The pretty streets and neat cottages of the slave quarters frame the "big house" with its galleries, porticoes and piazza just as accounts of negro weddings and baptisms form humorous shadow rituals to the master's "real" ceremonies:

We had a wedding last week; Jenny, the sempstress, a pretty mulatress, being married to Charles, the ebony coachman...From the neighboring estates were several females, handsomely dressed, and wearing their mistress' willingly loaned jewels, so that, at this wedding of slaves, shone more jewels (thanks to the kind indulgence of masters and mistresses) than are often seen in more elegant assemblies...The hall was soon filled, and as far as I could see into the piazza beyond was a sea of wooly heads, of "cultured" gentlemen and ladies... The colonel read the service for the ceremony in a clear and solemn voice; and all passed off with the utmost decorum and gravity. The bride was not kissed by the colonel! (144)

⁵ The author of this exoticized Arcadia, Joseph Holt Ingraham, was born in Maine but transferred early to the South and describes it with the zeal of a convert. Unlike George Tucker or even John Pendleton Kennedy, Ingraham was a nationally best-selling author of sensational novels. Upon his entry into the Episcopalian priesthood, he began writing religious novels. His popular trilogy, The Prince of the House of David, The Pillar of Fire, and The Throne of David are forerunners of the religio-historical trend in fiction that produced Ben-Hur, Barabas, and The Robe.

This marriage pantomime, like a Tom Thumb wedding, is not sanctified by a minister, but given shadow authenticity with borrowed clothing and jewelry, and peripheral status by being enacted in the foyer, the kitchen galleries, and the piazza rather than the central rooms. Unlike the instability of the scene in Tucker's representation of Bristow and Aggy, who take on the white identity so convincingly that the line between black and white is blurred, Ingraham has mastered the damning smile of the baptismal naming scene cited at the opening of this chapter. The lowgrade ridicule that passes for affectionate humor in The Sunny South separates the races ruthlessly, no matter how much the slaves are allowed or encouraged to imitate their masters. Thus the amused condescension of the narrator, remarking on the slaves' decorum and gravity (as though one might expect Africans to burst into tribal chants) highlights the imitative shape that gives form to the lives of the masters. "Give me 'cullered gemmen' at a 'cullered party' for your true and genuine politeness!," Kate exclaims in her letter; "The white gemmen are not one half so courteously polite to us white ladies, as *they* are to their 'fair sec!'" (145). Ingraham not only employs negro dialect, which has become a popular strategy for slave owner narrators by midcentury, but has Kate imitating the dialect, as though saying "colored gentlemen" in standard English would be an oxymoron; only "cullered gemmen" can describe the phenomenon of a slave who imitates the dress and manner of an authentic-- which is to say white-- gentleman.

A further example of how far the southern view of the negro position in the family has evolved away from Tucker's position is when Kate writes in one of her letters that "..these familiar looking negroes, which we see every day about us, are indelibly *foreigners!* Yet what Southerner looks upon his

slave as a barbarian, from a strange, barbarous land, domesticated in his own house, his attendant at table, the nurse of his children? Yet no alien in America is so much a foreigner as the negro!" (117) Edward Said's observation about the relationship between European culture and the Orient has application here: "European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self" (3). The ladies in The Sunny South willingly lend their jewels to their slaves in order to enhance the "reality" of the slaves as their shadow selves, but visitors from the North, whether actual travelers like "Viator" in *DeBow's Review* or invented northerners like Kate Conyngham, participate in this backgrounding of slaves out of a desire for the exotic. "The North itself always exhibited a curious Janus-faced attitude;" says W.J. Cash: "At the same time when its newspapers and its orators, led by the *Liberator*, were damning the South with unctious and zeal, it was also writing and reading histories which derived every planter from Cavalier noblemen, and novels which not only accepted the legend but embroidered it" (65). And if the economic relationship between southern cotton production and northern power mills is enhanced by a romantic belief in the exotic "otherness" of their trading partner, it is easy to understand why prosperous northerners might be reluctant to abandon their business trips and vacations to a conveniently nearby "foreign land" where all their desires for the strange-- for alien landscapes and submissive slaves-- might be satisfied.

The irresistible combination-- for white people of both regions-- of the foreign and the familiar, the domestic and the barbarous, made the problem of contradicting this argument formidable. What could the slave narrator do to shed the bright light of reality on the southern myth and show it to white

readers as the invented construct that it was? One thing that had not changed between the time Tucker wrote his account of plantation life and Ingraham wrote his: the slave was still seen as happily dancing and singing, whether at corn shuckings or weddings, and of praising the masters with the highest form of flattery-- imitation.

III. The Voice as Humanity:

Sad Songs and Uncontrolled Laughter in Douglass

Frederick Douglass, with his remarkable literary voice, was probably the best equipped fugitive slave to try to fight the image of the "Sunny South." The general strategy of abolitionists and slave narrators against this seductive fantasy was strong doses of reality-- the Slave Narratives gave explicit accounts of beatings, overwork, poor food and clothing, and the dismal privation of an empty future. Douglass, in his Narrative of 1845, added to the list of slave owner crimes while striking a telling blow to the pseudo-Arcadian ideal by exposing the suffering at the heart of slave singing. He subverted the idea that slaves were jolly, irresponsible, child-like creatures by making it clear that "slaves sing when they are most unhappy." A generation before W.E.B. DuBois wrote the final word on the origin and meaning of the sorrow songs, Douglass made a brave attempt to prevent slave owners from appropriating slave singing into their system of justifications. Although slave owners were well aware of the nature of the sorrow songs, they believed that the songs only introduced a piquant minor note, making the slaves seem all the happier when their sorrows evaporated with the rapidity of childhood squalls. "Their griefs are transient," said Thomas Jefferson: "Those numberless afflictions, which render it doubtful

whether heaven has given life to us in mercy or in wrath, are less felt, and sooner forgotten with them" (139). Douglass is "utterly astonished" at such ideas, which he rejects completely: "It is impossible to conceive of a greater mistake." While Vinnie Brunson, a former slave who remembered bondage a century after Douglass and forty years after emancipation, was at liberty to be straightforward about slave singing-- "If he wuz happy, [singing] made him happier"-- Douglass could make no such confession, since it would have been held as evidence against the humanity of his race.⁶ He was limited to the abolitionist agenda, the very closed pattern of story telling which their white sponsors thought would be most effective in persuading borderline audiences and indifferent readers during antislavery campaigns. James Olney, in "I Was Born: Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature," has described the format of Slave Narratives and the abolitionist requirements that gave them their characteristic form. When fugitives were adopted into the political battle for nationwide emancipation, they had very little freedom in the manner in which they told their stories:

When the abolitionists invited an ex-slave to tell his story of experience in slavery to an anti-slavery convention, and when [the abolitionists] subsequently sponsored the appearance of that story in print, they had certain clear expectations, well understood by themselves and well understood by the ex-slave too, about the proper content to be observed, the proper theme to be developed, and the proper form to be followed. (Davis and Gates, 158)

It did not serve the abolitionists' interests to have the slaves reinforce the

⁶ Vinnie Brunson is quoted in B.A. Botkin, Lay My Burden Down (144).

prejudiced stereotypes held by people in either the North or the South by offering reports reminiscent of George Tucker's description of "humble creatures" singing their corn songs. Fugitive slave narratives were to emphasize the brutality of slavery and the misery of the slaves. They were not, for obvious reasons, to recount the slaves' ability to have happy times even in the midst of suffering, or to mention the individual generosity of slave owners. These limitations required slave narrators to control any sense of spontaneity they had in their descriptions of themselves and their lives, and to muster their anecdotes about slavery and accusations against slave owners in the sequence that was believed to be most effective. This yielded a body of work that Olney describes as having an "overwhelming *sameness*" that causes the reader "to come away dazed at the mere repetitiveness of it all" (Davis and Gates, 148). It was as if the burden of slavery had stripped individual fugitives of their personal characteristics and made them into representative figures of a political institution. And while it was true that the main objectives of African Americans and abolitionists were the same, it was also true that the fugitives escaped physical enslavement in the South only to have their stories held hostage in the North. A narrator with the genius of Frederick Douglass was able to enrich his story with metaphor within the confines of the abolitionist template, but the majority of the six thousand narrations Olney identified suffered the depersonalization of their individual voices.

The antidote to this form of capture, in which the slave was asked to adapt his narrative to the political needs of his sponsors, was the fictional account of slavery given in African American novels such as Douglass' The Heroic Slave (1853) and William Wells Brown's Clotel; or, The President's

Daughter (1853). It is true that the fugitive slaves who had the inventiveness and writing ability to elude a sense of "sameness" in their abolitionist narratives were also the ones who invented the African American novel. But it is interesting to observe how the differences between the two genres allow for more authenticity in the fictional voice than in the "authentic" slave narrative.

In The Heroic Slave, for instance, the fugitive hero is hiding in a tree when a gang of slaves arrive to cut down firewood. Though of no consequence to the plot line-- they threaten accidentally to discover the fugitive, but do not-- Douglass describes these slaves as "a gay set; and they would make the woods resound with that uncontrolled laughter for which we, as a race, are remarkable" (40). The novel, which is a fictional retelling of the *Creole* mutiny led by Madison Washington, who is also the "heroic slave" of the title, has nothing to gain by this description of the wood-chopping crew or their uncontrolled laughter. The story leaves them behind immediately, and they are nothing more than a brief impression pressed upon the reader's mind with the ephemeral effect of Barthes' "third meaning"-- something "filmic" which begins where language and metalanguage end. The very unlikeliness of the image is what gives it its value-- an observation about a "remarkable" trait among slaves which, like slave singing, reinforces white stereotypes of slave contentedness and the transience of their griefs. Why, then, would Douglass permit his fictional slave narrator to make an observation not only about slave laughter, but about its nature as a racial quality?

Douglass locates the heroism and leadership of the main character, Madison Washington, not only in his Herculean build and brave intelligence,

but in his voice: "that unfailing index of the soul," which, "though full and melodious, had that in it which could terrify as well as charm"(28). Before the outbreak of the mutiny on the *Creole*, a sailor describes Madison Washington's heroic qualities in terms of his voice:

His manner and bearing were such that no one could suspect him of a murderous purpose...He seldom spake to any one, and when he did speak, it was with the utmost propriety. His words were well chosen, and his pronunciation equal to that of any schoolmaster. It was a mystery to us *where* he got his knowledge of language, but as little was said to him, none of us knew the extent of his intelligence and ability till it was too late.
(65)

The absence of dialect is understood by Douglass, as well as slave owner narrators like Tucker, to be a signifier of intelligence and nobility. Like Aggy and Bristow, whose clarity of language aligns them with the free white members of the Grayson family, the ability to speak standard English suggests trustworthiness. The sailor claims that "no one could suspect [Madison Washington] of a murderous purpose" because his speech and comportment were like that "of any schoolmaster." Since the narrator himself is an unschooled sailor (though his language would not suggest it) the image of a schoolmaster is that of the authority that comes from the perfection of language-- the power to say anything, which is the power to persuade. This power is mysterious not only in itself, but in its origins: "It was a mystery to us *where* he got his knowledge of language..." since it resides in the unexpected form of a transported slave. The other powerful device at work for the slave is silence, since the sailors could have no way of knowing

Madison Washington was dangerous because he kept silent and did not reveal the power of his language until it was too late. The irony of Douglass' heroic slave is that he does not lead the mutiny by virtue of his physical strength or savagery, but by virtue of his most refined and civilized traits: language and restraint. Douglass authenticates his voice further by placing it in the mouth of a white sailor who, when accused of being an abolitionist because he survived a mutiny in which the slaves sailed to freedom, threatens to kill his accuser saying "*The man does not live who shall offer me an insult with impunity*" (63). Thus the reader has a trustworthy narrator who, by using refined language himself, is accepted as a judge of language, and by extension, a judge of character.

Fiction frees Douglass of the restraints of abolitionist political agenda, by allowing him to represent slaves in the full range of their humanity-- uncontrolled laughter, silence, perfect standard English-- without bowing to the abolitionists' "representative slave" with his/her narrow menu of sufferings and complaints. Abolitionists wished to confine the slave image to the sorrow songs--a narrow band of indignation and suffering that did not express the full range of the human personality, while slave owners wished to confine the slave image to the corn shucking songs and the negro spirituals-- permissible comforts for a race with transient feelings and simple needs. But Douglass recognized that the slave voice was the best metaphor of negro humanity-- the true signifier of the slave's human worth in a world that mistook skin color for "the unfailing index of the soul."

Of all the African American qualities Douglass might have selected to use as the emblem of reality to separate white people from their attachment to the southern myth, and to arouse indifferent northerners to the anti-

slavery cause, it is not surprising that he should have selected the voice in all of its manifestations-- singing, laughing, and speaking. Douglass had come into his own powers through finding both his prophetic and his physical voice. By 1853 he was a national figure renowned for his fiery speeches, splendid speaking voice, and oratorical expertise. William McFeely in his 1991 biography of Douglass, relates several eye-witness reports of Douglass' unforgettable powers:

A reporter for the *Christian Recorder* left one of the richest accounts we have of "the magnetism and melody of his wonderfully elastic voice." The reporter allowed that the printed text gave a "fair view of the *ideas*, but no printed sentences can convey any adequate idea of the manner, the tone of voice, the gesticulation, the action, the round, soft, swelling pronunciation with which Frederick Douglass spoke, and which no orator we have ever heard can use with such grace, eloquence and effect as he." (213)

Douglass was compared to the greatest orators of his day, as having "a voice that rivaled Webster's in its richness, and in the depth and sonorousness of its cadences," which "made up such an ideal of an orator as the listeners never forgot" (125). Even at the end of his life, when he was heckled on the platform at a "Colored People's Day" rally organized to fight the Jim Crow laws, Douglass overcame infirmity and exhaustion to deliver one of his last memorable speeches: "Full, rich and deep came the sonorous tones, compelling attention, drowning out the catcalls as an organ would a penny whistle" (371). On the occasion of his death in 1895, Elizabeth Cady Stanton recalled once sitting on a podium with Douglass as he transfixed his audience:

"Around him sat the great antislavery orators of the day, earnestly watching the effect of his eloquence on that immense audience, that laughed and wept by turns, completely carried away by the wondrous gifts of his pathos and humor" (383).

The pathos and humor he wielded with his voice-- like his heroic slave, Madison Washington, whose voice "had that in it which could terrify as well as charm"-- signified two poles within which were contained the full range of human emotion. His prophetic voice, which terrified when denouncing the crimes of slave owners and their supporters, was also the voice of uncontrolled laughter among the slaves who, in spite of their suffering, had the ability to enjoy one another, keep up their spirits, and have faith in the future. These were not the two-dimensional traits of simple people, but the "deep" "rich", and "resounding" indexes of the African American soul. If Douglass' voice was like an organ, then his hecklers-- and by extension the racist voices of the slave owner tradition-- were thin, shrill penny whistles with souls to match. Writing fiction gave Douglass the freedom to express in writing what he was not allowed to express in the narrow confines of a fugitive slave narrative-- the laughter that was not contentment with slavery, but rather was contentment with the self. Since the slave owners and their descendents in the Jim Crow tradition could not see the African American in any capacity other than as their own shadow-selves, the African American voice, whether singing, laughing, or speaking, would be consistently misinterpreted. There was, however, the occasional moment when, in spite of ideology or logic, the emotive message of the negro slave-- suddenly, unexpectedly-- got through to the slave owner.

IV. The Haunting of Mary Boykin Chesnut

In the final quotation above, Mary Boykin Chesnut finds the "soul-stirring camp-meeting hymns" to be "the saddest of all earthly music, weird and depressing beyond my powers to describe." In this passage of her journal, she records a Sunday morning spent at a negro church on a plantation in South Carolina, where the planter family and their guests attend church with the slaves and listen to the preaching of a negro minister who, she reports, "preached Hell fire so hot, I felt singed, if not parboiled." She sits in the plantation church taking note of the members of the congregation, what they wore ("The house women, in white aprons and white turbans, were the nicest looking,") and what transpired. She describes the prayer session, in which the driver, "the stateliest darkey I ever saw," prays in a violently excited way: "He clasped his hands at the end of every sentence, and his voice rose to the pitch of a shrill shriek, yet was strangely clear and musical, occasionally in a plaintive minor key that went to your heart. Sometimes it rang out like a trumpet. I wept bitterly." But Mary Chestnut is not easily convinced, and concludes that the histrionics of the prayer leader were but sound and fury, manipulating feelings but not thoughts:

It was all sound, however, and emotional pathos. There was literally nothing in what he said. The words had no meaning at all. It was the devotional passion of voice and manner which was so magnetic. The Negroes sobbed and shouted and swayed backward and forward...It was a little too exciting for me. I would very much have liked to shout, too. (149)

She freely acknowledges that she is subject to the same emotional stirrings as

the slaves, and is not speaking ironically when she says "I would very much have liked to shout, too." Her sense of decorum and place in the southern hierarchy prevent her from participating in the negro preacher's call and response, but she "weeps bitterly" because the free expression of emotions around her makes it permissible to unburden herself of a backlog of feelings. She is cynical of its power to convert, however: "Now all this leaves not a trace behind... those who stole before, steal on, in spite of sobs and shouts on Sunday." In her stalwart Anglican way, Mary Chesnut mistrusts any message that does not consist of conscious thought encased in meaningful language. She does not question her conclusion that "the words had no meaning at all," and in this is typical of slave owners who see the slaves as savage or childlike because their modes of communication do not participate in western logic or abstract thinking. It never occurs to her that the words have no meaning *for her* and that the sobbing of the negroes is in response to a message that goes beyond the "emotional pathos" she is able to understand. In spite of this distance, however, something breaks through:

Suddenly, as I sat wondering what next, they broke out into one of those soul-stirring Negro camp-meeting hymns. To me this is the saddest of all earthly music, weird and depressing beyond my powers to describe. (149)

Though she cannot find her way to rational meaning as she listens to the preacher's voice, the music signals to her that there is a message, but that it is beyond her powers to describe. It is weird, and-- because the implications of the message she only dimly perceives are terrible for her-- she knows it is depressing. Her journal goes on to another subject, as if the momentary penetration of the sorrow songs were an insignificant phenomenon. Only

later, after the surrender, does her journal begin to reflect the tragic sense of loss that touched her in the plantation church.

Mary Chesnut is the perfect narrator, because her curiosity, clever writing, and humor-- hard-edged, sometimes, but absent of the smug white supremacy of Joseph Holt Ingraham-- give us a view of her life that is immediate and believable. Since she is writing in her diary, she has no other requirement than to unburden herself of her impressions and to record the daily events of her life. If this particular act-- more candid for being private-- is performed by a person who is famous or situated at the heart of historical events, the observations recorded are somewhat compromised by the certain knowledge that others will want to read and publish what is ordinarily a personal form. Because Mary Chesnut was an intimate of high-ranking Confederate politicians, generals, and their wives, her spontaneity is brought into question. When she re-copied her diary after the war, which had been written originally on odd scraps of scarce paper, she had an opportunity to elide, expand, and edit her own work in the light of her knowledge of the worth of her wartime diary and the destinies of many people mentioned in it. Yet her personality, revealed over 400,000 words, shows an unstudied intelligence and wit that bears none of the stiffness or polemics of rehearsed writing. Whatever improvements or elisions she made would have been in the interests of discretion toward others rather than censorship of her own impressions and opinions. ⁷

What are the camp-meeting hymns that Mary Chesnut finds so weird?

⁷ Mary Chesnut used her wartime diaries as a basis for an expanded book she wrote twenty years after the events themselves. This book, written in the 1880s and published for the first time in 1902, was called by its editors A Diary from Dixie. Subsequent editions in 1949 and 1981 added more material, but the original wartime diary was not published until 1984 by C. Vann Woodward and Elisabeth Muhlenfeld. I am using the 1981 edition of A Diary from Dixie.

They are not the rhythmical laboring songs, the "shouts" that kept the slaves working at a certain pace in the fields, nor are they the more festive corn shucking songs. Church meetings provided a more candid, confessional atmosphere where open lament and expressions of hope for the promised land were permissible, so that religious songs were focused on the slave's condition. We know what many of these old hymns were-- negro spirituals such as "Go Down, Moses," "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "Nobody Knows the Trouble I Seen," and "Roll, Jordan, Roll," which are familiar today, as well as less familiar songs such as "When I Can Read My Title Clear" (Blassingame, 204). These, too, are the songs DuBois names as "Sorrow Songs" and uses the same term as Mary Chesnut to characterize them:

They that walked in darkness sang songs in the olden days--
Sorrow Songs-- for they were weary at heart. And so before each
thought that I have written in this book [The Souls of Black
Folk] I have set a phrase, a haunting echo of these weird old
songs in which the soul of the black slave spoke to men. (204)

Both Chesnut and DuBois are using the word "weird" in its sense of being unearthly, mysterious, or supernatural. Mary Chesnut senses in the camp-meeting hymns both the power of the supernatural and the threat of judgement associated with death and the ultimate confrontation with final things. She is writing in 1861, when the rigors of war have taken hold in the South, and the dashing young men of April are returning the maimed veterans of October. After years of patriotic defense, the institution at the heart of the war is being constantly subjected to the question "Is slavery worth *this* or *this*?" The defense of slavery was a patriotic touchstone before the war, when a negotiated settlement was still possible, and the worst threat to

the South seemed to be a limitation of the Western spread of slavery, or the imposition of gradual emancipation which had been advocated by southern abolitionists for years. But the southern commitment to slavery was being tested in 1861 against the increasingly brutal loss of life and the inexorable stripping away of southern resources. The slave owner was not only faced with the immediacy of death but with the supernatural issue of whether the "sacred cause" was truly sacred. No wonder Mary Chesnut, who in her long and detailed journal could find the words to describe people and events so vividly that the reader enters fully into her world, could not find words to describe the weird, depressing quality of the sorrow songs. Frederick Douglass shares Mary Chesnut's term to describe his own feelings when he hears his fellow slaves sing: "The hearing of those wild notes always depressed my spirit, and filled me with ineffable sadness" (263). The songs had become the shared territory of grief for both the slaves and slave owners. They had become a field upon which Mary Chesnut was projecting her own indescribable sense of loss, rage, and doubt. And as the war persisted, and every battle brought reports of butchery in the thousands on both sides, songs by white composers began to speak for the sorrows of slave owners in the same way that slave songs had been speaking for generations. "Just Before the Battle, Mother," "The Vacant Chair," and "Lorena" were songs that moved both sides, North and South, some so powerfully that the Generals had to forbid their soldiers from singing them before battle.

But these songs went far beyond the "emotional pathos" of pure feeling expressed by slaves suffering bondage and slave owners suffering the consequences of a terrible war. The message that Mary Chesnut had an inkling of was that of the slaves own condition, and the implied accusation

contained within camp-meeting hymns like "Go Down, Moses" of the inconsistency between the slave owners' profession of faith and their behavior as owners of other human beings as slaves. The relentlessness of death during the war years, when Mary Chesnut records loss after loss in her journal, places the Christian reality of judgement at the forefront of the mind, in a way that does not occur in peacetime. Was the foundation of the Confederacy unable to take hold because it had a sin at its core? Were the loss of lives, resources, and hope a pronouncement of God's judgement on the South for its tenacious grip on the peculiar institution?

