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The slave in the swamp: Disrupting the plantation narrative

William Tynes Cowan

College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences

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THE SLAVE IN THE SWAMP:

DISRUPTING THE PLANTATION NARRATIVE

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A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the American Studies Program

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

———

by

William Tynes Cowan

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APPROVAL SHEET

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of

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Susan Donaldson

Joanne Braxton

Grey Gundaker

Rich Lowry

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William Tynes Cowan
William Tynes Cowan

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Mary Kemp Davis
Mary Kemp Davis
Florida A & M University

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ABSTRACT

In nineteenth-century plantation literature, the runaway slave in the swamp was a recurrent "bogeyman" whose presence challenged myths of the plantation system. By escaping to the swamps, the runaway, or "maroon," gained an invisibility that was more threatening to the institution than open conflict. The chattel system was dependent upon an exercise of will upon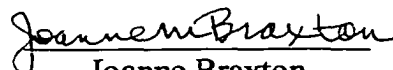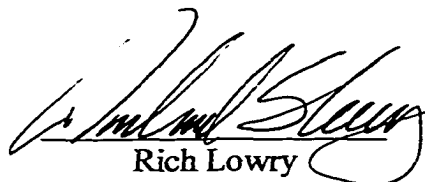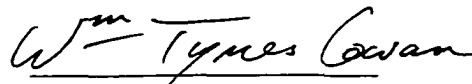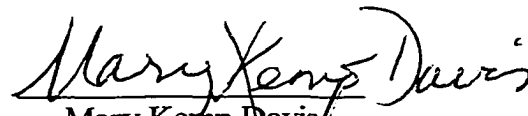 the body of the enslaved, but slaves who asserted control over their bodies, by removing them to the swamps, claimed definition over the Self. In part, the proslavery plantation novel served to transform that image of the slave free in the swamp from its untouchable, abstract state to a form that could be possessed, understood, and controlled. In other words, writers defending the institution would often conjure forth the rebellious image in order to dispel it safely.

Each of the three sections of this project contextualizes a major work in the genre by revealing the dialectical processes involved in its creation. Section I examines interactions between white and black on the plantation, newspaper representations of African Americans, and testimonies by former slaves regarding their uses of swamps. The section ends with an analysis of these processes as they are dramatized in John Pendleton Kennedy's *Swallow Barn*, arguably the first novel of the plantation genre.

Section II focuses on the slave narratives and proslavery novels of the 1850s as a context for Harriet Beecher Stowe's two anti-slavery novels: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*. The difference in title characters between Stowe's first and second antislavery novels, a martyr and a maroon, reflects the growing sectional tensions during the 1850s, but it also reveals the increasingly intertextual nature of plantation narratives.

Before turning to George Washington Cable's novel, *The Grandissimes*, Section III looks at postbellum collecting of slave folklore by white Americans, which served the valuable function of collecting such material but also served the purposes of the Lost Cause Cult. Conversely, the most popular proponent of the Lost Cause, Thomas Nelson Page, unwittingly casts doubt upon his own dreamy visions of the antebellum South when a maroon invades his swamp story "No Haid Pawn." Cable's maroon character, the New Orleans legend Bras-Coupé, reveals how the maroon's story often ended in a pillory scene with the runaway's body mutilated and publicly displayed.

Despite the common occurence of pillory scenes at the conclusion of maroon tales, my project hopes to show that the final signifying power of the maroon was not of the law writ large upon his body; rather, the maroon survived as legend, as an invisible presence, just beyond white control.

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THE SLAVE IN THE SWAMP:
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CHAPTER ONE

INTO THE DISMAL SWAMP

During the summer of 1856, Harriet Beecher Stowe published her second anti-slavery novel, *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*, in which her own civility shows itself to be wearing thin. Although she had initially thought to write a plantation romance, the incidents in Kansas and the Senate floor beating of Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner led Stowe to shift her novel's focus to the swamp, onto a band of maroons making preparations for an insurrection. Stowe appropriated the threatening image of the black "monster" in the swamp as white southerners' worst nightmare.[1] Despite the nightmarish quality, southern proslavery writers themselves did not entirely avoid this kind of image; rather, proslavery plantation novels sometimes conjured forth a rebellious slave to represent an aberration among otherwise contented slaves. Once summoned, the image was destroyed or contained so that the dominant image of the plantation slave was that of the devoted Uncle Tom or the clownish Sambo—both unthreatening in their fidelity and child-like simplicity. The white South's insistence on the happiness of its slaves, however, smacks of whistling in the dark, a diversionary tactic to soothe one's nerves in a potentially dangerous situation. They were attempting to divert attention away from what critic Jan Bakker refers to as "geothermic rumblings" beneath the placid veneer of southern life;[2] or what Stowe's Augustine St. Clare in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* calls the threat of a "St. Domingo hour."[3] In essence, white southerners were afraid that a "Nat" figure was hiding beneath a "Sambo" mask.

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1856 was a particularly turbulent year for abolitionists and proslavers alike. Besides the increased sectionalism caused by the Fugitive Slave Act and violence over the slavery issue in "Bleeding Kansas," the presidential candidacy of Colonel John Frémont for the Republican party stirred hopes and fears of emancipation; as a result, rumors of mass slave insurrections proliferated from summer to the new year.[4] The interplay between literary representations and historical circumstances in the plantation South is not mentioned here to suggest that Harriet Beecher Stowe instigated or created the insurrection panic of 1856 although attention to her new novel might well have fueled the fire. Rather, Stowe's move toward a more aggressive, even radical, discourse in her new novel is indicative of the climate in which such a panic could take hold, a climate in which the white planters' construction of their slaves' identities as harmless children was becoming untenable. As the slave's identity crumbled, so would the master's.

The election of 1856 brought to a head the tensions between pro- and antislavery forces, particularly over the issue of spreading slavery to the territories, which had led to sectional violence in Kansas after the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act. What made the presidential election particularly divisive was the strong showing by the new Republican party, the first major party with antislavery planks in its platform. Although the platform addressed only the party's opposition to the extension of slavery into the territories without directly suggesting the abolition of slavery entirely, its moral stand on the issue was fairly clear, referring as it does to the institution as a "relic of barbarism."[5] The presidential nominee of the party, Col. John C. Frémont, was vilified and members of his party scornfully called "Frémonters" in the South. The fear aroused in slaveholders by the spectre of Frémont as president led white southern-ers to see a vote for Frémont as an act of sedition. The Boston abolitionist paper *The Liberator* printed a letter from a Captain Stannard who related his experience of

proclaiming (naïvely) his intent to vote for Frémont in his adopted home of Norfolk, Virginia. At the polling place, his name and candidate were announced, as was the custom, and "a large number of voices shouted, 'Hang him,' 'Hang him,' and the Inspector handed [him his] vote and said, 'There is no such ticket voted here—we cannot receive this.'" He had to hide in his rooming house and watch crowds gathering outside and hear threats against him. Early the following morning he fled the city "by an unusual route, and in disguise."[6]

Similarly, a University of North Carolina professor, B. S. Hedrick, was found to be a Frémont supporter. As described by Guion Griffis Johnson, Hedrick was burned in effigy by students and dismissed by the board. "In Salisbury, near his boyhood home, where he went two weeks later to attend an educational convention, he barely escaped tar and feathers."[7] Even if exaggerated, the existence of such stories speaks to the climate of fear in the South created by charges that Frémont would free the slaves. The escalating rhetoric likely had two effects that added to the snowballing panic: first, slaves would have become eager to be free; in addition, whites would have started seeing a threat from within, even where none existed.

As a result, this year is one in which the stakes surrounding ideological representations of the black Other were greatest. The shift in Stowe's title characters, from the nonviolent, nonthreatening Uncle Tom to Dred, the son of famed insurrectionist Denmark Vesey, suggests the tension of the day. Stowe wields the image of the maroon as a big stick with which to threaten proslavery forces, a dramatic shift from the more passive, nonviolent abolitionism of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. This character, however, was not merely the fruit of Stowe's active imagination; rather, Dred is just one manifestation of the recurring image of the "brute Negro," armed and free, outside of the constraints of the peculiar institution, outside the familial bond of the plantation. Southern whites would have known of runaway bands living in woods and swamps,

especially in eastern Virginia and North Carolina, Louisiana, and Florida, where swamplands were vast and plentiful, but also anywhere that terrain would provide seclusion for runaways. As a sign of discontent, this black figure outside the confines of the plantation called into question the depth of the loyalty of those still on the plantation. Planters must have wondered: if some slaves preferred life in the swamp to enslavement on the plantation, perhaps those who remained were not as content as they appeared. In other words, it seems likely that the actual embodiment of black insurrection that lived out in the swamp would have caused white southerners to ponder the reality that lay behind the plantation slave's smile. The anxiety caused by memories of the 1831 Nat Turner rebellion, knowledge of maroon communities, and rumors of insurrections must have fractured the white planters' carefully maintained image of their slaves.

Maintenance of the preferred image of African Americans as happy and content in slavery depended on controlling or destroying the threatening image: "Sambo" must forever replace "Nat." Besides employing a willful self-blinding or self-delusion, southern white society could have exorcised the Nat demon through cultural represen-tations in print. Newspapers, avoiding as much as possible repor-ting news of rebel-liousness among slaves, could compensate for such disturbing news by focusing on the punishment of a Nat or by deluging the reader with Sambo images. Likewise, the antebellum southern plantation novel could conjure forth the "bad nigger" in order to relieve the anxiety caused by his very existence. In both ante- and postbellum works loyal to the plantation ideal, the image of the dangerous black man is exploded, con-trolled, and replaced by the more comforting image of the helpless child-slave. The slave in the swamp was an amorphous threat; however, once transformed from its untouchable, abstract state, that threat could be possessed and controlled.

Another 1856 publication provides an example of the processes by which southern whites could resolve any cultural contradictions posed by the image of the maroon. "The Dismal Swamp" in *Harper's Monthly* is popular illustrator David Hunter Strother's travelogue of a trip to the Great Dismal Swamp in Virginia.[8] The story is told by Strother's illustrating alter ego, Porté Crayon, and it culminates with Crayon's encounter with a runaway slave named Osman. This maroon emerges from a thicket in the swamp until he sees Crayon, and then he mysteriously slips back into hiding. The sketch Crayon makes of Osman suggests an affinity between maroon and swamp: Osman is practically a part of the landscape. Without careful inspection of the sketch, one can hardly tell where the body of the runaway ends and the swamp's vegetation begins. Although it is entirely possible that Strother's journey to the swamp actually did climax with such an encounter (as his story does), it seems just as likely that, hearing stories of runaways and perhaps Osman in particular, Strother concocted the encounter as the crowning touch to such a travelogue. Whereas the climactic effect may have just as easily been achieved through his dramatic confrontation with a snake or wild hog, the choice of Osman seems particularly appropriate to Strother's era. An image such as Osman's would have been floating somewhere in the minds of white southerners, especially those living in the region of the Dismal Swamp, an image representing the potential threat posed to the institution by the surrounding slave population. Where Stowe may have used the image of a maroon with the political intent of frightening white southerners, Strother's work is not overtly political. Rather, Strother is aiming at a momentary effect on the reader. In fact, he purports to be chronicling *his own* reaction to a confrontation with this strange creature. In doing so, Strother offers a glimpse into the mental processes by which white southern slave-holders may have willfully embraced the image of the Tom or Sambo in their own

slaves and rejected the idea that underneath lay the threat of an Osman or a Nat in the swamp.

Strother offers a prologue to his story, with himself as narrator, in which he visits his fictional friend, Porté Crayon. Here we learn that Strother will play the role of editor for the letters and sketches that Crayon sends from his travels. It is February 2nd, and Crayon eagerly awaits the springtime so that he can begin his travels. However, since the groundhog has seen his shadow, Crayon's slave tells him, the illustrator should wait another six weeks to depart. It is March, therefore, when Crayon is finally taken by canal barge to Lake Drummond at the heart of the Great Dismal. The author moves between romantic musings and more scientific observations as he catalogues the flora and fauna that make up the swamp. In one moment of romantic fancy, he recites the Thomas Moore poem, "The Lake of the Great Dismal Swamp" (1803), in which the poem's speaker enters the swamp in search of a dead maiden who paddles a white canoe. It seems as if Crayon is imagining himself in the position of the persona who ultimately finds and joins the dead maiden. At other times, he tries to enlighten the reader with more objective data about the region: its size, geographical location, and history. Somewhere between the real and the fantastic, he finds Osman.

After offering the reader a catalogue of the humans one might encounter in the swamp, mostly slaves of the Dismal Swamp Canal Land Company, Crayon mentions that a number of escaped slaves are said to inhabit the region. He has actually seen specimens of the other people, birds, and animals known to inhabit the swamp, but as evening approaches on the last day of his visit, he yearns to see a maroon. He says:

> The desire to eat forbidden fruit and see forbidden sights is the
> natural inheritance of the human race. Now I had long nurtured a
> wish to see one of those sable outlaws who dwell in the fastnesses
> of the Swamp; who, from impatience of servitude, or to escape the

> consequences of crime, have fled from society, and taken up their
>
> abode among the wild beasts of the wilderness. (452)

At this point, the traveller seems to conceive of runaways to the swamp in the same way he thinks of the other inhabitants of the swamp. In other words, while there is a touch of romantic fascination that accompanies his recitation of the Thomas Moore poem, Crayon's desire is still rooted in a scientific curiosity to see and catalogue a real, if rare, swamp-dweller.

Although he has tried to gain information about such runaways from his two black companions (slaves), they have denied any such knowledge. As the slaves prepare dinner, Crayon walks alone until he hears footsteps. He hides among the reeds to get a glimpse of Osman.

> About thirty paces from me I saw a gigantic negro, with a tat-
>
> tered blanket wrapped about his shoulders, and a gun in his
>
> hand. His head was bare, and he had little other clothing than a
>
> pair of ragged breeches and boots. His hair and beard were
>
> tipped with gray, and his purely African features were cast in a
>
> mould betokening, in the highest degree, strength and energy.
>
> The expression of the face was of mingled fear and ferocity,
>
> and every movement betrayed a life of habitual caution and
>
> watchfulness. (453)

Osman cautiously backs into the brush, and Strother sits down immediately to sketch what he has seen. Once back at the camp, he leaves the sketch where the slaves can see it, hoping it will prompt them to offer him information. Instead, they cover their momentary surprise and interest in the picture by asking Crayon to sketch *them* as well. In the moment between their notice of the sketch and their changing of the subject, the men "converse together in low whispers," which makes Crayon feel nervous.

He wonders, "Was I the possessor of a dangerous secret? In the Swamp a man might easily be murdered and concealed where the buzzards couldn't find him" (453).

Until this point Crayon has described these two black men in terms that are anything but threatening to himself. In fact, he journeys with them over four hours, from Suffolk to Lake Drummond, before he notices them as individuals separate from the task they perform on the canal barge. Even then, he takes note of them because he associates them with dinner, because they will cook for him, and because he is hungry. One, Jim, has "goggle eyes," while the other, Ely, has "nothing about him sufficiently striking to justify either description or a sketch" (446). They are essentially invisible and benign; they are a part of the equipment, such as the barge, that make his trip possible. But now, with the image of Osman sticking in his mind, Crayon imagines them capable of more sinister acts—murder! Ely's request of a sketch of himself to give to his family places him (and Jim) back in a familiar, domestic setting. By making this request, Ely allows Crayon to reframe his two servants, and perhaps African Americans generally, as just that: servants with no agenda other than serving their white master.

While the specter of Osman does serve as a climax to the journey into the swamp, Crayon still must depart the region; and it is in the denouement at the threshold of the Great Dismal that another black figure helps Crayon to confirm his former belief in the white-black power dynamic. It is here that he visits Uncle Alick, a black minister who claims, "Now, mass'r, . . . all de sense I got I larned from white folks; colored folk ain't borned wid no sense naterally" (455). Such a pronouncement serves to reestablish for Crayon, and for the reader, the preferred racial dynamic in which blacks are humble, grateful, and reliant upon whites. For a moment, the foundation upon which Crayon's sense of self as a white man in the 1850s had been swept out from under his feet. Once he comes to the edge of the swamp, however, he finds firm

footing provided by Uncle Alick's reassuring countenance. For both his character and his readers, Strother has provided a thrill in the image of Osman and a balm in the figure of Alick.

The moment of uncertainty in Crayon seems a sign of the change in racial attitude, described by George Fredrickson, that developed in the last couple of decades of the antebellum period. According to this theory, no longer were all races considered to come from a common ancestry; rather, blacks were considered inherently inferior to whites.[9] The image of the maroon, then, was seen as both the degraded form of the black man (in contrast to Uncle Alick) and the potential for degradation in all black men (the possible villainy of Ely and Jim). Such thinking allowed southern whites to defend the institution of slavery by seeing it as a way of protecting African Americans from themselves. Slaves needed, it was argued, the paternal guidance of a white planter to civilize them.[10] Still, as Crayon claims, humans have an innate desire for mystery, a need to probe the unknown places on the margins of society. Strother wanted to excite the reader, to create a sense of mystery, but he did not want to destroy the cultural assumptions of his white readers. The encounter with Osman was meant to provide a thrill in the same way that amusement park rides do: in a safe, controlled environment. It thrills because it challenges preconceived notions; it is safe because those notions are reestablished before the story ends.

Despite any intention Strother may have had to affirm the white South's preferred image of African Americans, the temptation to end with the figure of a "wild Negro" must have been overwhelming to his romantic sensibility. It was an image that might be sketched but not understood. Osman could not be captured, analyzed, or reduced to statistics as Strother had done with the swamp as a whole. When Crayon first enters the swamp, his pen overflows with lofty, romantic descriptions of the

region. After several hours on the barge, however, monotony overtakes him and he tries to elevate his mood with a recital of Moore's poem. After this, the barge comes to the expanse of Lake Drummond, and he exalts: "I have seen the lake, and a life long yearning has been gratified. I have seen the lake, and the romance of boyhood is undisturbed" (446). Perhaps in order to prevent his readers' childhood fancies of the swamp from being disturbed by his sometimes demystifying descriptions, Strother ends the travelogue with Osman in order to reinvest the Great Dismal Swamp with the air of mystery.

When he first enters the swamp, Crayon calls forth all the signifiers of death the swamp has to offer, from funereal moss hanging down from the trees to the dead maiden paddling her ghostly white canoe. He is, in effect, trying to make the swamp into the landscape equivalent of a haunted house:

> The low whispering ripple of the water, and the sullen tramp,
> tramp, tramp, of the bargemen, did not disturb the stillness, but
> made it seem all the more dreary, like the ticking of an old clock in
> a deserted house at midnight. I was alone, utterly alone. My men
> were voiceless as the mutes of an Eastern despot. With the eternal
> tramp, tramp, tramp, they might have been ghouls, or cunningly–
> devised machines, set in motion by some malignant sorcerer, to
> bear me away living into a region of stagnation and death. (443–44)

Such musings about his bargemen are short-lived as his investigations soon make the swamp and his companions less forboding. However, he finds within that region one figure above the others that continues to cause terror and delight. If the swamp is the landscape equivalent of a haunted house, it is Osman who becomes the swamp's ghostly inhabitant.

Osman is the story's gothic element; or perhaps Teresa Goddu would say that he is one gothic element embedded within other overlapping gothic elements. Goddu argues that the South as a whole is America's gothic region. "Identified with gothic doom and gloom, the American South serves as the nation's 'other,' becoming the repository for everything from which the nation wants to disassociate itself."[11] A primary emblem of the South is its swamplands, which also serve as a psychological other to the nation's cultivated, organized, ordered landscapes. And white America's racial "Other," African Americans, are here made all the more inscrutable in the form of Osman. The maroon does not fit the mold Crayon has made for black men in general, although his moment of doubt with Jim and Ely suggests that he fears an Osman hides within all black men. While Strother may have conjured forth the maroon's image in order to dispel safely the anxiety it creates, he has chosen a frightening image with implications larger than he could have imagined. It must have had a lingering effect on the character's (and the reader's) view of black-white relations, highlighting as it does the possible infamy of Ely and Jim. Even though Ely is able to smooth out the moment of discord with Crayon, it must be noted that the discord did occur. The slaves accompanying Crayon have information that they withhold from white people, and this refusal to be known endangers any rigid image that southern whites may have had of their slaves. Such images must have been constantly challenged in ways less drastic than Strother's story. Both white and black had to work to give the appearance of stability to what were otherwise fluid identities. However, "[l]ike the abject, the gothic serves as the ghost that both helps to run the machine of national identity and disrupts it."[12] As Goddu notes, regarding Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, "[W]hiteness is constructed in relation to blackness . . . white identity is mediated through a combined desire for and dread of blackness."[13] We should think, then, about the ways in which Crayon's

confrontation with Osman alternately disturbs and sustains Crayon's sense of self. Ultimately, in what ways does Osman represent the Other?

Strother loads his travelogue with character pairings that help the reader define characters by seeing what they are not: the author projects his own inadequacies as a writer onto Crayon; the image of Osman casts a new light on Ely and Jim; Uncle Alick provides a pleasant repackaging of the image of the Negro in Crayon's mind. The most important pairing comes in the moment when Crayon and Osman are face-to-face, a moment we might call a "mirror-crisis" when a character is confronted with his Other. Before Crayon leaves on his trip, his slave (also called Jim) offers an interesting if extremely odd way of reading the encounter between Crayon and Osman. Jim has argued with his master that the groundhog has seen his shadow and returned to his hole, thus predicting more winter for six weeks and providing reason for Crayon to postpone his travel plans. Knowing that the encounter with Osman will be the climax of the story, I find it hard to read Jim's discussion of the groundhog as merely Strother's attempt to sprinkle some "Negro folk wisdom" into his tale. Intentionally or not, Strother has set up an additional pairing: Osman's brief appearance and that of the groundhog. In response to Jim, Crayon grouses:

> "Many a one," he said, "have I seen, while watching for deer, as, all
>
> unconscious of my proximity, he would come out of his hole and
>
> play around. I spared their lives because I considered them
>
> harmless creatures; and now, in return, the devilish beasts have
>
> broken up my trip, or at least deferred it for six weeks." (442)

Such mocking disdain for the heretofore unknown power of the groundhogs is echoed in the fear Osman registers in Crayon. Although thrilled at the possibility of seeing one of these swamp-creatures, he is unprepared for the cost to his psyche, his world-view, that the encounter produces.

As the groundhog is said to see his shadow, so too does Osman: he sees his white Other, or shadow self; and perhaps this is what is most disturbing, though unacknowledged by Crayon. Jim has attributed more subjectivity to the groundhog than Strother does to Osman. That is, Crayon and the reader can imagine the anthropomorphic groundhog stirring from his hole, seeing his shadow, and returning to bed. We imagine this yearly ritual from the groundhog's perspective. However, when Crayon confronts Osman, Strother offers little, if any, speculation about what Osman thinks. In fact, in seeming contradiction to Osman's eternal vigilance, Crayon claims that the maroon never sees him. As a result, the focus is placed entirely on the effect Osman produces in the seer: Crayon. Osman, rather, is an object to which the subject reacts. Osman is the startling Other--the dark shadow self, if you will, for Crayon. If, however, we believe that Osman, true to his "habitual caution and watchfulness," does in fact see Crayon, then the maroon steps back into the brush with a sigh of relief at having avoided a close call. From this perspective, Osman is one of those "'beast creeters [that] knows things better dan larned men,'" as Crayon's slave notes (442). He, like the groundhog, is a reader of signs, a subject confronting *his* shadow self; and Crayon is that Other.

Of course, it is unlikely that Strother or his contemporary audience considered such possibilities. The encounter with Osman is a frightful moment, a fitting end to the story; however, the *reason* Osman produces that fright goes beyond the mere sudden and unexpected nature of his appearance. The appearance of Osman brings to the surface some cultural contradictions for which Crayon is not prepared, contradictions concerning his image of the Negro, concerning his attitude toward the system of slavery that produced the maroon, concerning his sense of self. One might wonder if Crayon would have reacted with such fright had he seen the dead maiden rowing her white canoe.

This momentary glimpse at a creature of folklore and nightmare provides a thrill, an unexpected shudder that Crayon anticipates but for which he is not fully prepared. Such an episode is a fitting conclusion, whether real or imagined, to Strother's travelogue. Having trekked through the swamp and demystified through classification so much of the mechanics of this fantastic region, Strother leaves the reader *re-mystified*. The encounter may serve to fulfill his job of cataloguing the inhabitants (animal, vegetable) of the Dismal Swamp, but it lacks the thoroughness of his other descriptions. It is a momentary sighting that serves to reinforce the legend, the fanciful notions the reader may already have in mind concerning fugitives inhabiting the swamp, but it does little to alleviate fears. Details of the maroon's personal story, of his daily habits, of the way the runaway lives, eats, sleeps, are still beyond our grasp; as a result, he seems less to inhabit the swamp than to haunt it. In a work built on taxonomies, on cataloguing the natural and man-made wonders of this mysterious region, it is Osman, and with him all maroons, who remains elusive, who refuses to be known, who transgresses boundaries. As Crayon begins his journey by enticing the reader with the mysteries of the region, so he ends by reaffirming its mystery.