Slave owners had been vulnerable to the accusation of religious hypocrisy since the earliest days of slavery, and especially since the rise of Enlightenment ideals in the eighteenth century began to eradicate world-wide slavery. As Kenneth Stampp points out, American settlers were comfortable with slavery at the outset:

To the north and to the south of them Englishmen, Dutchmen, Spaniards, and Portuguese held Indians, Negroes, and whites in bondage... But antebellum Southerners lived less comfortably in their world of the nineteenth century. They found themselves increasingly isolated, increasingly on the defensive, increasingly compelled to improvise, as the code by which their fathers had justified holding slaves became less and less intelligible. (18-19)

Religious justification of slavery was at once the most fertile and dangerous avenue of defense for the South, since the slaves could use the same arguments and the same Bible to counter all evidence posed against them. Thornton Stringfellow, author in 1841 of "A Brief Examination of Scripture

Testimony on the Institution of Slavery," musters an impressive roll call of ancient patriarchs, apostles, and Jesus himself, to prove that slavery is a sacred institution (Faust, 138-167). His arguments summarize the typical slave owner position by locating God's authority for slavery in the acceptability of slaves in Greek and Roman social systems, the Hebrew law governing treatment of chattel slaves (Exodus 21-22), the instruction in the Epistles for slaves to be obedient to their masters (Ephesians 6:5-7), and the direction of Christian slaves to honor unbelieving masters (Romans 13:7). Stringfellow constructs airtight syllogisms that address and demolish every conceivable counter-argument. He concludes with the classic "Christian" argument that slavery has saved many souls from perdition: "Under the Gospel, [slavery] has brought within the range of the Gospel influence, millions of Ham's descendants among ourselves, who, but for this institution, would have sunk down to eternal ruin..." (Faust, 166).

Yet no amount of scholarly logic and Biblical exegesis could dismiss the simple claims of slaves like Olaudah Equiano, the eighteenth century slave narrator who addresses his white audience in prophetic tones: "O, ye nominal Christians! might not an African ask you, 'learned you this from your God, who says unto you, Do unto all men as you would men should do unto you?' Is it not enough that we are torn from our country and friends, to toil for your luxury and lust of gain?" (38) Frederick Douglass is equally damning when, in 1845, he addresses the "*slaveholding religion* of this land:"

...with no possible reference to Christianity proper; for between the Christianity of this land, and the Christianity of Christ, I recognize the widest possible difference-- so wide, that to receive the one as good, pure, and holy, is of necessity to reject the other

as bad, corrupt, and wicked... I can see no reason for calling the religion of this land Christianity. I look upon it as the climax of all misnomers, the boldest of all frauds, and the grossest of all libels. (326)

The stentorian parallelism of Douglass is matched in fervor if not in rhetoric by Henry Bibb, an escaped slave who in 1852 mounted a letter-writing campaign from Canada against his former master, Albert G. Sibley, a Methodist preacher who is relentlessly confronted with the inconsistencies of his "slaveholding religion" by his chatechising former slave:

Sir: You will perceive that I have not yet done with you: as I promised in my last that if you did not answer soon to the charges brought against you through my letters, that you might expect to hear soon from me again... Have you repented of selling my brother George, from his wife and children, after having set under his preaching over and again and communing with and acknowledging him as a Christian brother, in the same church with yourself! A man professing Godliness as you do, who has willfully separated husband and wife, children and parents, and sold a minister of the Gospel into perpetual bondage, is an open violator of the divine law, and must without repentance, be banished from the presence of his God (Blassingame, 54).

Unlike the generalized, public accusations of Equiano and Douglass, Bibb makes himself missionary to a single slave owning heathen, exploiting the ironic trope of the whited sepulchre in the sinful preacher. Like the Reverend Dimmesdale, one wonders if Albert G. Sibley found a scarlet "S" burnt into

his chest as a result of these excoriating letters. Though we do not know Sibley's reaction, the evidence of slave owners' guilt over their increasing inability to reconcile the judgement of their Christian law with the justification of slavery is discovered in the spontaneous revelations of slave owners like Mary Chesnut, who are haunted by "weird" and "depressing" hymns which play upon her sense of the sacred, reinforcing the burden of slavery and her suspicion that the "sacred cause" is not blessed. Equiano, Douglass, and Bibb were enabled by their literacy and their escapes into freedom to articulate the slaves' demands and warnings; but the voiceless slaves who remained in bondage relied for their expression upon the sorrow songs. As the evidence mounted against them, slave owners like Mary Chesnut began to have "ears to hear:"

When Israel was in Egypt's land,
 Let my people go;
 Oppressed so hard they could not stand,
 Let my people go.

Thus saith the Lord, bold Moses said,
 Let my people go;
 If not, I'll smite your first born dead,
 Let my people go,

Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land;
 Tell old Pharaoh, to let my people go.

Chapter Three

Testifying: The Rhetoric of Persuasion

"For he who would have all men trust his judgement as to what is expedient and honorable, should possess and be regarded as possessing genuine wisdom and excellence of character."

Quintillian

Institutio Oratoria, III, viii, 13

"But where will the returning traveller see the accumulated cotton profits of twenty years in Mississippi? Ask the cotton-planter for them, and he will point in reply not to dwellings, libraries, churches, school houses, mills, railroads, or anything of the kind; he will point to his negroes-- to almost nothing else."

Frederick Law Olmsted

The Cotton Kingdom (21)

"To you, generous, noble-minded men and women, of the south-- you, whose virtue, and magnamity, and purity of character, are the greater for the severer trial it has encountered... Have you not, in your own secret souls, in your own private conversings, felt that there are woes and evils, in this accursed system, far beyond what are here shadowed, or can be shadowed?"

Harriet Beecher Stowe

Uncle Tom's Cabin (470)

In the great argument over slavery, the balance was tipped against the South when northerners began to entertain the abolitionists' view that slave owners no longer possessed Quintillian's requirement for the trustworthy man: "genuine wisdom and excellence of character." The South had depended for a long time upon its Cavalier reputation for high honor, and the concomitant qualities of truthfulness and good judgement. If the honorable planter claimed that slavery was good for the negro and good for business, that was sufficient assurance for most of his northern brothers. But the abolitionists and early slave narrators introduced an element of doubt into the northern mind with their relentless attacks on the integrity of people who called themselves Christians while depriving others of their human rights. The southern gentleman was thus forced to defend his veracity against the gathering opinions of northerners like Harriet Beecher Stowe and Frederick Law Olmsted; he was contending for the support of neutral northerners, or, at least, those who would concede that the Constitution permitted him to lead whatever style of life he found appropriate and profitable. The three decades between 1830 and 1860 saw a public relations war of tremendous proportions focused on the northern reader. And who was the slave owner's opponent in this competition? Not the North itself-- that would come later when the balance had been fully weighed against the South and war was inevitable. The southerner's opponent was his own slave, who had taken his fight for freedom to the court of public opinion.

This is the point at which the two-ply yarn of the Slave and Slave Owner Narratives becomes most entangled: where each voice attempts to establish its veracity with the northern reader. Whose version of events in

the South was to be believed? How could the different accounts be verified? Since slaves were thought to be universally illiterate and unteachable, written accounts of captivity by fugitive slaves required testimonial prefaces from white people who would vouch for them. The slave narrator also included a preface that was, in substance, a sworn oath that the story was not false testimony, since the slave's account was suspected to have been motivated by ignorance or vindictiveness against the slave owner, or to have been manipulated or purchased by forces hostile to southern interests. Accounts of slavery by slave owners were also subject to testimonials, though in less overt ways due to the cultural necessity of assuming the veracity of a southern lady or gentleman. In order to save face, the slave owner had to maintain the fiction of being presumed truthful by fellow white people in the North, even though abolitionists were creating an environment in which the word of a black person might actually be accepted over the word of a white. Since the slave owners could not enlist testimonials the way slave narrators did, they were forced to rely upon rhetorical strategies to authenticate their narratives and to persuade the reader that their version of events was the correct one.

Thus the two genres of narrative represent a struggle for believability between the slave and slave owner which is like a court room drama, with each side standing before the bar arguing its case, presenting evidence, providing corroborating witnesses, and using all the lawyer's rhetorical tricks to arouse the emotions of pity, fear, indignation, and rage. On one side of the court is the impoverished, illiterate plaintiff, alien, kidnapped from home, and attempting to receive justice in a system where all the power, custom, and wealth of society is arrayed against him. On the other side is the wealthy, congenial, educated defendant, related by birth to the judge and sharing

financial arrangements with the jury. Although the plaintiff has an excellent attorney to argue for him, and though he argues with increasing eloquence for himself as the case drags on, the evidence is stacked against him for decades, even centuries. In the early years, the defendant needs no attorney-- he simply speaks for himself, laughs the case off, points to the plaintiff in a gesture of self-evident dismissal and goes to dinner with the judge and the jury, his fellow citizens with whom he fought the Revolution, and with whom he is deeply engaged in building a nation. The only strategy available to the plaintiff is to keep the case alive, no matter how hopeless it seems. Like *Jarndyce and Jarndyce*, the perennially unsolved case in Bleak House, neither side can make the other go away, and so the litigation continues at a dull pace-- an annoyance to the defendant, a wretched hope for the plaintiff.

But unlike Dickens' relentless case, which destroys all who become involved with it, the case of *Slaves vs. Slave Owners* in America picks up steam in mid-century. After the acceptance of slavery in the colonial and early national periods, during which economic dependence on the institution developed in both regions-- as well as in England after the invention of the cotton gin in 1794-- the moral argument that had been pressed by the abolitionists since the 1830s, and which southern abolitionists had been arguing since the institution of chattel slavery, began to turn the tide with previously uncommitted northerners. As the argument became more serious, it was no longer possible for the defendants to treat it lightly. Like any court case in which the same facts are in dispute, the strategies that developed on both sides were remarkable for their interrelatedness. Almost every accusation raised by one side was countered by the other, and every point of defense set forward by one side was attacked and dismantled by the other. The

briefs being argued were in the form of novels, poems, and political essays. The court of public opinion was being swayed by literary argument, and anyone with a pen and a point of view could join in.

I. Northern Rhetoric: Frederick Law Olmsted and Harriet Beecher Stowe

The jury in this court of appeals consisted of northerners whose unresolved concerns about the nature of slavery, the equality of negroes, and the economic interdependency of the northern and southern systems were the field of contention between the two sides. Their attention was not only commanded by slaves and slave owners, but by fellow northerners who had resolved these issues to their satisfaction, or who were working through the issues in public.

Frederick Law Olmsted's unresolved feelings about slavery, and his interest in the subject that brought him lasting fame-- agriculture and landscape gardening-- led him to take a trip to the unfamiliar southern states from October, 1852 to February, 1853. He set out on his journey with an open mind, expressing to his father before his trip that they in the North should "*reason* with [southerners] as though *we might* be the mistaken ones, for I truly think in my heart we *may* be" (xxxvii). Commissioned by the New York Daily Times to send back his observations, he was praised for his balanced view by moderates in both North and South, but blamed by anti-slavery journals for pieces that, they claimed, were "designed to gloss over the evils of Slavery, and to discuss the subject from a false basis" (xviii). The "false basis" was economic rather than moral, as the quotation above indicates, taken from the preface of his collected articles, The Cotton Kingdom (1861). Olmsted's uncertainty was, in the end, resolved by the lack of

productivity he found in the South, and his conclusion that the negro would be "of tenfold more in value to the commonwealth than they are" as slaves (xliii). But his rhetoric was not devoid of moral argument. Typical of his buried appeal to the values of his fellow northerners was the observation that the Mississippi planter will proudly point to his cotton profits as residing "not [in] dwellings, libraries, churches, school houses, mills, railroads, or anything of the kind; he will point to his negroes-- to almost nothing else."

Olmsted is arguing from the premise that the profits from cotton should be measured in social benefits to the community and not in labor (though if the planter had pointed to new acreage or farm implements the objection, one suspects, would not been so indignant, if it had been offered at all). Olmsted implies that since the profits from twenty years of cotton farming have been re-invested in labor rather than those kinds of institutions which any northern industrialist, philanthropist, or minister would admire, that the profits are, in every meaningful sense, "unprofitable."

The cleverness of Olmsted's claim is that it folds several faulty generalizations together into a combined *ad populem/ad hominem* fallacy: that since the (implied) object of labor is social good rather than personal profit, and since the Mississippi farmer does not point to dwellings, libraries, churches, school houses, mills, or railroads to describe his profit (implying that the south is has none of these amenities), and since the Mississippi farmer points, instead, to his negroes, as though these cannot represent profit (even though, in the system as it existed in Mississippi, they could and did represent profit), that the Mississippi farmer must therefore be unproductive, self-centered, and, by implication, *against* all of those things symbolized by the sequence of benefits he did *not* point to: he must be *against* dwellings

(family life), libraries (knowledge), church (God), school houses (learning), mills (industry), and railroads (progress). Olmsted does not come right out and say that the Mississippi farmer is a bad man because he invests his profits in slaves, though that is what he wishes the reader to believe. Instead he implies that the farmer is lacking in all judgement, and that therefore the entire South is barren of all civilized amenities. Even the title, The Cotton Kingdom, implies to democracy-loving northerners something negative about the South. Yet Olmsted's book is full of highly articulate eyewitness accounts supported by statistics, and his conclusions about slavery and slave ownership are impressed upon the reader as part of a sequence of facts. Far from using the abolitionists' aggressive emotional and ethical arguments, Olmsted employs "weasel words" to arouse feeling in the northern populace about libraries, railroads, and churches, and then to turn those feelings against slave owners.

The Cotton Kingdom was published early in 1861, at the critical moment when negotiated settlements with the South were breaking down and a rationale was needed for bringing moderates to accept the extreme position of fighting to prevent secession. Although Olmsted's position on slavery was for gradual emancipation, his subtle condemnation of the South in The Cotton Kingdom-- so subtle that even The Southern Literary Messenger endorsed Olmsted's letters in the New York Daily Times-- established a form of argumentation that was very difficult for slave owners to contradict.

Harriet Beecher Stowe's argumentation could not be called subtle. Her controversial novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin: or Life Among the Lowly (1852), received such notoriety in the South and popularity in the North that it

seems now, to the contemporary mind, to have been the most powerful literary voice in the argument, if not the only voice that mattered in the end. Abraham Lincoln contributed to this notion with his ironic hyperbole, "So you're the little woman who wrote the book that made this great war;" along with the fact that Uncle Tom's Cabin sold 300,000 copies within a year, and was the first American novel to exceed one million in sales.¹ The source of its power, as Jane Tompkins has pointed out, was not so much anti-slavery polemics, but the marriage of three issues central to American culture in the 1850s: "Uncle Tom's Cabin retells the culture's central religious myth-- the story of the crucifixion-- in terms of the nation's greatest political conflict-- slavery-- and of its most cherished social beliefs-- the sanctity of motherhood and the family" (34). These issues were no less central to southern readers than to those in the North. Stowe's morality tale of a Christ-like slave who is "sold down the river" due to the mismanagement and uncertain values of a well-intentioned but weak slave owner was experienced in the South as a deadly insult to southern character. It was understood among the ladies of the Confederacy, as reported by Mary Boykin Chesnut, that Stowe employed specious argument to create a distorted picture of slavery; that she "would take an extraordinary freak of nature as a specimen of a class, a common type" (202). Her inaccuracies about slavery were patent, as Margaret Johnson Erwin expressed to a friend: "UTC [Uncle Tom's Cabin] is the *worst* piece of *endless* misrepresentation that I have ever read" (58).

But it is in her final chapter, "Concluding Remarks," that Stowe drops the veil of fiction and makes her abolitionist appeal directly to the public. By

¹ Lincoln's quote and a discussion of Stowe's impact on pre-Civil War politics can be found in James M. McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom: the Civil War Era (New York, Ballentine, 1988) 90.

addressing the question of "whether this narrative is a true one," she joins the plaintiff at the bar of public opinion as a character witness, and offers her fiction as non-fiction, attributing almost every character or incident to something she witnessed first hand or something she has on good authority. (467) Though such information violates the "hearsay" rule of testimony, Stowe is employing that branch of persuasive discourse that depends upon the emotions rather than logic or reason to animate an ethical response. Stowe was typical of sentimental novelists of her day in her appeal to the feelings, for which she has been criticized. But while emotional appeals were suspect in the academy, Stowe's masterly manipulation of them was consistent with the point of view of rhetoricians like the Scottish scholar George Scott, who advised his students that "So far, therefore, is it from being an unfair method of persuasion to move the passions, that there is no persuasion without moving them."² As Jane Tompkins has shown, Stowe was drawing upon a broad base of religious and domestic sentiment in the creation of her characters, particularly a familiarity with the scripture that aligned Uncle Tom, Eva, and Simon Legree with familiar types. Her audience was prepared to be moved, in effect, by the sacrifice and conversion of Jesus and his apostles.

In the quotation above, Stowe employs the rhetoric of the pulpit to address to the South in the particularly authoritarian manner of a preacher, whose use of the rhetorical question is an accusation rather than an appeal. Though the Calvinism of the Beecher family had been mitigated by the mid-nineteenth century-- and, indeed, was being rapidly replaced in New

² *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Book I, Ch. VII, quoted in Edward P.J. Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, (New York, Oxford UP, 1990) 87.

England-- by the humanism and detachment of Congregationalism, Stowe's use of the preacher's unanswered and unanswerable question is in the long tradition of Jonathan Edwards, whose conclusion to "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" contains much the same tone of Stowe's question to the "noble minded men and women of the south:"

And you, children, who are unconverted, do you not know that you are going down to hell, to bear the dreadful wrath of that God, who is now angry with you every day and every night? Will you be contented to be the children of the devil, when so many other children of the land are converted, and are become the holy and happy children of the King of Kings? (Baym, 342)

This form of rhetorical question operates not only by indicating the expected, correct answer to the question, but by shutting off any alternative answer with condemnation. The perversity of answering "Yes, I am contented to be a child of the devil" would signify that the person answering *was* the child of the devil. In the same style, Stowe's question, "Have you not, in your own secret souls, in your own private conversings, felt that there are woes and evils, in this accursed system, far beyond what are here shadowed?" not only indicates that the appropriate answer to this question is "Yes, in my secret soul I know this is an accursed system," but it makes it impossible to say "No, I don't think it is an accursed system" without also agreeing that one's secret soul is hardened, insensitive, outside the pale of Christian understanding. Everyone in nineteenth century America understood the conventions of this style of preaching, and would have recognized it immediately in Stowe's question, along with the implied conflation of the curse with the accursed for those who answer wrongly. For just as the unrepentant child belongs to the devil,

so the unrepentant southerner belongs to the "accursed" system and is, by extension, cursed.

On a more complex level, the framing of Stowe's rhetorical question traps the slave owner who *has* felt in the privacy of the soul or in "private conversings" the many woes of slavery. Mary Chesnut and Margaret Johnson Erwin are not untypical of the Southerners who record in their journals their frustration with the liabilities and obligations of slave holding. Part of the fury both women express at Stowe's "misrepresentations" is her assumption that southerners know less about the ills of slavery than do northerners, who have not had to live with it. "On one side Mrs. Stowe, Greeley, Thoreau, Emerson, Sumner," Chesnut bitterly lists: "They live in nice New England homes, clean, sweet-smelling, shut up in libraries, writing books which ease their hearts of their bitterness against us." But they are the worst kind of hypocrite: "What self-denial they do practice is to tell John Brown to come down here and cut our throats in Christ's name" (163). The Mrs. Stowes of the North have no concept of the life of plantation wives, who "have less chance of living their lives in peace than if they were African missionaries." By asking the question "Have you not... felt that there are woes and evils in this accursed system" Stowe implies that southerners have not given sufficient feeling or thought to the matter of slavery, even as a preacher poses questions to his congregation in areas in which he feels they are falling short to the endangerment of their souls. This infuriating assumption is made additionally insulting to slave owners who feel that their proximity and responsibility to slaves has given them the status of missionaries. To be treated like the heathen themselves by a one who is "shut up in libraries" is as frustrating as armchair generals passing judgement on soldiers at the front.

There is no conciliation in Stowe's prefatory compliment: "To you, generous, noble-minded men and women of the south," because in a previous paragraph she has described the generosity of one slave owner who manumitted his slave, and concludes:

The author hopes she has done justice to that nobility, generosity, and humanity which in many cases characterize individuals at the south. Such instances save us from utter despair of our kind. But, she asks any person who knows the world, are such characters *common*, anywhere?" (470)

Having "damned with faint praise" by complimenting one southerner while claiming that the common, or typical, southerner could not be so generous, her use of a string of compliments one paragraph later seems hollow indeed. They are not meant to be actual characterizations of southerners, any more than Jonathan Edwards considers the children in his congregation to be "holy and happy children of the King of Kings." The point is that they are not yet those noble-minded men and women that Stowe hopes they will become when they consult their "secret souls." When Stowe goes on to pity the southerner for "the severer trial" they have encountered, being tempted to injustice by the slave system, the trap of her rhetoric has fully closed upon the southerner who-- she has already suggested-- has not felt the suffering of the "accursed system" enough. Clearly the southerner has failed in that "severer trial" and is *not* virtuous, magnanimous or pure. Stowe only hopes that the southerner, upon hearing her appeal, will assume those characteristics she bestows upon them in anticipation of their change of heart. The high-handed religiosity of Stowe's Calvinist preaching style caused Margaret Johnson Erwin to refer to Stowe as a "dreary, deranged, religious fanatic" (97) and to

struggle with her own sense of Christian charity: "I try to keep an open mind, but when I see mealy-mouthing, glory to Godding, being taken as Gospel from a silly New Englander-- it almost kills me" (102).

But as galling as the northern abolitionist's pronouncements about the South were, they did not provoke the same type of response from southern writers as did the African American Slave Narrative. Southerners were accustomed to an abolition movement that, as the editor of the *Richmond Enquirer* said in 1832, "weeps at what it does not comprehend." Mrs. Stowe stirred up a great deal of trouble, and inspired southern authors to write a great many counter-novels to set the record straight. Nevertheless, a northern outsider could be addressed directly and on the same terms with the slave owner, while the slaves required a different type of rhetorical response altogether. The slaves, who had the temerity and ingratitude to make accusations against their own masters, had to be answered indirectly with information rather than argument. Since the slave owner could not grant the slave an equal voice with his or her own, the ignorant northerner had to be informed of the slave's inferiority and the irreplaceable worth of the south to the North by a form of educational campaign. To alleviate the ignorance of the North and to counteract the voice of the slave required both a literary and a scientific response.

II. The Rhetoric of Science in the Service of Slavery

The so-called "scientific evidence" mustered by slave owners to justify the peculiar institution did not have a counterpart in the African American Slave Narrative. Unlike the debate on the role of Christianity in slavery, in which the slave had the high moral ground and could give as well as he got,

one can hardly imagine a fugitive slave standing before the bar of public opinion and trying to convince the jury that slave owners were insane, or that there was no scientific basis for belief in the superiority of white people. For while it was conceivable that southern people could find the northerners "deranged" and vice-versa, the slaves-- who were largely illiterate or, if literate, unable to gain access to higher education and consequently not considered reliable sources of scientific or academic knowledge-- could not mount a counter argument to the pseudo-scientific and sociological defenses that were widely promoted in the South³. In this area of argumentation there is no overlap between the cultural fields of slaves and slave owners.

The "scientific" pro-slavery arguments offer an important insight into the mentality of slave owners who could not contradict directly when the slaves spoke for themselves and were heard in the North as credible witnesses. The emotional and ethical appeals used by slaves and their abolitionist allies were unavailable lines of argument for slave owners, firstly, because any Biblical argument could be countered with its opposite position by using the same authority, and secondly, because the emotional frustration of life as *de facto* African Missionaries, as Chesnut characterized the lives of slave owners, garnered little sympathy from northerners, whose response to such appeals would be "If they make you so unhappy, let them go;" or, more simply put: "It serves you right."

Since slaves had no citizenship and no legal identity, and since they were not allowed to testify in courts of law, it was intensely frustrating to

³ African American scientists, mathematicians, and scholars have had this difficulty well into the present century, as the lives of George Washington Carver, Benjamin Banneker, Jan E. Matzlinger, Dr. James Derham, and Dr. Charles Richard Drew attest. For a discussion of this problem, see Lerone Bennett, Jr. Before the Mayflower (New York: Penguin, 1984) 78-80.

slave owners that they were allowed to testify in the court of public opinion. In the Dred Scott decision of 1857, Judge Taney spoke for the those who were committed "to southern life and values, which seemed organically linked to the peculiar institution and unpreservable without it" (McPherson 173). Although he had freed his own slaves, Taney felt that the framers of the Constitution had not included negroes in the "all men" who were created equal, because at the time the Constitution was adopted "Negroes had for more than a century before been regarded as being of an inferior order...so far inferior, that they had no rights which a white man was bound to respect" (174). As the inferiority of negroes became separate from the issue of slavery, southerners presented slavery as a solution to the problem of what to do about the presence of inferior beings among white people. Free blacks were seen as an increasing threat in both regions: in the North due to the competition of a cheap labor force, and in the South as a threat to the slave labor system. So slavery as a solution to the disposition of negroes became linked to the argument that negroes were inferior⁴.

Scientific proof of the inferiority of negroes was promulgated by various essayists, some of whom had credentials in science and many more who did not. It was still the age of amateurism, in which educated gentlemen were at liberty to move authoritatively into undifferentiated scientific fields which were seen as genteel diversions. If we remember that Charles Darwin went specimen-collecting on the voyage of the *Beagle* as a hobbyist in the

⁴ One exception to this position among Southern apologists was George Fitzhugh, who argued in Sociology for the South; or Failure of Free Society (1854) that if slavery was an effective institution for laborers, it was not necessarily associated with race. He attempted to persuade planters in the South and businessmen in the North that the logical consequence of black slavery was white slavery. Far from being seen as a crackpot, Fitzhugh made an extensive tour of the Northern lecture circuit in 1856.

field of natural science, which had no degree status at Oxford or at any other university in Europe or America, it is not so surprising to find the most ardent claims of negro inferiority based upon the deductive reasoning of respectable gentlemen rather than the inductive research of scientists⁵.

When southern scientists were involved in the discussion, however, the research was often a matter of presenting, as inductive investigations, deductions based upon the previously derived premise of negro inferiority. The rhetorical fallacy of circular thinking was raised to high art by these "scientists" of the nineteenth century South, who did not admit the possibility, in their research, that negro inferiority could be disproved.

One example of this circular thinking is the work of Samuel A. Cartwright, a physician from Virginia, who began his medical research into the diseases of the negro race from the observations of slave owners that their bondsmen had a tendency to be lazy and self-indulgent, and to run away. In great detail, with many measurements and descriptions of negro physiology, Cartwright describes "Drapetomania, or the Disease Causing Negroes to Run Away," and "Dysæsthesia Æthiopica, or Hebetude of Mind, and Obtuse Sensibility of Body-- A Disease Peculiar to Negroes-- Called by Overseers, 'Rascality'" (Paskoff and Wilson, 37). The first disease, Drapetomania, is attributed to "mental alienation" and can be cured by kind treatment and confinement to quarters at night. The more serious Dysæsthesia Æthiopica displays the alarming symptoms of "stupidness of mind and insensibility of

⁵ Sciences such as geology, botany, and biology were available for study as subjects at Oxford, but students still took degrees in the classics and humanities. Medicine was the only scientific field in which students could receive conferred degrees. However, early recognition of the need to centralize scientific discovery and to establish standards for scientific research led to the foundation of The Royal Society in England in 1660 and the American Philosophical Society in 1743.

the nerves":

Thus, [afflicted negroes] break, waste and destroy everything they handle,-- abuse horses and cattle,-- tear, burn or rend their own clothing, and, paying no attention to the rights of property, steal others, to replace what they have destroyed. They wander about at night, and keep in half nodding sleep during the day. They slight their work,-- cut up corn, cane, cotton or tobacco when hoeing it, as if for pure mischief. They raise disturbances with their overseers and fellow-servants without cause or motive, and seem to be insensible to pain when subjected to punishment. (37)

There is no evidence that Cartwright interviewed slaves in his pursuit of information about this alleged malady; but if he had done so, it is not likely that he would have gotten straightforward answers from them, since it was unwise and unusual for a slave to speak his or her mind to a white person. Yet even without the contribution of the slave, Cartwright's rhetorical style signals to the reader that there will be no scientific detachment in his diagnoses. While the proliferation of violent verbs-- break, waste, destroy, abuse, tear, burn, rend-- might be attributed to the victim's symptoms, Cartwright's language ceases to be descriptive and becomes accusatory when he describes slaves as "paying no attention to the rights of property." Though he employs no irony here, assuming, with the naiveté that often characterizes slave owners' beliefs about their slaves, that the interests of the slave are the same as the master's, he also assumes that this shared interest indicts the slave who does not care for the master's property as if it were his own. There is unintentional irony here, since the slave cannot own property, being

property himself by the agency of kidnapping and enslavement. That the slave owner has himself paid no attention to the rights of property of the man he has enslaved does not occur to Cartwright, since he is operating from the premise of negro inferiority, which, in his circular fallacy, answers any such objection.

Cartwright continues his value-loaded word selection by speculating that the slaves "cut up corn, cane, cotton or tobacco when hoeing it, as if for pure mischief." A slave must be ill to wish to cut up the crops while hoeing, Cartwright suggests to his planter audience, since he would have no reason to be mischievous. The implication is that it is in the slave's interest to work well, as if he were a laborer in a commune and shared in the profits.

Cartwright then contradicts this implication by implying that the slave's free will can be owned and controlled in the same way as their bodies, since he sees no "cause or motive" in rascality, suspects no subversive behavior growing out of individual refusal to be exploited, and imagines no aggression toward the interests of the master in the slave's destructive behavior. Under the guise of a physician's detached, scientific language, Cartwright promotes the idea that slaves have no self-determination, except when the master's interests are at stake-- then the slave (if he is not suffering from *Dysæsthesia Æthiopica*), works wholeheartedly for the good of his master's property.

DeBow's Review, in which this treatise was first published, catered to the southern planter, but was read in the North as one of the best indications of the southern mind in the critical pre-war years. Cartwright's explanation of aberrant slave behavior was calculated not only to bolster the planter's desire to suppress the idea that slaves were rebellious, but to reassure the North that "rascality" was an exceptional phenomenon attributable to illness or insanity.

The Slave Narratives, of course, do not describe "rascality" or the mischief-making of slaves, since such descriptions would be counter to the abolitionists' intention of representing the slaves as worthy and honest human beings who are deprived of the Christian and human rights owing to all people. Accounts of "rascality" would only alarm the northerners who had an increasing population of free blacks living in their communities, and whose good will the abolitionists needed to turn the political tide in the North against slavery. Yet this behavior-- accepted in the South as evidence of negro inferiority, but clear evidence by contemporary standards of slave resistance to unjust authority-- is given a more detached description by Frederick Law Olmsted in The Cotton Kingdom. His observations are fairly free of pro-slavery agenda relative to the abolitionists of his day, though they display some pride in capitalism:

That slaves have to be 'humored' a great deal, and that they very frequently cannot be made to do their master's will, I have seen much evidence. Not that they often directly refuse to obey an order, but when they are directed to do anything for which they have a disinclination, they undertake it in such a way that the desired result is sure not to be accomplished. They cannot be driven by fear of punishment to do that which the labourers in free communities do cheerfully from their sense of duty, self-respect, or regard for their reputation and standing with their employer. (100)

The slave owner could not explain "rascality" in the terms Olmsted implies, as a lack of the self-respect, reputation, and regard for their standing with their employer, because to do so would be to acknowledge that the slave had a

personhood that is fundamentally denied in the slave system, and that the northern system was not the heartless "wage slavery" that southern authors used as evidence of the superiority of bondage. Illness or disease-- Dysæsthesia Æthiopica-- seemed to be a scientific advancement in the understanding of the maladies afflicting negroes, conveniently explaining both the common behavior of "rascality" and the inferiority of the negro race, being subject to such illnesses as did not affect the white race.⁶

If the language of medical research could be manipulated to admit the circular reasoning of the proponents of negro inferiority, the "sociological" argument could use the same detachment discussing racial traits and behavior to support the same thesis. One of the most detailed and consciously "scientific" studies produced in the South was Henry Hughes' Treatise on Sociology (1854) which imitated the the style and vocabulary of Auguste Comte's positivism, calling slave owners "Warrantors" and slaves "Warrantees," and arguing that there were, in fact, no slaves in the South since "Warranteeism in the United States South is not an obligation to labor for the benefit of the master, without the contract or consent of the servant. That is slavery." But, Hughes goes on:

⁶ What afflicted the white race was "leisure," a euphemism for the array of indulgences used to alleviate boredom created on the plantation by the lack of useful occupation. As Bertram Wyatt-Brown observes in Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South (New York: Oxford UP, 1982): "...behind the agreeably slow pace of Southern gentry life, the friendships joyfully affirmed by hunting, the barbecues, the wild nights at cards and drink, and even the fights, there often lay cheerless anxieties and unmanageable furies. Minor doings, pointless trips, and complaints about 'wuthless' hands merely punctuated the boredom that greeted nearly every rising sun" (328). John Pendleton Kennedy is surprisingly candid about this condition in Swallow Barn: "When our topics grow scarce, we saunter towards the bridge, and string ourselves out upon the rail, to watch the bubbles that float down the stream; and are sometimes a good deal perplexed to know what we shall do until dinner time" (308).

Warrenteeism is a public obligation of the warrantor and warrantee to labor for the benefit of, (1) the State, (2), the Military, and (3) the Warrantor. This obligation is not unilateral; it is bilateral; it is mutual. Its reciprocity is absolute. It is an obligation with considerations to both parties. These considerations are good and sufficient: they are eternally just.
(242) ⁷

The reader can see right away that the elaborately flat tone affected by Hughes, which is meant to suggest the serious repetition of facts, is undermined by assertions that cannot be proved with facts. Hughes treats his assertion that the obligations of slaves and slave owners are bilateral as a self-evident proposition, defined in the rules of rhetoric as "a statement that all men or most men would immediately assent to once they understood the terms of the statement. Being self-evident, such statements do not have to be proved" (Corbett, 71). Thomas Jefferson claimed self-evidency in the Declaration of Independence, when he stated that "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their maker with certain inalienable rights..." and yet his assertion was not at all self-evident. The British were in disagreement over the terms of equality, which led to the Revolution. Hughes attempts the same strategy of calling an assertion a self-evident proposition in the hope that the reader will accept it as true without the required proofs or demonstrations. But the very presence of the word "eternal" in his assertion-- a time frame that cannot be claimed in temporal logic-- signifies the presence of a false statement.

Hughes weaves in and out of fact and false assertion as his sociological "description" progresses. He lists the duties of "warrantors, or masters," as

⁷ Hughes' Treatise on Sociology is reprinted in Faust, 239-271.

falling into three categories: "economic, political, and hygienic." These duty-categories can be summarized as the duty of providing the slaves with work, the duty of defending slaves "against legislative injustice," and the duty of keeping slaves healthy or restoring them to health if they are sick. If the warrantor fails in any of these obligations, he is punished by the loss of labor-obligation in the warrantee; (in other words, the slave is either ill, dead, incarcerated, or executed, which causes the slave owner to suffered loss). "The warrantor is economically enforced therefore to warrant health, strength, and justice, to the warrantee" (251). This, at least, is a true statement since it is based upon market forces, but it is inconsistent with the former assertion that the arrangement is just.

Hughes' redundant scientific "facts" fly off into fantasy when he asserts that the slaves are not slaves: "In the United States South, warrantees are persons who have all their rights, they are not slaves; they are not persons who have no rights. Their slavery is nominal only; and the name, a wrong to the warrantee states" (252). As if to make his statement true in the absence of proof, Hughes makes the assertion in positive terms, negative terms, and double-negative terms. Though there is no "fallacy of repetition" in the rules of rhetoric, the effectiveness of persuading the audience through redundancy is the keystone to any public relations or advertising campaign. And while the inescapable fact remains that Hughes cannot make the slaves into not-slaves by repetition-- a mode that resembles incantation more than logic-- he is nevertheless able to persuade readers by the tone, force, and redundancy of his language.

And what are the rights that warrantors are guaranteed? "All rights are those of, (1) Existence, and (2), Progress. Existence-rights are those of, (1)

Subsistence, and (2) Security" (252). Which is to say that the slaves have the right not to die of starvation or to be murdered, and the right to make progress as a race "to moral power, order and liberty." The latter, however, has not materialized because the warrantees, in this case, are negroes:

Warrantees' right to philosophic or educational power, order and liberty is not yet actualized...The warranteeism of the United States South, is that with ethnical qualification. The existence-rights of both [white and black] or one of these races, now forbids to the other, this progress-right. The educational is at present antagonistic to the political system. (257)

In the convoluted bureaucratise that a later generation would come to identify with Kafka, Hughes culminates his argument with a condemnation of the negro-- which was the point of the exercise in the first place. The "ethnical qualification,"-- a phrase that prefigures contemporary racist euphemisms like "ethnic cleansing"-- is that the slave who is not a slave has rights as long as he is not a negro; if he is a negro, the right to advance is denied. Hughes does not say the obvious: that the negro must therefore be a slave. In short, Hughes has abandoned the rules of argumentation so completely that there is no point in attempting to unravel the tangled threads of his assertions.

As if to acknowledge the inadequacy of logic to support his ideas, Hughes' abandons his redundant scientific language to provide a coda to his treatise: an ecstatic vision of the future which sees the warrantees in their ideal position in the "Warrantee form of society:"

...in the plump flush of full-feeding health, the happy

warrantees shall banquet in PLANTATION-REFECTORIES;
 worship in PLANTATION-CHAPELS; learn in PLANTATION-
 SCHOOLS; or, in PLANTATION-SALOONS, at the cool of
 evening, or in the green and bloomy gloom of old catalpas and
 magnolias, chant old songs, tell tales...and after slumbers in
 PLANTATION-DORMITORIES, over whose gates Health and
 Rest sit smiling at the feet of Wealth and Labor, rise at the
 music-crowding of the morning-conchs, to begin again welcome
 days of jocund toil, in reeling fields, where weak with laughter
 and her load, Plenty yearly falls, gives up, and splits her
 o'erstuffed horn...(271)

Hughes veers from the pole of dry "logic" to the palmy allegorical language of the pastoral with its Virgilian image of the Golden Age. He trots out all the pastoral topoi: the overhanging, protective boughs symbolizing the patron; the song as an element of praise and contentment; the dusk as an element of closure; the pastoral shepherd-- in this case, the slaves-- welcoming toil that is "jocund, " i.e. the agreeable cultivation of the *locus amoenas*. He even conjures up Spenser's image of "Triton blowing loud his wreathed horn" with the highly unlikely picture of a "morning-conch."⁸ What is lacking here are the qualities that make true pastoral so interesting: the unrequited love or death that result from idealized relationships; the equivocal voice of the poet who must leave Arcadia for the rigors and dangers of court life; the political undertones that threaten Arcadia and make it an unstable place. Yet for all his effort, the political instability of the South and the troubled slave system he tries so hard to contain cannot be obscured in a single pastoral fantasy. The tone of this passage unconsciously reveals its tension in the

⁸ Colin Clout's Come Home Again, l. 245.

Milonic register of the pastoral, reminding the reader of Mirth in "L'Allegro" who presides over "Sport that wrinkled Care derides,/And Laughter holding both his sides" (ll.31-32). Here Hughes has abandoned all his "science" to return to the Sunny South of Ingraham and Kennedy, with the happy slaves singing their corn songs again. But the inconsistency of his "just" scheme which deprives the "not-slave" warrantee of all rights except that of existence is revealed in the personification of Health and Rest who "sit smiling at the feet of Wealth and Labor" at the gates of plantation dormitories. The image is unintentionally reminiscent of the figures of Sin and Death at the gates of Hell in Book II of Paradise Lost, and creates in the reader's mind a vision of those writhing personas who prevent the damned from escaping-- an apt image when reflecting on the fact that in Hughes' idealized world it is the black slaves' labor generating wealth for the white "warrantor." Like a person trying to cheat a psychological test by answering positively to every question, Hughes cannot hide his troubled and hostile world view with a pastoral fantasy of an idealized South.

III. The Origin of the Necessary Outsider

Quintillian's injunction to rhetors that "he who would have all men trust his judgement as to what is expedient and honorable, should possess and be regarded as possessing genuine wisdom and excellence of character" had not been a difficult precept for southerners to fulfill in the early years of the nation. Their position of political leadership had been of the highest order, affording them equally powerful moral leadership. But as the position of the South eroded into sectional opposition and the Slave Narratives began to erode northern confidence in the unvarnished truth of the slave owners'

position, it became necessary for pro-slavery writers to develop a variety of methods to place their position before the public without being seen to contend directly with their slaves. Cartwright and Hughes represent the "scientific" approach to this effort, biased as those efforts were. But the number of people who read scientific journals or sociological tracts was small relative to those in both the North and the South who read fiction. A fictional device, ironically, was what presented the best opportunity to persuade the general public of the truth that the southerner was still "possessing genuine wisdom and excellence of character."

The device that developed, the trope of the "necessary outsider," developed from the epistolary novel tradition, and from the function of actual outsiders, who prompted early Slave Owner Narratives. The device operated by the agency of a person from outside the South-- a northerner or an Englishman-- whose rhetorical job within the story is to ask key questions which the planter can then answer in detail. The outsider eventually gives a final assessment on the virtues of southern culture, usually by declaring a change of heart from the prejudices brought to the South from the outside. This plot device, which became almost universal in southern writing before the war and developed interesting variations afterward, evolved from the eighteenth century literary tradition of epistolary critiques such as Montesquieu's Les Lettres Persanes (1721), Walpole's Letters from Xo-Ho (1757), Goldsmith's Citizen of the World; or, Letters from a Chinese Philosopher (1760), and the Turkish letters in Irving's Salmagundi (1807).⁹ This literary style consists of a native author who takes on the imaginary

⁹ See Richard Beale Davis' introduction to William Wirt, The Letters of the British Spy (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1970) viii.

persona of a visitor from some exotic or distant place in order to relate the virtues and foibles of society from a fresh, often satirical, point of view.

The earliest southern literary work that employs this style is William Wirt's The Letters of the British Spy (1804) which, because of its early date, purports to study the American character, rather than to illuminate the particular virtues of the South over and against those of the North. Wirt takes the persona of an Englishman of rank who writes back to a London friend that "I continue to wear the mask, and most willingly exchange the attentions, which would be paid to my rank, for the superior and exquisite pleasure of inspecting this country and its people" (100). The letters, however, are all written from Virginia, and the issues at stake, for Wirt, have to do with the role of Virginia in the national agenda and the development of citizens who will be able to maintain Virginia's noble place in the forefront of American history. Wirt is concerned with the lack of education, the decline of oratory, and the inequalities of society in a state devoted to democracy. The Spy observes that Virginians offer a cringing respect to visiting noblemen, and that the distribution of property is less equal than in any state in the union: "Here and there a stately aristocratic palace, with all its appurtenances, strikes the view; while all around, for many miles, no other buildings are to be seen but the little smoky huts and log cabins of poor, laborious, ignorant tenants" (102). While the Spy observes the liabilities of the Cavalier system in developing a new generation of Virginians to replace Washington, Jefferson, and the rest of the revolutionaries, the Spy makes no mention of slavery, as though there were no "little smoky huts" behind the great houses as well as around the countryside. The Spy devotes all of Letter IV, however, to the injustices suffered by the Indians, and takes some small comfort in the

thought that they have gone where "it is perfectly immaterial what complexion an indian or an African sun may have burned" (179). Like Jefferson, Wirt is more interested in and respectful of the indigenous people than he is of the slaves, condemning the crimes of his ancestors in the horrified reaction of the Spy: "Great God! To reflect...that the authors of all these wrongs were our own countrymen, our forefathers, professors of the meek and benevolent religion of Jesus! Oh! it was impious; it was unmanly; poor and pitiful!... My soul melts with pity and shame" (166). That this recognition of crime is not extended to the African may be due to the fact that the slaves were not numerous in 1804. And yet the slave trade was not abolished until 1807, so an observant Spy in Richmond, Virginia would surely have seen the slave pens and the auction block if he had looked for them. That he did not look for them could mean that the sight was so common as to excite no notice, that the idea of attacking the only source of urgently needed labor would have been unpatriotic, or that the anxiety of addressing an issue that would have required immediate and radical action to alleviate-- not to mention unified political will-- was too great. Nevertheless, Wirt had introduced a literary device into the South which was to bear much fruit. While his Spy fooled nobody into thinking the author was anyone other than a native Virginian pretending to be an Englishman of rank, it created a fiction that would permit the discussion of important issues from fictionally "neutral" ground.

The other originating impulse for the necessary outsider device, in addition to epistolary letters from afar, was the actual, non-fictional, outsider. America was a new creation and generated a great deal of interest in Europe as it attempted to establish an actual society and government in forms that

had been, until that time, theoretical constructs. One of the best examples of an actual outsider is Alexis deTocqueville, whose Democracy in America (1835) offered a Frenchman's view of the developing sectionalism in the new nation. But it was another Frenchman, François Marbois, who prompted Thomas Jefferson to write Notes on the State of Virginia (1787) by sending a detailed questionnaire to members of the Continental Congress. His submission of twenty-three comprehensive queries was made with both the lively interest in learning typical of the Enlightenment, and the European air of condescension which would expect someone in the midst of a revolution to take time to answer his questions, which covered every subject from topography and Aborigines to manners and commerce. Jefferson's answering voice-- detached, analytical, exhaustive-- was the prototypical Slave Owner Narrative written in response to a curious, non-judgemental outsider. Taken together with the letters of William Byrd of Westover to his friends among the English aristocracy, the slave owner responses written to actual outsiders demonstrate the value of the format for eliciting testimony which gives every appearance of being authentic, balanced, and informed. This was just the stance that later southerners wished to take toward their critics, though they quickly discovered that the fictional "outsider" could be exploited to offer southern commentary on the character of the outside critic as well as the virtues of the planter.

IV. The Necessary Outsider in Tucker, Kennedy, and Ingraham

As seen earlier, George Tucker in The Valley of the Shenandoah (1824) was writing in the period before 1832 when southern writers were still at liberty to question and criticize their own system, and were not attempting to

convert the North to the monolithic point of view that emerged in the South later. Though the novel alerts fellow Virginians to the demise of the old planter class and its replacement with middle class strivers who lack Cavalier values, it also employs a "necessary outsider," James Gildon, as a point of comparison to demonstrate how superior those Cavalier values are to the merchant classes of the North. Tucker establishes all of the major conventions of the outsider device: in addition to being from New York, Tucker's outsider is taken for a tour of the quarters; asks key questions about slavery of his host; stimulates patient and compassionate answers from the host about the necessity of slavery for the sake of the slaves who cannot care for themselves; is shown the kindly treatment of elderly, retired slaves; sees some episode of childlike behavior, usually the petition of slaves for some favor from the master; sees some evidence of the generous, paternal care the slave owner uses toward the slaves.