Strother's travelogue can be seen as a microcosm of nineteenth-century white writing that attempted to bring southern landscapes and southern life to a national audience. Attempts to use the maroon as a character came from various political stances, but the image refused to behave no matter what the political purpose for which it was appropriated. Generally speaking, in the decades preceding and following the Civil War, the maroon served as an image of the inscrutable Negro. Those who sought an essentialized image of all African Americans were frustrated by characters such as Osman. This is especially true of the years leading to the Civil War. Southern white slaveholders felt an ever-increasing need to view their chattel as Sambos, as known entities, unthreatening and devoted to the system of slavery; but the

maroon inhabited a world unknown to white America. No matter how much slave-holders claimed to know their slaves, images such as Osman's challenged that claim. Believing that he had knowledge, and therefore control, of his plantation landscape, the white planter would have thought he knew the slaves inhabiting that landscape. The uncultivated regions at the margins of his ordered terrain, however, were beyond his control, as were the inhabitants of such regions. Ultimately, then, the story of the maroon is one of spaces; it begins not in the swamp but on the plantation proper and in the way in which planter and slave inhabited and perceived plantation spaces.

Although the image of the plantation manor house (or "big house") is ingrained in the national psyche as symbol of the Old South, the shift over the past few decades from the slaveholders' perspective to that of the slave requires a shift also in our spatial maps of the plantation. As Edward T. Hall notes, "[P]eople from different cultures not only speak different languages but, what is possibly more important, *inhabit different sensory worlds.*"[14] While the planter may have sat confidently in his manor house, feeling that he knew and understood the people he surveilled, his conception of the landscape was likely quite different from that of his slaves. The planter may have built a self-image based upon his physical centrality on the plantation, all other individuals having meaning only in relation to him, but African Americans on the plantation surely did not conceive of themselves in this way. That is, they would not have defined themselves in relation to the planter, as being on the margins of the plan-tation rather than at its center. As Henri Lefebvre puts it, "one . . . relates oneself to space, situates oneself in space. One confronts both an immediacy and an objectivity of one's own. One places oneself at the centre, designates oneself, measures oneself, and uses oneself as a measure. One is, in short, a 'subject.'"[15] The planters may have seen and used space as both symbol and instrument of their wealth, power, and status, but slaves were anything but defined by or "fixed" in place.

John Michael Vlach argues that slaves most likely rejected the planter's attempts to enforce a hierarchy through symbolic use of space. Unlike the planter's white visitors who paid "ritual obeisance" by submitting to the plantation's "processional landscapes" and architectural hierarchies (which I will discuss in more detail in chapter two), slaves moved in ways counter to social decorum. Ignoring the spatial constraints built into the house and grounds, "[t]hey took shortcuts across lawns and through gardens and entered parlors and bedrooms without always asking permission. Because they were seen as part of the inventory of an estate, they were expected to be everywhere and thus did not have to adhere to the scripted movements the planters expected of visitors." White visitors were made conspicuously visible by plantation architecture, and their level of access to the planter's private spaces was determined by their social standing in the planter's eyes. Slaves, however, were expected to come and go quickly and quietly in the most intimate parts of the big house. "They eventually used this level of access to inscribe plantations with their own meanings and associations."[16]

Although the planter would have attempted to control his slaves through a similar manipulation of space as he used with his white visitors, Vlach sees such control as meaningless since it was ignored by the slaves.[17] The planter wished to be the panoptic power that sees and controls all, but his simultaneous desire *not* to see his slaves as they performed services for him may have provided more freedom of cultural self-determination than the planter might have known or could have imagined.[18] In keeping with Lefebvre's association of space and self, such spatial remapping of the plantation schema helps us to see the subjectivity of otherwise objectified African Americans. Vlach goes further to say that spaces such as the big house "were relegated to the margins of the slave domain." Even though slaves may have appropriated spaces as their own by right of habitation, work sites such as the farm buildings and

fields were not central places for the development of slaves' culture and sense of self-worth. Rather, "[t]he hinterland surrounding a planter's estate . . . symbolized liberty, and slaves developed a detailed knowledge of its features so they could run away to it, either to find temporary refuge from abusive treatment or, in some cases, to escape captivity entirely."[19]

A possessive attitude toward one's work space could be easily hidden by a slave so as not to draw negative attention from the planter. Or if such an attitude were overt, it might still fit the planter's notion of a slave's identity. We can imagine a planter and his family saying, "Uncle So-in-So won't let anyone care for the horses but him!" or "Mammy won't let anybody else in her kitchen!"[20] Because these acts of territoriality pertained to work done for the planter, they complemented the stereotype of the obsequious slave doing his/her best for the planter's sake. They might be seen as precious, and therefore un-threatening, as children are seen as precious when they do something that seems imitative of adults. However, if, as Vlach argues, slaves had a greater feeling of ownership over their living spaces than they did over their work spaces, what sort of a feeling must they have had toward those spaces that were untouched by the white man's geographical-hierarchical ordering? Though a planter most likely saw uncultivated regions such as swamps as unprofitable and annoying, his slaves could and did make very good use of them. Slaves' use of the swamps as their own, however, was not an act that could have been easily assimilated into the planter's view of the world. Such proprietary action ran counter to the plantation's prescribed role-playing that supported the planter's sense of order; thus, it registered a contradiction, an error in the system. Slaves using, running away to, or living in swamps suggested that all was not well on the plantation and, perhaps even more disturbing, that the world did not revolve around the planter and his well-being.

If we conceive of a slave's perspective as an owner of the space s/he inhabited rather than as a piece of property inhabiting space on geographical property owned by the planter, then our conception of the roles white and black played on the plantation becomes very different. The Sambo stereotype that developed during the antebellum period seems a logical extension of the planter's sense of space. The seemingly child-like devotion to the master follows naturally from the architectural and geographical centrality of the planter and his white family; they were at the center of life; the slaves' lives revolved around the lives of the white family just as the work buildings and slave quarters were arranged around the plantation's central feature: the big house. The white planters had created a narrative of the plantation in which everyone played a part. Any action or utterance by slaves that challenged or disrupted the planter's view of himself and the world would need to be reframed in some way, recast so that it would fit into that "master" narrative. Priscilla Wald argues that untold stories are "reabsorbed" by official stories and national narratives; however, "the extra work required by that reabsorption threatens to expose the discontinuity it is supposed to obscure."[21] Instead of hiding the discontinuity, the effort made in bringing contrary stories into line with the national narrative may actually serve to highlight the discord it is trying to mask. This effort of reabsorption cannot be measured in any scientific sense, but it may be detected in a reader's moment of incredulity, in a moment when an otherwise well-crafted narrative begins to fall apart, explode, or fall short of the mark. In such moments, we can see the struggle between the untold story and the master narrative.

At least a part of the United States's national narrative involves manifest destiny and the frontier myth: an image of Europeans landing in a savage but beautiful land and hewing a civilization out of it.[22] Swamp imagery signifies disorder, whether a chaos to be feared or marvelled at, and the black fugitive's association with this

wilderness endowed the escaped slave with some of the same signifying properties. Besides threatening white civilization, however, the untamed regions at the margins of this civilization served also to define it. As these uncultivated regions served to distinguish what was civilization from what was not, those inhabitants of the swamp, the maroons, truants, and runaways, both disturbed and reaffirmed a white sense of self. Stories, legends, and novels about such swamp-dwellers may have titillated readers with a momentary revel in chaos, but more often than not, such tales served to reinscribe the rebel. What was usually intended by white writers who made use of the maroon's image was a sense of closure. The runaway was given a narrative with a beginning, a middle, and an end. There was nothing at the margins of society, the national myth said, but death and barbarism; and when a barbarian from the margins intruded upon the civilized space of light and reason, he must be controlled or destroyed. In the process of inscribing boundaries around these figures of disorder, southern white society could shore up the boundaries of the self. Still, as a prominent image on the margins of American civilization, the swamp signaled a refusal to be tamed, ordered, or bounded. If we see the conquering of the frontier as one of the national narratives of closure, then Osman and other swamp-dwellers disrupt, refute, and deny that narrative. The degree to which we see Osman as a disruptive force in Strother's narrative of closure is the extent to which we believe the image of Osman bursts the frame Crayon's story and sketch try to impose.

The encounter with Osman turns the story that Strother is marketing as a travelogue into something else. I am tempted to announce the discovery of a new genre, the American maroon narrative, but the swamp and its inhabitants are more rightfully seen as elements that invade other genres. According to Jacques Derrida, a genre by its very nature wages war against contagion; it is obsessed with preventing contagion by means of categorizing and establishing boundaries.[23] Teresa Goddu,

however, views one genre, the gothic, as obsessed with *transgressing* boundaries.[24] For my purposes, the gothic is important less as a genre unto itself and more as a literary form that pops up in unlikely places, signalling deeper psychological fears than, perhaps, the author intends. These fears are repressed notions that do not fit the national myths. Goddu argues, "The gothic disrupts the dream world of national myth with the nightmares of history."[25] The gothic registers those cultural contradictions that the national myth wants to ignore or gloss over. The swamp is the landscape equivalent of the gothic's haunted house. The maroon is its ghost.

Goddu notes that African-American writers like Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs made use of the gothic. They rematerialized the ghosts of American racial history in order to "haunt back" as does Harriet Beecher Stowe's Cassy who tricks Legree with ghosts of her own making "by turning the horror of her own history into the source of her power."[26] These haunting voices materialize in works by white authors who, regardless of political intent, tried to silence or ignore voices that threatened their version of history. When such a writer tried to avoid history and the experience of slaves, the text was "haunted" by absence, the fake, smiling glibness of unreality. When more daring authors attempted to confront a threatening image like the maroon, they found him unmanageable, unwilling to be forced into their national narrative form. A fictional maroon might die, be executed, dismembered, lynched, or pilloried; he might even escape to the North or return to the plantation; but he is always transgressing the boundaries white writers might impose on him, always calling forth the contradictions of the system. The maroon haunts back.

The occasional escape of a cantankerous slave to the North might even have been viewed as a blessing by southern whites, since s/he might have spread discontent among slaves in the "plantation family" if s/he had remained. It is possible, then, to see such running away as a safety-valve for the institution. However, when slaves escaped

to the woods and swamps, they donned an intolerable invisibility; for though they could not be seen, their presence was still felt by the planters in the form of stolen goods from the plantation. Those maroons who made a life for themselves in the heart of the South evoked a sense of African American autonomy and resistance to the peculiar institution. They were outside the system of white control, yet their invisible presence signaled the potential for insurrection. They might have risen up from the swamps and descended upon the plantation like Nat Turner, joined by those whom the planter had assumed were happy and simple slaves who had remained on the plantation. As the swamp evoked a sense of Other-ness in relation to the cultivated areas of the plantation, so the maroon accentuated the sense among whites that African Americans were an exotic and potentially dangerous Other. The image of the maroon became the "bogeyman" of the white southern imagination and plantation literature. The challenge posed to white plantation writers by this figure must have been similar to the challenge posed to planters; their sense of self and the righteousness of the institution were challenged by the *idea*, if not the physical presence, of African Americans living independently on the margins of white society.

As Toni Morrison argues, analyzing "the strategic use of black characters to define the goals and enhance the qualities of white characters. . . . will reveal the process of establishing others in order to know them, to display knowledge of the other so as to ease and to order external and internal chaos."[27] The goal of this study is to analyze this particular black character as he[28] appears in cultural works of the nineteenth century. Each section that follows contextualizes a major work in the plantation genre by revealing the dialectical processes involved in its creation. As an escaped slave generally signified a disruption to the plantation system, the maroon frequently disrupted the otherwise placid portrayal of the institution of slavery. The individual runaway embodied a contradiction to the logic that slaves were happy and content in

servitude. The maroon who ran away yet stayed in the South, lurking at the edges of the system, presented a greater threat: the fear of insurrection. By fleeing to the swamps, the maroon gained an invisibility that was more threatening than open conflict. As long as the slave remained on the plantation, slaveholders could feel a sense of control, for the chattel system was dependent upon an exercise of will upon the body of the enslaved. Once the slave fled, s/he asserted control over his or her body and claimed definition over the self. As a result, writers defending the institution would conjure forth the rebellious image in order to dispel it safely. By tracing the use of this image by various camps of socio-political thought before and after the Civil War, this study will show the effect the threat of insurrection, embodied by the maroon, had in shaping that thought.

Each of the three sections of the project contextualizes a major work in the plantation genre by revealing the dialectical processes involved in its creation. Section One deals with the interplay of landscape and identity formation. Despite the practice among the southern gentry to "write themselves" into the details of the plantation architecture and landscape, African Americans were able to assert a utilitarian proprietorship over the swamps of the South, claiming those spaces as their own. Slaves leading lives that were unknown to planters, defining themselves without regard for the planter as the center of the universe, may have been more threatening to the planter's world than open hostility and rebelliousness. Chapter Two examines ritualistic plantation interactions between white and black, newspaper representations of African Americans, while Chapter Three examines testimonies by former slaves regarding their use of swamps. The section ends with an analysis of these processes as they are dramatized in John Pendleton Kennedy's *Swallow Barn*, arguably the first novel of the plantation genre.

Section Two focuses on the cultural milieu of the 1850s as a context for Harriet Beecher Stowe's two anti-slavery novels: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*. Stowe's use of very different title characters, the harmless Uncle Tom and the insurrectionary maroon Dred, is indicative of the escalating violence in the rhetoric of slavery during this decade. The first two chapters of this section contextualize Stowe's use of the swamp in *Dred* by examining the way swamps and maroons are portrayed by proslavery novelists writing in response to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, fugitive slave narrators, and African American novelists William Wells Brown and Martin Delany.

Section Three begins with a look at postbellum collecting of slave folklore by white Americans. While serving a valuable function in preserving the material, such collecting ultimately served the purposes of the reconciliation project of the day and the Cult of the Lost Cause. Even within the Lost Cause movement, however, the swamp-dweller was a disruptive element, as seen in "No Haid Pawn" by Thomas Nelson Page. Fighting against the plantation narrative, George Washington Cable, in *The Grandissimes*, appropriated the New Orleans legend of the maroon Bras Coupé to expose the myth-making process of the genre.

The project concludes with the public execution and mutilation of Squire, the runaway whose maronage inspired the legend of Bras Coupé. Pillory scenes such as the mutilation of Squire were meant to serve as antidotes for threatening maroon images; however, as a legendary figure, the maroon burst the frame of representation even as white "justice" wrote itself upon his body. The final signifying power of the maroon's tale is not of the law writ large upon his body; rather, it is the ghostly, gothic effect of an invisible presence, just beyond white control.

SECTION I

IDENTITY AND THE DYNAMICS OF SPACE

Discussing self and Other in terms of American slavery is problematic since these terms often denote a white self set against an ideological and exotic black Other: enslaved African Americans. In such a rendering, the Other is equated with all that is strange to the dominant social force. Proslavery plantation fiction serves to define, therefore confine, this otherwise disturbing and unpredictable Other. Where the Other poses a threat because it is not fully known, the narrative serves to make it known. These literary techniques, however, suggest a one-sided, monolithic exercise of power: slaves are passive and powerless before the onslaught of white authority; their bodies are objectified and defined by others. In order to develop a more dialectical model of this interaction between white and black, slaveholder and enslaved, we must consider the enslaved African American as the self or subject and the white authorities as the Other. Doing so shifts the focus from whites as subjects trying to control an exotic Other to questions of African American subjectivity, selfhood, and agency.

Ann Jefferson's essay, "Bodymatters: Self and Other in Bakhtin, Sartre, and Barthes," offers a valuable survey of how twentieth-century theorists have developed the idea of the body's place in self-Other interactions in the struggle for identity.[1] For Jefferson, and the three theorists of her title, the body is more than a passive recipient of domination; rather, it becomes a locus of *struggle* between the self and the Other. Her survey begins with an early essay by Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity," that suggests a one-way power structure. The young Bakhtin begins with

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the notion that definition of the self is dependent upon and at the mercy of the Other because we cannot see our own bodies as others see us. In this case, Bakhtin imagines the self-Other dichotomy as analogous to that between character and author. The problem with this early formulation is that it assumes a *benevolent* Other.

From her discussion of Bakhtin's early assumptions, Jefferson moves on to Sartre who sees the same relationship but interprets the Other's action as *theft* of the character's self. Sartre adopts a more dialectical stance so that his subject is much more active in resisting the Other's definition of him.

> The result is that self-Other relations are a perpetual see-saw on which neither party can ever achieve permanant ascendancy over the other. The site of this struggle is the body, because it is through the body that one becomes vulnerable to the Other. . . . The subject is vulnerable to the Other on two counts: in the first place, as Sartre is saying here, he cannot control the image or interpretation that his body constitutes in the eyes of the Other. And in the second place, the Other is liable to reduce the subject to being a mere object, *only* a body, and thus denying what Sartre calls the subject's trancendence.[2]

Contrary to Bakhtin's early assumptions, Sartre argues that the Other tends to reduce the subject to "facticity" or objectify him, seeing only a body and disallowing a transcendent being.

The character/hero/subject/self is able to transcend the body when s/he has transcended *representation*. "The subject may suffer from the representation constructed by the Other, but his responses--be they evasive or aggressive--still show him to be thinking in terms of representation."[3] With his later theory of carnival in *Rabelais and His World*, however, Bakhtin conceives of an alternative to representation, a way to reconstitute the one-sided power of representation as participation.

"[T]he body of representation is a *finished* construction, whereas the body of carnival and the grotesque is by definition *un*finished. . . . to draw attention to the unfinished processes of becoming and regeneration."[4] One trouble, however, is that Bakhtin seems to establish a chronology that shows the grotesque always preceding representation, so that representation can seal openings left by the dialogical processes. Jefferson answers this problem by drawing on Roland Barthes's theory on the alienating effect of the Other's gaze: for Barthes, reading itself is a carnivalesque activity, blurring the boundaries between bodies. "Representation is abolished as the body comes out of the frame within which representation seeks to confine it. . . . The leap out of the frame that is figuration creates a connection between bodies which completely transforms the relations between what would otherwise be the subject and object of a representation."[5]

As discussed in the previous chapter, the signifying power of Strother's Osman sketch is such that it bursts forth in the manner described by Barthes. If such bursting is not apparent in the sketch itself, it is undergirded by the accompanying text in which Strother makes clear that the runaway was seen for only a moment, just time enough for Strother to capture a "snapshot" of him. The maroon, free in the swamps, resists the frame Strother's sketch might otherwise impose. He refuses to be catalogued, therefore known, along with the rest of the swamp's physical properties. Instead, Osman aligns himself with the mythical or legendary inhabitants of the Great Dismal. The taxonomy Strother has offered up to this point is part of a closed system of knowledge, but legends are open-ended. According to Richard Dorson, "the action or plot of a legend is not completed in the narrative itself, and in fact the action continues into the present or even into the future. The house down the road continues to be haunted."[6] It is this quality, the uncertainty that Osman generates, that causes Crayon to respond with fear and doubt. The image of the maroon makes him uncomfortable;

it disrupts his image of blacks generally and therefore of his self-image as the man in control. Though the slaves who accompany him are obviously, even to Crayon, hiding information about themselves, such as their knowledge of Osman, they work to help Crayon reconstruct his stereotypes of blacks, a stereotype that is completely reconstructed with the appearance of Uncle Alick.

Sander Gilman argues that stereotypes arise in response to threats to one's sense of self. Stereotypes, then, are an integral part of the construction of self.

> The deep structure of the stereotype reappears in the adult as a
> response to anxiety, an anxiety having its roots in the potential
> disintegration of the mental representations the individual has created
> and internalized. The sense of order . . . is an unconscious sense of
> symbiosis with the world, a world under the control of the self.
> Anxiety arises as much through any alteration of the sense of order
> (real of imagined) between the self and the Other (real or imagined) as
> through the strains of regulating repressed drives. . . . But when we
> relate to them [objects/other], we relate to them through the filter of
> our internalized representation of the world. This representation
> centers around our sense of control.[7]

In the case of Osman, the maroon acted as a momentary disruption in Crayon's self-concept and created a temporary loss of control. Such confrontations are important to a study of maroons but should not be considered the only challenge to a planter's self-image. Rather, one might argue that stereotypes on the plantation were always in a state of flux because a planter would have routinely seen evidence that his slaves were not conforming to his preferred image of them. Gilman continues:

> No matter how well articulated, these images are constantly altered by
> our interaction with the realities upon which they are based. We may

momentarily perceive an individual as aggressive, but the absence of a
constant pattern of aggression enables us to resolve the conflict
between the "bad" image and the complex reality and perceive the
individual as possessing both "good" and "bad" aspects.[8]

If the "bad" aspect of a slave, however, was the slave's desire to resist white authority,
run away, steal, or foment insurrection, it could not easily be incorporated into the
planter's image of the slave. Although white slaveowners undoubtedly understood
such a potential in any slave, to one degree or another, there seems to have been a
strong tendency to bifurcate the image of the slave so that the "bad" African American
was an aberration at the margins of the plantation and of the slave community. The
"badness" that could be incorporated easily was more akin to childish precociousness.
Still, the planter's sense of himself was to a large degree dependent upon his concep-
tion of his slaves in a quiet struggle of representations. Not only did his ownership of
slaves signify his class status, but signs of happiness among his slaves were indicative
of his quality as a patriarch: a good master would have happy slaves.

It is doubtful that the planter would have viewed his slaves simply as "Other,"
be they a benign or threatening Other. The self is not only defined by its opposite but
also by what it internalizes, its constituent parts. Perhaps if African American slaves
had themselves been monolithic, the planter's task would have been simpler. But the
images projected by slaves were too various, likely adding to a planter's perception of
both self and Other in his slaves. Charles Joyner offers one such slave's projection of
her own sense of identity.

A few house servants seem to have identified less with the slave
families in the quarters than with the master's family in the Big House.
"When I was a small child and lived in the house with the white folks,"
said Ann May of Mississippi, "I despised for anyone to call me a

'nigger'--that would make me fighting mad. Now I don't want them to call me that yet. I am black, but I was raised with white folks and got no nigger ways."[9]

Likewise, slave culture generally may have sent the planter mixed messages about slave identity. In his study of slave culture in eighteenth-century Virginia, James Sidbury finds that, although African Americans did not simply accept a European culture imposed by their masters, their culture would have looked very familiar to whites. The slaves "appropriated the forms of their masters, transformed them to mirror their own communal ethos, and infused the appropriated forms with new meanings."[10] As a result, the planter's perspective must have perpetually shifted between seeing his slaves as self and as Other.

Sidbury also argues that the road to a corporate racial identity for African Americans was a long one. Over time, as white planters moved westward in Virginia, uprooting slaves and breaking up slave families, the slaves themselves had continually shifting concepts of group membership--beginning with very small, local units and expanding as they felt themselves to be members of groups not bounded by geography.

[W]hile group identity and community are, on one level, about drawing boundaries to delineate who is and is not a part of the group, most people simultaneously consider themselves part of several groups. Thus a single person can consider him or herself to be a part of two seemingly contradictory communitites at the same time.[11]

Sidbury is talking here about African American communities bound together by common social status, by work, by family, and by beliefs; but this idea likewise applies to the white planter who might have thought of himself as a member of many communities, including both the white society and the slave community. This is not to say

that a planter would have differentiated himself from other whites as Ann May, above, distinguished herself from other blacks; I simply suggest that the frequently used term, "*our* black folk," went beyond its economic meaning.

The complexity of these interactions makes it all the more remarkable that plantation stereotypes survived as long as they did (or as they have). The planter's need to maintain continually his own self-image, socio-political necessity, and historical convenience collaborated to make the image of the patrician planter and contented child-clown slave a lasting one. Despite the planter's conscious understanding that the relationship was much more complicated, historical documents and cultural records of the time reflect the processes by which southern whites opted to stereotype African Americans, therefore simplifying them, in order to reinforce a favorable self-image. Slaves on the plantation would have provided the planter with daily challenges to self- image, while actual confrontations with swamp-dwellers would have been occasional at most. The importance of the image of the maroon, then, lay more in his status as legend than in Osman-like confrontations. It was that knowledge of runaways, defiant in the wilderness, that threatened the planter's conception of his slaves, and therefore his self-concept.

*   *   *   *   *   *   *

This section will lay a foundation for what I see to be the typical, or most common, means by which white perception of blacks during the antebellum period was willfully skewed toward the benign Sambo image. The slave's association with the swamp made this skewing particularly difficult. Chapter Two focuses on interactions between planters and slaves that were often rituals that both challenged and reinforced the stereotype. In particular, I will look at slave humor, which reveals actions taken by slaves to help planters reinforce stereotypes. To get an idea of how the larger white society tried to maintain the Sambo stereotype, I will use the weekly *Williamsburg*

Gazette as a case study, examining the representations of blacks around the time of the slave insurrection panic of 1856, a time when that Sambo image would have been most difficult to maintain. With Chapter Three, I move into the swamp to see how slaves made use of landscapes largely left alone by whites. In a system given to architectural hierarchies and the careful mapping of landscapes, swamps and other uncultivated areas symbolically resisted white hegemony. Truants and runaways often used swamps to elude capture or to "take a break" from work for days, weeks, or months; possibly more important, however, African Americans asserted a utilitarian proprietorship over such landscapes, incorporating them into their daily lives. Finally, Chapter Four examines what is arguably the first novel in the plantation genre, John Pendleton Kennedy's *Swallow Barn*. Kennedy makes good use of swamplands as both plot device and metaphor. In a novel that features a somnolent southern gentry and their stereotypically childlike slaves, the swamp becomes a locus for action. It energizes the otherwise staid whites and suggests greater depth to black characters. In all, Section One examines plantation stereotypes and the ways in which swamps served to challenge them.