In establishing these conventions, however, Tucker makes unique use of the outsider as an antagonist, whose contrast with the aristocratic protagonist is designed to show the readers the superior qualities of the Cavalier class. Gildon is the only son of a wealthy merchant in New York who is sent to college in Williamsburg to break off an inappropriate attachment; (already we know that Gildon is self-indulgent and not dutiful in matters of love). He makes friends with Edward Grayson, a classmate and the scion of the Grayson family, who is described as having all the aristocratic characteristics so prized in Virginia: "In his temper Edward was reserved, somewhat haughty in his manners to those who were not acknowledged inferiors, (to whom he was all mildness and condescension), and possessed of the most scrupulous and fastidious honour"(3). It seems natural that Edward

is "tall, thin, with grey eyes, light hair, and a long, thin, but very pleasing visage," while Gildon, "without being positively short, was lower and stouter than Edward, had a full, round face, florid complexion, black eyes, and hair of the same colour" (4). Tucker uses the contrast between Gildon and Grayson to demonstrate the value system that he fears will replace the Cavalier in the South-- the squat, grasping, "darkness" of the industrial North. And while Gildon asks all the necessary questions, and gives Grayson and his father many opportunities to justify slavery, he wreaks havoc in the symbolic Cavalier family by ruining Laura Grayson, Edward's eighteen year old sister, and killing Edward in the obligatory duel. Tucker uses the necessary outsider to perform a symbolic pantomime demonstrating the superiority, and tragedy, of the sinking planter class. He was the first and the last to add this plot dimension to a trope that became purely functional later.

Southern fiction is not so hard on northerners in characterizations after 1830, as the court of public opinion becomes an increasing factor in the moral struggle over slavery. Southern authors will continue to use the New Yorker or the Pilgrim Yankee as a necessary outsider, but they will not play Grayson's villainous role. Instead, they will arrive in the South with good will and mistaken ideas, of which they will be disabused by patient planters in response to timely questions and tours of the "quarter." In Swallow Barn, John Pendleton Kennedy's outsider, Mark Littleton, writes letters to his friend back home in New York, reporting on the wonders and oddities of the South where he is visiting his cousin, Ned Hazard. Littleton was invited on the southern tour because his cousin accused him of a common northern malady:

He insinuated that I had arrived at that inveteracy of opinion for which travel is the only cure; and that, in especial, I had fallen into some unseemly prejudices against the Old Dominion which were unbecoming the character of a philosopher, to which, he affirmed, I had set up pretensions..." (14)

The jocular tone established at this early stage of the book is Kennedy's contribution to the form and one that becomes typical of all the Slave Owner fiction that comes afterward. It is as though nothing could be more pleasant and enlightening than to go South and have the scales fall from one's eyes. The bitterness that southerners feel toward the North, expressed in The Valley of the Shenandoah and in private journals throughout the antebellum period, is masked as teasing one's northern brother (or cousin, or visitor) for his "pretensions" to philosophy. Friendly fun-poking with the purpose of promoting healing between the sections strikes both the right tone and the right degree of significance. Kennedy's outsider, Littleton, asks all the necessary questions, of course, and is gently converted to the point of view that the "parasitical" negroes, "having few but simple wants...seem to be provided with every comfort which falls within the ordinary compass of their wishes" (455). The author's intention of converting his guest to the southern point of view is peacefully achieved.

But just as the scientific treatises inadvertently revealed tensions in the system they were attempting to justify, Kennedy exposes the deeply troubled social stress of plantation life in a scene that is intended to do the opposite. Kennedy treats his outsider to a moral pantomime intended to convert him, and the reader, to charms of the slave system, but which contains a subtext of lethargy that might have alienated rather than converted industrious

northern readers, and which reveals the subtle and fundamental brutality in the slave owners' treatment of the negroes they held in bondage. In this revealing episode, Ned and Littleton— searching for a way to alleviate their boredom— amuse themselves by playing with the negro children who have not yet been set to work:

There is a numerous herd of little negroes about the estate; and these sometimes afford us a new diversion. A few mornings since we encountered a horde of them, who were darting about the bushes like untamed monkeys....They are almost all clad in a long coarse shirt which reaches below the knee, without any other garment...The *shirts* ran with prodigious vehemence, their speed exposing their bare, black, and meagre shanks, to the scandal of all beholders...They are a strange pack of antic and careless animals, and furnish the liveliest picture that is to be found in nature, of that race of swart fairies which, in the old time, were supposed to play their pranks in the forest at moonlight. (310-311)

The most marked use of language in this passage is the use of sub or non-human terms to refer to the children: "monkeys;" "animals;" "fairies;" and, in a synecdoche that empties as well as reduces, "*shirts*." After a long, picturesque scene involving the organization of these youngsters into relay races and skirmishes, Kennedy, in his guise as Littleton, seems to realize that this picture might not make the best impression on businesslike northerners, and attempts to integrate the concept of idleness into a menu of acceptable of pursuits: "There is a fascination in the quiet, irresponsible, and reckless nature of these country pursuits, that is apt to seize upon the imagination of a

man who has felt the perplexities of business" (311). The unwillingness of white people to do work, he seems to be saying-- a dangerous consequence of slavery that was noticed and feared by Byrd, Jefferson, and the Virginia Legislature, to name only a few-- is presented by the necessary outsider as an argument for southern living which alleviates the "perplexities of business." One is not meant to examine the claim too closely, or it might become clear that planters conduct no business, in the northern industrial sense, and therefore do not have perplexities to alleviate.

The complexity of the necessary outsider trope rests in the fact that whoever is chosen as the ringer-- in this case a good natured "philosopher" from New York-- is really a slave owner in disguise. A cynical TV viewer of the twentieth century takes for granted that the sincere and realistic people in advertisements are offering paid testimonials which cannot be trusted as unbiased; the less cynical reader of the nineteenth century was not as quick to apprehend the disguise of the slave owner in his fictional outsider, especially since the novel so often took the form of a travelogue, and since the planter himself-- with the warmth and authority of a sincere patriarch--would persuade the reader that his representation of slavery was the authentic one.

In the passage above, then, the "herd" consists of "monkeys," "animals," "fairies," and "shirts," which, the reader should agree, are in no need of education or training, or even clothes to cover their meagre shanks (the reader should not ask why the shanks are meagre). An actual outsider, Frederick Law Olmsted, gives corroborating but de-romanticized evidence on the existence of this "herd," which must have been a common sight on southern plantations:

Until the negro is big enough for his labor to be plainly profitable

to his master, he has no training to application or method, but only idleness and carelessness. Before the children arrive at working age, they hardly come under the notice of their owner. An inventory of them is taken on the plantation at Christmas; and a planter told me that sometimes they escaped the attention of the overseer and were not returned at all, till twelve or thirteen years old. The only whipping of slaves I have seen in Virginia, has been of these wild, lazy children, as they are being broke to work. (102)

With the veil of exoticism removed, Olmsted's readers can see that the "herd" are, in fact, a troop of neglected children whose humanity is calculated for so little that they receive nothing but subsistence level nourishment and a single shirt to wear. It is the job of the slave owner masquerading as a northerner like Olmsted, to counteract the information of the actual northerner.

This job is made more difficult by the fact that further corroboration is offered in Frederick Douglass' second narrative of 1855, My Bondage and My Freedom. In it he describes the same neglect of negro children as do the fictional and the actual outsiders, but from the child's point of view: "There is, after all, but little difference in the measure of contentment felt by the slave-child neglected and the slave-holder's child cared for and petted. The spirit of the All Just mercifully holds the balance for the young." The irony of Douglass' description of the advantages of being a member of the "herd" tropes on the necessary outsider's romanticized description of the dehumanized children:

The slave-boy escapes many troubles which befall and vex his

white brother...He seldom has to listen to lectures on propriety of behavior, or on anything else. He is never chided for handling his little knife and fork improperly or awkwardly, for he uses none. He is never reprimanded for soiling the table-cloth, for he takes his meals on the clay floor....He literally runs wild; he has no pretty little verses to learn in the nursery; no nice little speeches to make for aunts, uncles, or cousins, to show how smart he is... If he feels uncomfortable from mud or from dust, the coast is clear; he can plunge into the river or the pond, without the ceremony of undressing, or the fear of wetting his clothes; his little tow-linen shirt-- for that is all he has on-- is easily dried; and it needed ablution as much as did his skin. His food is of the coarsest kind, consisting for the most part of corn-meal mush, which often finds its way from the wooden tray to his mouth in an oyster shell. (144-143)

All of Douglass' rhetorical powers are at work in this passage: irony, parallel construction, vivid word-pictures, humor dissolving into indictment. A child who is, in Douglass' great metaphor, "within the circle," does not know he is neglected; he cannot know that the slave owner believes he is no more entitled to an education than a monkey, an animal, a fairy, or a shirt, and that therefore he is not a person and has no future. By using the same "reckless" and "irresponsible" images as does Kennedy to describe a life that any boy would think was "spirited, joyous, uproarious and happy,"(145) Douglass effectively conveys the fact that the most cruel treatment a slave ever receives is the ruin of his formative years, when the impulse toward a productive, literate, self-reflective life is allowed to atrophy. This is the damning

testimony that the necessary outsider is designed to oppose, by offering the vision, as Kennedy's Littleton does, of a Land of Cockaigne in the "Sunny South." That the passage has the opposite effect on the contemporary reader may be an indication of the effect it ultimately had on Kennedy's northern contemporaries. Yet the slave owner narrators continued to offer fantasies of leisure and self-indulgence as counter-weights to the testimony of slaves and actual outsiders.

In The Sunny South, Joseph Holt Ingraham invents a necessary outsider that is aimed at northern women and calculated to disarm the reader by presenting an alternative to the work-a-day lives of the nineteenth century homemaker. Kate Conyngham, a "Yankee Girl" from the "Granite Mountains of the Pilgrim Land," offers another vision of the Land of Cockaigne in the vivacious and enthusiastic letters she sends up North. Like the mythical land-- where a perpetual banquet is spread for the taking-- Kate describes all her plantation meals, from breakfasts in which "four or five varieties of warm bread load the table, with succotash, and hominy, and ham, always; [with] two men and two negresses, all well dressed and in white aprons, [who] wait on table and anticipate every wish," to evening meals "consisting of many courses, with wine and dessert of fruit, sweetmeats, ices, nuts, domestic grapes, and black coffee" at a table overhung with a huge silk fan "pulled to and fro by a little negro, all dinner time" (53-54). This abundance must certainly have impressed housewives who spent the bulk of their time in food acquisition and meal preparation. And this fantasy of food is not confined to the masters of Overton Lodge: Kate also describes a supper "both handsome and costly," "gotten up" for guests in honor of a slave wedding: "A dozen frosted cakes, jellies, preserved fruits, pies, custards,

floating island, blanc mange, and other nice things too numerous to mention [were] in the center [of the table] and at each end, was a pyramid of cake, wreathed with flowers" (147).

Not only do the slave owners eat well in this Land of Cockaigne, but the slaves are served banquets as luxurious as those of their masters. Ingraham's subtle suggestion that a northern woman is less well off than a southern slave is a suggestion related to another popular southern claim: that the "wage slaves" of the north are less well off than the chattel slaves of the South. In her unabashed appreciation of the aristocratic luxury of Overton Lodge and the exotic leisure of the southwestern frontier, Kate represents to her northern audience the virtues of enjoying the fruits of labor, particularly if it isn't one's own. It is as though the aggressive consumerism which forms the underside of northern industry is exposed-- in Kate's delight of luxury and ease-- as the secret wish of the pilgrim heart. Unlike Kennedy's outsider, Mark Littleton, who must be converted from his "unseemly prejudices," Kate Conyngham suspects that "a northern girl in these circumstances will, in a year, render herself more helpless than ever a Southerner to the manor born" (53). Ingraham hopes that this vision of aristocratic leisure will ingratiate himself and his position on slavery with the female reader.

Kate Conyngham's patriotic love of freedom suffers no guilt over the bondage of slaves because her reservations were based upon false information, as she explains in another letter:

I am already getting reconciled to slavery, since I find that it does not, in reality, exhibit the revolting horrors I was taught in the North to discover in it. There are many things to admire and interest one in the social and domestic condition of the slaves,

and I am almost ready to acknowledge that the African is happier in bondage than free! At least one thing is certain: nearly all the free negroes I have ever seen in the North were miserable creatures, poor, ragged, and often criminal. Here they are well clad, moral, nearly all religious, and the temptations that demoralize the free blacks in our northern cities are unknown to, and cannot approach them. (59)

In the Slave Owner Narrative, a necessary outsider-- even a girl of nineteen like Kate-- has all the authority and omniscience of the Voice of Reason and the *vox populi* combined. She is able to decide on behalf of the African that they are happier in bondage, and to use her own experience of nineteen years ("all the free negroes I have ever seen") as the basis for global summations on the effect of freedom on an entire race. The voice of the necessary outsider is offered in the court of public opinion as sworn testimony; but since the nineteen year old Yankee girl is really a southern man of the master class masquerading in a more persuasive voice than his own, it is false testimony. How then, can the voice of the slave owner's outsider be evaluated? One might ask the other witnesses present at the scene: the actual outsider or the slave. Frederick Law Olmsted compares the northern free negro with the Louisiana slave in a discussion of provisions in exchange for labor:

The fact is, that ninety-nine in a hundred of our free labourers, from choice and not from necessity-- for the same provisions cost more in Louisiana than they do anywhere in Northern States-- live, in respect to food, at least four times as well as the average of the hardest-worked slaves on the Louisiana sugar-plantations (482).

Olmsted goes to some lengths to demonstrate that "a great deal of falsehood is circulated and accredited about the sufferings of the free negroes at the North. Their condition is bad enough, but no worse than that of any men educated and treated as they are, must be; and it is, on an average far better than that of the slave" (487). While acknowledging the "occasional suffering of the free labourer," Olmsted has seen in his travels that the widespread belief in the North that the negro slave has more basic needs met than the freedman, is not true. He flatly states that "slavery, in practice, affords no safety against occasional suffering for want of food among labourers, or even against their starvation, any more than the competitive system" (493). Olmsted reprints in his book the coroner's inquest from the *New Orleans Delta* of September 18, 1855, offering journalistic testimony of the most unadorned kind:

INQUEST.-- DEATH FROM NEGLECT AND STARVATION.--

The body of an old negro, named Bob, belonging to Mr. S.B. Davis, was found lying dead in the woods... It appeared from the evidence that the negro was too old to work any more, being nearly seventy; and so they drove him forth into the woods to die. He had been without food for forty-eight hours, when found by Mr. Wilbank, who lives near the place, and brought him into his premises on a wheelbarrow, gave him something to eat, and endeavoured to revive his failing energies, which had been exhausted from exposure and want of food. Every effort to save his life, however, was unavailing, and he died shortly after being brought to Mr. Wilbank's. (492)

This report raises discomfoting possibilities about the relationship between

slave owners and their old retainers in the Sunny South. How much pleasanter for the reader to listen to the charming Kate, whose reports from the great house about the tender care rendered to old servants are so much more humane and pleasing to imagine:

The first day I took dinner at the Park, I noticed this noble girl [the daughter of the house] setting aside several dainties, and directing the servant in attendance, in a whisper, to place them on a side table; and I was led from it to believe some person, some very dear friend in the house, was an invalid. But I soon found out that they were for Aunt Phillisey, Aunt Daphney, and Father Jack, and other venerable Africans of the estate, whose age and helplessness were thus tenderly regarded by the children of the master they had once faithfully served. (116)

It is interesting that these two extremes-- starvation in the woods for Bob, and dainties from the master's table for Aunt Phillisey and the others-- are not the extremes painted by abolitionists versus southerners, but are both accounts by southern writers: one, intended for insiders, about a shocking event that is as much about the good Mr. Wilbank as it is about the heartless S.B. Davis, and the other, intended for outsiders, which is about the slave owner as he imagines himself to be at his best. And while we can reasonably assume that there were as few elderly slaves driven into the woods to die as being hand-fed dainty morsels, the coroner's report is a hard fact with which the most well-meaning slave owner had to come to terms. Underneath Ingraham's clever construct of Kate Conyngham is a Cavalier who is as shocked by the behavior of his fellow slave owners as any northerner-- perhaps even more shocked, since a northerner cannot be expected to understand the nuances of

the loss of aristocratic values in the South. Slavery was an institution that developed in aristocratic Virginia, when the quality of *noblesse oblige* in the Cavalier was as Tucker described it in his ideal young planter Edward Grayson, who was "somewhat haughty in his manners to those who were not acknowledged inferiors, (to whom he was all mildness and condescension)." It was truly an *honor* system, in which the slaves were supposed to be protected against cruelty by the mildness and condescension of the honorable man. The last of the Cavaliers, Robert E. Lee, expounded on this quality to his son in 1851: "Honor and fame are all that men should aspire to...Hold yourself above every mean action. Be strictly honorable in every act, and be not ashamed to *do right*" (Wyatt-Brown, 107). As the old planter class died off and lost ground to the merchant middle class and poor whites, anyone who could afford to own one or two negroes could exploit and abuse them. And as the slave population grew to be thirty-three percent of the southern population by 1860, there was less interest in the genteel management of "servant" populations in ancestral homes as in the driving of slaves in order to control their increasing numbers and to produce more cotton in a declining market.

The promulgators of the myth of the Sunny South were aware that the idealized visions they held of themselves were gone forever, long before the Civil War had closed the issue. William Gilmore Simms, with his creation of the noble but lethargic Captain Porgy, George Tucker with his murdered scion of a ruined house, John Pendleton Kennedy with his romantically deteriorating Swallow Barn, and even Joseph Holt Ingraham with the impossibly perfect, highly improbable wealth of Overton Lodge, all express the melancholy subtext that the aristocratic South of the Cavalier is a thing of

the past. The implication is that slavery, as the artifact of a defunct system, cannot work in a South that has no concept of honor. As the political atmosphere became more heated between the sections, slave owner narrators were working to convince the North of the noble qualities that they themselves knew were passing away. As the Virginia Legislature realized in 1832, slavery was an evil that had to go, but southerners felt that it was their privilege to decide the terms. This is why natives of the South, to this day, claim that the Civil War was not fought over slavery but over the constitutional right to secede. How the Confederate States of America would have solved a problem in 1860 that amounted to economic ruin in 1832 will never be known; but the Slave Owner Narratives, which would have been their national literature, are complicated by the subtextual implication that the Cavalier mentality was a memory rather than a resource.

As suspicious as the slave owner was about his own social system, he could not reveal these reservations to his readers. Slave owner narrators were trapped on the wrong side of a debate that no amount of rhetorical ability could correct. And though the slave had the moral advantage, which lent wholehearted conviction to his arguments, he, too, had the problem of persuading his audience-- not to conceal his reservations, like the slave owner, but to overcome reservations in the mind of the reader.

Chapter Four

Appropriating: Pastoral and Anti-Pastoral in Douglass and Jacobs

"But, while attending a convention in Nantucket...I felt strongly moved to speak...It was a severe cross, and I took it up reluctantly. The truth was, I felt myself a slave, and the idea of speaking to white people weighed me down. I spoke but a few moments, when I felt a degree of freedom, and said what I desired with considerable ease. From that time to this, I have been engaged in pleading for my brethren."

Frederick Douglass

1845 Narrative (326)

"When spring returned, and I took in the little patch of green the aperture commanded, I asked myself how many more summers and winters I must be condemned to spend thus. I longed to draw in a plentiful draught of fresh air, to stretch my cramped limbs, to have room to stand erect, to feel the earth under my feet again.

Harriet Jacobs Incidents in

the Life of a Slave Girl (121)

The slave narrators, no less than the slave owners, had to concern themselves with the issue of believability. If the accusations of slaves against the powerful white planters were to be believed, the fugitive slaves had to be perceived, in Quintillian's words, "as possessing genuine wisdom and excellence of character." The typical strategy for slave narrators was to have

white people of high reputation add testimonials to the prefatory material of slave accounts, not only to assure the reader that the slave narrator was a man or woman of good character, but that to assure them that the narrative was authentic, since many Northerners were loath to believe the reports of the abuses committed by their brothers and sisters in the South. Robert Stepto has described how this authentication process in the Slave Narrative was gradually absorbed directly into the narrative stream in three phases over the history of Slave Narratives: Phase I, in which the authenticating documents and strategies are appended to the author's story; Phase II, in which the authenticating documents and strategies are integrated into the story by being made into voices or characters; and Phase III, in which the authenticating material is subsumed into the story, transforming the slave's narrative into another genre altogether: autobiography, history, or fiction.¹ Stepto's observations demonstrate that former slaves were at pains to prove their authority in describing the slave experience well into the postbellum period. Testimonials were the most apparent and the most important strategy the slave could use to do this, appropriating the white voice in service of the black appeal for justice.

A less apparent but similarly important strategy for appropriating the white voice was to build learned literary conventions into the slave narrative. Just as the presence or absence of negro dialect was a measure of the trustworthiness of the slave voice-- so that old Bristow and Abby in The Valley of the Shenandoah are authenticated by their use of perfect English-- so the presence of allusions to the classical figures of western culture provided a means to elevate the Slave Narratives and to give them credence with their white readers. This is not a particularly common device since very

¹ Robert Stepto, From Behind the Veil, (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1991) 5.

few of the six thousand antebellum slave narrators had the means or the literacy to enrich their stories with figures of speech or literary allusions other than those found in the Bible and in Christian liturgy. However, Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs were two slave narrators who were highly literate and who had editorial advice in the writing of their narratives. They seem to incorporate into their works elements of the classical pastoral tradition that lend additional weight and depth to the significance of the plantation setting in which their stories unfold.

In this discussion, the presence of pastoral motifs in Douglass' 1845 Narrative and in Jacobs' Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (1861) will be explored in the context of two pastoral traditions: the literary strain that can be traced from Theocritus to Virgil and from thence into the mainstream of English and American literature; and in the particular reference of southern culture to pastoral elements, reflecting a dedication to classical style that dates back to the Cavalier migration and which was reinforced by the nationwide classical revival that occurred in the nineteenth century. Douglass and Jacobs can be seen as appropriating this tradition to use familiar and powerful topoi in their narratives, providing a unique pastoral register to American and African-American literature as it relates to the pastoralism of the plantation culture. The pastoral form itself, characterized in some registers by danger and discontent hidden beneath complacent surfaces, is an ideally complex and modulated system to accommodate both the troubled fantasy of the antebellum slave holder in his plantation paradise, and the forced participation of chattel slaves in that fantasy-- slaves whose compliance constantly threatens to erupt into rebellion. Douglass and Jacobs use the

tradition of pastoral doubleness to appeal to the white reader and to imply insult to the slave owner at the same time.

By drawing a distinction between the pastoral myth enacted in antebellum culture and the pastoral literary tradition which provided the terms of the myth, and by discussing various modulations of the pastoral literary traditions which might be recognized as entering into Douglass' and Jacobs' writing, it will be possible to analyze those pastoral modulations as they appear in the 1845 Narrative and Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl.

I. The Pastoral Tradition in Literature

Pastoral is a collection ideas set in various places with a variety of characters who enact a range of activities. To say anything more specific would be to define one kind of pastoral at the expense of another, and yet pastoral is anything but vague. It derives its great variety from its long history and its capacity to be transformed from age to age, and from one genre to another. With each transformation new meanings and nuances accrue, creating both complexity and breadth of form. As Andrew Ettin observes in Literature and the Pastoral, pastoral is a "complicated and seasonally changing body of literature that is not always neatly marked off from the literary terrain that adjoins it." (7)

Theocritus' Idylls is the proto-pastoral, in which each of twenty-two short poems-- among them a singing contest, a walk along a road to a harvest festival, a lament for a dying shepherd, a woman trying to bewitch a lover, a fight between a shepherd and a goatherd, some housewives going to a religious ceremony-- provides an image or an idea that future writers adapted into their own modulation or "register" of the original form. Virgil's

Eclogues is perhaps the most influential adaptation because it was translated and re-adapted by Renaissance writers into their own forms of pastoral, while Theocritus was apparently unknown during the English Renaissance. As Frank Kermode states in English Pastoral Poetry, Theocritus "is the acknowledged classic of pastoral poetry, though his influence upon the tradition is less direct and in the long run less formative than that of Virgil." (22)

Consequently, the elements of pastoral that Virgil chose to adopt from Theocritus formed some of the most pervasive concepts of pastoral that have been passed down and modulated over the centuries. Virgil selected from Theocritus such major topoi, as the singing contest, the awarding of gifts and prizes in return for song, the *locus amoenus* or pleasing place suffused with the music of nature, the protecting bough under which a shepherd plays his pipes, the double presence of the country and the city, and the lover's lament. Virgil also assumed many of Theocritus's stylistic elements such as the framing of the events by one or two narrators, the shortness of each poem in opposition to the Homeric or epic length, realism of characterization and epideixis, the rhetoric of praise or dispraise.

What identifies pastoral more than subject and style, however, is the "pastoral stance:" an attitude displayed by the poem that sets it apart from other kinds of poems that may employ similar content or devices. One of the major pastoral stances Virgil adopted from Theocritus is that of equivocation for political reasons. Both poets were writing in politically unstable times, and so made covered references to controversial issues by introducing ambivalence into their work. Theocritus's inconclusive endings-- "I pray that you find us here,/Healthy and happy, when you come back next year" (Id.15); "There was no winning or losing where both played best" (Id.5)-- suggest

closure, but in fact leave final meanings open, avoiding offense while suggesting ominous possibilities on second thought. This stance, imported by Virgil into the stream of pastoral, becomes an important tone in modern pastoral attitudes, and offers an especially productive tool, at once veiled and open, for the slave who wishes to speak his mind while pleasing his masters, whether they are slave owners or abolitionists.

Another pastoral stance which develops major importance as the form is adapted over time is that of pastoral compression or *mutlum in parvo*-- "much in little"-- complexities compressed into apparent simplicities. For instance, the deceptive simplicity of a shepherd lying under a beech tree playing his pipes contains within each image a world of metaphorical suggestion: the shepherd and his music are the poet and his poem; the shade is the protection cast by his benefactor, represented by the beech tree. The benefactor may be the major political figure of the day, or, if the topos is inverted by slave narrators like Douglass and Jacobs, who wish to turn conventional images back onto their enemies, the shade cast by a beech tree may be seen as a tyrant, blocking out the sun of growth and freedom.

The image of the shepherd in Theocritus and Virgil was "much in little" because the all-important function of singing was located in the lowly figure of a shepherd rather than in an aristocratic, educated courtier. The court and the city may have their wealth and political power, but the shepherds (who are singers, poets, and therefore, truth-tellers) have moral and prophetic power because of their natural place in the landscape. By the time the pastoral form was adapted by Spencer, however, the shepherd's importance reflected the influence of Christianity, in which the shepherd image was one of powerful virtue. In E.K.'s Epistle to The Shepheardes

Calender, Spencer, who is the poet and, therefore, the shepherd, is praised for "his pastorall rudenesse, his morall wiseness, his dewe observing of Decorum everye where..." (120). The "morall wiseness" of the shepherd reflects the received wisdom of the Bible: Moses was the shepherd of the tribes of Israel, a precursor and ancestor of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. In the Renaissance, scholars believed the Messiah to have been anticipated by Virgil in the Fourth Eclogue, which speaks of the the pastoral child who will come to return humanity to the Golden Age, even as Jesus was sent, in Milton's words, to "restore us and regain the blissful seat." The angels announced the reincarnation to shepherds because of their simplicity, which is to say their closeness to God, for whom "many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first" (Matt. 19:30). The shepherd, in his Christian register as both a lowly person and yet one who is morally superior to the wealthy and powerful, is an attractive image to Douglass, who preached many a jeremiad against the wealthy planters who, he claimed, could not reconcile slave holding with Christianity.

The polarity between the country and the city, a topos which figures in virtually all transformations of pastoral, established the seat of wealth and power in the city, and the site of leisure and prophecy in the rural landscape. The threat to the *locus amoenas* was the court/city which had the power, as seen in Virgil's Ninth Eclogue, to displace rural people from their places. The security of Arcadia relies upon the policy of the powers in the city. Yet in a culture where wealth and power reside in the country, as in the Antebellum South, and the only leisure available is for the planters, the escaped slave finds that the seat of good things is in the city, where one can be recognized as a human being instead of a beast of burden. In the city, Douglass is no longer a

beast who requires the brutal shepherding of an overseer, but discovers his vocation as a shepherd of leadership and prophecy. Jacobs, imprisoned in her coffin-sized hideaway, discovers in her topos of the anti-pastoral that nature itself is the dangerous court/city and that she must avoid the very air to find safety in a place where she cannot even feel the earth under her feet. These are not the only inverted pastoral motifs of the city/country topos which emerge in the upside-down values of the antebellum South. The unique merging of the city/country polarities into an anomalous pastoral setting creates a self-inflicted threat to the southern Arcadia: not only are the powerful court figures mislocated in the pastoral landscape as if it were the city, but they have introduced discord into the landscape in the form of a people they wrongly perceive to be animals. This essential misreading of nature induces such discord that the Arcadia of the southern planters cannot survive.

II. Pastoral Myth in the South

Though the conceptual jump between Virgil and the Antebellum South of Douglass and Jacobs is distant in time, it is less distant in affinity and sympathy. Few societies in modern history have so consciously referred themselves to the values of another culture as did the Old South in its adoption of the classical and pastoral modes of Greece and Rome. However different in register and execution, one only has to imagine the Grecian portico of Monticello from which Thomas Jefferson surveyed his gardens and orchards to find a connection. And yet a distinction must be made between a literary attitude and a social attitude. While turning to the classics for a myth upon which to construct a society, the antebellum South was borrowing style

rather than content. A reverence for and elevation of all things classical came from imitation of the English, for whom classical education had been central to aristocratic society for centuries. It was the aristocratic Cavalier ideal, with its squires and palladian mansions, as much as the classics themselves that defined pastoral values in the Old South.

In Ante-Bellum South Carolina: A Social and Cultural History (1941), Rosser H. Taylor describes the place of classical studies in the life of the South:

No South Carolina gentleman of parts considered his intellectual armory complete unless stored with the weapons of ancient oratory and mythology. A classical education, as defined by its champions, lifted a person above sordid desires and purely material motives and filled him with an appreciation of the highest values life could offer... southern society prized men of elegant address, men facile in conversation, chivalrous in love and brave in war-- men who could not be deflected from the path of honor by blandishments or bribes. These qualities the classics were supposed in some degree to nourish.

(116)

In order to attend South Carolina College, the premier institution for higher education in the antebellum South, a young man was to "posses an accurate knowledge of English, Latin and Greek grammars..." and be able to "translate into English with facility and correctness Caesar's Commentaries, the whole of Virgil's Aeneid and, from the Greek, the four Evangelists and the Acts of the Apostles" (118). While the entrance examination was heavily weighted on the heroic end of the classical range, we can imagine that a young man so well versed will be familiar with the Eclogues and Georgics, and that the

relationship between the wisdom of the pagans and the redemptive transformation of Christianity is manifest in the ability of the classics to ennoble daily life and preserve one from "sordid desires" and "material motives."

A classical education was cherished not only as the hallmark of a gentleman in the manner of English aristocracy, but was useful for defining social inclusiveness rather than inspiring intellectual thought. Bertram Wyatt-Brown, in Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South (1982), observes that "Easy reference to Homer, Plato, Horace, and Livy assured Southern gentlemen of one another's trustworthiness, but only so long as the quotations and allusions were familiar... catchwords and maxims from the ancient past were simply part of everyday parlance... Even gamblers named their horses Bucephelas and hunters called their dogs Scipio"(93). On the most mundane levels an affinity for ancient culture permeated the slave owner culture.

At the same time that this world view was perpetuated beyond practical and intellectual usefulness in the South, the northern states were changing the curriculum to the sciences and to those courses that would support the expansion of America into new intellectual and geographical territories. Regional differences were being institutionalized as the South committed itself rigidly to the pastoral myth in the face of a changing world. As Taylor notes, "the social ideals of the Old South were reflected in the educational objectives;" educators were to "cement more securely the bases of the social pattern in the framework of Southern polity" (131).

Southern polity consisted, of course, of a social and economic agrarianism based upon chattel slavery. Faced with the same moral

arguments that caused the British Empire to abolish slavery in 1833 and the Northern states to outlaw the slave trade in the early nineteenth century, southern gentry called upon the classics, modulated through the Bible, to provide the justification for their economic commitment to slavery. They cited the acceptability of slaves in Greek and Roman social systems, the Hebrew law governing treatment of chattel slaves (Exodus 21-22), and the instruction in the Epistles for slaves to be obedient to their masters (Ephesians 6:5-7) as arguments supporting their commitment to slave labor. As Wyatt-Brown notes, "[Southerners] genuinely trusted their own slaves and loved those they knew best, yet were convinced that the race was vile, bestial, and fit for nothing but bondage" (60).

Believing that God ordained the distinction between bond and free, the full force of the church was brought to bear upon the slaves to educate them to their condition, as a sermon by Thomas Bacon of Winchester, Virginia in 1743 illustrates. Based upon the same chapter in Ephesians cited above, Bacon enumerates all the ways in which the "well-Beloved Black Brethren and Sisters" must be obedient and industrious without being wasteful:

Take care that you do not fret or murmur, grumble or repine at your condition. For this will not only make your own life uneasy, but will greatly offend Almighty God. Consider that it is not yourselves, it is not the people you belong to, it is not the men that have brought you to it, but the will of God, who hath by his Providence made you servants, because he knew that condition would be best for you in this world, and help you the better towards heaven, if you would but do your duty in it.

(233)²

In spite of the contradiction between the idea that the slave was bestial and the idea that obedient slaves go to heaven, the chattel slave was expected to be a compliant, herdable beast— a position that rationalizes the place of the slave in the pastoral landscape.

Lewis P. Simpson, in The Dispossessed Garden: Pastoral and History in Southern Literature (1975) refines the focus of southern neo-classicism to the pastoral myth by tracing its origins to the vision of America as a new Garden of Eden, which consisted of two distinct pastoral registers. While the northern states were governed by the pastoral vision Simpson refers to as the "Garden of the Covenant," the call to create a paradise of godliness and virtue in which the puritan settlers labor to retain God's blessing on the land, the southern states were governed by the pastoral vision of the "Garden of Chattel," a paradise in which the anomaly of slavery introduces a figure that has no place in the landscape. In discussions of Robert Beverly's The History and Present State of Virginia (1705) and the letters of William Byrd II (1726), Simpson traces the rationalization of this anomaly through a process of southern men of letters who begin with the idea of the slave as gardener and end with the idea of the slave as beast of burden.

In the early stages of slavery, before the need for large numbers of slaves to work tobacco and cotton fields, the small number of slaves could be viewed as contented gardeners, similar to the shepherd's role in Arcadia. Though the slave had neither leisure to enjoy the *locus amoenas*, nor independence to engage in a life that would motivate the loves and pastimes of the pastoral shepherd, the planter could think of the slave in the biblical register, as a humble and lowly servant laboring in the vineyard of his

² Aubrey C. Land, ed. Bases of the Plantation Society (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

master. William Byrd conveys this idea in his letter to Peter Beckford of Jamaica:

Our negroes are not so numerous or so enterprizing as to give us any apprehension or uneasiness nor indeed is their Labour any other than Gardening & less by far that what the poor People undergo in other countrys. Nor are any crueltys exercized upon them, unless by great accident they happen to fall into the hands of a Brute, who always passes here for a monster. (22)

Yet Byrd himself recognized the danger of allowing the negro population to increase, reporting in 1736 to Lord Egmont of England that the presence of slaves in southern society "blow up the pride and ruin the industry of our white people, who, seeing a rank of poor creatures below them, detest work for fear it should make them look like slaves" (20). This is one of the earliest observations of the self-destructive element introduced by slavery into the southern Arcadia. The term "rank" evokes pastoral polarity of high and low, but goes beyond the standard conception of lowly servant/noble master to the concept of hierarchical rank on the Great Chain of Being: Byrd strongly suggests that these "poor creatures" are a link lower on the chain and not human at all, leading to the anomalous distortion that increasingly disturbs the repose of the pastoral setting.

When Alexis deTocqueville reported on his travels in Democracy in America in 1840, the fear Byrd expressed a century earlier seems to have become reality. Describing the phenomenon of slavery, deTocqueville says that "it became clear that slavery, so cruel to the slave, was fatal to the master." He describes a trip along the Ohio river, with the free state of Ohio on one side, and the slave state of Kentucky on the other. On the Kentucky

side of the river the land is deserted and the population sparse; occasionally one sees "a troop of slaves loitering through half-deserted fields." On the Ohio side are fine crops, elegant houses and industrious workers.

DeTocqueville explains the phenomenon not only in Byrd's terms of proud white people fearing that labor will make them appear to be slaves, but in economic terms, in which the slave laborer, unmotivated by pay, will avoid work. The white southerner, in the meantime, is acting out the pastoral ideal of leisure. DeTocqueville observes of the southern man that "living in idle ease, he has the tastes of idle men... Slavery therefore not only prevents the white men from making their fortunes but even diverts them from wishing to do so" (347-8). The southerner has rejected the Georgic register of the pastoral myth, in which labor is ennobling, for idea of leisure in the pleasant, secure place. Yet in Arcadia, leisure is the natural consequence of work, whether herding sheep, keeping house, or other common chores. The presence of the slave has corrupted the pastoral vision by substituting passivity for leisure, and the landscape itself begins to reflect its troubled state. The polarization of the slavery issue between North and South gave the Antebellum culture little opportunity to correct the problem even though its consequences-- fallow fields, underdeveloped resources, and shabbiness beyond the facade of elegance-- were clear even to the observant southerner.

This polarization forced the South to take a rigid position on the appropriateness, even holiness of slavery, while at the same time burying more deeply the reservations about the institution held from the beginning. Thomas Jefferson, like William Byrd, veered between the complacency of the Virginia planter, lord of all he surveyed, and the famous reservation offered

in Notes on the State of Virginia "Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep forever..." This fear of a "revolution of the wheel of fortune," meaning a revolution of the increasing number of slaves, who outnumbered their masters to a considerable degree, emerges in southerners whenever the pastoral myth rubs thin and the difference between the imagined beast of burden being cheerfully herded through the landscape and the human chattel with suppressed desire for freedom is brought to the surface. Louis P. Simpson regards the style of writing that developed in this this atmosphere as the South's "lack of distinguished literary accomplishment in the nineteenth century," which he attributes to the "culture of alienation:"

The antebellum Southern writer was cut off from the literary sensibility of the larger world... because of the involvement of the Southern man of letters in the politics of slavery. He could not participate in the opposition to society which distinguished the function of the man of letters in Europe, and in New England, where it marked in important ways the writings of Emerson, Thoreau, and Hawthorn. (38-9)

In an analysis of William Gilmore Simms' Woodcraft, Simpson argues that the neglected and disintegrating plantation of the bachelor hero, Captain Porgy, his disinterest in marriage and procreation, and his dependence upon his slave Tom are unconscious signs on the part of the author of a culture that was "a world without issue doomed to come to an end with its present generation..." (60). The political implication was one of sterility, in which "The South must become a complete, self-contained slave society living in isolation from all free society and from the world marketplace-- a nation

apart." (61). The operative register is of Arcadia as a walled garden, hidden from the threats of the outside world. And yet the threat is not external-- the South has imported into its garden the city and its polity. The effect of enslavement is counter-enslavement, demonstrated in a famous passage from *Swallow Barn*, quoted earlier, in which Porgy offers Tom his freedom. Tom refuses it declaring "Ef I doesn't b'long to you, you b'long to me! ...and you nebber guine git you free paper from me as long as you lib." (in Simpson 59) This passage, which is presented by Simms as a sign the love Tom has for his master, is an unconscious revelation of the southern dilemma.

Jan Bakker, in Pastoral in Antebellum Southern Romance (1989) does not agree that the topos of the disintegrating garden is unconscious. She argues that antebellum romance is more intentional-- that the "pastoral allusion gives romances of the Old South a symbolism and a realism that make them something more than merely regional expressions," and that "a very serious, almost allegorical quality infuses antebellum pastoral with a dialectic force whose contrast of dream and reality work to compromise or question that pastoral's recurring images of a southern *locus amoenas*" (4). She credits Kennedy, Simms and other Plantation writers with a system of "pastoral and anti-pastoral" in which the anti-pastoral is the expressed but unacknowledged system of motifs which display disintegration in the garden. Interestingly, she never mentions the issue of slavery in her analysis but locates the threat of danger to outside forces representing the failure of the New World to live up to its "idyll of redemption." Bakker views the pastoral myth of the Old South from the planters' point of view, and does not see the ruination of the garden as self-inflicted. Yet her concept of the anti-pastoral has particular application to the hostile world in which Harriet Jacobs hides

for seven years before she is able to escape to the North.

The anti-pastoral mirror of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs developed out of their struggle against the society they lived in-- the very quality which, according to Simpson, "distinguished the function of the man of letters in Europe, and in New England, where it marked in important ways the writings of Emerson, Thoreau, and Hawthorn." This is the quality that Simpson thought was lacking in the "southern men of letters" which made them unable to produce literature to rival the American Renaissance authors. Simpson and Bakker, both, are referring to white men of letters, forgetting that the South also produced black men and women of letters whose work is essentially southern and, because it was not paralyzed by political commitment to the status quo, may be seen as superior the the work of white men of letters in the South and comparable to the best work of Northern writers of the same period. Douglass was born and grew up in the southern culture, became literate there, and absorbed the myths of the Old South along with its debasing realities. It seems entirely possible that Douglass' 1845 Narrative belongs in some measure to the culture that inspired or necessitated it, and that the black man of letters, having access to the same pastoral motifs of his culture as the white man of letters, doubles and reverses his master's world view in way which is fundamentally pastoral in its orientation.

III. Pastoral in Douglass' 1845 Narrative

Douglass was unlikely to have escaped the influence of the pastoral as he became literate, and as he observed the myths of the Old South enacted around him, in which he was assigned a particularly unhappy role. The

system of motifs employed in the 1845 Narrative demonstrates a perceptive assessment of the southern social myth and his place in it. Douglass expresses the constant friction of reality against that myth by making use of what Henry Louis Gates calls in his preface to Douglass' Narrative a "system of signs that we have come to call plantation culture, an ordering of the world based upon a profoundly relational type thinking..." in which "...a strict barrier of difference forms the basis of a class rather than, as in other classification schemes, an ordering based on resemblance or the identity of two or more elements" (xiii). By juxtaposing elements that do not belong in a category together, such as men and animals, and relating them to a third element, such as knowing one's birth date, he highlights the absence of a necessary quality-- in this case, humanity. Douglass begins his narrative, for instance, by saying that he does not know when he was born: "By far the larger part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep their slaves thus ignorant" (255).

This synaptic method of comparison, in which two ideas laid together with deceptive simplicity spark the suggestion of an absent idea, is in complete opposition to the vehement moral tone used by the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison to make the same point in his preface to the Narrative: "O, how accursed is that system, which entombs the godlike mind of man, defaces the divine image, reduces those who by creation were crowned with glory and honor to a level with four-footed beasts, and exalts the dealer in human flesh above all that is called God!" (250) Both Douglass and Garrison are saying that slaves are treated like animals, but Garrison's agenda is to rid the nation of a great sin which, by association, pollutes every

Christian citizen. His concern is as much for the moral state of white society as for the condition of slaves. Douglass' agenda is buried beneath the necessity to align himself with Garrison and the abolitionists: he knows that the world of 1845 does not accept him as a human being with a "godlike mind" who is "crowned with honor and glory." He must first demonstrate to the North as well as to the South that he is neither an animal nor a member of an inferior and dependent race.

The system of motifs Douglass uses to achieve his own goals while conforming to the form and content requirements of his abolitionist sponsors, is to relate a buried narrative simultaneously with the standard slave narrative. The hidden narrative may be understood in pastoral terms, as that of the lowly child of unknown parentage who, discovering his identity, engages in a mission to restore a corrupted world to its pristine state. This messianic identity is expressed in the classical register by Virgil in the Fourth Eclogue, in which, by way of a Virgin "...a new begetting now descends from heaven's height" to bear a child "...whose birth will end the iron race at last and raise a golden through the world" (57). This *multum in parvo* stance is modulated to the biblical register by the life of Christ, whose lowly origins were the source of redemption. Since the Old South believed itself to be the new paradise, the terms for this buried narrative were available to Douglass in the culture, and he is always aware of the irony of the "slaveholding religion of this land [the South]... for, between Christianity of this land and the Christianity of Christ I recognize the widest possible difference-- so wide, that to receive the one as good, pure, and holy, is of necessity to reject the other as bad, corrupt, and wicked" (326).

The hidden narrative appears to progress in terms of the revelatory

task of the pastoral child: Douglass not only begins in a manger, he is the beast rather than the babe, and his first task is to be transformed from animal to human. The second task is to find his voice: to discover his identity as the shepherd who sings. As the shepherd is the poet and his song is the poem, so Douglass locates his voice, both through the acquisition of literacy and through the native songs of his race. When that voice is found and realized, the final task is to sing laments which, from Theocritus on have been central to all modulations of pastoral. Douglass employs the jeremiad, which is a biblical form of epedeixis-- the rhetoric, in this case, of dispraise-- to become the prophetic voice of his people. Whether a new Moses, rising from the bullrushes to lead his people to the promised land, or the messianic figure of the New Testament, Douglass' task is entirely different from the one set for him by his Northern white allies. While the straightforward narration of Douglass' life is executed in conformity with the abolitionist's "template" for slave narratives, the hidden narrative seems to be a pattern of pastoral motifs which tell the real story of Douglass' identity and the tasks that fall to him as a consequence. It is also this transformational process which persuades the reader of his humanity, as he gradually develops the insights and the strength to resist the universal assessment of his world, that he is subhuman.

When Douglass' owner, Captain Anthony, dies and leaves his estate to his children, Douglass is required to participate in an inventory in which the property is assessed and divided:

We were all ranked together at the valuation. Men and women, old and young, married and single, were ranked with horses, sheep and swine. There were horses and men, cattle and women, pigs and children, all holding the same rank in the scale

of being, and were all subjected to the same narrow examination.
(282)

In this and other references, Douglass describes the condition of the slaves as identical, or worse, than that of the animals. He has no way of assessing the truth of the claim that he ought to be numbered with the animals, because he is "within the circle," lacking any outside dissension that would present the idea to his mind that he is other than what his society holds him to be. "I was within the circle; so that I neither saw nor heard as those without might see and hear" (263).

To know himself to be the shepherd rather than the sheep, Douglass needed the inspiration that came to him in his relationship with his mistress, a Northern woman who, unschooled in the ways of slaveholding, taught him the alphabet. Douglass attributes her humanity to fact that she was not an idle southern woman, corrupted by leisure, but, in an inversion of the topos, a weaver, and used to honest labor. She had the vision to see Douglass as a version of herself, and he was given the central tool for his future vocation. He did not understand his possession, however, until he heard his master forbid the lessons saying "if you teach that nigger how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave" (274). This objection provided Douglass with the perspective he needed to leave the circle of chattel and know himself to be human: "I now understood what had been to me a most perplexing difficulty-- to wit, the white man's power to enslave the black man. It was a grand achievement and I prized it highly. From that moment I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom" (275). He repeated this great achievement over years of struggle, painstakingly providing himself with the literacy he needed to give the same moment of

insight to his fellow slaves still in bondage.