CHAPTER TWO

SAMBO, NAT, AND THE GENTLEMAN PLANTER:

NOTIONS OF SELF ON THE PLANTATION

At the heart of this argument for the significance of the maroon's image are the more general, and stereotypical, representations of African Americans by whites. For planters and proslavery writers, the image of the contented slave--singing, dancing, and innocent even if mischievous--was preferred to the threatening image of the rebel-lious, recalcitrant, or insurrectionist slave. The latter type can be labelled a "Nat" figure, after Nat Turner, whose name is forever linked with the Dismal Swamp into which he and his band were thought to have escaped after killing some fifty whites in Southampton County Virginia in 1831. Though I am arguing that the maroon is a particularly threatening form of the Nat figure, any rebelliousness may be linked to a "Nat potential" in slaves; and it was the fear that any slave might secretly be another Nat Turner that white southerners worked to suppress. As is often noted, however, open insurrection or rebellion was not common in the old South; the fact that the Turner rebellion was the bloodiest in the history of North America speaks to this point. Rather, African Americans more often tended to mask rebellious tendencies and subvert the system covertly. This technique is later described by Ralph Ellison in *Invisible Man* (1952) as the narrator's grandfather advises: "'Live with your head in the lion's mouth. I want you to overcome 'em with yeses, undermine 'em with grins, agree 'em to death and destruction, let 'em swoller you till they vomit or bust wide open.'"[1] Though this is perhaps a more militant stance than one might have found on

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the plantation, it is this same masking of adversarial intent that led to the creation of the Sambo stereotype. The Sambo act allowed slaves to protect themselves while allowing planters to think of themselves as benign, paternal figures. Where the specter of Nat sometimes disrupted these roles, greater efforts were made by both planter and slave to replace the mask.

Joseph Boskin, in trying to account for the longevity of the Sambo stereotype in American culture, looks briefly at the roots of this slave "personality type" to explain its ideological function for the white power structure of the peculiar institution.

> Sambo was an extraordinary type of social control, at once extremely subtle, devious, and encompassing. To exercise a high degree of control meant also to be able to manipulate the full range of humor; to create, ultimately, an insidious type of buffoon. To make the black male into an object of laughter, and, conversely, to force him to devise laughter, was to strip him of masculinity, dignity, and self-possession. Sambo was, then, an illustration of humor as a device of oppression, and one of the most potent in American popular culture.[2]

We need not, however, follow Stanley Elkins's path of recognizing the insidious plan and assuming that it succeeded.[3] That is, African Americans may have acceded to white demands for humor without actually becoming Sambos. Beneath the Sambo mask, of course, lay the true feelings of the enslaved. The Sambo character hid any real intent, keeping an escape or milder form of resistance from being foiled; thus, it helped to conceal any threat to white power. In addition, whether the slave was planning anything against his/her master or not, the Sambo act kept a slave from *seeming* willful, a trait that would call for severe treatment. Still, as Joel Williamson notes, the Nat figure was probably not too deeply buried in the white planter's consciousness. "Sambo had within him, then, two terrific and opposite capacities.

Improperly cared for, he became bestial, an animal in human form and all the more dangerous because of his human capabilities. Properly managed, on the other hand, he was like a white child—and dear."[4]

Through concerted efforts by both slaves and slaveholders, witnesses of plantation slavery were given plentiful material for perpetuating the Sambo stereotype as a natural characteristic of African Americans. According to Mel Watkins, such witnesses, often travellers from the North or abroad who published travelogues, "offer a more or less identical portrait of the public image of black slaves as clowns and entertainers."[5] One such traveller, British comic John Bernard, commented extensively on this particular aspect of the slave stereotype. In his *Retrospections of America: 1797-1811*, Bernard calls the American slaves "the great humorists of the Union." This judgment is based on a view of the slave's character as essentially child-like: "with all the ignorance of the child he possesses its disposition for enjoyment."[6] Punctuated with an untainted simplicity, in Bernard's view, the slave's words and actions bring a smile or a laugh to the planters, who consider themselves to be parental figures for their property. Everywhere he travels, Bernard sees these same characteristics in African Americans and concludes that they are naturally funny and, therefore, naturally content in their servitude; as a result, the picture he presents is in line with the Sambo stereotype: the slave as child-clown.

However, the term "great humorists" is misleading because it suggests agency on the part of the enslaved. Instead, the picture painted by Bernard depicts the slave as less the *teller* than the *butt* of his own jokes; his words and actions are funny to a more sophisticated white sensibility. As illustrations of this great humor, Bernard offers several anecdotes in which a slave's misunderstanding or, at any rate, exotic way of seeing the world, produces laughter in the white audience. In one, a slave remarks that a fly had alighted upon the nose of his master only to retreat immediately because

it had burned its feet on the planter's alcohol-inflamed proboscis: "*oo burn oo foot at last*, massa fly!"[7] In another, a slave named Cicero imagines his deceased master has gone to Hell. When berated by a white man for making such an insulting, disrespectful remark, Cicero replies that his master had told him "he would never be comfortable anywhere where he wasn' berry warm."[8] At the distance of nearly two centuries, we can interpret these jokes as aggressive jabs at white authority, but Bernard sees them as coming from the mouths of babes. For us, these "babes" are not amusing or simple-minded but are cleverly masking insults with feigned ignorance. Even in jest, open mockery of the planter's facial features or, certainly more dangerous, the assertion that a white man has gone to Hell would not be well-received by white slaveholders. Veiled in this way, however, the slave is able to assert opinions with impunity, either because the white audience believes that no opinion is being asserted or because the opinion is lost in the laugh.

Even Bernard, though, sees the potential for social leveling or "moral justice" through the slave's word-play.[9] In one case, a slave named Agamemnon (Aggy) is accompanying his master and a visiting Jerseyman, a friend of his master, on a survey expedition. The Jerseyman has somehow been offended by the slave and, rather than petitioning his friend to punish the slave, decides to deal covertly with Agamemnon, whipping him across the skull while he sleeps. When Aggy complains to his master, the Jerseyman claims that he must have done it in his sleep and cannot be held accountable for anything done in that condition. The following night while the Jersey-man is asleep, Aggy takes the man's jug of whiskey and drinks it all, compensating himself for the injury with this nightcap. When questioned the next day, Aggy gives the same excuse used by the Jerseyman, that he must have done it in his sleep. This "tickled the planter as much as it dumfounded his guest, and between the two Aggy came off victorious."[10] Though obviously an aggressive practical joke with a clear

motive and outcome, the manner of execution serves to protect the slave from retribution. In other words, "tickling" his master gets him out of trouble.[11]

Despite some claims of admiration for the slave's ability to outwit an opponent, any praise of the slave's intelligence is demeaned by implied analogies to clever children and exceptionally bright animals: "It was the presence, not the absence of intelligence which gave it a relish."[12] Bernard makes his ideological position clear in a long discourse on the European peasantry and the notion of liberty. As with the lower classes of Europe (especially the Irish), Bernard argues, the American slaves have no use for *liberty* because the concept takes too much intelligence and education to appreciate fully. The slaves, Bernard explains, would not know what to do with liberty, since they understand only bodily pleasures.

> Toil, in ordinary cases, is but a dam to his animal spirits, which overflow with greater violence at the hour of relaxation. A dance, a song, and a laugh are then his sole desiderata. All this is, no doubt, merely sensual, and far inferior to the pleasures which an elevation to his just dignity would afford him; but still, nothing can be more erroneous than the impression that the negro is not to the full extent as happy as any of the other unenlightened laborers with whom Europe abounds.[13]

Ultimately, then, these anecdotes may themselves be seen as racist jokes. They are not told to illustrate a slave's getting the better of a white man by making the planter the butt of the joke; rather, they are told to reinforce the Sambo stereotype and the happiness and good-naturedness of the slave. They are seen as naturally funny, but the source of the laughter is in the white man's feeling of superiority: African Americans are objects of entertainment in the way that a child or animal may seem funny when attempting to "act" adult or human. In effect, the slave himself is the butt of the joke.

Bernard fails to imagine that such comic actions and sayings might not be signs of an essential, and degraded, African American character; that, instead, the Sambo act may have derived from a larger verbal tradition and been employed to · ease interactions with whites. As a comic actor, playing comic roles, Bernard should have been able to recognize Sambo as such. Even more curious, the planters in close contact with their slaves would certainly have caught glimpses beneath the comic mask. Yet the Sambo myth lived well past slavery. The most obvious reason for such a stereotype sticking to one group is of course racist imperialism, the need to dehumanize the Other in order to control and justify his treatment. However, the maintenance of the slave's comic mask seems also to speak to white fear: planters not wanting to see beneath the mask-- wanting instead to be able to sleep at night without worrying about the surrounding slave population. The Sambo stereotype, then, served two social functions on the plantation: it helped the individual slave to survive, to hide true feelings and true intentions from the slaveholder; and it allowed the slaveholding class to maintain its belief that the institution of slavery was not only benevolent but was a necessary shelter for their innocent, enslaved "children."[14]

If a slave was seen as hostile towards white authority, the slaveholder's laugh- ter certainly would have been of a nervous sort. But as Ralph Ellison : suggests, "The white man's half-conscious awareness that his image of the Negro is false makes him suspect the Negro of always seeking to take him in, and assume his motives are anger and fear--which very often they are."[15] The dialectic of appearance and reality, again, points to the issue of white fear. From this perspective, the slaveholders willfully sub- merged their knowledge of the aggressive side of African-American humor, choosing instead to see only innocent deviltry.[16] Besides providing the planter with a good night's sleep, one through which he did not fear for his life in the midst of these aggres-

sive slaves, such an attitude toward the slaves' humor could actually have reinforced the institution. Eugene Genovese argues:

> The slaves' necessary resort to put-ons and lies had other ramifications which might even fall under the rubric of ruling class control. The masters often knew they were being deceived. Sometimes they fretted; sometimes they chuckled, as if delighted by the cleverness of their mischievous children. . . . But [H.C.] Bruce had seen how whites, as a matter of ideological control, welcomed - although with some fear - the slaves' prevarication and dissembling, and how they tried to strengthen their own claims to being men of honor.[17]

The constant interplay between the appearances and realities underlying the peculiar institution turned every encounter between black and white into a ritualized play of wits in which the maintenance of the slave's mask allowed the master to maintain his own mask.

We may consider these everyday interactions to be semi-formal rituals where the act of will on both sides served to maintain the respective facades; however, the white self-image of benevolence and moral authority was jeopardized by the essential nature of chattel slavery. Singing, laughing slaves helped to maintain that self-image, so it is only logical that the planters would have wished for such behavior from their slaves. As one Mississippi planter proclaimed in 1851: "The Negroes are permitted and encouraged to clap and dance and make merry; and often after performing an active and faithful day's labor, you can hear them dancing till a late hour at night. They have an abundance, are free from care, and they are happy."[18] Frederick Douglass is often quoted countering such assertions that slave song and after-hour merriment were a sign of happiness among the slaves; rather, for him, the songs were expressions of

sorrow. More important than this distinction, however, was the expectation placed on the slaves by the planters to *appear* happy. Mel Watkins notes:

> Southern slaveholders often encouraged the slaves' merrymaking. It was a source of entertainment for plantation masters as well as for their Northern American and European guests. Former slave Frederick Douglass wrote: "Slaves are generally expected to sing as well as to work." He also contended that a "silent slave is not liked by masters or overseers. '*Make a noise*,' and '*Bear a hand*,' are the words usually addressed to the slaves when there is silence amongst them."[19]

On the practical side for the planter, slaves who were singing could not be plotting thefts, escapes, or insurrections; but, on the more intangible side, it must have been comforting to hear and see outward signs of joy in those they held in bondage. The reason for such intentional self-blinding among the planters and their guests, a willingness to see this Sambo character as real despite certain opportunities for seeing it as a mask, may have been simply a desire for it to be real.

On an everyday basis, the chance of either mask cracking seems high; however, these master-slave roles could be reinforced more formally through plantation rituals. James Sidbury notes that events such as the distribution of clothes, the promotion of a slave to driver, and slave weddings all became plantation rituals "designed to enhance the master's aura of status and power."[20] The most famous and memorable of such rituals was the yearly corn shucking festival, which is often mentioned in accounts by both black and white as a highlight of life on the plantation. Typically, this festival occurred in the fall when the barn was loaded with the corn crop for the year. All of this corn was hauled to an open space nearer to the big house and put into two huge piles. Towards nightfall slaves from neighboring plantations would arrive to participate in the work and festivities. The primary action involved the slaves forming into

two teams, each with a captain or "Corn General" who sat atop his pile of corn to lead the corn songs and spur his team on. Cheating was part of the fun as members of either team tried to throw corn from their pile on to that of their opponents.[21]

Although the festival was "attended" by the planter, his family, and sometimes other white guests, the festivities were, for the most part, a spectacle for the whites. Some interaction, though, did take place verbally during the corn songs, which were often laced with humor at the expense of the slaveholder. According to Genovese, "They turned their wit and incredible talent for improvisation into social criticism. Occasionally they risked direct, if muted, thrust in their 'corn songs,' as they came to be called."

> Massa in the great house, counting out his money.
> Oh, shuck that corn and throw it in the barn.
> Mistis in the parlor, eating bread and honey,
> Oh, shuck that corn and throw it in the barn.[22]

The optimal word in Genovese's remark is "muted," since, without a more direct contrast between slave life and planter life, this song could be seen as a glorification of the planter's lifestyle. The picture of the planter and his wife are much as they would have seen themselves. The satire comes only in the contrast between white and black: the hypocrisy of the whites in their carefree enjoyment of the fruits of others' labors. This satirical song could also reflect some amount of resentment among the slaves that, however enjoyable the festivities were, corn shucking was still hard labor.

After the shucking contest, there was a feast and liquor provided by the master of the house. Here the interaction between planter and slaves became more direct as the slaves toasted the host. "As the eating started, one of the captains or other good talker among the slaves took on the role of the master of ceremonies to toast the health of the host and hostess, and to hold forth on other subjects."[23] William Cullen

Bryant recorded one such speech made by a slave during his visit to a South Carolina plantation in 1843. Here, it was not the corn captain but a slave with a greater capacity for public speaking who was called upon.

> Toby, a man of powerful frame, six feet high, his face ornamented with a beard of fashionable cut, had hitherto stood leaning against the wall, looking upon the frolic with an air of superiority. He consented, came forward, demanded a bit of paper to hold in his hand, and harangued the [other slaves]. It was evident that Toby had listened to stump-speeches in his day. He spoke of "de majority of Sous Carolina," "de interests of de state," "de honor of ole Ba'nwell district," and these phrases he connected by various expletives, and sounds of which we could make nothing.[24]

We can imagine that while the planters found such "speechifyin'" hilarious for its attempt on the part of a slave to capture something of the eloquence of a white politician, the slaves listening might also find humor in this burlesque of white pomposity. Bernard and other believers in the Sambo reality would see such entertainment as attempts, on the part of slaves, to be like their masters rather than satires of white lifestyles.

Generally speaking, the songs, stories, and jokes collected from the testimony of former slaves might be categorized by the amount of aggression against whites that is palpable in each verbal expression. Such distinctions could help determine *where* on the plantation these works were performed. The more directly aggressive, the more likely it is to be performed out of earshot of planters or overseers. The above examples show slaves making jokes at the expense of whites in very subtle or indirect ways. These jokes may reflect a skill by which the slaves could release anxiety or chalk up a score against the master without his knowing, but what about more direct, aggressive

humor where the master becomes the clear butt of the joke? One informal instance involved a slave named Charlie, noted by his master for his wit and spontaneity with song, who challenged or inverted the normal role-playing of the situation when called upon to sing a funny song for the planter's guest. Sometime earlier Charlie had, unbeknownst to his master, seen his master crossing a field on a mule laden with a keg of whiskey. The mule had slipped and the planter was thrown into the dirt. Charlie had not said anything about the incident until the planter called him forth to entertain a visitor to "show off what he knew." Charlie hesitated, and the planter said,"'Come on, you black rascal, give me a rhyme fo' my company--one he ain't heard." So Charlie negotiated, asking his master to promise that he would not get a whipping no matter what he says in his rhyme. The planter agreed and Charlie recited:

> Jackass rared,
> Jackass pitch,
> Throwed ole Marsa in de ditch.

The planter was furious but "he didn't whup Charlie, not dat time anyway."[25] After this incident, Charlie performed his poem many times, even adding new verses to it, though never again in front of his master. In this way, his verbal skill and quick thinking earned him quite a reputation among the other slaves. The informant told collectors: "Don' recollec' all dat smart slave made up. But ev'ybody sho' bus' dey sides laughin' when Charlie sung de las' verse":

> Jackass stamped,
> Jackass hupped,
> Marsa hear you slave, you sho' git whupped.[26]

If Charlie as the entertainer was normally the butt of the joke, this situation turns the master into the butt, and Charlie won praise from his peers. The original joke then

became something else: more than a direct assault on the master, it became part of Charlie's repertoire, one of his "lies" to be told around the quarter.

In his essay, "A Theory of Play and Fantasy," Gregory Bateson provides instruction for understanding these moments of intercourse between black and white on the plantation. The complexity of daily interaction was immense, involving the framing of play behavior and whether or not the participants could discriminate between what was play and what was not play. "In many instances," says Bateson, "the frame is consciously recognized. . . . in other cases, there may be no explicit verbal reference to the frame."[27] In the case of Charlie's negotiation, turning the master into the butt of the joke, the frame of play was explicitly negotiated and created so that the slave could, with impunity, make his humor more overtly aggressive. Charlie challenged his objectified role as performing Sambo, and the planter's need to preserve his own persona of gentility prevented him from punishing Charlie. The planter, however, must certainly have seen beneath both facades at that moment.

A more formal instance, the corn shucking, with its fairly well-established boundaries, involved one particular ritual, *totin' the host*, that blurred the distinction between *play* and *not-play*. This toting of the planter, lifting him onto the heads and shoulders of the slaves and carrying him to the table in a procession of singing and chanting, occurred after the contest—the corn shucking itself. It was meant as a tribute of thanks to the generous planter for providing the food, drink, and occasion for entertainment. "This honor, though of questionable comfort, or rather most uncomfortable discomfort, must be undergone, for a refusal is considered most churlish, and a retreat gives too much license to the guests."[28] The license here would have been exactly the riotous activity most feared by a planter surrounded by a drunken and "spirited" mass of slaves.

Another description of the toting, given by former slave Lewis W. Paine, offers more detail into the proceeding.

> As soon as the pile is finished, the slaves keep a sharp eye on the Host, lest he should slip out of their sight, and get to the house; for it is a rule with them at corn-shuckings, always to tote their Host to the house, on their heads; and the moment he gives the word to proceed to the house, he expects his doom--and, by dodging and running, he tries to escape it.[29]

Although Paine may be adding a bit to the planter's feelings about this situation, we should consider this act in terms of other such rituals, say, a football coach being carried off the field. In that case, the ritualized action does not include the "foreplay" we see in the totin'. Structured in this way, then, the totin' of the host offers a ritualized capture, perhaps an inversion of the original capture of Africans or the return of runaways.

The totin' of the master was an instance during which the participants may have had an unspoken understanding, a frame that said, "These actions in which we now engage do not denote what those actions *for which they stand* would denote."[30] In other words, "play action" replicated action from "real life," but only in form; thus the aggression and consequences of the actions were emptied of meaning. But within all play, Bateson notes, lies the question: "Is this play?" The fact that the frame (the rules of the game governing the level of aggression) was left unspoken left open the possibility that what was mere performance last year might this year turn into real inversion, a rebellion against authority.

Without the evasion, the ritual did nothing to disarm or subvert the regular order; it merely recapitulated the everyday hierarchy that positioned (this time literally) the planter on the backs of his slaves. This is not to say that the discomfort mentioned

by Barrow or the evasion described in Paine was faked. The social obligation required his submission in order for him to maintain his persona of benevolent patriarch. Paine mentions a rule that one would think a requirement of the slaves, but it applied to the master: "But a dozen stalwart negroes pounce upon him, and it is always understood that he is not to hurt *them* [italics added], but prevent them, if he can, by wrestling and running; but when the negroes get their iron gripe on him, it is useless to struggle."[31] This condition highlights a temporary dismantling of the master-slave relationship. The extent of the planter's power here was limited to the power normally associated with a runaway who had nothing but his/her wit and agility to gain freedom. The slaves, however, were not the planter's only adversaries in the game, as is made clear in Paine's description of the toting's final phase.

> If he should get angry, it will make no difference; the masters of
> the slaves run to their rescue, and order them to seize him; and nothing
> suits them better than this. They lay hold of him, and down he comes,
> and on to their heads he goes, in just no time at all; and they bear him
> off in triumph to the house, where he receives the jokes and gibes of
> the young ladies, and of his family.[32]

When the planter becomes the butt of the joke for his slaves and the collected white guests, we can see the corn shucking festival truly to represent the world-turned-upside-down.

Naturally, though, the festival should not be viewed as a time when the slaves took over the plantation and ruled for a day. True, they obtained certain privileges at this time and the boundaries of power became blurred in the toting of the host, but the festival on the whole served the same general purpose for antebellum society as the Sambo mask. Although the other planters may have refereed the toting merely for their own amusement at seeing their neighbor suffer, they were really performing a

social obligation: to make sure that the slaves were happy and that they let off some steam. That the South was cognizant of such strategies to maintain order is made clear in an Alabama planter's commentary on corn shuckings.

> All restraints, except such as are necessary to preserve order and decorum are removed, and they are allowed the largest liberty in their enjoyments. After all, the negro is a human being, actuated in some measure at least, by motives similar to those which govern other more favored members of the great brotherhood of man. Hence, it is necessary that Hope, that great prompter to cheerful action, should be cultivated in him. A human being, the horizon of whose life is never illumined by the cheerful beams of Hope, is devoid of any inducements to praiseworthy actions, and must be driven to discharge the duties of every day, solely by the fear of punishment.[33]

The discomfort of the ritual, then, disarmed the immediate situation, the yard full of spirited, intoxicated slaves, as perhaps the annual festival might have served to defuse the overall institutional danger by venting discontent.

Mary Douglas would probably conclude that the very ritualized nature of the corn-shucking activities *disarmed* the power of joking by institutionalizing it: "The rite imposes order and harmony, while the joke disorganizes. . . . When joking is used in ritual, it should be approached none the less as a rite."[34] This is not to say that the slaves themselves were foolish to enjoy the festival or to look back on it fondly after emancipation. Even though their humor served the ideological purposes of their masters, it helped the slaves survive physically and culturally. The temporary social leveling offered by the festival is what the slaves were attempting to create every day through their masking and what Charlie managed to achieve in his negotiations before singing.

These illustrations of plantation masking rituals, both daily and annual, are presented here to suggest the ways in which black performance might simultaneously undermine and perpetuate the planter's self-image. While being careful not to cross the line, slaves could explore the boundaries of their power relationship with white planters. In interactions between master and slave, the slave would often use humor to "grease the wheel" of his/her intercourse, to make him/herself seem harmless while manipulating the situation as much as possible. The need to maintain those boundaries, however, is suggestive of the planter's realization that the Sambo act was just that: an act. Beneath the seemingly amicable relationship between master and slave was in fact an adversarial one. The mock insurrection ritualized each year in the totin' of the host is especially interesting for peeking beneath the surface of the planter's idyllic realm. Surely, on some level, the planter and his guests must have registered the connection between the playacting of the ritual and the constant, if muffled, rumbling of the "St. Domingo hour" beneath the idyllic veneer.

To see how white southerners reacted when that hour seemed near at hand, let us turn to the insurrection panic of 1856. Where Charlie's owner might have gritted his teeth at Charlie's insulting song and chalked up the incident to the "clever boy's" rascally nature, how could southern society maintain the Sambo image of their slaves while discussing the threat of a general insurrection? The image of slaves rising in arms against their masters ran counter to the preferred conception among slaveholders of their institution as benevolent and their slaves happy.[35] Various oral testimonies give us an idea of how slaveholders must have worked individually to replace the Nat image with the more comforting image of Sambo; recollections of the corn shucking festivals tell us how white neighbors collaborated with each other to disperse any Nat-potential among their slaves; likewise, contemporary newspapers, as quasi-official voices, offer insight into the ways entire communities accomplished the same goal.

The panic of 1856 offers us a window of time during which newspapers were extremely sensitive toward issues of race and racial representation. Southern newspapers generally were reluctant to call forth the Nat image, even as rumors of insurrection abounded; it was in the form of rumor, however, that Nat was most powerful. By confronting the amorphous Nat, newspapers could solidify the threat and relieve anxiety. An analysis of *The Williamsburg Gazette*, in particular, reveals how one southern community conspired in print to replace the threat of insurrection with the comforting image of Sambo.

An article in the *Williamsburg Gazette* of December 18, 1856, tells of the impending execution of a black man belonging to Mr. Thomas A. Edwards of Amherst County, Virginia. This prisoner and an accomplice had been arrested and tried for shooting *at* a white man: the one slave to be hanged; the other "transported." The article ends: "Troubles are like hornets, the less ado you make about them the better, for your outcry will only bring the whole swarm upon you." This one-line editorial seems a non sequitur when taken out of the context in which it first appeared; the meaning behind the line was more fully fleshed out, however, in a Milledgeville, Georgia, newspaper the following week. An editorial in the *Federal Union* of December 23 begins:

> We have refrained from giving our readers any of the accounts of contemplated negro insurrections that have been lately discovered in the South Western States, and even in Virginia and South Carolina. It is a delicate subject to touch, but it would be criminal to keep the public in ignorance of matters so vitally important.[36]

Typically, there existed among southern newsmen an understood code of silence regarding the threat of slave insurrection. These "eruptions" in newspapers of the

otherwise taboo subject of slave insurrection point to the extraordinary nature of the year 1856.

In his 1939 essay, "The Slave Insurrection Panic of 1856," Harvey Wish examines newspaper articles from 1856 to produce a well-ordered account of the rumors that spread throughout the South in anticipation of a slave rebellion in the fall of that year.[37] Much of his article is interested in reconstructing the spread of the panic and criticizing newspapers for reporting insurrectionist activities where none existed. Wish suggests that these papers contributed to a climate of fear and suspicion and helped the rumors to press eastward from their origins in Texas; in essence, those rumors found expression, and a mark of authenticity, in the newspapers of the day. Wish's orderly account of the panic, however, overlooks the means by which papers may have served to manipulate the image of African Americans in the public imagination. The newspapers may have authenticated the rumors, but they simultaneously defused the threat by replacing Nat with Sambo.

Broadly conceived by Wish, the panic of that year took place from September through December and spread from Texas eastward to complete its cycle in Virginia and Maryland. The first reported incident came in the form of a letter from a community in southeastern Texas to the *Galveston News* of September 9th. It involved the supposed discovery of "a well-organized plot to murder the entire white population. The slaves had in their possession large quantities of pistols, bowie knives, guns, and ammunition." Part of the plan had involved Mexicans living in the county; the entire Mexican population was subsequently "ordered to leave the county within five days and never to return on penalty of death." At least five slaves were executed. Other plots were reported in October nearer the Louisiana border, but evidence of insurrectionary intent in each case was exaggerated if it existed at all.[38]

In November, rumors of an insurrection planned for Christmas day began rumbling in Louisiana, but Tennessee and Kentucky became the center of the insurrectionist threat. These seem to be the real uprisings of the year, whereas little if any evidence was found to substantiate rumors in other parts of the country. Initially, the confession of a serving girl on October 29th revealed a plot scheduled for Election Day. Real panic began after a powder keg was discovered in the possession of slaves. From this point through early December, much of the focus was on the Dover area in northwestern Tennessee.[39] Wish tries to portray the panic as sweeping in counterclockwise motion from Tennessee through Missouri and Arkansas, then eastward through the deep South and ending in Virginia and Maryland, but the panic seems to have been more instantaneous than that. After weeks of reporting the drama in Tennessee (rumors likely spreading more by personal letters and word of mouth than by newspapers), newspaper accounts by mid-December showed communities throughout the South calling emergency meetings and demanding greater security.[40]

Although newspaper articles can give us valuable historical insight into incidents of slave resistance, if we can separate the report of rumor from the report of fact, my concern here is with the rumors themselves; or, more precisely, my focus is on the state of mind of white southerners and how newspaper representations of African Americans reflected and created that state of mind. In order to gain understanding of how one community in Virginia coped with the conflict between the slaveholder's conception of the system as benign and the institutional contradictions embodied in the image of the insurrectionist slave, I will examine the *Williamsburg Gazette*. Although this weekly paper is often laden with stories reprinted from big-city papers, local reports and editorial choices made during the insurrection panic offer insight into the power of the medium. For example, Wish notes that slaves in Williamsburg attempted an insurrection in early December.[41] This reference, though

unclearly cited, suggests that Williamsburg was one of several hot spots in the state during the month; yet the *Gazette* made no mention of an uprising. However, from a statement in the New Year's Day edition for 1857, it is evident that, despite the lack of discussion at this "official" level, the daily public discussion had focused heavily on the subject for some time. A local editorial on the passing of the threat ends: "We are pleased to observe that the panic existing in the minds of this community, and especially in the *female* populace has entirely subsided, and that we can now hear some other topic of conversation, besides the 'negro insurrection'" (p.2, col. 1; original italics). Besides indicating the prominence of this topic in the preceding weeks, the editorial seems to justify its own policy of silence by relegating such topics to the realm of female gossip and hysteria. Nevertheless, the paper did not remain wholly true to its ideals, that is, to the ideology that assumed the institution had nothing to fear from its chattel.

The edition of December 4th may provide a glimpse into the usual representation of African Americans in the pages of the *Gazette*: one reference to African Americans comes in the form of a review of a new book regarding the "proper instruction of colored persons" (p.1, col.5). At once, this article brings to mind the supposed benevolence of the institution while underscoring a need for control, since the author stresses *oral* instruction. Despite this allusion to the policy against slave literacy, a policy based on the fear that literacy would breed discontent and empower slaves, only the image of kind masters, concerned with the well-being of their charges, comes through. Likewise, the other portrait of "the Negro" in this edition serves to exoticize the black man and justify white hegemony. This brief report notes that the chief of a cannibal tribe in New Zealand says that Christianity broke him of his desire for human flesh (p.2, col.1). Whether intended as comic filler, hard news, or an early version of *Ripley's Believe It or Not*, the effect of the piece was the same.

The December 11th edition lacks even this directness. One piece labeled "The Effect of Tale-Telling" discusses a folk tale in poetic form that reveals how the once white raven was punished for telling stories by being turned black (p.1, col. 6). Although a direct connection to the black population is not made, we can assume that the readership drew such an inference, the tale-telling of the raven being analogous to the "lies" and "put-ons" of slaves.[42] While acknowledging some dissembling on the part of the otherwise contented slaves, the tale suggests, à la Bernard, that such dissembling is in the nature of African Americans. This edition does, however, finally print the news that had been a hot topic for some weeks in the western states:

> Negro Insurrection in Kentucky -- [dateline Louisville, Dec. 6] Reports have just reached this city that the negroes of Southern Kentucky have broken out in rebellion, and that a general insurrection is feared. They commenced an attack upon the iron works, and vigilance committees are being formed in Lafayette and Hopkinsville for the purpose of taking prompt action in the matter. (p.2, col.3)

This is the report in its entirety and the *Gazette*'s first mention of the story since the panic began before Election Day.

The following week's *Gazette*, however, reveals the breaking point of the paper's restraint as it began addressing the rumors directly. In this edition, December 18th, two pieces from the Richmond *Whig* fill larger than average spaces; in a paper whose entries generally run a couple of inches, each of these fills half a column. The first, titled "Negro Insurrections," makes explicit the general editorial policy:

> We have met with various accounts, says the Richmond *Whig*, in our exchanges, during the past few months, of threatened negro insurrections in the extreme Western and Southern States, which, for satisfactory reasons, we did not copy, or otherwise, noticed very

briefly. These reports begin to thicken, and as they emanate from points nearer our own territory, it is proper that we give them publicity. We have not heard the first whisper of a suspicion against the subordination of the slave peasantry in Virginia, but the same poison which has infected the Western negroes may exert its baleful influence here, unless the antidote is kept in prudent readiness. (p. 2, col. 1)

It goes on to report news of outbreaks from earlier in the month in Tennessee along with the fate of two white men "arrested and nearly whipped to death" as accessories. The final paragraph reinforces the notion that the slaves of the South would neither be inclined nor able to plan such behavior on their own; rather, it focuses attention on abolitionist agents inciting the actions: "Wherever these outbreaks have occurred, we have every reason to believe they have been instigated by white men who are sent here from the North to disturb the peace of our sunny clime." The effect of such scape-goating takes the plantation ideal to the extreme, suggesting the complete absence of disgruntled slaves and the utter dependency of the childlike blacks on white leadership. This article reasserts the image of the happy, childish slaves while marginalizing the "minority" element, the occasional unhappy slave; ultimately, the fact that their slaves could be so easily led to their own destruction, six executed in Dover at the time of this report, reinforces the need for the protection of the institution.

The other article in this edition is titled "Rumored Insurrections" (p.2, col.3). This one, also from the Richmond *Whig*, gives more evidence (or rumors) of local outbreaks and urges every community to organize watches and be on the alert. "We are no alarmist; but we think it behooves the good people of the state to be more than usually alert in times like these." Among the locales listed as infected with the insur-rectionary panic is Williamsburg, where "several suspected slaves have been arrested and lodged in jail." It is interesting to note that this single mention of the Williamsburg

threat was quoted from a Richmond paper. No comment is offered by the *Gazette* either to elaborate or refute the statement. As with the other article, this one ends with the suggestion that uprisings need not suggest the inherent contradiction of the institution, the unhappiness of the slaves, or their willingness to fight and die to be free. Instead, for example, the blame for the need to arrest thirty blacks in New Kent county is again placed on white instigators: "Nor is this suspicion entirely entirely [sic] groundless, for there are a good many yankee wood choppers in that county who are believed to be at the bottom of the matter."

The dominant representation of African Americans among white southerners would have helped to maintain the system by erasing institutional contradictions residing in the image of the rebellious or discontented slave. The unusual attention to the threat of insurrection in the December 18th *Gazette* is balanced by an unusual preponderance of other images of African Americans, images asserting the status quo. On page two, alongside the articles on insurrection, the standard role of slaves is reinforced: first, an advertisement proclaims the high rate slaves are fetching in the Norfolk hiring market (p.2, col.2); second, an article on "The Hiring Season" not only emphasizes the comfortable, reliable seasonal cycle, the natural inevitability of the slave's role in the society, but it focuses heavily on the dangers to the master of the slave's potential ill-treatment (p.2, col.1). Far from suggesting the defect of the system whereby the commodified and "rented" individual may be returned damaged as any other piece of machinery, the spirit of the article again calls to mind a special relationship between master and slave in which the planter has only the welfare of his ward in mind.

What is more striking in contrast to the insurrection news on page two is the tenor of page one, on which three views of African Americans are offered. The first is the standard representation of the "plantation darkie" famous in plantation literature.

This comes in a romantic poem called "Alone at the Rendezvous," in which a devoted slave named Cuffy acts as the go-between for a pair of star-crossed lovers (p.1, col.4). While this image of the devoted slave asserts the preferred image of blacks in the society from the planter's perspective, two other articles deal directly with its opposing image: the slave as threat to white security. The first is a story I have already mentioned, "Sentenced to be Hung" (p.1, col.5), about the two slaves held and tried for shooting at a white man; the slave not sentenced to hang is transported (sold "down the river" or to the West Indies). The article appends a sentence about another slave: "Col. Leftwitch's man, Allen, who killed Pleasant Hunter some time ago, is also sentenced to be executed." The arrangement of this information seems to deemphasize the more severe crime of murder, creating a sense that *any* rebellious act will be dealt with by the authorities sternly and effectively.

The final story in this sequence is much more detailed, yet it regards events from far away: "Lynch Law in Ohio" (p.1, col.6). This long report tells of the assault on a woman in her home by "a brute negro man, Bill Terry," who is taken by an "infuriated mob . . . to the neighboring tree and swung him by the neck until he confessed." Terry was confined in jail, but when the woman's husband returned home and learned of the crime, he raised a mob to "liberate" him and hang him for themselves. "After hanging until he was dead, his body was cut down, and with the chain still fastened to him, deposited in a box and buried." Besides the obvious attempt to assert the "logical" outcome of such a crime and the swiftness of local justice, what is striking here is the characterization of Terry: "On his way from the jail, and even under his gallows, the negro cursed and swore terribly, and vowed, if he get off alive he would kill [the woman] on sight." His actions and character in general are such that even his "own wife was so shocked with the horror of his crime and his repeated villainies of the kind, that she did not even beg the crowd to spare his life."

The story of Bill Terry is necessarily distanced from the local community. The fear-inspiring image of the "brute Negro" is placed into the context of free Ohio as if to say, "What do you expect when you free these people?" Just as the subtext of the hanging story lies in the current rumors of insurrection and the conscious wish to downplay such rumors, the subtext of this story brings to the fore the dreaded image and gives it a specific context outside of the local institution; still, it ultimately shows the ability of a white populace to deal with such threats if the occasion should ever arise.

On the actual day of the supposed insurrection, Christmas, the *Gazette* almost completely avoids the subject. One story that echoes that of Bill Terry concerns the execution in Texas of a man who "[d]uring his confinement, and while at the gallows . . . exhibited the most reckless depravity. He was of mixed blood--Spanish, French, and Negro" (p.1, col.6). A slightly less submerged reference to the black threat comes in a long article, "Servants," on the high rates of hiring that year: "servants may be sent to Richmond or Norfolk to be hired out, but the advanced prices, paid in those places, will hardly pay for the risk of escape, and the danger to the habits and health of servants in large towns, and negroes to revolt" (p.2, col.1). Coming on the day that it does, this brief reference to insurrection seems like a psychic hiccup, the coming to the surface of the idea one would most like to suppress at a given time. Be that as it may, its overt function is not dissimilar from the distancing strategy used in the Ohio story; only here the blame is placed on the big cities for spoiling otherwise contented slaves.

The key representation of African Americans in this edition, though, comes in the humor section, with a piece in dialect called "Verdict of a Negro Inquest" in which the black foreman declares:

We de underscribed darkies, being, being a kutner's juray in disgust to

> sit on de body of de nigger Sambo, now dead and before us . . . sitten'
>
> on de said nigger afore-sa'd did, on de night ob de furst enth of
>
> November come to his death by fallin' f'omde said ribber, whar we find
>
> he was subsecomely drowned, afterwards was washed on de ribberside,
>
> where we spose he frize to def. (p.1, col.6)

Though it is tempting to read into this piece a latent fear on the part of its white writer

that "Sambo" was indeed dead, because of the threatened insurrection, and replaced by

the vicious "Nat," I will refrain from such psychoanalysis. Instead, this piece is the

most obvious example of a newspaper suppressing one image in favor of the other:

the Nat figure of the insurrection articles is sublimated and the Sambo rendered in

broad strokes.

The New Year's Day edition of the *Gazette* has already been mentioned for its

assertion that, the holidays having passed, everything would return to normal and the

women would stop talking incessantly about insurrections. The editorial also gives

credit to the efficiency of the police and patrols but begins the process of reasserting

the righteousness of the institution by questioning the need for such precautions:

> But we are loth to believe that the negroes in this section of the State,
>
> well-fed, well-clothed and humanely treated as they are ever con-
>
> templated a general insurrection. We are loth to believe it, because we
>
> know that there are hundreds, who, if necessary, would take up arms in
>
> defence of their masters, in return for kindness of the latter to them.
>
> Negroes, fortunately, are not altogether destitute of gratitude. If they
>
> were, a general insurrection would have occurred in this State years
>
> ago. We are loth to believe it, furthermore, because servants have
>
> some sense and discrimination, and know, if they would undertake a

thing of the kind that a just, prompt, immediate and fearful retribution would ensue. (p.2, col.1)

The Doomsday having come and gone, this voice of the city can now speak directly about how silly their concerns had been. Those concerns had been so silly, in fact, as to be relegated to the realm of women's gossip.

The newspapers' manipulation of African American representations during the insurrection scare may tell us something about how planters managed to cope with challenges to their stereotyped images of slaves. As the editor of the *Gazette* re-established the image of the devoted slave once the threat had passed, so must planters, surrounded by slaves, also have *chosen* to forget signs of aggression; as the newspaper overwhelmed the images of insurrectionists by filling the paper with the alternative image of the Sambo, so too could the planter; and as the newspaper tended to place tales of rebelliousness at a distance, so too could the planter. The possibility of slaves somewhere taking arms against their masters was an abstraction, belied by the seemingly content slaves planters saw daily, laughing and singing. This image, promoted in the newspapers, solidified the amorphous threat and thereby controlled it, at least in the minds of the readers.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SWAMP AS APPROPRIATED SPACE

For Anglo colonists in North America, the land of the new world was at once inviting and threatening: inviting to their sense of exploitation, threatening to their sense of order. Carving out of the land a new nature along with a new nation, based on rules of classical symmetry, the planter in the South faced an especially stubborn Nature in the form of vast swamplands that would not come under his rule. William Byrd and George Washington exemplify this classical mindset that tried to bring order to the swamp: Byrd mapping the Great Dismal Swamp, making boundary lines in the chaos, and Washington heading a canal project there to make the swamp useful and profitable. As David Miller argues, after the formation of the republic and the growth of the romantic imagination, the swamp began to signify much more than waste and annoyance.[1] A region of death (as opposed to mere waste) that was simultaneously teeming with life, it became a liminal space, a meditative space. For both classical and romantic era Anglo Americans, however, the swamp served as a contrast to the cultivated, controlled plantation spaces.[2] If the Anglo American of the Enlightenment saw the swamp as a nuisance, the romantic saw it as alluring for the same reason: its chaotic, threatening nature. Whatever changes might have occured in the white American mindset, from the beginning African Americans were able to assert a utilitarian proprietorship over the swamps of the South, claiming those spaces as their own. Swamps were used as temporary refuge for runaways on their way North and for truants taking a "holiday" from the plantation. Some slaves made use of these

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uncultivated regions for meetings among slaves, for hiding stolen goods or evidence of theft, and as hunting grounds to supplement their food allowances. Still others became maroons, turning the swamplands into a permanent home. The image of the maroon is a particular type of Nat figure, combining the disordered, foreboding landscape with the "bad nigger" or degenerate black male stereotype. As with romantic fascination with the swamp alone, antebellum whites found the maroon at once appealing and repellent.

From the popular metaphors of original settlers taming Nature and carving a civilized space out of the vast wilderness, we can gather a sense of the meaning such "civilized" spaces might have had for early plantation owners. According to John Michael Vlach, "The world was, in their view, suitably improved only after it was transformed from its natural chaotic state into a scene marked by a strict, hierarchical order."[3] Plantations of the Old South, then, began as expressions of the planter's power.

> Implicit in the structural layout of Georgian houses, formal gardens, and extensive stretches of fenced and cultivated fields was a strong sense of the planter's dominance over both nature and society. The wide gap between the material condition of a great planter and that of even his closest local rival was underscored by the way in which his house was approached. Access was achieved by moving along a route marked by a series of threshold devices--gates, drives, forecourts, steps, terraces, porches, passageways, doors--all of which were intended to make the house, and its owner, appear more impressive.[4]

Part of this demonstration of power through architecture and landscape involved the way the planter's house itself dominated the landscape. Often built on the highest point of land, its size and centrality made it the organizational center of the plantation;

indeed, it was the "Big House" or the "Great House." Slave cabins and work buildings would be arranged in such a fashion as to assert that the manor house, if not the geographical center of the landscape, was definitely the heart of the plantation. Dell Upton observes:

> From the master's point of view, slave quarters were part of a working landscape that dictated to some degree their siting and location. Quarters for house slaves were often close to the main house on large plantations, and they were carefully ordered in rows or "streets." If they were visible from the house, they were arranged on the site and treated on their exteriors with an eye to the visual effect from the main house. Other planters hid them from the eye, and in those cases they were usually plainer but were nevertheless carefully sited and arranged.[5]

And at the heart of the manor house was the planter himself, reachable only by "passing through a series of physical barriers that are also social barriers."[6] The outward sign of dominance over his slaves combined with a carefully constructed approach to the manor house was meant to establish clear distinctions between the planter and any white visitors he might entertain. The further one could penetrate the many thresholds, the higher one's stature *vis à vis* the planter.

The contradiction inherent in this schema, of course, is the fact that the slaves themselves, the very means by which a planter could proclaim his dominance, had greater access to the planter's coveted "inner-spaces" than most of the white visitors. Upton argues that "it is evident in circumventing the formal barriers of the processional entrance, both the private and the slaves' route undercut the social statement made by the formal approach."[7] The slaves, therefore, "did not have to adhere to the scripted movements the planters expected of visitors."[8] Vlach adds that slave

opportunism regarding the appropriation of spaces (by inhabiting and using them) uproots the notion that these architectural exhibitions of power served to order and control their slaves.[9] Given the careful construction of a physical hierarchy to accompany or accentuate the existing social hierarchy, it is no wonder that house slaves are often assumed to have been more privileged than their counterparts in the fields or in the more menial labors in the out-buildings. According to the planters' own prioritized use of space, "To be above it all, to see and not to be seen,"[10] slaves working within the manor house partook of the rarefied, unseen places. Indeed, as noted in the previous chapter, slaves, individually and collectively, were a kind of spectacle for the planter; plantation landscape, then, served to accentuate the sense that the slaves were visible and knowable while the planter and his family were a mystery, veiled by the walls of the big house. In this scheme of things, then, the house slaves were privileged not only because their work was considered more genteel but because they occupied the point of view of the spectator rather than the spectacle.

However, as Charles Joyner points out, "working in such close proximity to their mistress's house, servants experienced both some of the best and some of the worst conditions of slavery."[11] As the house slave had more access to the privileged spaces and perspectives, to see other slaves as well as the planter and his family, so were they more *in view* of the planter. If slaves were indeed role-playing in interactions with whites, then the house slave would have had fewer opportunities to remove the Sambo mask. Where Charlie, from the previous chapter, was able to return to the slave quarter and expand upon the insult he had leveled at his master, slaves living in close proximity to the planter and his family did not have such opportunities. Nevertheless, just because the planter had greater power to scrutinize his house slaves does not necessarily mean that he took advantage of that power. The same willful self-blinding that planters used to assume that the mass of slaves were

happy and content, interpreting sorrow songs as a sign of merriment, for example, could have been used on the slaves who were close at hand.

As Upton notes, some planters attempted to hide slave quarters from the view of the main house; likewise, individual slaves could be rendered "invisible" by the slaveholder. An extreme case of a planter willfully blinding himself to the existence of his slaves is seen in Thomas Jefferson's Monticello. Not only did Jefferson design his mansion in a relation to the slave quarter that would prevent the slave cabins from being visible from the mansion, but his much-touted architectural genius went to work to make even the house slaves disappear. In particular, the dining room is located on the far end of the house from the kitchen. Servers would carry meals through a tunnel/basement beneath the mansion to a stairway beside the dining room; once on the same level as the planter, the slave would still be concealed by a wall into which had been built a revolving shelf. Here the slave could place the meal, delivering it without being seen. The same is true of a dumbwaiter from the wine cellar that allowed the master to call for a new bottle and receive it without ever seeing a slave.

Despite a planter's attempts not to see those African Americans who surrounded him daily, house slaves still had to veil some of their acts of appropriation. Mark P. Leone and Gladys-Marie Frye, in their archeological study of big house kitchens in Virginia and Maryland, concluded that slaves working in those kitchens literally carved out niches for themselves. Under floorboards, door sills, and hearths, these workers deposited conjure bags and fetishes, protective magic intended to "overturn the will of the master."[12] In contrast to such covert appropriation under the master's roof, slaves away from the big house collectively appropriated their living space, in effect turning the slave quarters into "little towns."[13] In addition, they could assert themselves anywhere the planter's influence was weak; that is, making black landscapes out of the areas that were "[b]eyond their master's immediate scrutiny, at

the margins of the plantation and in the thickets beyond its boundary lines."[14] Of these possible spaces ripe for appropriation was the one space that was most unprofitable to the planter: the swamp.

Although the uses of the swamp were many and varied, the easiest to verify is its use as refuge by runaways, truants, and maroons since they were the ones who caught white attention enough to warrant documentation. For example, during his 1728 expedition through the Great Dismal, William Byrd "came upon a Family of Mulattoes, that call'd themselves free, tho' by the Shyness of the Master of the House, who took care to keep least in Sight, their Freedom seem'd a little Doubtful."[15] Byrd goes on to mention the existence of numerous slaves in the region whose obscurity renders them safe from "their righteous Neighbours" on surrounding farms. Many other writers, both black and white, make references to slaves running off to the woods. In some cases "the woods" is simply a catchall phrase denoting any wild, uncultivated spot on or neighboring the plantation. Descriptions of some hiding places made in "the woods" could as easily have referred to forest or swamp. But when the wilderness is seen as either a barrier to the slave's escape or a barrier to white pursuit, the distinct attributes of the swamp are important to discuss. In addition, specific iconography is important when considering the more spiritual meaning that might be read in the swamp, as with the romantic iconography of the funereal hanging moss and the lonely crane. Nevertheless, the examples drawn here of slaves escaping through a swamp or actually taking up residence within one are limited geographically.