To help him prepare for his mission, Douglass made a group of friends who, like the shepherds and cowherds of Virgil and Theocritus, were persuaded to share their songs in exchange for gifts. The songs were reading lessons, and the pastoral friends were in the landscape that Douglass equated most closely with freedom: the city. He had been sent to live in Baltimore with a branch of the plantation family that owned him. There he discovered that "A city slave is almost a freeman compared with a slave on the plantation. He is much better fed and clothed, and enjoys privileges altogether unknown to the slave on the plantation" (275). One of the privileges was to run errands around town, which gave him an opportunity to make friends with little white boys he encountered in the streets:

As many of these as I could I converted into teachers. With their kindly aid, obtained at different times and in different places, I finally succeeded in learning to read... I used also to carry bread with me, enough of which was always in the house, and to which I was always welcome; for I was much better off in this regard than many of the poor white children in our neighborhood. This bread I used to bestow upon the hungry little urchins, who, in return, would give me that more valuable bread of knowledge. (278)

Douglass' own *locus amoenus* was that place where he could make friendships, learn to sing/read, and share his laments with his fellows. Of his urchin friends Douglass relates: "I would sometimes say to them, 'I wished I could be as free as they would be when they got to be twenty-one, but I am a slave for life! Have not I as good a right to be free as you have?' These words

used to trouble them; they would express for me the liveliest sympathy, and console me with the hope that something might occur by which I might be free" (278). The innocence of the urchins who have not yet been affected by policy is reminiscent of the ideal of friendship present in some registers of Arcadia, as well as having the eucharistic tone of transformation through spiritual bread.

This transformation enabled Douglass to interpret his environment accurately, in opposition to the false interpretation of his masters. To support their vision of pastoral, the antebellum slave owner needed to believe that he was treating his chattel well and that they were happy in their bondage. Mark Littleton, the narrator in Swallow Barn who is a Northerner paying a visit to a Virginia plantation, typifies this conviction when he describes the slave as "...parasitical. He grows upward, only as a vine to which nature has supplied the sturdy tree as a support... Their fondness for music and dancing is a predominant passion. I never meet a negro man-- unless he is quite old-- that he is not whistling; and the women sing from morning till night..." (454). As seen in Chapter two, this distorted view of music in the life of slaves is corrected by Douglass, whose vision from outside the circle reveals that "Slaves sing most when they are most unhappy...Every tone [is] a testimony against slavery, and a prayer to God for the deliverance from chains" (263).

Both the acquisition of his voice through literacy and his understanding of song were essential steps in Douglass' progression from chattel, to human, to the shepherd's mission of prophecy and leadership. Yet Douglass still had the practical problem of escaping to the North where he could fulfill his vocation. In the 1845 Narrative Douglass is unable to reveal the

mechanics of his escape for fear of endangering those who made it possible. In Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, (1895) when the intervening fifty years made it safe to tell the story, Douglass relates that a freedman, who was a sailor, sent him his seaman's travel papers through the mail, and Douglass used them to ride the train from Baltimore to Philadelphia. Though he could not tell this story in his 1845 Narrative, he drops what may be a fascinating hint in the midst of the most Arcadian episode of the book.

While the inverted topos of the rural landscape as a place of brutality and the city as *locus amoenas* reverberates throughout, the episode of the plantation garden vividly illustrates the simultaneously beautiful and dangerous quality of the countryside to the slave. Douglass describes his master's enclosed orchard-- so lush that people came from Baltimore, Easton and Annapolis to see it-- and the "hungry swarms of boys, as well as older slaves" who would attempt to climb the walls to get the fruit. The strategem finally devised to protect the garden was to put tar on the top of the wall:

...if a slave was caught with any tar upon his person, it was deemed sufficient proof that he had either been into the garden, or that he had tried to get in. In either case, he was severely whipped by the chief gardener. This plan worked well; the slaves became as fearful of tar as of the lash. They seemed to realize the impossibility of touching *tar* without being defiled. (264)

The complexity of this image centers on the word tar, which is curiously italicized for reasons that seem to signal special significance to the reader. That the image of exclusion should be tar on the wall is deeply ironic when considered in the light of slaves being commonly described as the color of tar, when the composition of tar is a "destructive distillation of organic matter"

(Webster) and when the legend of the tar baby which is set by Br'er Fox to catch Br'er Rabbit is among the cultural reverberations in the word. Yet the fact that the word tar is also an expression for sailor, and that "tar" or "tarre" is a transitive verb that means "to incite; to urge to action" suggests that Douglass is using a buried lexicon that counters the cruelty of the episode. What better location for the key word of his escape than on the wall that symbolized being walled into servitude and walled out of the fruits of his labor?

When Douglass arrives in New Bedford to begin life as freedman, his description of the city reveals the self-prejudice he will need to shed in the process of refining his voice. He is initially disappointed in the city because "I had somehow imbibed the opinion that, in the absence of slaves, there could be no wealth, and very little refinement" (323). The productiveness of the city, "the splendid churches, the beautiful dwellings, and finely-cultivated gardens" recalls deTocqueville's description of the Ohio side of the river in 1840. Douglass begins his process of dis-education: of relieving himself of those prejudices he brought with him from the south, and of re-educating himself to his task of speaking for his race without alienating his supporters. In the quotation above, he feels himself "still a slave" and "weighed down" by "the idea of speaking to white people." But when he opens his mouth to speak, the words come with "considerable ease," and he assumes his mission of becoming the voice for his brethren who are still in bondage. Douglass' selection of language makes clear his relationship to his fellow slaves and his suffering for their sake: he calls his speaking mission a "severe cross," and, like Christ on the Mount of Olives, he takes it up reluctantly. But his alignment with the Messiah of Christianity and, through pastoral

transformation, with the messianic child of the Fourth Eclogue, Douglass becomes the prophetic shepherd who will lead his flock to freedom.

Before he assumes his pastoral identity on the lecture circuit, his epedeixis against his former owners and the false "Christians" who provide them with moral excuses for their crimes is intense and direct. The 1845 Narrative concludes with two remarkable documents of dispraise: an appendix in which Douglass clarifies his ironic use of "Christian" throughout the book, and "A Parody," a thirteen verse ballad in which the clergy are criticized in terms more intense than "Lycidas" but in the same pastoral tradition:

Come, saints and sinners, hear me tell
How pious priests whip Jack and Nell,
And women buy and children sell,
and preach all sinners down to hell,
And sing of heavenly union.

The ballad goes on to compare clergy to goats, asses and snakes, completing the transformation of the slaves to humans, and the masters to brutes. An analysis of this poem alone, in which the oak is used as a whipping tree and the abundance of the plantation is changed into the grotesque excesses of "A roaring, ranting sleek man-thief/Who lived on mutton, veal and beef..." provides a microcosm of antebellum pastoral felicities turned back on the masters in the rage of an escaped slave who has found his voice. With this conclusion, Douglass allows himself to show the force of his indignation which completes his progression from an ignorant beast of burden to shepherd of his race.

IV. Anti-pastoral in Harriet Jacobs' Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl

The messianic topos of longing for the Golden Age which provides the pastoral frame for Douglass is far from the progression that takes place for Harriet Jacobs in Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. While Douglass has a destiny which draws him into the transformation from a beast of burden to the messianic shepherd, Jacobs-- a young mother who was threatened with the loss of her children if she did not succumb to the sexual demands of her master-- seems not to have a destiny outside of her designation as breeding animal and sexual object. Yet in the bizarre method she finds for outwitting her owner, Dr. Flint, and saving her children from being "sold down the river," she destroys the boundaries of the pastoral landscape while inverting the pastoral topos of *multum in parvo*. She removes herself from the landscape altogether by hiding in the attic of her grandmother's shed for seven years before making her escape to the North. In the mausoleum-like space of the nine-by-seven foot garret she occupies, Jacobs has a one-inch square peep-hole from which to view the world. In the quotation above, she longs "to stand erect, to feel the earth under my feet again" as she lives suspended in an artificial universe, where the natural world has become the hostile and dangerous environment, and in which the *locus amoenas* is reduced to a site that is not only unpleasant, but is hardly large enough to qualify as a *locus*. It is a constructed space in which she is entirely surrounded by man-made boundaries that separate her from the hostility of nature. Jacobs has effectually dissolved the boundary that delimits the pastoral place-- the plantation which has betrayed her into the position of an animal-- so that she can disappear into a no-place of her own creation. This anti-Arcadia is carved out of air; a place made from a void that was "never

occupied by anything but rats and mice." Though Jacobs is able to reject the slave owner's version of reality, the material available for her alternative world lacks any amenity to make it pleasant. She cannot, then, make a *locus amoenas*, but only an existence-place that will protect her until she can make her final escape to the North.

Thus Jacobs not only makes "much out of little," she invents an alternative universe in which her children are delivered from immediate danger, and in which she herself is delivered from the sexual vulnerabilities of her status and gender. The price of this deliverance is a form of artificiality that tropes on the artificiality of the pastoral tradition-- one in which the realities of actual sheep herding, with its butchering and manure, are replaced in the Arcadian landscape with the philosophical and emotional distancing of a place where the laws of the "real" world do not apply. The no-place of classical Arcadia is made pleasant by the absence of care that comes from herding sheep who are not preyed upon by wolves, disease, or forces of the market-place. This pleasant and untaxing labor creates *otium* or pastoral leisure, which offers a place for the shepherd/poet to find the rest which refreshes the mind. Pastoral reflectivity is one of the purposes of Arcadia: to allow the shepherd the leisure to reflect before re-entering the demanding and busy world of the court or the city.

Everything in Jacobs' anti-Arcadia is a voided version of the pastoral topos it suggests, so that the pastoral artificiality which generates the *otium* of Arcadia becomes the enforced idleness of a woman who cannot even stand up straight in her confined space. The reflectivity that characterizes Arcadian time becomes, for her, the only form of labor she can perform: that of monitoring the hostile outside world from her peep-hole. By this device

the reader is able to see the two Arcadias side-by-side: the slave owner's *locus amoenus*, which relies for its leisure on the stolen labor of others, and Jacobs' reduced and painful world which authorizes physical deprivation over the conditions of slavery.

The comparison of the two Arcadias should be conclusive on the surface, since Jacobs' world resembles living death so closely that few would prefer it even to a wretched life. But the instability of the slave owner's world is relentlessly presented to the eye that is fixed at Jacobs' peep-hole. The events she reports to the reader occur in the detached and apparently unrelated sequence of newspaper articles crowded onto a front page, and yet the comprehensive message is one of injustice and suffering. We see a female slave pursued by two men who are ordered to strip her and beat her publicly "for some trifling offense." With an eye that can see the end of stories in addition to the fragment that passes by the peep-hole, we are told that "To escape the degradation and torture, she rushed to the the river, jumped in, and ended her wrongs in death" (444). Jacobs sees her own child pursued and mauled by a dog, and cannot cry out for help lest she destroy the suspended, artificial world that protects the very child who is being bitten. Another fragment of life that passes before her eye is an event that, she says, "made me thankful for my wretched hiding place:"

One day I saw a slave pass by our gate, muttering, 'It's his own, and he can kill it if he will.' My grandmother told me that woman's history. Her mistress had that day seen her baby for the first time, and in the lineaments of its fair face she saw a likeness to her husband. She turned the bondwoman and her child out of doors, and forbade her ever to return. The slave went to her

master, and told him what had happened. He promised to talk with her mistress, and make it all right. The next day she and her baby were sold to a Georgia trader. (444)

Harriet Jacobs is giving the reader an alternative version of the events in her own life if she had not constructed an artificial world for herself. Slave women— particularly attractive mulatto women— could not escape the sexual attentions of white men, and had to select their own seducer, as did Jacobs, to find the most acceptable rapist they could. Her service to the anti-slavery movement was the exposure of this crime to the general public.

The reader, in this episode, is given listening ears as well as all-seeing eyes, to overhear the bitter words, "It's his own, and he can kill it if he will." The slave owner's power over life and death cannot be exercised in the no-place of Jacobs' garret, for in Jacobs' anti-pastoral, the laws of the "real" world do not apply. Though she is confined in an unthinkably small space, she is not enslaved. Her confinement is voluntary, and by it she has delivered herself into freedom, as much as she will do in the future when she actually reaches the free states. Though in constant danger of recapture, she accepts the torment of enclosure, as well as the company of rats, mice, biting insects, suffocating heat and frostbite in exchange for the no-place in which she has disappeared into freedom. Because she can no longer be threatened by the sale of her children, and since those children have value to Dr. Flint, and are somewhat protected by the moral authority of a city community which frowns upon the sale of children, he no longer has a motivation to sell them away. Jacobs has placed the boundaries of her anti-Arcadia around a self-created space that defies the laws of nature and of the state to grant freedom to herself and protection for her children.

Harriet Jacobs did not have the alternative of creating for herself a more expansive or humane life, but she makes "much of little" by reserving to herself the right to select which reductions and deprivations she will suffer. By so doing she saves the lives of herself and her children. The slave owner's fantasy of Arcadia-- so deadly for the slave who is treated like a beast of burden-- is transformed by her act of creation into the landscape of loss from which Jacobs carves her anti-Arcadia in suspended space.

Douglass' messianic destiny as the pastoral child appropriates one register of the pastoral to transform a slave into a prophetic leader. Jacobs appropriates materials from the slave owner's Arcadia to construct her own Arcadian space-- a no-place of safety for herself and her children which inverts the classical topos of *multum in parvo*. By picking up the strains of a literary trope normally heard in the white literary culture-- whether deliberately or by assimilation from the styles of the day-- both slave narrators reinforce the authenticity of their own narratives.

Chapter Five

Cross-referencing: Plantation Characters as Fields of Contention

"Each of us lives and experiences the world subjectively. We experience the world by projections representing the actual world. We organize these views of the world into concepts and precepts which we can communicate to ourselves and others with the help of language... It appears that absolute knowledge of how other people feel about themselves or about the world is impossible... All pretensions to the objective 'truth' have to be dropped. Since it is so difficult for people who see themselves through different world values to communicate with each other, verbal exchange between people... may be experienced as a kind of meaningless babble because the same words can represent different images or meanings. Therefore, people often live parallel lives while living together."

Herbert Holt The Subjective
Experience of the Self (8-9)¹

The world of the slave holding South contained two cultural structures, interrelated and presupposing each other for any adequate description. Yet the members of each culture, the slaves and slave owners, had very little concept of the reality of the other, as the conflicting literary descriptions of their shared world attest. Furthermore, any evidence offered to the contrary-- particularly on the part of slave owners who claim the affection of slaves-- can be discounted in terms of the limitations of subjectivity: even with good

¹ The existential view of the human mind is based upon the philosophical theories of Heidegger and Husserl, and the psychoanalytic theories of Binswanger.

will, neither a slave nor a slave owner can be said to understand the other. At best, a neutral space of suspended judgement can be constructed in which some degree of communication takes place. But with the power all on one side, and that power absolute, the candid exchange of information is impossible, much less the possibility of one group truly understanding the condition of the other. In the existential view, people act as screens upon which the self-generated image of the other is projected. The actual person behind the screen is lost to sight, not only to the viewer who has erected the screen, but to the subject, who is covered with a self-concept that ranges from grandiosity to self-hatred. Between the two projected views a third party (the reader) can extrapolate the presence of actual people, but will have accounts of only the fantasy versions of each.

The Slave Narratives and the Slave Owner Narratives were literatures of reference and literatures at war. Neither genre described either itself or its opposite objectively, but in terms of its needed projection, borrowing only those attributes from the opposite number that supported its world view. This cross-referencing is seen most clearly in the characters described by both forms of narrative which use the same actual person as a source. Thus the reader can have historical evidence that there were slave owners, and literary versions of what these actual people were like. If the version comes from the slave owner himself, it may be a grandiose image of generosity and confidence tinged with the counter-image of guilt or rage. If the version of the slave owner comes from the slave, it may be a powerful image of cruelty and hatred, tinged with the counter-image of kindness or Christian forbearance.

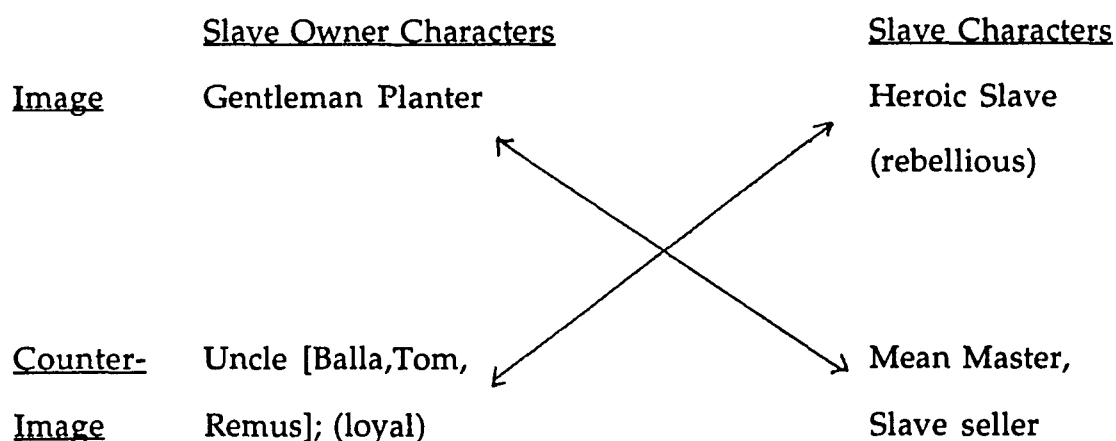
Like a coin with two sides, every image has its counter-image, so that the primary image presented to the reader suggests the presence of its own

opposite. If a character "protests too much" as a perfect specimen of its type-- the heroic slave, for instance, or the magnanimous master-- it suggests the counter image of imperfection whether that imperfection is mentioned as part of the character, transposed onto another character, or buried in the subtext of the narrative, giving it a troubled undercurrent of self-deceit. Since the public form of these genres were written to convince the unresolved reader of one or another point of view concerning slavery, the constructed quality of the characters is often a conscious act by the author, who deliberately suppresses some traits while foregrounding others. Often, however, like Lady Macbeth, the suppression of the counter-image is unconscious, which gives the texts an aura of self-righteous intensity and, in some cases, fragility, whether attacking or defending.

I. Charting Images and Counter-Images

One method available for the analysis of these different original subjects or characterizations is the semiotic square, originally defined by A. J. Greimas and applied to the cultural theory of comparative literature by Frederic Jameson. The semiotic square arranges the bipolarities of a text on a diagram that illustrates the resonances of their dialectic form. Jameson uses it to deconstruct texts, identifying both the square that represents the authorial intention and the square that represents the unconscious, subtextual acts. By overlaying the two squares, Jameson relates the intended and unintended texts to one another. The result is the tracking the "perpetual generation and dissolution of events"-- the accretions of the narrative path-- as it appears and disappears, and the consequent discovery of the underlying structure which reveals what ideological service the text is meant to perform (257). The

charting of signifiers in this systematic way would be tempting for the present discussion because the slaves and slave owners used one another in their public literature as counter-images. If charted, the resulting diagram would look something like a semiotic square. For example, if one were to establish a grid in which the X axis represents the characters that appear in each genre and the Y axis represents the image and counter-image, one might construct a chart showing the relationship of images to one another, with the arrows indicating the two poles of the same personality:



In this view, the counter-image of the Gentleman planter is the Mean Master, or slave seller, i.e. the flip side of the same coin-- an actual person, a planter, who owns a plantation and slaves. When portrayed by himself or his allies, the planter is presented with all his Cavalier attributes of nobility, honor, generosity, and *noblesse oblige* toward inferiors. When portrayed by the slave, the same man is shown in his counter-image as cruel, untrustworthy, greedy, and indifferent to the welfare of his slaves.

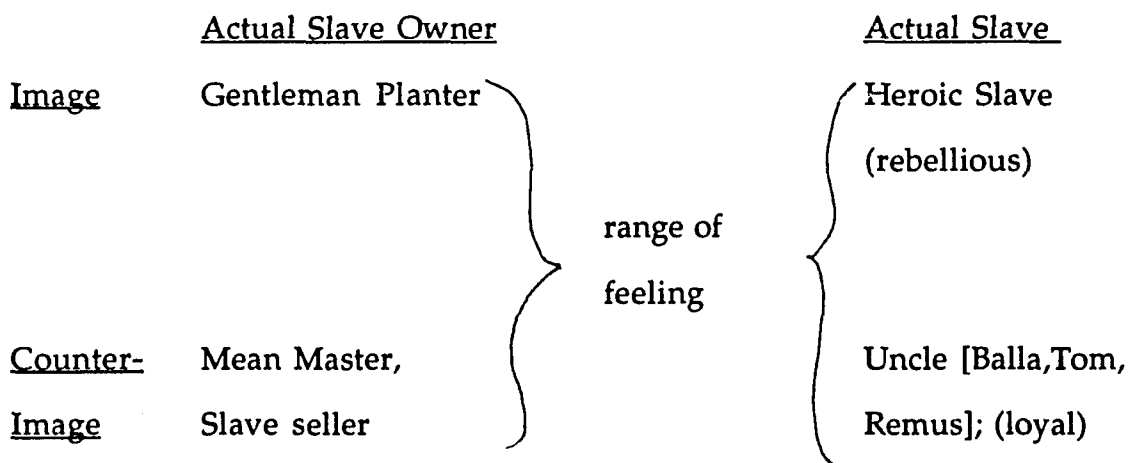
In existential terms, however, both the image and counter-image are poles of the same person, whose feelings about himself shift between the two

images as his behavior, thoughts, and perception in the actual world are reflected in his psyche. These shifts would not typically be portrayed in the same person in a Slave Owner Narrative, since the purpose of the portrayal is to persuade northerners of the value of slavery, and the counter-image of a Mean Master would undercut authorial intention. The candor and range needed for the insight of self-examination is usually found in private journals, where actual people are free to express their ambivalence about their roles in the world and their ability to perform them. Furthermore, an antebellum slave narrator would not portray himself in the obsequious and subservient terms of an Uncle, (though postbellum authors like Charles Chesnut used this counter-image effectively), because that would undercut authorial intention. The slave narrator would wish to portray himself or herself in the mode of heroic suffering to enable the reader to identify with the slave rather than the slave master.

To eliminate the unwanted counter-image without leaving a void in the text, both the slave and slave owner borrow the other as a counter-image, thus preserving the purpose of the text, while offering the reader a balancing pole to support the version of reality that the narrator feels is appropriate. This process, an unconscious projection of one race onto another, seems to occur consistently in both genres. The slave or slave owner, unwilling to show his worst self to the public, selects an opposite number to amplify rather than detract from his position. Almost always this opposite number is the counter-image of the opposite race. Thus the slave owner portrays himself as the Gentleman Planter, and does not want to show his reader the times when he feels angry or frustrated enough to use the lash, so he abandons his own counter-image. Instead he imports into his text the counter-image of his

slave, the loyal Uncle who has raised him, who performs the role of his keeper and his conscious, and provides tacit approval of all that he does. The Uncle makes the Mean Master counter-image unnecessary. Likewise the slave narrator portrays himself as the Heroic Slave who does not want to show the reader the times when he feels aligned with the interests and desires of his master, or merges his identity with that of his master. He therefore abandons his counter-image of the obsequious Uncle and imports into his text the slave owner's counter-image, which, as a Mean Master, justifies the rebellion and pride of the Heroic Slave, and makes the Uncle unnecessary.