Much of the information available comes from eastern Virginia and North Carolina because this region contains the Great Dismal Swamp which, like the extensive bayous of Louisiana and Florida, provided runaways with hundreds of square miles of wilderness in which to lose pursuers. In an abolitionist tract following

the Nat Turner Rebellion of 1831, Samuel Warner describes the Great Dismal Swamp
as

> a very large bog, extending from N. to S. near 30 miles, and from E.
> to W. at a medium about 10 miles; partly in Virginia, and partly in
> North Carolina, No less than 5 navigable rivers, besides creeks, rise
> from it. . . . the ground of the swamp is a mere quagmire, trembling
> under the feet of those that walk upon it, and every impression is
> instantly filled with water. The skirts of the swamp, towards the east,
> are overgrown with reeds, 10 or 12 feet high, interspersed every where
> with strong bamoo briers. Among these grow here and there a cypress
> or white cedar, which last is commonly mistaken for the juniper.
> Towards the south end is a large tract of reeds. . . . Near the middle of
> the Dismal the trees grow much thicker, both cypress and cedar. These
> being always green, and loaded with very large tops, are easily blown
> down, the boggy ground affording but a slender hold to the roots.
> Neither beast, bird insect or reptile, approach the heart of this horrible
> desert; perhaps deterred by the everlasting shade, occasioned by the
> thick shrubs and bushes, which the sun can never penetrate, to warm
> the earth: nor indeed do any birds care to fly over it. . . . noxious
> vapors infect the air round about, giving agues and other distempers to
> the neighboring inhabitants. On the western borders of the Dismal is a
> pine swamp, above a mile in breadth, great part of which is covered
> with water knee deep; the bottom, however, is firm, and the pines grow
> very tall, and are not easily blown down.[16]

Despite the dramatic excesses of this description, which were added to show how
desperate fugitives must be to seek refuge in the Great Dismal, Warner offers a fair

picture of the region during the antebellum period before more modern versions of Washington's canal project cut down its size.

Herbert Aptheker estimates that the Great Dismal maintained a population of two thousand maroons, some fugitives themselves and some descendants of run-aways.[17] In addition, Florida's terrain offered defensive positions to bands of outlaws, both black and white, as well as Indians and runaway slaves.[18] But New Orleans was home to the most stable of such communities, one with continuous ties to an urban area. According to Gwendolyn Midlo Hall,

> [t]he openness of New Orleans society was greatly enhanced by the ecology of the city and its surrounding cypress swamps and luxuriant waterways. The maroon communities of escaped African and Indian slaves that began during the first half of the eighteenth century evolved into permanent settlements under Spanish rule. By the 1780s, a stable community almost entirely made up of creole slaves had created maroon villages in the swamps surrounding the city. [19]

Although the locations mentioned above were particularly fruitful for maroon activity, swamps are common enough throughout the South for David Miller, in his book on swamp imagery, to call the swamp "the landscape equivalent of the Cavalier myth."[20]

The success and openness of communities such as the one in New Orleans might give the impression that African American's viewed swamplands as primarily havens. However, the imposing nature of many swamps would certainly have pre-sented a deterrent to any slave thinking of escape; so their concept of the region was probably formed in balancing the dangers of the swamp against abuses on the plan-tation. In *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, Eugene D. Genovese asserts, "If most slaves feared to think about flight to the North, many feared even to think of short-term flight to the nearby woods or swamps."[21] As evidence, Genovese offers the observations of

Thomas Wentworth Higginson and the words told to Fanny Kemble by an old Georgia slave woman. Both draw the conclusion that the snakes and alligators were the greatest slave catchers in that they would either dissuade running or serve to return the runaways. "Slaveholders . . . usually took a calm view of their runaways and expected an early return. After all, their slaves had a long way to go to get to the free states, hardly knew the way, faced trying conditions in the woods, and sooner or later—usually sooner—would come home."[22] Despite this assertion that the return rate was high, the fact remains that the dangers of the swamp were not a complete deterrent since slaves still felt it worth the risk.

Harriet Jacobs illustrates the fear of the swamp that may have led to the assumption that the region acted primarily to keep slaves at home. Those helping Jacobs to escape tell her at one point that she must return to the swamp where she had already spent one night. "I could scarcely summon the courage to rise. But even those large, venomous snakes were less dreadful to my imagination than the white men in that community called civilized."[23] Jacobs builds up her fear of the swamp to fit her literary persona, the woman of taste and refinement who, because of slavery, is not allowed to remain unsullied and completely virtuous as a white woman might.[24] Being forced into the swamp is typical of her character's constantly having to choose between one "evil" and another. Despite the sentiment and occasional melodrama with which Jacobs presents her story, this dilemma must reflect a common choice facing the slaves. Another runaway, Tom Wilson, puts more succinctly the rationale behind his choice to flee through the swamps: "I felt safer among the alligators than among the white men."[25]

Nevertheless, stories such as that told by Jacob Branch would likely have served to increase fear of the wilderness among slaves. Branch, who had been a slave in Double Bayou, Texas, relates the story of Charlie, who runs off to the bayou to

avoid punishment for not meeting the quota for grinding cornmeal. Exposure to the freezing waters up to his knees forces him to return to the plantation kitchen where he thaws before the fire and dies.[26] Charlie's own body could serve to signify the dangers of the swamp as clearly as the victim of a public whipping might ingrain the price for running away in general (or for getting caught). But Charlie's was an unpremeditated plunge into the swamp, one that came from the necessity of the moment, not from careful planning. At another time of year, he could have found no better place to evade pursuers. Swamps surrounding a plantation could serve as more of an incentive to escape than discouragement, because, as Melville Herskovits notes, "individual escapes were more likely to be made good where natural obstacles to pursuit were the most severe; in the United States, swamps always invited running away, permitting the slave a measure of protection from his pursuers that open country could never have afforded him."[27] This was the case for the uncle of Mississippi slave Dora Franks. Uncle Alf, having been severely beaten after running away and put immediately back to work, "work right hard till dey left. Den, when he got up to de end o' de row next to de swamp, he lit out again."[28] Apparently, Uncle Alf felt he just needed a little head start and time to get into the swamp to make good his escape that time.

As a physical boundary, a natural fence around the plantation, the swamp could have been seen as the source of containment or the goal to reach and/or cross. The other side of this boundary was a more level playing field, so to speak, where, once inside, the runaway could use the terrain to his/her advantage. Such is the case in the testimony former Alabama slave Heywood Ford, who tells of a runaway named Jake Williams, last seen walking towards the swamp. Jake was pursued by an overseer with several dogs, so he climbed a tree to get out of reach; but the overseer climbed up after him. He "kicked de oberseer raught in de mouf, an' dat white man went tumblin'

to de groun'. When he hit de earth, dem 'houn's pounced on him." Jake headed North with the lead dog. "De res' of de pack come home."[29] It does not seem a far stretch to believe that the swamp might have resonated with a particularly positive overtone in the minds of the slaves back on the plantation who saw a slave go in and the dogs return along with the body of an overseer. This white body might have resonated more loudly, signified more strongly the nature of the swamp than Charlie's cold, stiff corpse. At any rate, slaves *did* run away to the swamps in large numbers.

Besides offering the individual slave a defensive position in the moment of running away, swamps also served for maroon settlements. Working together, runaways set up communities and protected each other. This point is dramatically demonstrated by former Louisiana slave Octave Johnson, who ran off at the start of the Civil War and lived with some thirty other men and women about four miles from the planation's big house. This was close enough to steal pigs, chickens, and beef cattle from the plantation, but "one day twenty hounds came after me; I called the party to my assistance and we killed eight of the bloodhounds, then we all jumped into the Bayou Fanfron; the dogs followed us and the alligators caught six of them, 'the alligators prefered dog's flesh to personal flesh.'"[30] While belying the notion that alligators prefer dark meat,[31] Johnson's story illustrates the sense of safety that was provided by swamps that might outweigh the dangers.

As a group of runaways might have provided each other protection from slave catchers, they also helped to promote a sense of domesticity in their living arrangements. Although she lived in this runaway community for a year and a half, Johnson's living arrangements, sleeping on logs and burning "cypress leaves to make a smoke and keep away mosquitoes,"[32] seem to have been rather modest compared to other such communities. In his description of the Dismal Swamp made during his 1783-84

visit to the United States, German traveller Johann Schoepf noted a much more tranquil, domestic, and permanent lifestyle of the runaways within:

> [S]mall spots are to be found here and there which are always dry, and these have often been used as places of safety by runaway slaves . . . . So these negro fugitives lived in security and plenty, building themselves cabins, planting corn, raising hogs and fowls which they stole from their neighbors, and naturally the hunting was free where they were.[33]

Such a serene and unconcerned description of maroon life seems out of step with the view white planters would have had toward the scene. In fact, referring to the farms neighboring the swamp as the fugitives' "neighbors" might well have insulted these planters. In contrast to Schoepf's lighthearted account, antebellum southern newspaper stories noted by Herbert Aptheker were punctuated with horror at the prospect of growing communities of blacks within the swamp. For the most part, these news accounts focused on incidents of violence in encounters between whites and maroons, the deaths incurred among the white population, and the air of defiance among the maroons. The fear caused by such accounts can be read in a letter from concerned citizens to Governor Thomas Bragg of North Carolina that described the depredations being committed by the fugitives and asked for assistance to bring them out of the swamps.[34]

The level of concern among the white citizenry can also be gauged by the level of reaction taken against the outlaws. Although sometimes local volunteers or bounty hunters would go into the swamps after maroons, often, as Ulrich B. Phillips notes, "other agencies" would have to do the job.

> For example the maraudings of runaway slaves camped in Belle Isle swamp, a score of miles above Savannah, became so serious and lasting

that their haven had to be several times destroyed by the Georgia

militia. On one of these occasions, in 1786, a small force first em-

ployed was obliged to withdraw in the face of the blacks, and rein-

forcements merely succeeded in burning the huts and towing off the

canoes, while the negroes themselves were safely in hiding.[35]

The size, then, of this swamp was its most striking characteristic--large enough to

provide safety even from an invading force. The topography of other swamps could

likewise have determined the success or failure of a community as well as the type of

depredations committed upon the neighboring farms.

In 1816, near Ashepoo, South Carolina, a large maroon community, formed by

the consolidation of several bands of runaways, established itself in the swamps

created by the intersection of the Combahee and Ashepoo rivers. As a staging ground

and hiding place, this site had seemed the natural choice for each of the bands. The

difficulty in extricating them was noted by Governor David R. Williams:

The peculiar situation of the whole of that portion of our coast,

rendered access to them difficult, while the numerous creeks and water

courses through the marshes around the islands, furnished them easy

opportunities to plunder, not only the planters in open day, but the

inland coasting trade also without leaving a trace of their movements by

which they could be pursued.[36]

As time passed, however, swampy terrain was not enough to keep a large band of

runaways safe if they were too daring in their raids. If frightened and determined

enough, the government could have found the muscle to take them out.

In Newbern, Virginia, in 1830, for example, a group of sixty slaves were all

surrounded in their swamp and killed by the military. During the summer of the

following year, such news reports of rebellious slaves basing their operations in

swamps must have been on the public's mind during Nat Turner's rebellion in Southampton, Virginia. When the leader escaped after the uprising, "it was . . . strongly suspected that he had secreted himself among the thick brush of Dismal Swamp, but although the whole swamp has been thoroughly scoured even to its darkest and deepest recesses . . . and a great many runaway slaves found therein, no discovery could be made of 'Gen. Nat.'"[37] From experience, the white public made the automatic assumption that these rebels had hidden themselves in the swamp. From there, the connection was made between runaways in the swamp and other notorious rebels: "it is not improbable the Blacks might have supposed in case of a defeat, might afford them as secure a retreat as did the almost inaccessible mountains of St. Domingo to their black brethren of that island."[38] This comment provides some insight into just how seriously white southerners would have taken a camp of maroons hiding in a swamp. For years after the 1791 St. Domingo insurrection, slave owners along the eastern seaboard of the United States held a tremendous fear of slaves from the West Indies. States enacted laws against them, such as one in North Carolina: "The General Assembly in 1795 passed a law forbidding any person coming into the state with the intent to settle to bring with him any negro . . . from the French, Dutch, Spanish, or English West Indies."[39] Although the fear of rebellion might have waxed and waned along with news of rebellions elsewhere, it seems likely that the image of a community of free blacks living in the wilderness would have been a constant source of anxiety.

One tactic for fighting future rebellions was to make an example of a Turner-like leader. In at least one case, killing was not deemed enough. Squire, who had led a band of outlaws for three years in raids from the Cypress Swamp outside of New Orleans, was captured and killed in 1837. His mutilated body was put on display in the public square.[40] The focus upon a group's leader, however, was not new. At

times, a persona was created around the group's leader, such as "the General of the Swamps" around Wilmington, North Carolina, in 1795.[41] A military title applied to a fugitive slave might have mobilized whites for fear of armed rebellion, but it did little to add an air of "civilization" to the leader's public image. In a letter to his father, Virginia planter George Blow wrote in 1816 that a "General Sampson"[42] was leading a rebellion of slaves. While impressing upon the Blows the seriousness of the military threat, the title "General" was likely seen as a clownish "aping" of proper military decorum. In the rest of the letter, the younger Blow focuses on one of his own slaves suspected of joining General Sampson; he characterizes this slave as mischievous but unthreatening.[43] What stands out, then, in such a title as "General of the Swamps" is the swamp with its wild and dangerous connotations. Some accounts show that it was the "wild" ones, the recently enslaved Africans, who gained a reputation for running to the swamps, but wild or not when they entered the swamp, it is likely that their appearance would have been altered enough by life in the swamp to add to a wild (thus threatening) public image. In the case of former Mississippi slave Dora Franks's Uncle Alf, when he finally returned from years in the swamp, "he look like a hairy ape, without no clothes on and hair growin' all over his body."[44]

Such an image must have come to the mind of Samuel Huntington Perkins, a class of 1817 Yale graduate who became the tutor for the children of a North Carolina planter. Concerning his need to travel by the Dismal Swamp, he writes, "Travelling here without pistols is considered very dangerous owing to the great number of runaway negroes. They conceal themselves in the woods and swamps by day and frequently plunder by night."[45] Despite the enormous anxiety likely produced in whites by such stories of wild marauding bandits, the actual use to which runaways put the region belies that image of the maroon. According to R. H. Taylor, the main concern of runaways in the swamps, even armed camps of maroons, was not with

rebelling, but living--surviving from day to day. "In fact, gangs of runaways rarely became so desperate as to attempt a massacre of the whites. Hunger sometimes drove runaways to take life as an incident of procuring food; but in general they confined their activities to stealing, burning, and eluding capture."[46] But in larger swamps such as the Great Dismal, even such "depredations" may not have been entirely necessary. The runaways could, instead, make a living off their environment Even in newspaper accounts given to painting a threatening picture of those in the swamps, the domesticity of life there was mentioned as well. Regarding a "very secure retreat for runaway negroes" in a large swamp between Bladen and Robeson counties, the Wilmington *Journal* of August 14 [1856] mentioned that these runaways, "had cleared a place for a garden, had cows &c in the swamp."[47] The testimony of a captured slave named Moses provides some more insight into the possible extravagance of life in the swamp: in Dover Swamp in North Carolina, eleven houses served a community of thirty to forty runaways.[48] Unlike the temporary shelter provided by the Louisiana cypress swamp in which Octave Johnson hid, these accounts suggest the long-term commitment and expectation these runaways had for life in the swamp. Not content with sleeping on logs and stealing food when hungry, these maroons set up permanent housing and a self-renewing system of subsistence.

The possibility of living in a swamp in a "civilized" manner is evidenced by the enslaved workers of the Great Dismal Swamp. Better understanding of the material circumstances of the maroon communities may be derived from the example of their still-enslaved counterparts who lived and worked in the swamp. These are described by Perkins, who explains that many of the trees in the Great Dismal were valuable for their lumber, so lumber companies and owners of the land would send Negroes in to work for five months at a time. "They carry several months provisions, and penetrate eight or ten miles, sometimes farther. They are obliged first to make a path, by falling

trees. After accomplishing which, and arriving at a suitable place, they erect huts, secured from inundation by being placed on high stumps."[49] Frederick Law Olmstead, in his 1853-54 travels, also witnessed these workmen of the swamps. In speaking with one of them, he learned more of the runaways who "had huts in 'back places,' hidden by bushes, and difficult of access."[50]

Not all of the Dismal Swamp's runaways, however, secluded themselves to this degree. Some, in fact, were open enough to work alongside the still enslaved shingle workers--hired by poorer whites and not turned in to the authorities or their owners because they provided a cheap labor source. One such runaway worked in the swamp before eventually making his way to Canada. There, he offered his testimony of his escape and life in the swamp to abolitionists who were collecting biographical sketches of those they helped.[51] This man had run away to avoid being sold to the deep South and went to the Great Dismal expressly because a friend had told him he would find work there. At first, he boarded with a man who paid him two dollars a month, and later he began working for himself. Besides offering a glimpse into the ways runaways had of gaining sustenance once in the swamp, this tale also provides a glimpse of the community--the sense of mutual aid--that was formed among the swamp runaways.

> Dar are heaps ob folks in dar to work. Most on 'em are fugitives, or else hirin' dar time. Dreadful 'commodatin' in dare to one anudder. De each like de 'vantage ob de odder one's 'tection. Ye see day's united togedder in'ividually wit same interest to stake. Never hearn one speak disinpectively to 'nut'er one: all 'gree as if dey had only one head and one heart, with hunder legs and hunder hands. Dey's more 'commodatin' dan any folks I's ever seed afore or since.[52]

He goes on to describe ventures undertaken as a group for survival, such as making canoes for fishing and joining together to hunt: "When we wanted fresh pork we goed

to Gum Swamp, 'bout sun-down, run a wild hog down from the cane-brakes into Juniper Swamp, whar dar feet can't touch hard ground, knock dem over, and dat's de way we kill dem."[53]

The "normality" of life in the swamp can be seen in the mention of Ole Man Fisher, the swamp runaways' preacher, and by the reference to families being raised in the swamp so that some had never seen a white man. Sometimes, however, the day-to-day routines would be shattered by slave-catching expeditions into the region; "'Sometimes de masters comes and shoots dem down dead on de spot.'"[54] In particular, he tells of his friend Jacob, who was one day surrounded by six men as he was going about his daily affairs. Each of them had a gun pointed at his head, and among them stood his former master, who threatened to blow his brains out if Jacob took a step.

> Jacob lifts up his feet to run. Marey on him! De master and one
> ob de men levelled dar guns, and dar guns levelled poor Jacob. His
> whole right side from his hip to his heel was cut up like hashmeat. He
> bleeded orfull. Dey took some willow bark--made a hoop orn't--run a
> board trough it--put Jacob on it like as if he war dead; run a pole
> t'rough de willow hoop, and put de poles on dar shoulders.[55]

This gives some idea for the reasons this man may have had for moving on to Canada rather that staying in the swamp, but those who remained may have protected themselves by being more cautious in their hiding.

In areas more likely to have unwanted visitors, runaways may have chosen to be less carefree and ostentatious in their habitats; for example, a proper cabin with four walls and a roof may not have been practical. In such circumstances, runaways could disguise their homes. The following examples refer ostensibly to homes in the "woods." Although we cannot know if by "woods" they mean "swamp," they should

serve regardless as examples of possibilities for concealment that were available to runaways. Arthur Greene, born a slave in Virginia in 1851, remembered:

> Lord, Lord! Yes indeed, plenty of slaves uster run away. Why dem woods was full o' 'em chile. I knowed one man dat took an' run away 'cause his marster was so mean an' cruel. He lived in a cave in de groun' fer fifteen yeahs 'fo' Lee's surrender. He made himself a den under de groun'; he an' his wife, an' raised fifteen chillun down dar. Ha! Ha! Ha! Had a chile fur every 'ear he stayed in dar. Dis den slopped [sloped] back to keep water from coming in. ...
>
> Dis den was er - I guess 'bout size of a big room, 'cause dat big family washed, ironed, cooked, slept and done ev'ythin' down dar, dat you do in yo' house. Here dis man, Pattin, lived 'til surrender, jes as I done tol' you.[56]

There are numerous tales of slaves hiding in such spaces, not in the wilderness but right under the nose of the planter--even in spaces adjacent to his own house. These stories should attest to the fact that a swamp did not need to be large to conceal runaways. Of course, a small space would have required more tactics than just a concealed house, as seen in Samuel Warner's account of a woman who lived in a swamp for seven years with her two children. When they were eventually found and brought out, the children never spoke above a whisper, as their mother had prevented them from making noise their entire lives.[57]

Nevertheless, much credit can be given to the ingenuity of construction for maintaining secrecy. More detail for a hidden structure is provided in the testimony of former slave Rev. Ishrael Massie of Virginia:

> We had one slave dat runned away an' he had a vault in th' woods fixed jes like dis room an' he had a wife an' two boys dat he

raised under dar. Waal, ya say, "'Scribe" - ya mean tell how 'twas built? Dar wuz a hole cut in de groun'. I don' cut a many a one an' stole lumber at night to kiver hit over wid. Den dirt wuz piled on top of dis plank so dat hit won't rain in dar. Den he has him some piping - trough-like - made of wood dat runned so many feet in de groun'. Dis carried smoke way away from dis cave. Fer fir used oak bark 'cause hit didn't give much smoke. He had him a hole to come up on lan'. Dat wuz sticks, pine beard, and trash on top to kiver de hole. Ha, ha, ha. Ya could stan' right over dis hole an' wouldn't kno hit.[58]

Although underground houses seem a less likely feature of a swamp than of a forest, many of these same techniques for concealment could have been used, especially where there were spots substantial enough for gardening and raising cattle.

The laughter in the above testimony suggests that stories of runaways living in the woods and swamps might be a source of pride and/or empowerment among those who remained on the plantation. But some slaves apparently viewed these runaways as uncivilized and dangerous. Julia Banks of Texas, for example, said that "some of them runned off and stayed in the swamps, and they was mean. They called them runaways. If they saw you, they would tell you to bring them something to eat. And if you didn't do it, if they ever got you they sure would fix you."[59] Likewise, Green Cumby, who (incidentally) stayed with his old master four years after the Civil War, said, "To see de runaway slaves in de woods scared me to death. They'd try to snatch you and hold you, so you couldn't tell. Sometimes dey cotched dem runaway niggers and dey be like wild animals and have to be tamed over 'gain."[60] But fear of the runaways did not necessarily mean antagonism toward them. Even where there was fear, it often mingled with sympathy and support. As a little girl, former slave Mary White Ovington marvelled at the family of slaves in the wilds nearby: "It was not wise

to go near the place, but one might drop a piece of food at the wood's edge confident that it would reach a little hungry stomach."[61] Or fear would disappear to be replaced with curiosity -- perhaps envy or wonder. Mrs. Sis Shackelford, who had been a slave in Virginia, remembered:

> When we was kids, we used to take keer of cows 'bout four miles f'om
> home. De runaway slaves used to come out [from the Dismal Swamp]
> and beg us for food. At fust we was scare to deaf of 'em and jes' fly,
> but after while we used to steal bred an' fresh meat an' give to 'em. But
> dey never would let you foller 'em. Dey hid in Dismal Swamp in holes
> in de groun' so hidden dey stay dere years an' white folks, dogs, or
> nothin' else could fine 'em.[62]

Or, given conditions on some plantations, sympathy for those in the bush may have been impossible. Instead, a barter economy may have developed as described by Octave Johnson, who supplied those who had remained on the plantation with meat in exchange for corn meal.[63]

Ultimately, despite any fear of those hiding in the uncultivated regions surrounding the plantation, the effect of their existence on those still in the fields is likely reflected in the testimony of Cornelia Carney, who had been born a slave in Williamsburg, Virginia, in 1838.

> Father wasn't de onlies' one hidin' in de woods. Dere was his cousin,
> Gabriel, dat was hidin' an' a man name Charlie. Niggers was too smart
> fo' white folks to git ketched. White folks was sharp too, but not sharp
> enough to get by ole Nat. Nat? I don't know who he was. Ole folks
> used to say it all de time. De meanin' I git is dat de niggers could
> always out-smart de white folks.[64]

Again, we see the connection between the swamp runaway and the image of Nat Turner, but this time the image is one of the trickster, using the swamp as a site for outwitting the white folks. Carney's delight here supports John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger's contention that "those who remained on the plantation secretly cheered their brethren who remained at large for weeks and months or never returned."[65]

Carney, born some five years after Nat Turner's rebellion, touched on the precise connection between field hand and runaway/maroon that whites feared most: an infectious, rebellious attitude. Planters may well have tolerated individual run-aways, waiting patiently for their return and counting on a good whipping to serve as an example to deter the other slaves. But when runaways joined together in the bush and began committing "depredations" on the neighborhood, planters began to worry not only about a violent attack from these thieves, but about the effect the bandits had on the attitudes of their slaves. At the heart of this fear was the acknowledgment that those in the bush remained in contact with those on the plantation, as remarked by Samuel Huntington Perkins:

> Their fidelity to each other is almost proverbial. When one has run away they all take interest in his escape; and though there are usually 30 or 40 who know where he stays and who supply him with provisions, yet no instance has ever occurred of the most extravagant rewards inducing one to betray him.[66]

Perkins goes on to solidify this claim through the anecdote of one runaway who was bought by another, apparently more merciful, planter while still in the bush. The new owner let the transaction be known through his other slaves, and within half an hour, the runaway was in the field working. The upshot of Perkins story is that the com-munication allowed the planter to *avoid* using the practice of outlawing slaves, which

by an act of the North Carolina legislature, made it legal to kill "outlying" slaves.[67] By word of mouth, the runaways could be fairly warned of their dangerous new legal status and given a chance to return peacefully.[68]

Because of this communication network among the slaves, the planters could be assured that information of life in the swamp was reaching those in the field. Indeed, more insidious to the planters than the depredations committed by outlying Negroes was their effect on the behavior of those slaves still at work.[69] In May of 1802, one such camp of runaways was blamed for the rebellious actions and attitudes of slaves in Elizabeth City, North Carolina. "[T]he plots and insubordination uncovered among the servile population at the time were attributed to the agitation of an outlawed Negro, Tom Cooper, who 'has got a camp in one of the swamps.'"[70] The degree of concern these outlyers may have caused is, of course, impossible to gauge and would fluctuate with the times, but the following quotation, though somewhat ambiguous, may serve to illustrate the measures taken when "outlying" slaves seemed to be affecting the behavior of those in the field: "item dated Wilmingon, January 7, 1831, declared, 'There has been much shooting of negroes in this neighborhood recently, in consequence of symptoms of liberty having been discovered among them.'"[71] Although this could refer only to the shooting of those who had run away, it appears actually to refer to those still in bondage who had been inspired with "symptoms of liberty" by the example set by the outlaws.

All of this concern over the plantation slave's *reaction* to the goings-on in the swamp suggests that their conception of the swamp was dependent on the existence of maroon societies and temporary runaways using the region as a site of resistance. Slaves, of course, did not need such "outside agitators" to stir them to commit their own depredations. Even those not living or hiding in the swamps (or thinking of escaping through the swamps) made good use of the wilderness. Marrinda Jane

Singleton from Virginia recalled stealing a pig one night with another slave. "We took dis pig, carried hit down to de swamp lands. Killed hit. We got rid of de water whar we don scald him by puttin' hit in de river."[72] Such activities could be typical where the rations allotted to slaves were small and the swamp was accessible. Similarly, May Satterfield, born a slave at the beginning of the Civil War, was told by her mother that "de men would go at night an' steal hog and sheep, burry de hair in a hole way yonder in de swamp sommers whar dey knowed de white fo'ks cudden fine it and cook an' eat it."[73] Postbellum local-colorist George Washington Cable seems to have had a romantic fascination with Louisiana slaves' use of the bayous for transporting contraband.

> Sometimes the black man found it more convenient not to run away himself, but to make other articles of property seem to escape from custody. He ventured to forage on his own account, retaining his cabin as a base of operations, and seeking his adventures not so far form the hen-coop and pig-pens as rigid principles would have dictated. Now that he is free, he is willing to reveal these little pleasantries—as one of the bygones—to the eager historian. Much nocturnal prowling was done on the waters of the deep, forest-darkened bayous, in *pirogues* (dug outs). For secret signals to accomplices on shore they resorted to singing. What is so innocent as music! The words were in some African tongue. We have one of the songs from the negroes themselves, with their own translation and their own assurance that the translation is correct. The words have a very Congo-ish sound. . . . . It means, its singers avowed, "Out from under the trees our boat moves into the open water—bring us large game and small game!"[74]

For the most part, then, the swamp was a place where the enslaved could seize the opportunity afforded them by the environment to survive and strike back against the institution of slavery. The region could certainly fill them with dread as it would have the planters, but the spark it must have caused in the imagination would not be one of romantic self-reflection but of utilitarian possibilities.

Despite this emphasis on the utility of the swamp, it is possible that the fortunate proximity of swamps could fulfill not only a physical opportunity for resistance but a spiritual need. As African Americans most likely adapted to Christianity by fusing African deities with Christian figures and images,[75] so the swamp as a mixture of African spiritual elements may have served to maintain African religion. The composition of a swamp, trees and water (a combination of forest and lake), could echo the significance of those two elements in African religions:

> In ceremony after ceremony witnessed among the Yoruba, the Ashanti, and in Dahomey, one invariable element was a visit to the river or some other body of "living" water, such as the ocean, for the purpose of obtaining the liquid indispensable for the rites. Often it was necessary to go some distance to reach the particular stream from which water having the necessary sacred quality must be drawn.[76]

Herskovits sees the black Baptist baptism as a survival of spirit possession by African water deities. Similarly, in his research of the Central Guinea Coast, M. C. Jedrej finds that the forest is "a boundary joining yet keeping apart this visible world of human existence and the other invisible world of spirit beings."[77] Likewise, the American swamp seems a locus for African American magic and spirituality. Often, the plantation conjurer or root doctor was associated with the margins of the community, living in or beside a swamp. Ruth Bass documents the habits of a "tree talker" named Divinity who lived in a swamp: "'My grn'mammy brung tree-tawkin' from de

jungle."[78] Both practices speak of origins; they are, perhaps, survivals of African practices that had no place on the plantation proper.

As noted in many testimonies of former slaves, woods and swamps served a religious function by providing a space for slaves to meet secretly if they were not allowed to hold open prayer meetings. W.L. Bost of North Carolina remembered part of a slave song that was sung at prayer meetings held in the woods:

> We camp a while in the wilderness, where the Lord makes me happy,
> And then I'm a-goin' home.[79]

Though more directly connected to the image of Moses leading his people, wandering for forty years before entering the promised land, this song also suggests the wilderness as a space separate from the cultivated plantation spaces; the wilderness is the home of the dispossessed where they wait for their reward. As such, this space was more their own than the slave quarter provided by the planter. Still, the spiritual aspect of the swamp here is based in its utility and the necessity to meet secretly. As noted by the nameless Dismal Swamp runaway printed by Redpath, the woods and swamps would provide a suitable substitute for a church. "I b'lieve God is no inspector of persons; an' he knows his childer, and kin hear dem jest as quick in de Juniper Swamp as in de great churches what I seed in New York."[80]

Similarly, Harriet Tubman is said to have communed with an invisible force when leading slaves North:

> When going on these journeys she often lay alone in the forests all
> night. Her whole soul was filled with awe of the mysterious Unseen
> Presence, which thrilled her with such depths of emotion, that all other
> care and fear vanished. Then she seemed to speak with her Maker "as
> a man talketh with his friend."[81]

Likewise, Zora Neale Hurston records a folktale, "How the Brother Was Called to Preach," in which a man goes into a special praying ground in a swamp to await instructions from God.[82] David Holt, the son of a slaveholder in Mobile, Alabama, recalled that one of his father's slaves, old Uncle Louis, "would run away in the latter part of the summer once in every two or three years and come back in time to help dig sweet potatoes." What distinguished Uncle Louis's occasional running was his intent. Rather than avoiding punishment or being fed up with (mis)treatment, "I does cause de woods seems to call me.'" He had built a tree house to which he returned, where he sat and communed with nature (not dissimilar to Tubman). In this tree house, "'Can't nobody come along widout de birds tellin' me.'"[83] Again, however, any attempt to solidify these spiritual practices as Africanisms brings us back to the sheer utility of the actions. While Uncle Louis's time in the woods, communing with nature, seems very similar to Bass's tree-talker, the fact that the practice allowed him to know if anyone was coming made it seems less an African survival and more a survival technique.

The case for the utility of the swamp can also be made from observing how whites as well as blacks made use of it. When the Yankees advanced on the plantations during the war, the gentry resorted to hiding their valuables in the swamps. J.G. Clinkscales, the son of a North Carolina planter and a boy during the Civil War, tells of following Uncle Essick, who had volunteered to hide the family valuables inside the swamp as Sherman approached.[84] Some family slaves were not as helpful as Uncle Essick. For example, when one planter hid his horses and mules in the swamp, an unsympathetic slave named Uncle Tom fetched them for the Yankees. His nephew, who relates the story, says of Uncle Tom: "He was jes' mean. He hadn't been much good to massa since de war commenced; lay off in de swamp mos' of de time."[85] The planter's most innovative use of the swamp, however, came when ole massa hid him-

self there. This inversion of the plantation norm is mentioned in numerous testimonies, but it is captured best in the following song:

> White folks, have you seed old massa
> Up de road, with he mustache on?
> He pick up he hat and he leave real sudden
> And I 'lieve he's up and gone.
>
> (Chorus)
> Old massa run away
> And us darkies stay at home.
> It mus' be now dat Kingdom's comin'
> And de year of Jubilee.
>
> He look up de river and he seed dat smoke
> Where de Lincoln gunboats lay.
> He big 'nuff and he old 'nuff and he orter know better,
> But he gone and run away.
>
> Now dat overseer want to give trouble
> And trot us 'round a spell,
> But we lock him up in de smokehouse cellar,
> With de key done throwed in de well.[86]

Although this song does not mention the swamp specifically, it reflects a time when numerous stories were told of southern whites fleeing to the woods and swamps. The joy of this inversion seems to belie the notion that the swamp came to be a sacred place for enslaved African Americans; rather, it suggests a joy in seeing planters forced to resort to the slaves' own desperate survival tactics.

It seems likely that the slaves' use of swamps did not change dramatically from the time of William Byrd's expedition to the Nat Turner's Rebellion. What may account for the planters' growing anxiety after 1831 is the number of slaves engaged in such activities mixed with the planters' knowledge of uprisings such as those in the West Indies. No longer satisfied that the gators and snakes would return their run-aways for them, southern whites grew to fear the image of the slave in the swamp in

all its wild and potentially threatening forms. For the African American's part, the swamp came to serve a variety of functions. Certainly for some, the region may have been a place to preserve traditions just as for others it was a realm of the wild, savage slaves with whom they wanted no intercourse. For the majority, though, it would seem likely that the swamp served an important role in both adapting to life as a slave and rebelling against that life. As Dell Upton notes,

> [t]heir separation from much white control allowed slaves to form communities that were held together by their mastery of the slave landscape of woods, fields, and waterways. Slaves formed neighborhoods, black landscapes that combined elements of the white landscape and of the quarters in a way that was peculiar to them and that existed outside the official articulated processional landscape of the great planter and his lesser neighbors.[87]

The plantation landscape, as perceived from the slave quarter rather than the big house, exploded boundaries: the slave's space moves out from the individual cabin or workhouse into the yard of the quarter and into the woods, fields, and even into the swamp. Yes, it could be a foreboding place, but it also was a space that could be entirely theirs, not the slaveholder's.

CHAPTER FOUR

JOHN PENDLETON KENNEDY'S *SWALLOW BARN*

AND THE BIRTH OF PLANTATION LITERATURE

While African Americans were putting the swamp to good use in a utilitarian sense, white authors of the nineteenth century found it to be an important signifier of the South as a region and an alluring backdrop for their fiction. In titling his book *The Edge of the Swamp: A Study in the Literature and Society of the Old South*, Louis D. Rubin, Jr., is not merely paying tribute to William Gilmore Simms's poem by the same name;[1] rather, Rubin is acknowledging the swamp as a landscape that has been inextricably linked with the identity of the antebellum South. David Miller writes that "swamp scenery emerged as the landscape equivalent of the Cavalier myth that had long attracted Northerners apprehensive of the rise of an acquisitive, atomistic Yankee civilization."[2] Here, Miller is speaking primarily of the plantation literature produced after the Civil War, especially the stories of Thomas Nelson Page; however, the swamp had already been transformed by the romantic mindset at the time John Pendleton Kennedy wrote his plantation novel *Swallow Barn* (1832), often cited as the fountainhead of the plantation tradition in literature.[3] The swamp serves an important narrative function in *Swallow Barn*, suggesting that, with the movement from a classical to a romantic mindset, the swamp had become *the* liminal space of the Old South. The novel reveals a stagnating southern gentry, perhaps bored with the bounded gardens of their fathers, being energized by the dynamic forces of the swamp. This

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energy, however, comes at a price, for the swamp is the site where the gentry loses control not only of nature but of its carefully maintained image of African Americans.

Taking the form of letters from Mark Littleton, a traveller from New York, the novel centers on the lives of two plantation families in Virginia. Mark is visiting relatives at a plantation called Swallow Barn, which is separated from its neighboring plantation, the Brakes, by Goblin Swamp. The swamp is important in defining the relationship between the two families because they are engaged in a forty-year lawsuit over a boundary dispute within the marshlands. Frank Meriwether, the patriarch of Swallow Barn, is in the midst of settling the suit in favor of his neighbor, Isaac Tracy, the plaintiff, in such a way as to preserve Mr. Tracy's honor. This conflict is echoed in the novel's love story in which the heir to Swallow Barn, Ned Hazard, attempts to win the affections of Mr. Tracy's daughter, Bel. As characters travel from one plantation to the other, either cutting through or circumventing the swamp, the reader is reminded of the landscape that separates them.

However, the swamp is not only a point of conflict or a boundary; it becomes a source of activity in the otherwise lazy lives of the plantation gentry. As Miller points out, an immersion in such "desert places" as the swamp is, in the romantic imagination, "not only dangerous but also an exhilarating and self-renewing experience."[4] This is certainly the case for the gentry of the novel whose slow-moving lifestyle is accelerated and revitalized by exposure to the swamp. Kennedy is using the swamp as a trope to explore his own ambivalent feelings about the southern lifestyle, a staid existence the author sometimes mocks and sometimes envies; but in doing so, he creates unwelcome possibilities, for the gentry are not the only characters enlivened by association with this desert region. In addition, slaves associated with the swamp challenge the white man's construction of the "contented darkie." Throughout the novel, we see grinning, happy, subservient Negroes, doing only light labor (if any), and fully

invested in the plantation system and the welfare of "their" white family. We have with *Swallow Barn*, then, arguably the first literary presentation of the plantation system's dilemma: the need to replace the threatening image of the Nat figure with the docile, childlike slave. Such stereotyping serves to justify slavery while rendering harmless an otherwise threatening population, potentially poised on the edge of rebellion. In this way, Kennedy's characterization of blacks serves to mask or displace white fear.

In his essay, "The Image of the Negro in the Pre-Civil-War Novels of John Pendleton Kennedy and William Gilmore Simms," Alan Henry Rose argues that these two authors use "different forms of evasion" toward a common end: to suppress "covert associations with demonic and chaotic destructiveness" within the image of the Negro.[5] For Kennedy specifically, this evasion takes the form of the contented darkie stereotype that glosses *almost* every black character represented in the novel. This stereotype emphasizes a childlike quality in the slaves, a social retardation that accompanies their supposed anachronistic state: coming from a state of barbarity into civilization. However, Rose notes that "in spite of Kennedy's defences, a sense of the unconscious power associated with the Negro creeps into his images. . . . in environments that act to erode conscious control, at night by moonlight . . . the image of the Negro will move closer to its subjective diabolical source."[6] I would go further to say that the particular environ-ment that erodes the mask of stereotype is the swamp. That landscape is the novel's gothic element, which, to paraphrase Teresa Goddu, infiltrates other genres as a destablizing force.[7]

However, if Mark Littleton's descriptions of Swallow Barn and its inhabitants are meant as satire, the eruption of a "demonic" force from his image of the Negro may be intentional rather than unconscious, for the originator of the plantation tradition could also be its first subverter. Therefore, before examining whether the swamp-

slave connection disrupts the plantation novel's ideological purpose, we should determine to what extent this novel actually fits within the tradition it is credited with creating. Lucinda H. MacKethan argues that *Swallow Barn* deserves recognition as the first plantation novel because it

> provided authoritative treatment of the plantation in three important areas: its image of the planter's house as the social and moral center of order for the culture as a whole; its portrayal of the planter himself as a generous, unmaterialistic gentleman whose paternalistic relation to his slaves constituted an honorable, inescapable obligation; and its pastoral contrast of the simple grace of rural habits to the rude bustle of the expanding America Kennedy saw emerging in the 1830s.[8]

The first, concerning the patriarchs of the two plantations, is certainly accurate, for Frank Meriwether and Isaac Tracy are firm figureheads and focal points of moral authority. But what lies behind MacKethan's statement is the myth of southern chivalry, which is often shown by Kennedy/Littleton to be overdone and ridiculous. The subversion of the chivalric code is accomplished in connection with the plantation novel's pastoral setting, MacKethan's third element. While it is true that life at Swallow Barn offers a soothing respite from Mark's life in the city, the pastoral landscape is often *too* sharply contrasted to city life, becoming not just peaceful but static. The plantation becomes a zone of inactivity, and its pastoral quality highlights not the ease but the indolence and lethargy of the planter class. This is the primary target of Kennedy's mockery since even the most boisterous activity at Swallow Barn is much ado about nothing.

As the moral centers of plantation life, the two patriarchs reflect this inactivity. The "lazy and philosophical" Frank Meriwether is nearly xenophobic in his feudal philosophy, as noted in his remarks concerning the socially disastrous potential in

technological advances like the steamship that may make travel easier and bring people into greater contact. He declares, "'This annihilation of space, sir, is not to be desired. Our protection against the evils of consolidation consists in the very obstacles to our intercourse'" (31, 72-73). His politics, likewise, paint him as an immovable object, setting himself in opposition to all change (32-33). Still, next to the other southern gentlemen in the novel, Meriwether seems a model of the Protestant work ethic: up and working so early (out checking on his hands) that he is asleep on the couch with a book on his chest by the time the others awaken.

Similarly, the chivalric code of the Old South makes Isaac Tracy into the model of vital inaction. His forty-year lawsuit over useless property in the swamp provides his reason for living as he appeals every court decision and reads over every legal document and scrap of evidence in excruciating detail. In one sense, then, the swamplands have served to revitalize an otherwise musty, decorative code of honor for both patriarchs: Tracy pursues the case not for the land itself but on principle, and Meriwether tries to find a way for Tracy win honorably. Viewed this way, the swamp serves as a vitalizing force, allowing Meriwether to feel progressive by settling the long-standing suit and giving old man Tracy a sense of purpose. As the lawsuit moves forward, however, time is actually set back more than forty years, returning the boundaries to where they once had been. This backward motion reflects (and mocks) Meriwether's fear of progress, while it shows, in its anticlimactic resolution, how empty Tracy's code is after all.

In the narrative point of view, the swamp becomes a metaphor for southern life itself. For New Yorker Mark Littleton, the slow-paced lifestyle of the Meriwethers and the Tracys finds its ultimate expression, not its contrast, in a walk through Goblin Swamp. As Jan Bakker notes in regard to the southern lifestyle portrayed by Kennedy, "There is no doubt that this picture is beautiful. It is soporific, though, and

dangerously static in its summer heat. What it suggests is the scenery of Tennyson's Lotus-Eaters' land."[9] This image of the sedate lifestyle of the southern gentry as horrifically pleasant causes Bakker to see the novel as primarily satirical and critical of southern life. As an exaggerated form of this life, the swamp metaphor provides the strongest critique: "On one occasion, Mark describes a walk with Ned through Goblin Swamp. In this instance, Kennedy-Littleton pauses to create a gothic inversion of the details of the traditional pastoral setting. He is criticizing its static, timeless vision."[10] But the image of the swamp is not so simple as to be dismissed as a metaphor that only attacks southern life. This passive/active dialectic, as noted by Miller in *Dark Eden*, is one of the primary signifying functions of literary swamps in general.[11] The swamp is a paradox—signifying both a stagnant region of death and zone of vitality, seething with life. This dual function provides an interesting counterpoint for the cultivated spaces of the plantation proper (and its inhabitants), in which the author seems to explore the white southern lifestyle in relation to its past, rather than simply attack it

For the earlier generations of Hazards, the swamp is an unexploited resource, thus a source of frustration for the classical mind. Such unused property should be put to work to turn a profit, so both Ned's father and grandfather had made their respective attempts to tame the region. In fact, the only real picture we get of these past generations is in relation to the swamp for the purpose of providing background for Tracy's lawsuit. In contrast to the stubborn passivity of the swamplands, the planter's cultivated realm seems one of activity and industry in the family history. There, the swamp signifies the natural enemy of the pioneer out of which civilization is cut and against which civilization must defend. This point is generalized somewhat to the South as a whole when Ned and Mark make their trip to "the Landing" for the Fourth of July. The Landing had once been a site of activity in foreign trade but is now used by only a few farmers getting their goods to market.

> There were two or three dilapidated buildings in view, and, among
> these, one of larger dimensions than the rest, a brick house, with a part
> of the roof entirely gone. . . . An air of additional desolation was given
> to this ruin by an extensive swamp that reached almost up to the rear of
> the building, and over which the river spread its oozy tide, amongst a
> thick coat of bulrushes. (158-59)

This encroachment of the swamp is picturesque, but it is also threatening. If Kennedy is mocking the South through this exaggeration of stagnation and the swamplike nature of southern life itself, such mocking is a warning of the potential destruction of a lifestyle through inaction.

The lifestyles for this generation (c.1829) are much too sedate. For them, the swamp is no longer a source of income but a place for playing out their romantic notions of southern chivalry. Whereas once the swamp had stood in opposition to the industry of the plantation, here the vitality of the swamp makes the plantation seem to be standing still. Although Kennedy works against this interpretation by portraying slaves as lazy as the gentry, it is tempting to see the characters' laziness as resulting from a dependence on slave labor. The shift in perspective toward the swamp from one generation to the next need not suggest only, as Bakker would have it, a shift from industry to laziness, but the general shift from the classical to the romantic mind. The eighteenth-century adventurer marches into the swamp and wonders what can be done with such unprofitable real estate. The romantic, however, marvels at the space, meditates upon it, revels in the decay, and is inspired by it. This romantic attitude can be seen in the lawsuit and in the other major conflict of the novel, Ned's attempts to win Bel's affections. As Tracy is given life through the swamp, so is Ned revitalized in his courtship of Bel after a possum hunt in the swamp.

The question remains, though, whether the renewal of medieval notions of chivalry is the best use of the vitalizing force of the swamp. The reader wonders if the match of Ned and Bel might not be a death knell for southern life, the last gasp before slipping into the swamp of total inaction. It is unclear which is meant to be more ridiculous: Bel's expectations that Ned become the chivalric knight about whom she has read so much or Ned's responses, trying to meet those expectations. In high-lighting these differences between the myth and the reality, however, Kennedy is pointing out discrepancies in the self-image versus the reality of southern gentility. MacKethan argues:

> Ned is for the most part a level-headed, unpretentious young man. But his sense of what southern honor demands can move him to provoke a brawl at a country store, and his acquiescence to Bel's insistence on the hollow forms that she associates with chivalry makes him some-times as foolish as she is.[12]

For Ned, in his attempts to please Bel, a duel of honor is reduced to a bar brawl; a love song (serenade) is converted to backwoods caterwauling; a quest (for Bel's lost hawk) becomes a quixotic misadventure. These scenes certainly suggest mockery of the southern gentry as the inheritors of European chivalric traditions, but the unease with which all Ned's friends (Bel included) receive this new, more active Ned suggests they don't take their own ideals and self-image too seriously. They gladly let go of the exaggerated forms of the tradition.

The narrator's role as outsider allows him some room to mock the customs of the southern gentry, but his role as insider, a relative, tempers his mockery with sentiment. We get the sense, then, that despite any mockery, this is not a way of life that Mark (or Kennedy) would like to see disappear. Instead, the satire nudges very gently at this idyllic zone of inactivity. Mark, we must note, is lazy Ned's bosom

companion. As he tromps through the woods and swamps, singing and laughing, Mark seems to see his holiday not just a time away from work and the bustle of the big city but almost a regression to childhood. The South in general becomes his liminal space so that he returns rejuvenated to New York, "where I have become famous, at least with my mother and sisters, for my long stories and rapturous commendations of Swallow Barn" (503).

In his stories Mark mocks the South's static lifestyle, but he is fascinated by the "quiet, irresponsible, and reckless nature" of plantation life and considers it as a promising option to city life and business.

> I begin to grow moderate in my desires; that is, I only want a thousand acres of good land, an old manor-house, on a pleasant site, a hundred negroes, a large library, a host of friends, and a reserve of a few thousands a year in the stocks,- in case of bad crops, - and, finally, a house full of pretty, intelligent, and docile children, with some few et ceteras not worth mentioning.

> I doubt not, after this, I shall be considered a man of few wants, and great resources within myself. (310-11)

While Bakker sees this exaggeration as evidence of condemnation, where a surface layer of seriousness is punctuated by an ironic tone, it seems as likely to be the opposite. The exaggeration of his wants, noted as moderate, and the playing to his audience, northern city dwellers, place the ironic tone as the overt message, while the underlying tone is one of true melancholy, that such a life is not possible for him. Mark Littleton, then, is an appropriate stand-in for Kennedy himself, whose life was divided beween big city life in Baltimore and extended family ties to rural Virginia, where he had spent the summers of his childhood. MacKethan, in her introduction to the 1986 edition of *Swallow Barn*, characterizes Kennedy as "deciding to live in the world of the

future but to write about the one area hoe knew that was still hanging on, however tenuously, to a more gracious past."[13] In doing so, Kennedy maintains the South as an *other-worldly* space, but it *is* maintained, supported, and romanticized.