Thus the chart that demonstrates the relationship between characters in different genres can be useful as long as the reader remembers that the individual whose psyche is both the image in one genre and the counter-image in the other is a single source:



For political, literary, and emotional reasons, the narrator suppresses his own counter image, substituting in the text the counter image of the opposite race, which supports the idealized image of the actual person.

The chart I am using is a semiotic square insofar as it gives a graphic sense of the relationship among narrative elements occurring in two genres; but it does not conform to the uses of a semiotic square in important ways. The most useful field for such a device is a single novel whose universe is plotted in terms of characters, events, and underlying symbolism. To apply this device to an entire genre, not to mention two entire genres, would be to presuppose a unity of types that would impose an artificial conformity on works that contain their similarities in a wide variety of forms. Also, it would be tempting to call "The South" a single universe, and sacrifice for the sake of demonstration the variables among the literatures of Virginia, South Carolina, Louisiana, Georgia, Texas, etc. Though this project has had to imply just such a working generalization, the actual richness of difference in the various regions of the South would undermine many of the generalizations that could be made about them. Furthermore, while the two-ply yarn thesis is meant to identify a clear and important relationship between the Slave narratives and the Slave Owner Narratives, there is a world of difference between an overlap of influence and an overlay of cultures. Both Southernists and African Americanists have explored cultural origins and differences that have nothing do with the racial group that shared their time and place. Influence, appropriation, and imitation are inevitable in simultaneous cultures, but they do not constitute integrated cultures. Semiotic squares are not designed to chart the complexities and myriad elements of simultaneous worlds expressed in literary canons.²

² For an application of the use of semiotic squares, see "Romance and Reification: Plot Construction and Ideological Closure in Joseph Conrad," in The Political Unconscious (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981) 206-280.

II. Patriarchal Characters

The figure of the patriarch is most often associated with the Slave Owner Narratives, since one of the traits of the aristocratic Cavalier is the patron who, in the pastoral model, shelters his subordinates under the overarching canopy of his protective boughs, *sub tegmine fagi*. The kingly or princely model of condescension and benevolence was perpetuated in an American register by the migrating Cavaliers, and adopted in some of its specifics, as the old planter class died out, by the rising middle class. The slave owner liked nothing better than to be seen as a father to his dependent women, children, and slaves. But the infantilizing of slaves did not affect the slaves' construct of their own society which contained patriarchal figures in the form of noble or heroic slaves who resisted their diminishment and strove for literacy, independence within the system, or freedom. Fatherhood for these ambitious slaves does not pertain necessarily to the fathering of children, but the fathering of the community through wisdom and example. In a tacit acknowledgement of the black male status, the patriarchal negro is called "Uncle" rather than "Father," indicating both the importance and the liminal status of black authority in the white world. Thus in the cross-referencing of the counter-images, the slave owner sees his Gentleman Planter image balanced by the Uncle who shares his authority in the liminal world of the quarters, while the slave sees his Heroic Slave image balanced by the force against which he contends: the Mean Master.

In the Slave Owner Narratives, William Gilmore Simms provides an example of the this pattern. Captain Porgy, in Woodcraft, is seen to be a gentleman planter with many faults, all of them charming, and a solid Cavalier in all areas that matter: fighting, defending women, earning the

loyalty of his staff, loving ease and leisure. The *noblesse oblige* he displays to the subordinates on his staff and to his slaves allows him to strike the perfect note of authority and humor in all his dealings with them. We never see Captain Porgy display anger or unkindness to anyone other than the miscreant, and even that "varmint" receives his fair share of justice. The sublimated counter-image of the Mean Master surfaces, as in life, with a weight problem: Captain Porgy is a famous gourmand who requires the services of an heroic horse to carry his bulk home from the Revolutionary war. The real, human frustration that is buried in the Mean Master counter-image is abandoned in the text for the slave's Uncle counter-image-- in this case, a body servant named Tom who is, significantly, the Captain's cook. (Tom is the agent for supporting Captain Porgy's sublimation of mean feelings in food). Captain Porgy allows Tom many freedoms not usually given slaves, particularly in "speaking his mind" about matters that concern his master. In the following exchange, as a makeshift table is being laid on the floor of Captain Porgy's abandoned mansion to which they have just returned, Tom tells Captain Porgy how he sees the division of labor in the symbiosis of slave and master:

'Ax de gempleman's to git out ob de way [Tom says to another slave,] so you kin spread de table-clot'; dough gemplemans ought to hab sense 'nough, hese'f, for moob [move] widout axing!'

'Hear that impudent rascal!' quoth Porgy, moving good naturedly... 'Was ever fellow so completely spoiled?'

'I nebber *spile* supper, maussa!' responded Tom, with a toss of the head, as if to say-- 'nobody knows my qualities

better than yourself.'

'No, indeed, Tom, and you presume on your merits, somewhat to their injury; you will be taken down, you scamp, when you are required to find and hunt up the supper, as well as cook it.'

'Ha! but you see, maussa, my business is cook-- I knows um! It's maussa business to fin' de *bittle* [victuals]. Put de meat and bread yer, whay I kin put out my han' and git 'em, leff it to me to hab 'em ready for eat; but dat's all I hab a right for do.

'Ah! indeed my buck; but I'll persuade you, at the end of a hickory, that you have other rights.'

'Wha' maussa; hick'ry for Tom! Nebber! Anybody else bin tell me sich a t'ing, I say, widout guine to be sassy-- 'he's a d--n fool for he trouble.' (180)

Tom, both in his language and in his independence of mind, is like Queequeg, though the connection with his tribal history is subsumed in his loyalty to Captain Porgy, which seems to be more volunteered than enforced. Simms arranges the balance between the image of the Gentleman Planter and the counter-image of the Uncle around the subject of work and obedience-- a symbolic summation of slavery. Tom will not work beyond what he considers his proper limits, nor will he be threatened with a hickory stick for refusing to violate what he believes to be the decorum of a slave/master relationship. A northerner like Olmsted might observe in his travels South that "slaves have to be 'humored' a great deal [because] when they are directed to do anything for which they have a disinclination, they undertake it in such a way that the desired result is sure not to be accomplished" (100).

But Simms' fantasy projection of the dovetailing relationship between Captain Porgy and Tom is that it is based upon an etiquette that cannot be violated. What Olmsted sees as laziness or resistance is, in Simms' world, a compact that upholds both the Cavalier and the slave in the same benevolent relationship as courtiers to their prince. Captain Porgy's threat to use a hickory stick on Tom acknowledges his right to do so, but it is an open joke, and Tom's impudence is for the entertainment of Captain Porgy's friends. When Captain Porgy offers to give Tom away to one of his lieutenants as a punishment for talking back, Tom answers that "You nebber guine done wid Tom, maussa! I 'tick to you ebbrywhere." Tom is the loyal conscious who refuses either to be given away or manumitted because he knows (and makes the reader know) that he is not really a separate person from Captain Porgy: he is the Captain's counter-image.

The same phenomenon in a Slave Narrative, in which a patriarchal image abandons the unwanted counter-image and replaces it in the text with the counter-image of the opposite race, occurs in Douglass' 1845 Narrative. Douglass himself is the Heroic Slave who is suffering not only from the cruelties of slavery, but from an awareness of his condition that has come to him through the agency of literacy, which allows him to hear "the silver trump of freedom" that he could not hear when he was "within the circle" and unaware of the dimensions of his dilemma. Douglass, as we have seen in the discussion of pastoral, is the patriarch of his people in the sense that his destiny is to find the terms in which he can identify himself as fully human and then lead his fellow slaves, like a new Moses, into intellectual as well as physical freedom. He is the pastoral child who becomes the spiritual father by virtue of his transformation from sheep to shepherd.

The counter-image of Douglass' Heroic Slave, the Uncle, is unwanted because it represents a fundamental concession to the terms of slavery. The etiquette Simms projects onto the master/slave relationship, based upon Cavalier notions of honor, do not exists in Douglass' construct of plantation life. Far from manifesting the Cavalier value system, his master, Captain Auld, is described in terms of the Mean Master, devoid of noble qualities:

Bad as all slaveholders are, we seldom meet one destitute of every element of character commanding respect. My master was one of this rare sort. I do not know of one single noble act ever performed by him. The leading trait in his character was meanness... He was a slaveholder without the ability to hold slaves. He found himself incapable of managing his slaves either by force, fear, or fraud. We seldom called him 'master'... Prior to his conversion, he relied upon his own depravity to shield and sustain him in his barbarity; but after his conversion, he found religious sanction and support for his slaveholding cruelty.

(286-287)

This Mean Master image is opposite in every respect to Simms' Captain Porgy: Captain Auld has no leadership ability, is cruel to his slaves, and earns the contempt rather than the respect of his subordinates. By refusing to call him "master" Douglass invents an inverted plantation world in which the Gentleman Planter is relegated to a status consistent with his "barbarity." Thus the African slave, whose bondage is justified by slave owners' claim of negro savagery and barbarism, is depicted as having the characteristics that would consign him to bondage himself, if the world were just.

Douglass has rid the Heroic Slave of the Uncle counter-image and

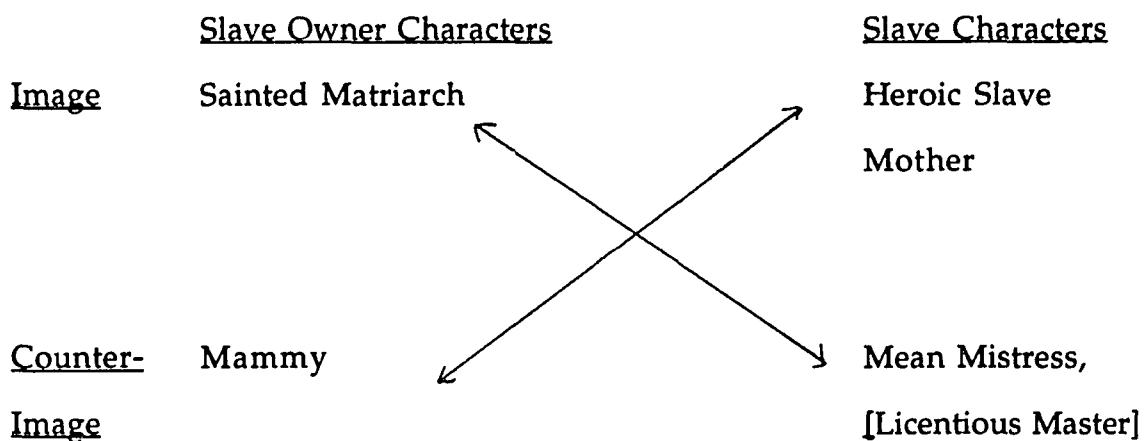
substituted it in the text with the Gentleman Planter's counter-image, the Mean Master, thus erecting a barrier between his own counter-image of the Uncle and his idealized image of the Heroic Slave. Douglass protects himself by this device from his own potential for developing into an Uncle figure. The irony is that Douglass had the typical opportunity that makes an Uncle out of a young slave: he was given, as a child, to Captain Auld's young nephew Thomas to be his body servant— the typical "shadow" arrangement in which young white children are given slaves their own age or slightly older to take care of them. This conditions the slave to become an intimate, in the manner of Tom's relationship with Captain Porgy, and to merge his own interests and concerns with those of his master. Yet Douglass was able to manifest his heroic qualities in childhood by appropriating his young master's lesson books rather than his identity. We hear little in the narrative about the young boy he serves, but a great deal about the young boys who are willing to trade bread for spelling lessons.

Douglass is able to establish distance from his white owners through the vehicle of a Mean Master who is responsible for the beatings he witnesses, the various episodes of petty harassment, hunger, and neglect, and the more aggressive cruelty he experiences in young adulthood, which combine to force him into his heroic and rebellious image rather than his compliant and cooperative Uncle image. As Simms' description of Tom in Woodcraft shows, an Uncle would not be loyal to one such as Captain Auld, who, if he attempted to use his cruelty on him would be told 'he's a d--n fool for he trouble.'

III. Matriarchal Characters

The women in both the Slave narratives and the Slave Owner narratives tend to follow predictable gender role patterns established by the patriarchal plantation society that both genres share. Since women are not independent, but rely upon men for their spheres of operation, they are seen in two modes based upon their relationship to men: as pleasing or nurturing to them, or as in competition for them. In the latter case, the competition manifests itself in terms of hostility directed toward other women, typically toward slaves. Furthermore, the roles assigned to women are based upon age, so that the matriarchal figures are associated with the authority that comes with age, while the patriarchal figures can be quite young in their identity as powerful leaders, as was Douglass.

Charting the images and counter-images of the matriarchal figures establishes the same relationships as seen in the Patriarchal chart, in which the arrows indicate two poles of the same personality:



In the historical person of the slave owner wife, the image of the Sainted

Matriarch and the counter-image of the Mean Mistress co-exist. The accounts of women in their private letters and journals give ample evidence of the ambivalence plantation mistresses felt toward the roles imposed upon them as "mistress of the house." They are reported by their sons and daughters to be saints because their social role requires them to care for the domestic needs of the family and plantation community, both white and black. Mary Chesnut, as quoted earlier, believed that her mother and grandmother had "less chance to live their lives in peace than if they were African missionaries." It was particularly difficult to "live in negro villages," and "strive to ameliorate the condition of these Africans in every particular" and "to set them the example of a perfect life, a life of utter self-abnegation" when the slaves were, in many cases, their husband's concubines and offspring. "Mrs. Stowe did not hit the sorest spot," she writes in her journal. "She made Legree a bachelor" (122). Mary Chesnut calls the lot of plantation mistresses "martyrdom... doing unpleasant duty among the Negroes with no reward but the threat of John Brown hanging like a drawn sword over your head in this world, and threats of what is to come to you from blacker devils in the next" (163). The unstinting, though often reluctant, service rendered by these women seems to attach to them the terms of "saint," martyr," and "angel," so that they are more than matriarchs: they are Sainted Matriarchs, who are expected to take comfort in their self-abnegation while their husbands and sons indulge the idle hours as they see fit. Their narrow role as benign spirits hovering over the plantation world is thus given a particularly indeterminate quality, as though they might be avenging angels rather than guardian angels. The bitter, knowing tone used by Mary Chesnut and Margaret Johnson Irwin when they discuss the men's behavior in their journals might convince the

reader that plantation mistresses are more aligned with the former than the latter.

Given the strong provocation for resentment and the inability, in a patriarchal society, to place blame at the feet of their husbands, the urge to be a Mean Mistress and to take frustrations out on offending servants was clearly too great for many women to withstand. As if sensing this ambivalent quality in their women, slave owner narrators eliminate from their texts the counter-image of the Mean Mistress, which would be inconsistent with both the requirements and the preferred beliefs of the southern man. Female slave owner narrators, like Caroline Hentz and Augusta Evans, eliminate the Mean Mistress image entirely. Rather than confront the dark side of their resentment, the counter-image of the Sainted Matriarch is subsumed or concealed behind the image of the Mammy, an alternative mother who can show temper, work with apparent unflagging energy, bear numerous children without ill effect, and give loud and passionate expression to grief that would seem vulgar in the Sainted Matriarch. Like the Uncle, the Mammy is a compliant slave who sees her identity as wholly contained in the master's needs and concerns. She functions as a safety valve for the dangerous pressures placed upon the white matriarch, who, far from being a fair magnolia waited on hand and foot, as in the myth of the "Sunny South", is in danger of erupting out of her saintly role into violence or insanity. The Mammy is at liberty to scold, complain, and even lose her mind without losing the sympathy and respect of the combined slave and slave master community.

The Heroic Slave Mother, however, is the oppressed figure of slavery at its worst, in which the mother is threatened and made vulnerable through

her children. Either she is sold or rented away from her children and has to make heroic sacrifices to see them, as does Frederick Douglass' mother, or she is threatened with the loss of her children if she does not accommodate the sexual demands of her master, and must make heroic efforts to protect her family, as does Harriet Jacobs. The Heroic Slave Mother image must be detached from the Mammy counter-image in the narration because the Mammy represents the female slave's willingness to give up her own children for the sake of the master's, even as she is expected to use her milk to nurse the white baby instead of her own. The Mammy is an alternate mother whose interests are merged with those of the white children she raises, thus ensuring slave loyalty for the sons and daughters of the household. In the Slave Narratives, the Mammy is replaced in the text by the white counter-image of the Mean Mistress, because this enables the Heroic Slave Mother to detach herself emotionally from the family who threatens her children. For female figures, the Mean Mistress is also accompanied by the Licentious Master, since it is often the master who-- either from beatings or rape-- imposes physical torment on the female slave.³

Though John Pendleton Kennedy's Slave Owner Narrative, Swallow Barn, is a series of epistolary sketches, the "necessary outsider," Mark Littleton, is careful to include accounts of both the Sainted Matriarch as well as the Mammy. The mistress of the house, Lucretia Meriwether, is a paragon of industry and order, as well as a "fruitful vessel" whose "progeny descend the scale, in regular gradations, like the keys of a Pandean pipe." She not only runs the household, but has organized the female slaves into a cottage

³ This poses an interesting gender question about the potential hermaphroditism of the Sainted Matriarch's counter-image. Is the plantation mistress appropriating male power when she beats her slaves? Though this and other gender issues are beyond the scope of this study, they deserve further investigation.

industry of spinners and weavers who make "not only all the clothes for the working people, but some excellent carpets for the house." She is known for her cures and simples, and doses the slave children every morning with a concoction that makes them "gallop off, with faces all rue and wormwood." But it is the relationship between Lucretia and her husband, Frank Meriwether, that defines her status as Sainted Matriarch:

It is refreshing to behold how affectionately vain our good hostess is of Frank, and what deference she shows his judgement in all matters, except those that belong to the home department;-- for there she is confessedly and without appeal, the paramount power. It seems to be dogma with her that he is the very 'first man in Virginia'...Frank, in return, is a devout admirer of her accomplishments..." (40)

There are not, of course, enough hours in a day for Lucretia to accomplish all the tasks attributed to her and for which she is so admired. The reports coming from actual women in the antebellum South about their own conditions vary from the "African missionaries" of Mary Chesnut to the "passive and inert" southern matron described by Augusta Evans: "We have thousands [of ladies] who are graceful, pretty, witty and pleasant, but their information is painfully scanty; their judgement defective; their reasoning faculties dwarfed, their aspirations weak and frivolous" (Moss, 31).

Once again, the sense of the plantation mistress is indeterminate, as though her conflicted stance toward her role in life is reflected in alternating bursts of activity and inertia; or as though her path led in only two directions and she had to elect either to play out the role of helplessness, as Kate

Conygham describes in The Sunny South, or as the "pattern of industry" as Lucretia Meriwether is described in Swallow Barn. William R. Taylor, in Cavalier and Yankee attributes this split image of southern women to the anxiety over the development of the "New Woman" and the effort on the part of male writers to promote the chivalric mode of womanhood as a method of keeping southern women from desiring more than domestic power (161-176). Yet in both the passive and the industrious manifestation of plantation mistresses, the male point of view is served, for Augusta Evans' picture of the pretty, graceful lady with dwarfed faculties would be a most reassuring presence to the southern gentleman, whereas the busy Lucretia is acceptably powerful, as long as her power is confined to the home and she recognizes that he is the "very first man" in the plantation world.

The counter-image to Lucretia's "pattern of industry" cannot be the Mean Mistress, though Lucretia's pleasure in doling out bitter-tasting doses to her slaves is presented as an acceptable form of meanness-- that which is "for your own good." But the happy world of Swallow Barn cannot be marred by any form of cruelty, frustration, or discontent from the mistress, and so the Mammy counter-image is introduced to grieve, suffer, and go crazy as the locus of behavior that would be inappropriate for a white woman.

Mark Littleton relates the story of Mammy Lucy, widow of Uncle Luke who had refused his master's offer of manumission in his youth. She has increased her master's stock of slaves by eight or nine children, each of whom has "been successively dismissed from Lucy's cabin, as they reached the age fit to render them serviceable, with that satisfied unconcern that belongs to a negro mother who trusts to the kindness of her master" (466). Her youngest child, however, is one of the "rascal" figures that populate both Slave and

Slave Owner Narratives. He is a "worthless" and "ungovernable" slave who cannot be put to useful labor. After running riot in the neighborhood and "annoy[ing] the vicinity by nocturnal incursions of the most lawless character" (468), the benevolent Frank Meriwether saves him from the law for Mammy Lucy's sake, and sends him away to be a sailor, a profession that agrees with his "heedless and irresponsible temperament" (475). His mother, in the meantime, mourns excessively for his absence, and when he dies a heroic death while trying to save fellow sailors in a storm, Mammy Lucy loses her reason altogether and descends into madness. Through it all, the slave owners are solicitous and kind, devising several stratagems to persuade her to accept reality and return to herself. All these Mammy Lucy resists, and when the reader meets her, she is quietly insane, living in a picturesque cottage on the outskirts of the plantation, cared for by one of her many daughters. It is as though she has chosen insanity as the better alternative to the life, however content, that she had been living.

Kennedy's interesting choice of anecdote for the Mammy counter-image accords perfectly, though subtextually, with the condition of the idealized image of the Sainted Matriarch. The *raison d'être* of southern womanhood, as promulgated by men who wish to discourage the "New Woman" and her Amazonian pursuits, is the bearing and raising of children. The Mammy is the surrogate mother of the white household, having literally nursed them as infants, and having guided their behavior in their formative years. She contains within herself the extremes of maternal joy and suffering, but these extremes, if practiced by the white mistress, would be unseemly. The Sainted Matriarch cannot go crazy, not because she would not be driven to it by her isolation, restricted education, limited activities, and burdensome

childbearing, but because it would reflect badly on the patriarchal system. Nor can she display her anger as a Mean Mistress, which would contradict the chivalric fantasy that had been so carefully constructed around her. Kennedy, with the same unconscious candor that allowed him to describe the neglect of negro children as "swart faeries" in an amusing interlude, registers the underlying stress of the plantation system in what he thought to be a safely removed figure, not realizing that what happens to the Mammy is commentary on the Sainted Matriarch. Mammy Lucy was not permitted to accept her freedom because the slave narrator, Kennedy, would not allow it. She and her husband, Uncle Luke, must prefer their master to their freedom, and so all of Mammy Lucy's children are born slaves. By the same token, her rebellious child cannot be allowed to live, because the Rascal image is counter to the loyal body-servant that the plantation myth requires him to be. The narrator forces slavery on Mammy Lucy just as he forces slavery on the Sainted Matriarch through a combination of custom, law, and Cavalier expectations. And though he attempts to conceal the predicament of women in the patriarchal system by removing the Sainted Matriarch's counter-image, his substitution of the Mammy is as revealing to the reader in her insanity as any termagant would be in her rage.

This commentary is nowhere so clear as in Harriet Jacobs' account of a Mrs. Wade who, on her deathbed, pleads with her husband not to let the Mammy into the parlor where her corpse will be laid out. But the Mammy has a key, and, upon entering, slaps the corpse in the face saying "The devil is got you *now*!" The child who witnesses the incident reports to her father: "I did see ma, and mammy did strike ma so" (49). In this rare confrontation of counter-images the Mean Mistress and the Mammy dramatize the dark side

of their idealized images, as though Dr. Jekyll were banished from the story and the only figure Mr. Hyde can confront is another Mr. Hyde. Harriet Jacobs' intention is to shatter the slave owner's fantasy about their loving Mammies by showing her exacting retribution against their "Sainted Matriarch" idealization who, in her secret life, practiced many cruelties. At the same time, slapping the Mean Mistress removes any vestige of the Sainted Matriarch from the corpse, thereby allowing the Mammy figure to be transformed and empowered as an Heroic Slave Mother. But looked at from the point of view of the child who crouches in a darkened parlor watching her surrogate mother beat the corpse of her actual mother, the complicated destiny for a girl in the South, white or black, is seen as the problem of overcoming the natural antipathy between women set against each other by the same man, characterized by the Gentleman Planter/Licentious Master.