Keeping in mind that Kennedyv's mockery of the South by no means detracts from his sentimental treatment of two eElements of the plantation novel, we are free to turn to MacKethan's final element. This . element, the attitude toward slavery, is almost indistinguishable in Kennedy from the p«erspective found in the work of Thomas Nelson Page, whose works are not marΒked by the ambivalence we see in *Swallow Barn*. That is, the prevailing representaations of black characters in the novel are consistent with postbellum racist caricatΒtures, serving as colorful scenery for proslavery ideology. Throughout the novel, slavess appear and disappear like ghosts: coming forth behind a wide smile to offer food ●or perform some other light duty before disappearing. Occasionally, though, Mark¯ will take the time for a more lengthy notation. For example, at a dinner party,

> A bevy of domestics, in ●every stage of training, attended upon the table, presenting a lively ˉtype of the progress of civilization, or the march of intellect; the veeteran waitingman being well-contrasted with the rude half-monkey, haΒlf-boy, who seemed to have been for the first time admitted to the parΒlor; whilst, between these two, were exhibited the successive degrees tΒhat mark the advance from the young savage to the sedate and sophisticaated image of the old-fashioned negro nobility. It was equal to a gallery ˉof caricatures, a sort of scenic satire upon man in his various stages, witΒth his odd imitativeness illustrated in the broadest lines. Each haсΙ added some article of coxcombry to his dress; a pewter buckle fasteneсΙ to the shirt for a breast-pin; a dingy parti-colored ribbon. . . . (32●6-27)

The costuming, pieced together by the slaves from the cast-off clothing of their masters, is presented as an absurdity and elaborated upon extensively by Kennedy to suggest that African Americans were protected from their own buffoonery by the institution of slavery. In general, the dominant characterization of the slaves relates them to children: they are clownish in their childlike attempts to emulate the manners and dress of adults (whites). When they are not childlike, they are compared to animals, especially monkeys. There is no hint of discontent--and certainly no suggestion that their slaves pose any threat to the security of the planter or his family.

Such stereotyping does not disappear when a slave is characterized in more detail. The one recurring black character in the novel is "a pragmatical old negro, named Carey, who, in his reverence for the occupation [caring for Frank's prize colts], is the perfect shadow of his master" (36). Here, too the emulation of whites is read as comical rather than threatening, even when such imitation may overstep the bounds of the master-slave relationship.

> The old man feels himself authorized to maintain his positions according to the freest parliamentary form, and sometimes with a violence of asseveration that compels his master to abandon his ground purely out of faint-heartedness. Meriwether gets a little nettled by Carey's doggedness, but generally turns it off in a laugh. (37)

Such assertion of free will and independence on Carey's part is generally seen by the white characters as humorous and part of his charm--not as a serious threat to authority (157, 216-17). Instead, Carey's characterization as primarily a source of entertainment for the gentry is made clear when he is called upon to play his "banjoe" as an after-dinner treat. "Carey is a minstrel of some repute, and, like the ancient jongeleurs, he sings the inspirations of his own muse, weaving into song the past or

present annals of the family" (101). Singing songs of the planter's family as if it were his own, the old man is shown to be not only content with his lot in life but happy.

The reason for such happiness in slavery is attributed to the warm, familial relationship between master and slave. In describing the morning activities of his cousin Lucretia, Mark mentions the regimen that is "enforced against the youngsters of her numerous family, both white and black" (39). This passage, with the accompanying illustration by David Hunter Strother in the 1851 edition, serves to underscore the institution as inclusive and familial rather than adversarial, as Lucretia takes pains to care for all the children of the plantation equally. In addition, the master of the house is concerned not only with the health of his slaves, but with their material needs and happiness. On his regular rounds through the slave quarter, Frank is petitioned by mothers and old men for various favors, and they are warmly received by him. "[I]t is a pleasure to see Frank's kind and considerate bearing towards his servants and dependants. His slaves appreciate this, and hold him in most affectionate reverence, and, therefore, are not only contented, but happy under his dominion" (34). Frank claims that "[l]ess work is exacted of them than voluntary laborers choose to perform" (427); and, indeed, even when we do see them working, as at the banquet, the slaves seem more to be enjoying the festivities than working. In fact, any discussion of hard labor done by slaves is deflected by avoidance, misdirection, and metaphor. One example of such metaphorical deflection occurs when Frank invites Mark to visit the slave quarter. Frank fills the journey with an oratory on horses in which *slaves* could be substituted every time he says *horses*. Meriwether praises their contribution to civilization, from assisting in battle to working the fields; but, the planter notes, this is not a one-way obligation: "'He has been accustomed to receive his food from our hands, and to be caressed by our kindness. We nurse him in sickness, and guard him in health.'" For this care, the horse returns complete fidelity. "'The horse has a family instinct, and

knows every member of the household: he recognizes his master's children when they come to his stall, and is pleased to be fondled by them. Then, see how faithfully he drudges in the field, and wears away his life in quiet and indispensable services" (437, 438). A visit to the stable solidifies the metaphor as Carey proclaims: "'I call them my children.'" And one injured horse is blamed for its own predicament for running away: "'wa'nt content with the paster, but she must be loping over the fence'" (443, 446).

In case these caricatures of happy slaves have not made clear to his reader that slavery as an institution is not only benevolent toward enslaved African Americans but a necessity (a favor to them), Kennedy includes in the visit to the Quarter a clear perspective. This is the chapter most extensively revised by Kennedy for the 1851 edition of the novel. Echoing Kennedy's own reservations about the institution, Mark ultimately reacts favorably to his visit and to Frank Meriwether's explanation of the burden slavery places on the white planter. Despite initial reservations about the institution, and even a predisposition to believe it a cruel one, Mark concludes that "they could never become a happier people than I find them here." He continues:

> In the present stage of his existence, he presents himself to my mind as essentially parasitical in his nature. I mean that he is, in his moral constitution, a dependent upon the white race; dependent for guidance and direction even to the procurement of his most indispensable necessaries. Apart from this protection he has the helplessness of a child,--without foresight, without faculty of contrivance, without thrift of any kind. (353)

Mark, then, has learned what the enlightened Frank Meriwether has believed all along, that paternalism serves to "save" these poor people from destitution. Frank, though, is more the visionary. Joining abolitionists in deploring the concept of slavery, Frank defends it on the grounds that they are stuck with it, that it is a legacy they have an

obligation to see through. Meeting their obligation, of course, means continuing the institution, though it pains the gentry to do so, and gradually bringing the other race in step with civilization. Frank's plan for the future ranges from an emphasis on maintaining family life in the slave population to a proposition to form a talented tenth, "an upper or privileged class of slaves - selecting them from the most deserving, above the age of forty-five years" (459). These would become "practice" landowners, holding land from the gentry in a feudal manner and paying rent through work or produce.

In these orations by Frank and Mark, all hints of Kennedy's earlier satire have disappeared. In this respect, at least, Kennedy's novel is a clear forerunner to the post-bellum plantation tradition that used caricature for ideological purposes. Lucinda MacKethan argues that, as Kennedy worked to revise his novel's discussion of slavery to fit better with the southern proslavery argument of the 1850s, he also softened or removed "some of the degrading remarks about blacks in the first edition." Despite his "increased sensitivity" toward representation of black characters, the 1851 edition contains sketches by David Hunter Strother, mostly depicting "slaves performing various chores in minstrel-show fashion," which have a tremendous, reinforcing impact on the reader's already stereotypical notions.[14] Among these stereotyped African American characters, there is one, noted by MacKethan, whose presence threatens stereotypcial notions from the very beginning.

> The first Virginia character met by Mark Littleton is an old free Negro named Scipio. Escorting Littleton to Swallow Barn, Scipio entertains him. . . . Yet we can also see stirrings of the sentiment that produced Paul Laurence Dunbar's poem "We Wear the Mask" and Ellison's devious grandfather figure in *Invisible Man* when Scipio, "laughing till the tears came into his eyes," says that "people think old Scipio a fool, because he's got sense."[15]

Although it is probably true that slaves "put on" the Sambo mask in order to please their masters who literally held the power of life and death over them, it seems unlikely that this mask would completely cover the feelings accompanying enslavement and the potential for slaves to take action against their condition. Likewise, it must have been difficult for an author constructing that mask over a character to maintain it fully; thus, this carefully constructed mask of the happy slave is (inevitably) fractured at several other points in the novel--not coincidentally, all in relation to the swamps.

The first and most subtle disruption of this image takes place during the tale of the mill. Mark's granduncle, Edward Hazard, had attempted to use the creek running through the swamp to power a mill, "that this unprofitable tract of waste land would thereupon become the most valuable part of the estate" (132). When Edward finds himself losing the battle, the swamp refusing to be tamed and offering only a two-hour supply of water, his defeat is capped by the words of his slave: "'It's a two-hour-mill,' added the negro, in a voice scarcely audible, taking the risk of my grand uncle's displeasure, and grinning saucily but good-humoredly, as he spoke" (135). Besides punctuating the foolishness of the planter's attempt to control the swamp, this scene is marked by the distinct difference between this black man's humor and that seen in others in the novel, for this joke is directed *at* the master. It is aggressive and made at the master's expense. The danger of such assertiveness is made clear not only in the slave's quiet tone but in Edward's reaction: "It is said that my grand uncle looked at the black with the most awful face he ever put on in his life. It was blood-red with anger" (135). After considering a beating for the slave, Hazard faces the truth of the statement and instead calls a halt to the entire mill project. Such an escape from punishment after a "saucy" remark may echo the relationship between Frank Meriwether and Carey, but Carey's impudence never takes the form of a joke at the master's

expense. In a novel populated with Careys, this slave's nearly inaudible remark echoes throughout.

By itself, the connection between the two-hour-mill and the swamp may seem only coincidental. That is, the swamp as a mysterious zone of vitality or liminal space may have little to do with the fracture in the slave's mask. However, a pattern for this association soon emerges with the next "history" to interrupt the main narrative of the novel. The beginning of this digression occurs when Ned suggests to Mark that they walk back from the Brakes by way of the "Goblin Swamp" which has, he assures Mark, an old causeway that is still sufficient to see them through. As night time nears and the two approach the ruins of an old house,

> Hazard, taking advantage of the impression made by the sombre imagery around us, as we marched onward to the ruin, threw out some hints that we were now upon a haunted spot, and began to converse in a lower tone, and walk closer to my side, with an air of mystery and fear, put on to sort with the nature of the story he was telling. The ruin, he informed me, was formerly the habitation of Mike Brown, who had strange doings with the devil, and both Mike and his companion were frequently seen in the swamp after dark; the negroes, he said, and many of the white people about the country, held this place in great terror. (251)

At this point the two become hopelessly lost until they encounter Haffen Blok, who frequents the swamp to capture 'possums and raccoons. Blok invites himself to dinner in exchange for rescuing Ned and Mark, and after dinner he entertains his hosts with the complete story of Mike Brown and the devil.

Whereas the story of the mill provides a history of the family's relation to the swamp, Blok's story fleshes out that region's folk history. Block tells this story to the

collected families, both white and black, and visitors on the porch of Swallow Barn's big house. Told around midnight, the story revolves around the roguish drunkard, Mike Brown, who lives beside the swamp, and his dealings with the hooved gentleman who lives within it. Although the story itself does not feature black characters, the slaves become linked to the swamp in Mark's imagination as his mind wanders from Block's story about the devil in the swamp to the slaves listening to the story with him: "there were sundry wide-mouthed negroes, children and grown, who were clustered into a dusky group beneath the parlor window, just where a broad ray of candlelight fell upon them . . . like some of Old Nick's brood" (265). Besides adding to the list of exotic associations whites see in the enslaved Africans (not only monkeys but devils), this scene connects the slaves to Old Nick on the basis of deception. In other words, the story of the devil's gentlemanly ways and grinning demeanor is linked to the expressions on the faces of Swallow Barn's slaves, as if danger is lurking beneath the surface of these comic characters. Alan Henry Rose credits this surfacing of the diabolical quality within the slave to the setting in which the story is told: "environments that act to erode conscious control, at night by moonlight."[16] But the environment of the story itself (the swamp) serves this same purpose. In either case, a moment such as this is a gothic intrusion; and, as Goddu argues, "Many texts that are not predominantly gothic use gothic effects at key moments to register cultural contradictions."[17] In the case of this text, the contradiction involves the duality of white perceptions of black characters.

Despite protestations on the part of white characters that the slaves love them and could not be more happy than in servitude, these two incidents, the two-hour-mill and the diabolical brood, are suggestive of the anxiety-producing image that lurks under the surface of the slave's smile. Regardless of whether or not this veneer is guarding dangerous or threatening thoughts, recognition that it *is* a veneer is a recog-

nition, at least, that there is a life within the slave to which whites are not exposed: there is more to their slaves than meets the eye. But the previous stories are merely suggestive of this other life of the slaves. Mark gets a more solid glimpse of it when he actually enters the swamplands as part of a 'possum hunting party.

In the midst of his most passive frustrations over Bel, Ned is prompted from his pining by some slaves who have treed a 'possum and think he may like to hunt it. On the surface, this episode highlights the sense of the exotic, the novelty of the adventure. This is something new and different to which the white men are not accustomed. However, underlying the scene is the sense of a black world, a black life about which the white men know nothing. This nocturnal venture into the swamp-lands provides a new distinction between the black and white inhabitants of the plantation, for the black characters are self-assured and active in the hunt, while the whites are confused and afraid. This scene echoes the earlier expedition into the swamp made by the Devil and Mike Brown. "The gentleman in black and crimson easily traversed [the swamp], without soiling his habiliments more than if he had been in a drawing-room; but Mike made his way with great difficulty, miring himself first in one hole, and then in another, and sometimes plunging up to his middle in water" (282). The mastery with which the black characters navigate the swamp would be extremely anxiety-producing for whites who know of maroon communities living in the swamps, perhaps creating more of a chill than when they had first heard of Mike Brown's visit to the "Devil's bedchamber." With these points in mind, the residual image of the renegade slave lingers around Carey after this expedition into the swamp.

Having brought forth the possibility that the slaves' happy appearance is a façade, Kennedy must confront directly the image of the hostile or rebellious slave. He does so through the story of Abe, who is characterized as offensive to black and white alike because of his fierce sense of independence. "[M]oulded with the pre-

vailing characteristics of the negroes of the West Indies," a particularly feared type of

slave among planters of the Eastern United States, Abe "was noted for his spirit, and

his occasional bursts of passion, which, even in his boyhood, rendered him an object of

fear to his older associates." Besides being ruled by a passionate nature, Abe "corrup-

ted his character" by associating with "menials" from the surrounding plantations and

"had rendered him[self] offensive to the whole plantation" (466, 467). For Frank

Meriwether, however, whose paternal kindness has no bounds, no punishment for his

behavior is forthcoming until Abe takes to the swamps. He "brought himself into ex-

treme jeopardy by joining a band of out-lying negroes, who had secured themselves,

for some weeks, in the fastnesses of the low-country swamps, from whence they an-

noyed the vicinity by nocturnal incursions of the most lawless character" (468). The

typical punishment for such action might be a whipping or even selling the slave down

south to New Orleans, where work was hard and escape impossible. Meriwether's

solution, however, is to give Abe to a sea captain as an apprentice, to make a man out

of him. This punishment works, and Abe becomes a hero, eventually gathering a crew

and sailing into the worst storm in history to save the crew of a ship caught on a reef.

> And while all acknowledged that the enterprise could not have been
>
> committed to a more able or skilful mariner than Abe, yet it was
>
> declared to be the endeavor of a fool-hardy madman who was rushing
>
> on his fate. The expression of such distrust only operated as an
>
> additional stimulant to Abe's resolution, and served to hurry him, the
>
> more urgently forward, to the execution of his purpose. (482)

Abe is last seen trying unsuccessfully to reach the reef. Lucinda MacKethan makes

note of the contradictions inherent in this portrayal of the heroic slave and wonders

> how conscious was Kennedy of the recent Nat Turner rebellion? Abe's
>
> reformation as a seaman and his subsequent heroism might be seen, in

one respect, as Kennedy's attempt in fiction to present the Old
Dominion, and particularly its slaves, in a light quite different from the
glare that Nat Turner and his band had cast upon them.[18]

The story of Abe is only minutely linked to the swamp, but his characterization as a
"bad-nigger" is solidified by this association: it is only when he joins the outlaws in the
swamp that Frank's paternal patience wears out and he takes action. This tale cul-
minates the section of the novel where Kennedy addresses the question of slavery
directly and provides Kennedy the opportunity to show that even a passionate, willful,
and independent slave ("Swamp Abe") can benefit from the benign institution of
slavery (and become "Hero Abe"). It is important to note that Kennedy's attempt to
deal with this type of slave is done in the context of his oddness. Swamp Abe is
shown as out-of-balance with the other slaves, and his actions hurt no one more than
his own mother; thus, his actions and his willfulness are more self-destructive than
threatening to white power. As a result, it is not the institution that is called into
question, but Abe's inability to fit into it.

His punishment is stern but paternal and proves to be a corrective measure,
making both a man and a hero out of him. But Hero Abe may threaten white security
more than Swamp Abe ever could. Not committing depredations on plantation
property or even threatening bodily violence against the gentry, Hero Abe threatens to
take over the novel itself and redefine southern chivalry. While there are many well-
intentioned people who could (at a stretch) be considered the hero of this romance, it
is Ned who is the principal actor/hero; thus, his mock heroism is the novel's central
action--the main driving force for much of the novel. By following the conclusion of
the Ned/Bel storyline with the tale of "true" heroics by the slave Abe, Kennedy could
again be ridiculing southern adherence to a medieval chivalric code since the message
to southern readers implies: "You are pathetic. Your slaves follow more truly in this

heroic tradition that you do." However, given Kennedy's overt view of the institution and implicit sentiment toward the southern lifestyle, it seems unlikely that such harsh criticism would be his intention.

It would be easiest, then, simply to say that this is a flawed work, that Kennedy's own ambivalence toward slavery or his inexperience as a writer left this huge fissure in his narrative. Consciously or unconsciously, though, he had to confront the image of the slave in the swamp, either because the stereotype of the contented darkie was too ludicrous to hold or because he betrayed his own stereotype by revealing occasional depth behind the mask. In any case, Abe's story serves as the conclusion to the Kennedy-Littleton-Meriwether discourse on slavery; it serves to justify through example the paternal institution as potentially transforming the "savages" into Virginians. What happens to Abe, then, is merely an example in microcosm of what can happen to all slaves, after long years of slavery in its "progressive" and experimental form as Meriwether proposes: getting the slaves ready for the day when they can take charge of their own lives.

Whatever Kennedy's reasons for including the story of Abe in the novel, the dangers to the overt ideological purpose of the novel posed by this image seem foolishly risky. Both images, Swamp Abe and Hero Abe, serve as a threat, a subversion of the antebellum *status quo* that the rest of the novel works hard to maintain. Among the novel's gothic elements, Abe seems to be one that could have been easily left out; and, as Goddu argues,

> [t]he nation's narratives—its foundational fictions and self-
> mythologizations—are created through a process of displacement:
> their coherence depends on exclusion. By resurrecting what these
> narratives repress, the gothic disrupts the dream world of national myth

with the nightmares of history. Moreover, in its narrative incoherence, the gothic discloses the instability of America's self-representations; its highly wrought form exposes the artificial foundations of national identity.[19]

We may, however, see their inclusion not as a subversion, but as an act typical of popular forms that bring forth threatening images, not to challenge the *status quo* but to exorcise demons. By converting Swamp Abe to Hero Abe, Kennedy literally disperses both dangers as the man fades into the sea mist, never to be seen again.

In a plantation novel so heavily infused with swamp imagery, those demons of the white imagination are bound to surface, and Kennedy does his best to contain and/or exorcise them. His final nod toward containment, the reestablishment of southern-Anglo heroism, is found in Mark's musings over Virginia's history. While waiting (in true southern patience) for the weather to clear so that he may start his journey home, Mark comes across a book on the life of John Smith and comments on that man's chivalry: "He possessed many of the points of a true knight. He was ambitious of honor, yet humble in his own praise,--tempering his valor with modesty, and the reckless gallantry of the cavalier with irreproachable manners" (498). Such an ending attempts to contain the image of Abe that had threatened to take control of the novel and leave the reader with John Smith as the dominant image of southern chivalry. Here again, the horse metaphor for slavery seems appropriate in Frank's action in sending Abe to sea. As Frank is drawing in the reins of the overly passionate brute, so too does Kennedy rein in the overwhelming image of the heroic slave along with the more amorphous "demonic" energy underlying the placid image of the plantation Negro. The swamplands that had threatened to invert to world order are returned to the heroic colonists who come to tame them rather than be transformed by them.

Kennedy's treatment of the southern plantation may only tentatively endorse the planter's lifestyle, but the author certainly lays a solid foundation for southern apologists who will follow him. As an early, if not the first, work of plantation fiction, *Swallow Barn's* seeming ambivalence toward the system of slavery is understandable. Kennedy's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*-era revisions, however, did much to solidify the novel's proslavery position as the author attempted to encode his work with the proslavery rhetoric that had developed in the twenty years since the first edition.[20] Until the 1830s, abolitionism did not raise major reactions among southern intelligentsia. According to William R. Taylor, however, it was the reaction (especially in Virginia) to the Nat Turner rebellion that began the solidification of the two camps: pro- and antislavery. After the Virginia legislature came close to abolishing slavery, southern intellectuals could no longer take their institution for granted but began crafting arguments for its legitimation.[21]

MacKethan says of Kennedy's 1851 re-issue that it was hailed by William Gilmore Simms and other proslavery reviewers as an excellent answer to the abolitionists; one critic even noted how wonderful it was to see their present ideology so well presented in a work that was twenty years old.[22] MacKethan goes on to note the particularities of Kennedy's revisions:

> The new material gives plantation owner Frank Meriwether's carefully considered defense of slavery in terms that reflect Kennedy's understanding of domestic politics. . . . Meriwether promotes two reforms: the slaves' marriages and family arrangements should be legalized, and a kind of feudal class structure should be instituted that would elevate some slaves above others, giving them degrees of self-governance and a patriarchal sort of authority within certain

jurisdictions. Kennedy, through Meriwether, thus attempts to combine the opposing values of family affection and patriarchal authority.[23] MacKethan sees such attempts to combine these opposing values as one of the primary reasons that proslavery writing failed to reach the literary heights of an abolitionist work such as Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.[24] However, MacKethan is more interested in Kennedy's changes regarding the white women in the novel, which make "it impossible for southern women to interfere" with that patriarchal authority.[25] She ends her discussion of *Swallow Barn* with the puzzling and pathetic image of Abe's mother, Lucy, who has been driven mad by the loss of her son. With Lucy, Kennedy

> risks evoking, through his pathetic portrait of crazy Lucy defined *as*
> *mother*, the associations that his readers might make with other slave
> mothers whose separations from children were forced through much
> less kindly motives than Meriwether's. . . . [this image] makes for a
> unsettling conclusion to Kennedy's pastoral idyll.[26]

As with the ideological problem posed by the story of heroic Abe, this final portrait of an African American character threatens the serenity of the novel. However, proslavery writers following Kennedy must have seen, even in the more ambivalent 1832 edition, their preferred images of the plantation.

In her introduction to the 1986 edition of *Swallow Barn*, MacKethan comments on how the original critics of the novel interpreted Kennedy's position according to their own world views. In other words, where a northerner saw a scathing satire, a southerner was likely to see an idyllic portrait. "Readers have continued to find whatever they look for in *Swallow Barn*, a phenomenon that is indicative of the book's strengths as well as its weaknesses."[27] Even with more obviously proslavery revisions in the 1851 edition, Kennedy's version of the plantation myth left much room for alternative readings. Although the producers of fictional

works may encode each image with preferred meanings, the "proper" decoding of those meanings depends upon the world-view of the reader. Kennedy's revisions, despite any reluctance he may have had in embracing the institution of slavery, offered proslavery southerners an idyllic reflection of their system -- a reflection pulled from the author's idealized memories of summers spent in such pastoral settings. As a result, regardless of Kennedy's ambivalence, his novel contained the essential ingredients of the plantation novel.

For their part, southern proslavery writers took seriously the notion, presented more light heartedly in *Swallow Barn*, that certain aspects of southern culture needed to be preserved. Kennedy's foundation, then, led to a genre that placed emphasis on several major points of representation: First, enslaved African Americans are portrayed as childlike, clownish, and helpless without their masters; they are, therefore, happy and content--the lazy part of the plantation family, doing little work and only light labor. Second, the institution of slavery is shown to be benign and necessary; if an evil, it is an inherited one that the planter must bear as best he can. Third, the gentry are characterized as chivalric nobility who adhere to a strict moral code that guides their every action. Fourth, the simplicity and grace of a pastoral landscape evokes the sense of a lost Eden. And, finally, the sense of history and tradition is alternately the source of power and the white man's burden.[28] Whether or not we consider *Swallow Barn* to be the first work in the plantation genre, it certainly marks the beginning of a consolidated stable of plantation images, stereotypes, and beliefs. Kennedy laid a foundation for future works in the genre that would follow his lead by positing a world, introducing a threat to that world, and finally reconstituting the world in all its glory. Frank Meriwether's response to Abe's rebelliousness became a model for future writers. Abe and other rebels like him are "demonic," destructive forces that are harnessed or diverted to serve the slavocracy. The figure of resistance

is eliminated in such a way that his presence, which should signify a basic flaw in the system, actually reinforces the myth.