In the Slave Narrative equivalent of a Sainted Matriarch, the Heroic Slave Mother is prepared to endure any amount of suffering to save her children. Kennedy debases this narrative strategy by having Mammy Lucy mourn for the worst and least productive of her offspring, but Harriet Jacobs shifts the argument from "How much do you love your children?" to "Where did your children come from?" She focuses on the taboo subject of miscegenation, showing that her mistress is not mean without cause: "Slaveholder's wives feel as other women would under similar circumstances" (34). But she rejects the argument that slave women seduce their masters, as the plantation mistresses believe. In Mary Chesnut's opinion, "Those beastly Negress beauties are only animals," (162) but Jacobs maps the complicated terrain of relations between white and black women who are equally helpless to defend against the licentiousness of the slave

owner. On the most fundamental level, Jacobs absolves the Mean Mistress because she is equally victimized. Jacobs realizes that the meanness she suffers at the hands of her jealous mistress is the fault of the Licentious Master, who has manipulated both of them to blame each other rather than himself. This insight allows Jacobs to correctly identify the Licentious Master as the counter-image with whom the Heroic Slave Mother must contend.

IV. Sons and Daughters

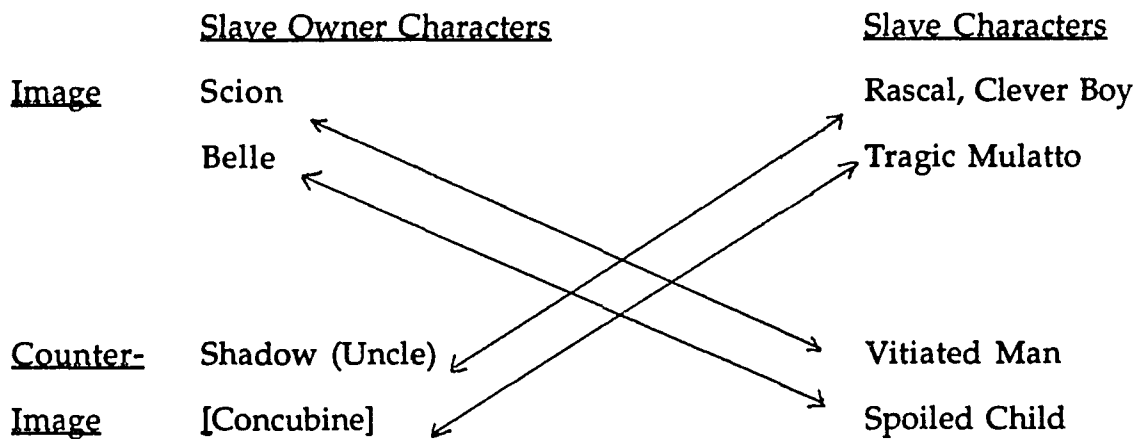
In a society that prized the purity of its women and the gallantry of its men, the taint of miscegenation affects the image projections of the sons and daughters in the plantation world. Typical for young people who inherit the values of their parents, the roles they are expected to fulfill are clearly defined. For the slave owners, the Scion is to absorb from his father patriarchal *noblesse oblige*, courtliness to ladies, and, in many cases, licentiousness to female slaves; the Belle is to absorb from her mother the domestic virtues and the purity at the heart of saintliness. The obligations of slave children are less clearly defined. According to slave owners, young slaves should be like their Uncle and Mammy parents: compliant, loyal, and identified with the interests of the slave owner. But the slave narrators, while rejecting the Mammy and Uncle images, falter at this stage in the face of what must become of their children. The age at which young white children are learning their roles in life is the same age at which young slaves are learning that they have no role other than as sexual objects or beasts of burden. Jacobs draws a vivid picture of the dilemma:

I saw two beautiful children playing together. One was a fair white child; the other was her slave, and also her sister. When I

saw them embracing each other, and heard their joyous laughter, I turned sadly away from the lovely sight. I foresaw the inevitable blight that would fall on the little slave's heart... The fair child grew up to be a still fairer woman. From childhood to womanhood her pathway was blooming with flowers... but the flowers and sunshine were not for [her sister]. She drank the cup of sin, and shame, and misery whereof her persecuted race are compelled to drink. (29)

Consequently, the primary images of slave sons and daughters are either as reservoirs of hope-- the rescued children who are smuggled into freedom by their mothers before they are degraded-- or they become figures of tragedy and resistance: the Tragic Mulatto, like Jacobs herself as a girl of sixteen, who is forced to sleep with a white man for protection or survival, and the Rascal, like Douglass or Mammy Lucy's son, a clever boy who manages to use the system to his advantage while bamboozling his master. Slave children have no other means of retaining their individuality.

The counter-images of slave children are figures of compliance: the Shadow, or loyal body servant (Uncle in training), or the willing Concubine who serves the master with sexual favors as loyally as his Mammy nursed him in infancy. In both the Slave and Slave Owner Narratives, however, the counter-images are less defined and more troubled than those of their elders. Charted, the images and counter-images of the sons and daughters have a less settled quality, where the arrows indicate the opposite image of the same individual:



Where the adult images have positive and hopeful qualities within the construct of each value system, the images of the sons and daughters have tragic qualities that are not offset by more settled or optimistic characteristics. The slave daughter has very narrow horizons, as either a willing or a resistant concubine, whereas both the Belle and the Scion are offset by ominously unformed counter-images that threaten loss of community status and identity if the idealized image is lost. The Scion, whose image is centered on virility and manly power, is offset by the Vitiated Man, a figure that fails to function in the world due to debilitating impulsiveness, sexuality, or weakness. Whether the counter-image is lost in idleness, syphilis, or dueling, the Scion is threatened by a dangerous undercurrent in his Cavalier personality.

The Belle, whose major task is the protection of her virginity, can be "spoiled" in a variety of sexual and social ways if her counter-image is not rigidly sublimated. Thomas Dew, in an essay for *The Southern Literary Messenger* entitled "On the Characteristic Differences between the Sexes, and on the position and Influence of Women in Society," wrote that a woman "cannot give utterance to her passions and emotions like a man... She is thus

frequently required to suppress the most violent feelings; to put a curb on her most ardent desires, and at the same time to wear that face of contentment and ease which may impose upon an inquisitive and scrutinizing world" (Taylor, 172). The ominous sexual threats that trouble the smooth surface of the idealized slave owner images, and which are responsible for the essentially hopeless slave images, come from the behavior of the all-powerful Gentleman Planter and his counter-image. Jacobs captures for the reader the catastrophe of the Licentious Master's violation of the family, in which the sins of the father are visited upon the sons and daughters:

No pen can give an adequate description of the all-pervading corruption produced by slavery. The slave girl is reared in an atmosphere of licentiousness and fear. The lash and the foul talk of her master and his sons are her teachers... The slaveholder's sons are, of course, vitiated, even while boys, by the unclean influences every where around them. Nor do the masters daughters always escape. Severe retributions sometimes come upon him for the wrongs he does to the daughters of the slaves. The white daughters early hear their parents quarelling about some female slave. Their curiosity excited, they soon learn the cause. They are attended by young slave girls whom their father had corrupted; and they hear such talk as should never meet youthful ears, or any other ears. (51-52)

Jacobs goes on to describe the one fact that no one wished to believe: miscegenation between a Belle and a slave leading to offspring. No one but a

mother, and then a determinedly innocent one, would expect the Scion of a southern household to remain sexually uninitiated, though compulsive miscegenation was humiliating and dangerous. But Jacobs strikes at the heart of southern myth when she accuses the Belle, icon of all that is pure and lovely in Cavalier values, of being corrupted, led into her forbidden knowledge by the concubine her own father has created. This comes uncomfortably close to incest, and through the transfer of images in the psyche, incest is precisely the crime that the slave owner-- by his own attestation as a patriarch of one family, black and white-- has committed. The Licentious Master uses a concubine who may be his own daughter from an earlier rape, and who functions in the symbolic structure as the counter-image for his own daughter, replacing in the text the ambiguously Spoiled Child counter-image. Since the daughters are in training to become Sainted Matriarchs who are sexually innocent, the counter images of these idealizations involve the sophistication of the Belle as a Spoiled Child, either in the sexual or the behavioral sense. Violating the purity of a southern Belle is unthinkable, so the slave owner narrator substitutes the loyal young "shadow" woman whose sexual purpose makes her unnameable. The Concubine image is in brackets because the slave owner narrator cannot risk condemning himself or implicating his daughter by identifying the other side of the Belle's personality or the object of his desires. The only slave narrator who revealed the vulnerability of the Belle in a novel was George Tucker in The Valley of the Shenandoah, who has the daughter of the house seduced and ruined by the "necessary outsider" from the North. In this case, the culprit is distanced as far from the Gentleman Planter as possible to remove blame to a locus entirely outside the plantation world. But in private

communications, the plantation mistress is willing enough to name the concubine, as Mary Chesnut and her friends do in their conversations, journals, and letters; nor is the slave owner spared the contempt and condemnation of his wife who knows exactly who to blame for the corruption of her family.

The charting of images and counter-images sketch the outline of entwined relationships that surface in the Slave Narratives and the Slave Owner Narratives. The characters who people both genres are not inventions, but constructs based upon actual people who lived at the same time and at the same place in the plantation world. Since, as Holt states in the quotation above, "it is so difficult for people who see themselves through different world values to communicate with each other," narrators took the same material and spun oppositional yarns. Some of these narrations are, indeed, "tall tales" in that they consciously eliminate all evidence of the counter image in themselves, and all evidence of the idealized image in the opposite number. Ingraham's The Sunny South and Kennedy's Swallow Barn, for instance, resolutely prettify the plantation world, and erase from the slave any trace of disloyal or resistant behavior. Jacobs' Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl and Douglass' 1845 Narrative, for another example, purposefully foreground the idealized aspects of the slave and emphasize the cruel counter-image of the slave owners. The political objectives of both genres require the narrators to manipulate the material of their own psyches and that of their masters or slaves to construct what they hope will be convincing versions of reality.

These characterizations, which go beyond the conflicting evidence presented by adversaries at the bar— defendant says x; plaintiff says y— are

created from a complicated but systematic cross-referencing of images that could only occur between two groups of people who know each other very well, but understand each other very little.

Conclusion

The Two-Ply Yarn of Influence

"And as he talked about those old times and those dead and vanished men of another race from either that the boy knew, gradually to the boy those old times would cease to be old times and would become part of the boy's present, not only as if they had happened yesterday but as if they were still happening, the men who walked through them actually walking in breath and air and casting an actual shadow on the earth they had not quitted."

William Faulkner

"The Old People"

"Someone is always at my elbow reminding me that I am the granddaughter of slaves. It fails to register depression with me. Slavery is sixty years in the past. The operation was successful and the patient is doing well, thank you... I am off to a flying start and must not look behind to weep. The position of my white neighbor is much more difficult. No specter pulls up a chair behind me when I sit down to eat. No dark ghost thrusts its leg against mine in bed."

Zora Neale Hurston

"How It Feels to Be Colored Me"

There were two "rebirths" in American literature in the 1920s: the Southern Renaissance and the Harlem Renaissance. As the quotations above

suggests, the Southern Renaissance was engaged in looking back to its "dead and vanished men," while the Harlem Renaissance was committed to looking forward-- positions still apparent in the state of scholarship today. Like Zora Neale Hurston, African American scholarship has not looked behind to weep, and, until recently, has not been aware of the white ghost in bed beside it. Focusing resolutely on its roots in Africa, it is only now, in the last decade, beginning to consider its relationship to white literary America. William Faulkner, on the other hand, was particularly aware of the intermingling of white and black-- the interracial genealogies of the McCaslin family become an important element in the Faulkner corpus. Yet Faulkner's insights into the fundamental relationship between the races has been overlooked in the study of southern literature of the preceding century, as if the two-ply yarn of influence did not spin together until 1920. The antecedents of these "rebirths"-- the Slave Owner Narratives and the African American Slave Narratives-- plied their yarns from the earliest moment of contact, when the histories of each race necessarily included the presence, and therefore the influence, of the other.

I have had to limited my exploration of this literary phenomenon to a small body of works written from the late eighteenth century to the Civil War, but the yarn extends both backward and forward in time, from 1619 to the present, and may be picked up and examined at any point. This dissertation makes a contribution to the ongoing project of scholars exploring cross-racial literary influence, including Toni Morrison in Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination and Eric Sundquist in To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature. So little work has been done in this field, that it constitutes virtually new territory for

American literary scholarship.

This particular project, which has proposed the Slave Owner Narrative as a new discursive category to set over and against the Slave Narrative, attempts to re-focus attention on a marginalized corpus of writing that was central to the intellectual and social development of an entire region of America, and which, in its position as the defendant in the most catastrophic public relations contest in American History, calls for attention not only as the story told by a culture about itself, but as a warring story, attempting to silence the slave's version of plantation life and to re-construct the slave culture as its own projected fantasy. Likewise, this project has attempted to show the Slave Narrative as an equally focused effort not only to tell a culture's story but to re-construct the myth of the "Sunny South," by dislodging it as an Arcadian fantasy and exposing the false claims of its component parts. This cross-racial effort of reconstructing the Other involved the free appropriation, imitation, and reinvention of the cultural and literary elements of each group. Though some modest inroads have been made, in this dissertation, toward demonstrating the dimensions of the exchange of influence between slaves and slave owners, this project has been more useful in pointing to areas that call for further investigation if the two-ply thesis is to be convincing as a paradigm for understanding either Southern or African American literature. Specifically subjects for investigation are:

- 1) Public versus Private literature. The freedom of private discourse departs from public discourse to such a degree that one direction for scholarship is to separate these world views, and to discover the mechanism of cultural re-invention in the difference between one voice and the other, and one race and the other. This will require a special effort to identify private

journals and letters of African American slave narrators.

2) Gender issues at the heart of cultural stereotypes. The role of miscegenation in undermining the cooperation of Southern women in the war effort has been suggested by William R. Taylor in Cavalier and Yankee. After reading many southern women's private writings, I find this astonishing idea convincing, and would go further to speculate that the rage and frustration of southern women, white and black, toward white men is one of the primary formative factors in both Slave Narratives and Slave Owner Narratives. An important area of investigation would be the literary manifestations of this contest, and the effect upon of black men of being in the cross-fire on this sexual battlefield. Equally important would be an investigation of the "Woman's Question" in foregrounding the solidarity and competition between African American slaves and white women for freedom in a patriarchal society.

3) Reception histories of Slave Owner Narratives. In a marginalized canon of literature, everything seems, to the contemporary reader, to be equally marginalized. But there is evidence that some works, such as Kennedy's Swallow Barn, enjoyed far more attention and influence than other works which seem equally important, such as Tucker's The Valley of the Shenandoah. It would be useful to know whether the slave owner's efforts to sell the myth of the exotic "Sunny South" were successful in the North, with whom, and for how long. At what point did the Northern fascination with the South begin to sour; and when did the Slave Narrative begin to gain ground over the Slave Owner Narrative in the North? Individual works present interesting reception problems that may cast light on these issues. Why has Ingraham's The Sunny South been absent from

scholarly considerations of plantation literature? How did Ingraham's powerful reputation as an author of religious historical novels influence the reception of his Arcadian myth of the South?

4) The problem of the Third Voice. The two-ply yarn thesis focuses on the interrelation of two cultures and their two resulting literatures in the American South; but both these cultures were profoundly influenced by the voice of the "outsiders," primarily from the North. A consideration of abolitionists, and others whose entry into the slavery discussion influenced history, tends to fragment the focus on slaves and slave owners. How, then, can the third voice of the outsider be included with the slave and slave owner voices without falling back into the familiar terrain of anti-slavery scholarship? In another vein, to what extent are northerners truly outsiders? One has a strong sense, in reading the literature of the day, that the description of the Civil War as "brother versus brother" was in no sense a metaphor. The North/South split came to resemble, for me, more a relationship akin to sibling rivalry than conflict between Others. How did this intimacy between white Americans complicate the slave narrators task?

5) Slavery as the object of holy war. Nineteenth century America was undergoing dramatic changes in its patterns of worship and the distribution of religious denominations across the country, and the slavery question became one of the issues against which this change was played out. Both the abolitionists in the North and the slave owners in the South had fervent religious convictions about the righteousness of their positions. Though touched upon in the present project, the role of Christianity is far more central than my discussions would indicate, and intimately involved in the the fundamental question of miscegenation.

6) The literary history of marginalization Both the African American Slave Narrative and the Slave Owner Narrative suffered literary marginalization after the turn of the century. The prejudice of northern literary historians like Barrett Wendell against regional writing of any kind forced southern scholars to write competing histories for their literary survival. Their dilemma reflects that of the African American narrators who, though best sellers in the North prior to the war, quickly faded from the popular mind after emancipation, though white versions of slavery-- in both the heroic mode of Uncle Tom's Cabin and the humorous, nostalgic mode of slave impersonators like Thomas Nelson Page and Joel Chandler Harris-- remained popular. It was as if white society could not look at the emancipated slave directly, but had to look at imitation slaves to be able to consider the slave at all. As both the Slave Owner Narratives and the African American Slave Narratives are discovered and re-discovered by ensuing generations of scholars, it will become more important to understand why they have been considered marginal, and what claim they have to less marginalized participation in the American canon of the future.

7) Periods of influence. This study began with the time-honored grandiosity of most dissertations: upon seeing a pattern that shed light on two bodies of literature, I determined to study it all and apply it to everything. Like Alice with her growing cake, I found that my gigantic objectives crowded me into a room too small, and I had to take a hasty drink from the shrinking bottle to get my project in scale with my time and resources. Nevertheless, if the two-ply yarn of influence is correct, it can be demonstrated across all periods of American literature where both members of the overlapping cultures were recording their impressions. A particularly fruitful stage of

application would be the post-reconstruction period, when the nostalgic re-creation of the plantation myth by Thomas Nelson Page and Joel Chandler Harris contended with Charles Chesnutt and Paul Laurence Dunbar, among others, for versions of racial identity in Jim Crow America. With the groundwork established in the nineteenth century, the influence of Slave Owner Narratives on the Southern Renaissance would be an especially interesting study to balance the work that has been done by African Americanists on the place of the Slave Narratives in the canon. When a clear picture is established of the Slave Narratives and Slave Owner Narratives as a two-ply yarn twisted into a unit, it will then be possible to see how it fits into the discourses of captivity narratives, colonial and post-colonial narratives, and the literature of American expansion.

Appendix: A Survey of Unpublished Studies

Unpublished studies are no less important than published studies in understanding the degree to which African American and Southern scholarship has been segregated, and the degree to which scholars are beginning to turn toward the concept of interrelatedness.

Recent dissertations on African American Slave Narratives are developing larger cultural themes implicit in the literature of resistance. James Francis Fox's "Citizenship and the Problem of Violent Means in the Political Thought of Frederick Douglass" (Thesis. U of North Carolina, 1994) examines Douglass' turn toward political agitation after the passing of the 14th Amendment. Krista Lynn Walter's "Loopholes in History: The Literature of American Slavery as Cultural Critique" (Diss. U of California, 1991) discusses the uses of "master class artistry" by Harriet Jacobs, Frederick Douglass and Herman Melville to create a "useable past" of precedents for slave rebellion. Craig W. Bartholomaus wrote "'Of One Blood': The Nineteenth Century African-American Literary Response to Racial Stereotyping" (Diss. U of Colorado at Boulder, 1991) to analyze the works of Jacobs, Douglass, William Wells Brown, Sutton Griggs and Charles Chesnut in terms of their defense of African humanity and intelligence against the contemporary "racial science." Bartholomaus claims that African Americanists using vernacular theory, misunderstand 19th century texts, which use counter-stereotypes of noble, educated and superior African Americans.

A recent dissertation on Southern Literature in the nineteenth century

by Michael Sugrue, in "South Carolina College: The Education of an Antebellum Elite" (Diss. Columbia U, 1994) demonstrates the power of a single institution of create pro-slavery sentiment, states rights dogmatism and Southern nationalist feelings in the men who become the lawyers, educators, ministers and politicians of the 19th century South. Jorg Werner Homberger in "A Further Garden: The Gentleman Ideal in Southern Fiction, 1894-1904" (Diss. U of Pennsylvania, 1991) focuses on the development of the mythic past-- an imaginary Old South to counteract the industrialization of the New South, and solidifying sentimental stereotypes of the honorable gentleman, Southern Belle and happy slave in a lost Arcady. Vernon Garth Miles has taken an interesting approach to the Plantation Novel in "Polemic Themes in the Anti-Slavery Plantation Novel: 1820-1865" (Diss. U of Arkansas, 1990) in which he labels Northern abolition novels set on plantations-- Uncle Tom's Cabin being the prototype-- as "Anti-Slavery Plantation Novels." He analyses their plots in terms of the various schemes proposed for the elimination of slavery. Miles claims that the polemics in favor of emancipation are subverted by the novelists own prejudicial solutions, typical of the national consciousness of mid-nineteenth century America: domestic education, restriction of education to mulattoes, colonization of slaves to Liberia. Susan Jean Tracy, in "Images of Women, Blacks and Poor Whites in Antebellum Southern Literature" (Diss. Rutgers, 1983) explores the patriarchal concept of "natural superiority" in six Southern novelists of the period, while Minrose Clayton Gwin, in "The Peculiar Sisterhood: Black and White Women of the Old South in American Literature" (Diss. U of Tennessee, 1983) examines the mistress/slavewoman relationship across the entire canon. A similar issue is the thesis of Gerald Lyn Early's "'A Servant of Servants Shall He Be...': Paternalism and Millennialism

in *American Slavery Literature, 1850-1859*," (Diss. Cornell, 1982). Debra Faye Weston, in *"Smashing the Monuments and Saving the Pedestals: Washington Allston and Edgar Allan Poe's Mandate for the American Artist"* (Diss. U of North Carolina Greensboro, 1993) explores the way Southern aristocratic values undermined Poe and Allston who were unable to realize their agenda for the American artist because of their inability to accept the democracy, pluralism and theology implicit in Transcendentalism.

Earlier unpublished works have helped to carve out the broad themes that current scholarship is exploring in more detail, including Corine Howell Dale, *"The Lost Cause: Myth, Symbol, and Stereotype in Southern Fiction,"* (Diss. U of Michigan, 1978); Martha Jo Anderholt, *"The Role of the Plain Folk in the Southern Antebellum Novel,"* (Diss. U of Tennessee, 1978); and Katherine Eugenia Staples, *"The American Pro-Slavery Novel: A Study in the Popular Fiction of the 1850's"* (Diss. U of Texas at Austin, 1977). Some works of literary history have also established foundations for later studies: Randall Gerald Patterson: *"Writing Southern Literary History: A Study of Selected Critics and Historians of the Literature of the South, 1890-1910"* (Diss. U of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1976), Kay Stripling Perdue, *"Poe, Simms and the Call for a Southern Literature,"* (Diss. Georgia State U., 1981) and, for the Northern view of Southern Literature, Paul Emanuel Cohan's *"Barrett Wendell: A Study in Harvard Culture,"* (Diss. Northwestern U, 1974).

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