SECTION II

LITERARY SWAMPS OF THE 1850's

The seeming consolidation of plantation literature by the 1850s, in the style of Kennedy and in answer to Stowe, makes the South appear to have been of one mind on the issues of race and slavery. In fact, the early nineteenth century had seen a variety of racial theories, but the concept of blacks as inherently inferior to whites was a theme that appeared throughout the century. George Fredrickson traces a "scientific racism" to Thomas Jefferson, who had in *Notes on the State of Virginia* asserted an opinion that blacks were naturally inferior to whites; however, he had cautioned that such a conclusion had yet to be reached scientifically. As if in answer to Jefferson's hunch, Dr. Charles Caldwell of North Carolina argued, anonymously in 1811, against the view that blacks could be changed (essentially into whites) by environment. He published his full opinion about "polygenesis" under his own name in 1830. George Fredrickson characterizes the evolution of this theory:

> The new scientific doctrine, however, did not become an accepted view even in scientific and intellectual circles until the 1840s and 1850s, when the "American school of ethnology" emerged and affirmed on the basis of new data that the races of mankind had been separately created as distinct and unequal species. The full scientific assault on environmentalism came at a time, therefore, when it was bound to have some influence on the discussion of slavery and Negro prospects.[1]

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Such a theory belies Frank Meriwether's (and thus Kennedy's) idea of a gradual emancipation of those slaves who have learned enough from their masters to become planters themselves.

Science was not the primary force in the defense of the peculiar institution, and Meriwether's plan was related to the philosophical systems imported into the United States in the 1830s. Joel Williamson argues that the creation of an image of the planter as a chivalric nobleman was greatly influenced by the importation from Europe of Idealism, Victorianism, and Romanticism. The North, he says, incorporated these ideas in the form of transcendentalism, while the South applied them to the institution of slavery.

> Thus the process of change that had begun with a readjustment to the presence of menacing blacks and resulted first in the creation of a Sambo role for blacks and a paternalistic role for whites, now added roles drawn from the Victorian order, roles that were reinforced by overtones that smacked of the high feudal ages--all overlaid by a template of idealism in the form of its post-Napoleonic Western revival.[2]

Essentially, both regions imported the same philosophical ideas and applied them to their existing social constructs. With historical hindsight we can view the South's elaboration of Romanticism as extreme, but if Kennedy's novel is any indication, particularly his depiction of Ned's attempts to be chivalrous, we might see medieval adaptations as more a game among the gentry than a serious guide for conduct. Or perhaps, as *Swallow Barn* also suggests, it was only in regard to the planter-slave relationship that chivalric ideals were taken seriously.[3]

In any case, the development of the 1850s proslavery mindset was not dependent upon importation of theories; rather, internal pressures created the anxiety

that led to a constant redefining of roles. According to John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, whites

> were especially apprehensive following revolts and conspiracies in the nineteenth century, such as the Gabriel plot in 1800, the revolt in Louisiana in 1811, the Denmark Vesey conspiracy in 1822, and the Nat Turner revolt in 1831. They were also anxious when groups of runaways committed various "depredations" in their neighborhoods. Despite their insistence that their own servants would never become involved in such activity, slave owners spoke of the possibility of "conspiracy" and "insurrection," of slaves who were "proud & malignant, with great impudence," of the "plotting and conspiring" to murder whites. Although not a slave owner—indeed she wrote about the "evils of slavery"— longtime North Carolina resident Frances Bumpass expressed the fears of others when she wrote in her diary in 1844 that rumors of a possible insurrection remain with her constantly. "Dwell too much on said imaginary scenes of murder—fear to sleep— when slumbering often start in dread."[4]

Southern whites expressed their own anxieties to various degrees in a variety of cultural forms. Just as the Nat Turner insurrection might be seen as a point of escalation or change in the debate over slavery, so too did *Uncle Tom's Cabin* lead to the production of texts by white southerners as they attempted to answer the charges leveled against them and their institution in Stowe's novel. Although the plantation novel was not the only form of public discourse affected by the seige mentality some attribute to the white South of the 1830s through 1850s, it does seem to have been an especially effective format for establishing a sense of order and righteousness in the embattled institution.[5] Besides modes of "official discourse" such as legislation and

executive decrees, other forms of discourse included venues such as newspaper stories, editorials, political speeches, and religious sermons.

For example, ministers such as Thornton Stringfellow had a "strong conviction of the necessity of making the South believe in its own righteousness and justify its position before the onslaughts from the North."[6] Taking this regional self-righteousness to the extreme in the 1850s, essayist and pamphleteer George Fitzhugh argued against the *Declaration of Independence* itself in his books *Sociology for the South* (1854) and *Cannibals All!* (1857). Basing his argument in historical precedents, Fitzhugh argued that slavery and serfdom were the norm in human societies and that liberty was a dangerous exception--a state that offers no protection for the weak as they compete with the strong for resources. As a result, "[t]he capitalists, in free society, live in ten times the luxury and show that Southern masters do, because the slaves to capital work harder and cost less, than negro slaves."[7] In contrast to northern laborers,

> [t]he negro slaves of the South are the happiest, and, in some sense, the freest people in the world. The children and the aged and infirm work not at all, and yet have all the comforts and necessaries of life provided for them. They enjoy liberty, because they are oppressed neither by care nor labor. The women do little hard work, and are protected from the despotism of their husbands by their masters.[8]

The plantation slavery of the South, for Fitzhugh, was indeed a white man's burden. Far from the stereotype of the idle master, Fitzhugh envisioned the southern slaveholder having responsibilities unknown to northern capitalists.

> The trouble, care and labor, of providing for wife, children and slaves, and of properly governing and administering the whole affairs of the farm, is usually borne on small estates by the master. On the larger

ones, he is aided by an overseer or manager. If they do their duty, their time is fully occupied. If they do not, the estate goes to ruin.[9]

The suggestion here that even poor whites would benefit from enslavement may be a (somewhat) logical extention of the general southern defense of slavery, but it falls well outside the mainstream of proslavery arguments. Still, this argument is emblematic of the fevered pitch that the argument over slavery had reached by the late 1850s. As Stowe began to toy with the idea of slave insurrection after her friend Charles Sumner was beaten by a proslavery congressman, Fitzhugh published *Cannibals All!* at a time most advantageous to pushing the limits of his argument: months after the slave insurrection panic of 1856.[10]

As discussed in Chaper Two, local newspapers could play a large role in assuaging fears among its readers that slaves might rise up in rebellion. Maintaining order necessitated a certain amount of public discussion; in particular, crimes by African Americans served as excuses for keeping the free black populations in check. This was a major topic of an editorial, occasioned by a report on the 1856 insurrection scare, in the Athens, Georgia *Southern Watchman* (Jan. 1, 1857): "The residence of free negroes among slaves is incompatible with the public safety. Let the next Legislature abate this nuisance."[11] But legislation could only go so far in alleviating slave-owner anxiety. The Richmond *Times-Dispatch* offered a fairly formalized means of reassuring the white public of the need for and righteousness of their system for regulating the black population. The typical layout of this paper included a two- or three-column section labeled "Local Matters," which contained crime reports; and the criminals were, more often than not, African American. Very seldom, however, were the criminals still at large; rather, the column was filled with official responses to crimes, and those crimes were petty offenses by slaves and free blacks answered with harsh punishments. For example, the December 9, 1856 edition, which reported (for

the first time and very briefly) the insurrection attempts in Tennessee and Kentucky, filled its "Local Matters" section with black offenses: "Impudence Punished" told of ten lashes given to a free Negro for not giving way on the sidewalk; "Disorderly" reported ten stripes each for three slaves for public disorderliness the night before; and "Smoking" noted that a free Negro has been flogged for smoking a cigar on the street. The onslaught of such reporting, especially when the threat of insurrection had been mentioned on the same page, had the effect of assuring the white public of white control. The report of trivial crimes shared the page with other kinds of representations of African Americans, creating a cumulative picture of Sambo to dispel that of Nat.

Through these channels, the myth of the benevolent institution could be reinforced on a daily basis, but such formats called attention to themselves as subjective positions. The overt argument for one vision of the institution of slavery could not help but address the vision against which it was arguing. The fictional creation of a world, however, de-emphasizes its function as argument, replacing that with an ultimate truth provided from the eye of God (the narrator). The fictional narrative is set apart by its ability to smooth away contradictions that are highlighted by these other forms of discourse. That is, a novel *creates* a world whereas a political speech *argues for* a world. Accordingly, the narrativization of the proslavery ideology in plantation fiction could serve as a supplement for those other forms of public discourse; writers of plantation fiction could fill the void by transforming the various news reports and rumors into narrative, "endow[ing] them with an illusory coherence."[12] According to Hayden White, narrative "displays to us a formal coherency to which we ourselves aspire."[13] Certainly a reaffirmation of the planters' lifestyle, without the threats and contradictions that runaways signified to the institution, could be better accomplished through fiction than through legislation and public debate.

Where narrative generally offers the possibility of idealizing the past, plantation fiction in particular presents an idealized vision of the plantation, leading many critics of antebellum southern fiction to focus on the pastoral element and show the South in the literary imagination to be a lost Eden. This idealization is especially the case in postbellum writers, but also for those like John Pendleton Kennedy for whom modernization was depriving the South of this pastoral quality. As Jan Bakker argues, "For Kennedy and other malcontents of his time and place, the previous century represented a stage in national development that, to paraphrase Leo Marx, was more innocent and simpler than the present because its ideals were rooted in sound rural virtues."[14] Thus, as the postbellum plantation writer, such as Thomas Nelson Page, looked back to the Old South as a lost Eden, writers of the Old South themselves may have been looking back more than arguing for the perfection of their present state. In fact, William Taylor notes that the antebellum plantation novel was marked with "a kind of sadness associated with the passing of an old and more ample and decorous style of life."[15] In arguing that the plantation ideal was not based in aristocratic chivalry but in middle-class acquisitiveness, Louis D. Rubin suggests that "the dream of the great plantation was just that—an aspiration, and not a firmly established characteristic of Southern life."[16] At any rate, the plantation novel represented the desire for an idealized version of the system at hand, or, as Lucinda MacKethan puts it, such novels responded to a hunger for "the stability and the maintenance of order and decorum that were felt to be the outstanding attributes of life on the old plantations. The pastoral quest is always basically a search for order."[17] Yet at the heart of the myth was the very institution whose discontinuities caused the anxiety in the first place: "the plantation regime was . . . founded upon an institution which made the innocence which we associate with a pastoral way of life impossible."[18]

For the evangelical social reformers of the South, this quest for order meant confronting the part of the system that threatened its stability, the potential for slave insurgency, and replacing the antagonistic relationship of master to slave with the paternal vision of the master as steward.[19] Likewise, the plantation novel attempted to render the institution innocent. While typical works in the plantation genre characterized slaves as content and thankful for the love of their owners and the safety of the institution, some works did feature a rebellious slave or an insurrection plot. Such dramatization of rebelliousness in slaves may seem risky in a genre dedicated to smoothing over such disturbing truths, but in the context of newspaper reports and rumors of just such activities, simply ignoring the issue might have been even riskier to the project. Instead, narrative had the effect of bringing the white South's greatest fear to the surface rather than papering over it completely. Anxiety was produced by a seeming contradiction within the cherished myth--a contradiction embodied in the disgruntled slave, an image that would have to be confronted daily in one form or another.

According to Franklin and Schweninger,

> [w]hat weighed most heavily on the minds of slave owners and, indeed, contributed to their increasing defense of southern civilization, was the knowledge that so many slaves were neither docile nor submissive. Runaways symbolized the very aspect of bondage that they could not reconcile with their belief that slavery was beneficial for both master and slave. Few owners were unaware of the dissatisfaction or hostility among some of their slaves. Yet they could not publicly, or even privately, admit that such widespread unrest existed. To do so would undermine the very foundations of their arguments about slaves and slavery.[20]

"Official" remedies for this anxiety, from stronger legislation to the *Richmond Times*'s crime report, may have discharged the anxiety caused by the immediate physical threat posed by the surly slave, but their likely punitive nature may have left doubt as to the ultimate beneficence of the institution. The narrative example in the previous chapter suggests ways proslavery southerners could dispose of the immediate danger while reconstituting the institution: Kennedy's patriarchal scolding and molding of Abe argued that the assertion of will on the part of slaves was met not with force but with redirection; thus, the momentarily disgruntled slaves were happiliy brought back into the family, and the reasons for their troublemaking were dismissed as aberrant rather than systemic.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *   *   *   *   *</p>

The purpose of this section is to understand the uses to which writers put the image of the slave in the swamp in the escalating war of words during the years preceding the Civil War. I take as my core literary example of this escalation Harriet Beecher Stowe's apparent change in tone from her first to her second antislavery novel. From Uncle Tom the martyr to would-be insurrectionist Dred the maroon, Stowe's choices as an artist reflect the inevitable tug toward bloodshed. During her celebrity years following the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe interacted with, influenced, and was affected by countless abolitionists, both white and black. At the same time, numerous proslavery writers attempted to counter Stowe's image of the South by writing their own plantation novels. Somewhere in this mixture of viewpoints and degrees of militancy, Stowe moved from featuring a slave who dies a martyr's death on a plantation surrounded by swamplands to an insurrectionist, swamp-dwelling slave who dies deep within the swamps while actively defying white authority. I will trace the dialogue taking place between and among these antebellum writers by focusing on each writer's use of the maroon image.

My starting point will be an examination of southern responses to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. On the whole, these proslavery writers omitted the satiric jabs at southern planters that peppered Kennedy's *Swallow Barn*. Instead, their novels devoted more time to didactic discussions and representations of the master-slave relationship as benefiting both black and white. Nevertheless, the specter of runaway slaves sometimes intruded upon these placid scenes only to be subsumed quickly into the ideological framework--explained away as abberations or dupes of northern abolitionists. Where proslavery writers may have felt the need to address the fact of slaves using swamps to defy the system, despite the threat such an admission posed to their cause, fugitive slaves themselves only reluctantly discussed the swamps through which many escaped. Chapter 6 focuses on the narratives of those runaway slaves who, fully aware of the negative connotations associated with swamps, eschewed swamplands as settings and denied having the skill of woodcraft or any ability to use such regions to their advantage. This chapter is by no means an exhaustive exploration of antebellum slave narratives, but I have examined approximately two dozen narratives from the late 1840s and 1850s with an eye toward finding the general tendencies in the genre that would have made a substantial impact on the cultural milieu in which Stowe and others created their works. I have tended also to focus upon those narratives that advertised themselves as "fugitive" tales, those that placed the escape at the heart of the autobiography. Finally, Chapter 7 examines Stowe's own journey to the swamps of the South in *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*. She navigates with some difficulty between the standard romanticization of the maroon as a noble savage and her own need to justify Dred's desire for insurrection. Stowe and black novelists William Wells Brown and Martin Delany used the image of the maroon in their fight against slavery, but, like the proslavery novelists and slave narrators, they found the image a difficult one to manage. Although the maroon's image served as a powerful

threat to the white power structure in the South, none of these writers could wholly embrace it. In all, the literary works of the 1850s portrayed maroons in various ways, from pathetic victims to barbaric threats, but always there was an understanding that the swamp signified the absence of civilization; thus, swamp-dwellers were considered less than civilized.

CHAPTER FIVE

PROSLAVERY WRITERS

IN THE WAKE OF *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN*

As John Pendleton Kennedy revised his novel *Swallow Barn* in 1851 as a southern response to Harriet Beecher Stowe, so did numerous other proslavery writers attempt to portray the South "as it really was." As part of this response, such writers had to dispel the notion that some slaves were unhappy with their circumstances. One strategy was simply to avoid the issue entirely, offering instead a large population of Uncle Toms without a single George Harris. Other novels, and arguably the more successful ones, followed Kennedy's model of addressing the problem of disgruntled slaves more or less directly. In disposing of the fictionalized threat, an author was able to discharge the anxiety concerning insurrection and reconstitute the institution. The narrative, then, served to reinscribe boundaries around this disgruntled and unpredictable element of the plantation "family." To completely ignore the threat of insurrection or other forms of rebelliousness, the plantation narrative would not fulfill its function in the public discourse; if we see the narrative as another form of *response* to the slave threat, ignoring the threat provided only temporary escape from it. But to minimize and manage that threat was to present it in a way that either did not threaten the basic structural assumptions of the society, or, in fact, made the threat become part of the myth itself: if slaves were children, the insurrectionists were particularly bad children who needed to be punished. As Eugene Genovese points out regarding slave resistance, "[t]he masters often knew they were being deceived. Sometimes they

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fretted; sometimes they chuckled, as if delighted by the cleverness of their mischievous children."[1] Similarly, Kennedy and his followers in the genre were restoring the clarity of myth to an otherwise troublesome reality by casting rebellious black characters as wayward children in need of some stern, but loving, paternal guidance.

Some works in the plantation genre following Kennedy perpetuated the ideal-ized image of the South typically through a strategy of avoidance; that is, such authors offered representations of African Americans that treated them more as background than as characters. For example, Caroline Gilman's often cited *Recollections of a Southern Matron* (1837)[2] recollects the trials of a southern lady's courtship, mother-hood, and management of an extended family of her slaves. To some extent, the slaves offer the author a chance to paint local color portraits of the South for her reader in chapters such as "Negro Superstitions."

> I must ask indulgence of general readers for mingling so much of
> the peculiarities of negroes with my details. Surrounded with them
> from infancy, they form a *part of the landscape* of a Southern
> woman's life; take them away, and the picture would lose half its
> reality. They watch our cradles; they are our companions of our
> sports; it is they who aid our bridal decorations, and they wrap us
> in our shrouds. (106; emphasis added)

The narrator, Cornelia, later notes that the "plantation is solitary; . . . but then the large negro family is there, claiming and giving, in a thousand ways, human recognition" (184). As unnamed background material, the slaves are nevertheless admitted to be integral parts of the slaveholder's life; and this "part" begins to intrude--the slaves pushing past anonymity in this passage, "claiming" recognition for themselves as human beings.

In the first pages of the novel, an African American presence suggests that slaves are more than scenic backdrops. Gilman begins with the sound of slaves in the woods, heard by the narrator during her ruminations in a cemetery, "waking up life in the solitude" (5). Thus, *Recolleactions* seems to begin with the same notion with which Kennedy left us: that it is the slaave community and the uncultivated regions that pump life into an indolent slaveholding class. The mistress's thoughts on death lead her to think that, in the cemetery, "there is but one inscription . . . for we were as one" (6). Both these points of ambivalencae, however, are quickly subsumed by the story of Old Jacques and his instinctive devottion to the narrator's grandfather by whose side the slave had served in the Revolutionary War. Thus, even when slaves are given names and characteristics, the author is - more clearly arguing for the benign nature of the institution than for the humanity and subjectivity of the individual slaves. Likewise, Jacques's sister, Nanny, is described in a later chapter as having won the respect and appreciation of her owners so thaat she is sometimes brought up on the porch to enjoy a sunny day in her old age. But just as poor Jacques had trouble grasping the import and tragedy of the bloody battlefield beyond his unquestioned reverence and grief for his dead master, the narrator nottes that Nanny's "children's children play on the lawn, but I sometimes think my Eleanor awakens stronger interest even than they, from her resemblance to her mistress" (26). The first-person narrative perspective does not allow us to actually see inside Nanny's thoughts; neither does Gilman allow Nanny to speak for herself. Although it may be easy for us to see such a statement as the most grievous kind of self-delusion, the narrator/author putting thoughts in the heads of her slaves the same way she might attribute certain emotions to her cat, the limits placed on characterization allow the narrator to craft whatever attitudes she likes in the minds of the slaves. Where newspaper crime reports can only imply that the punished criminals are "sorry" for their transgressions, the plantation narrative can place those

repentant thoughts in their heads. Slaveowners and their cohorts, then, can speak for their poor chattel who are too ignorant to express themselves and articulate the bliss of their life on the plantation.

Besides offering us African Americans as part of the local color background and as flat, stereotyped contented slaves, *Recollections* includes a third category of representation: that of the *repentant runaway*. In a chapter describing her marriage and honeymoon in the North, the narrator tells of a slave named Ormsby who "was carried away under mysterious circumstances" four years previous. By chance, she and her new husband meet Ormsby in their travels:

> The poor patroon sprang towards his fellow-servant, wrung his hand, and burst into tears. He was conducted to me, and no sooner recognized me than he fell on his knees at my feet, clung to my garments, burst into tears anew, and thanked God that he lived to see one of our family again. He had been carried to Calcutta, had worked his way back to America, and was endeavoring to return to Carolina. I told him that he was at liberty to remain where he was, but he said his only wish on earth was to live and die in his master's service. (272-73)

In the following chapter, having returned to the plantation and settled into a dull routine as mistress, Cornelia is told by an old slave that a slave named Dick had disgraced them all by stealing a sheep and running away to avoid a whipping. "'He disgrace we all,' said the old man, resuming his work. 'He tief one sheep—he run away las week, caus de overseer gwine for flog him. He an't desarve a good mausa, like Maussa Arthur'" (295). While alone by a frog pond, Cornelia is approached by this Dick, who begs her for leniency. This incident, placed at a moment when the author has begun to describe Cornelia's settling into life as plantation matron as one of bordom and isolation, could be another example of the slave population stirring up the

otherwise stagnant lives of the gentry; however, Gilman's depiction of Cornelia's discussion with Dick seems more an indication of her boring and never-ending duties as plantation mistress: showing compassion for the wayward "child."

Despite the author's earlier apology that she is giving over so much of her narrative to descriptions and discussion of the slaves, these "intrusions" of African American characterization take up very little space in the novel. On the one hand, she extends to the nineteenth century Mechal Sobel's argument, following Melville Herskovits, from *The World They Made Together* "that blacks, Africans and Afro-Americans, deeply influenced whites' perceptions, values, and identity, and that although two world views existed, there was a deep symbiotic relatedness;"[3] on the other, the emphasis on superstition, ignorance, and subservience in the slaves argues for an Anglo world in which African Americans were an undisputed presence—but one without cultural effect. Ultimately, the slaves are only as important to *this* story of the South as are descriptions of balls and duels and cotton and swamps.

However, some critics would argue that the very inclusion of slaves in these stories of plantation life creates points of fracture in the potentially seamless narratives. For example, Jan Bakker finds black characterization disrupting literature designed for adolescent Southerners in his examination of Gilman's "Rose" magazines of the eighteen-thirties.

> Virtually always in her columns and serialized fiction, blacks are pictured as dependent children, irresponsible frolickers, devoted retainers, or leisurely workers seen at a distance. Sometimes, however, Mrs. Gilman's images of happy, docile, and stupid slaves are surprisingly if subtly marred by less comfortable, unexpected, conscious or unconscious, flashes of authorial insight that reveal the antebellum Southerners' deepest fear of all: the fear of servile

insurrection. If the metaphysical poets expressed their particular shudder in unexpectedly grim imagery of life and death, the writers of the Old South such as Caroline Gilman occasionally and with equal surprise for the reader expressed their own special shudder over the peculiar institution.[4]

It is difficult to pin down something as subjective and intangible as the "shudder" Bakker refers to here, but that is precisely the effect that this study is attempting to trace. Susan J. Tracy speaks more generally of that shudder as being the cause rather than the effect of representations of African Americans in this fiction. "Through stereotypes, one can perceive directly the anxieties that haunt the 'self' in its attempt to bring order out of chaos and to distinguish between the self and 'the Other.'" She continues: "the cultural stereotypes that might be found in all forms of cultural production are more revealing of the producer's anxieties and fears than of the lived experience and essence of the targeted group. Stereotyping blurs individuality as members of the targeted group are reduced to their most common denominator of difference."[5] In the case of stereotyping in these proslavery works of fiction, a tension exists between the need of the authors to establish African Americans as Other and the need to subsume that Other into the self. That is, as we see in Gilman and Kennedy, the political agenda of these representations was to reveal a nonadversarial master-slave relationship, to show that it was harmonious and that the slaves were part of the planter's extended family. At the same time, however, white slaveholders were defined against their slaves--their definition of self dependent upon their difference from their slaves. If slaves were depicted as children, then the institution could hold together under a domestic model; but the "shudder" occurs when characters fail to fit into this model.

In examining Gilman's novel as it pertains to the domestic fiction of her time, Elizabeth Moss finds that Gilman

> placed the greatest emphasis on the interaction between master and slave. It was this peculiar bond, Gilman argued, that stabilized the South, that perpetuated the values of community and preserved the ideals of the Revolution intact. Slavery strengthened the moral currency of the South by consistently demanding sacrifice on the part of the planter class; it ensured the persistence of the Christian ethic . . . and, more important to domestic novelists, it reinforced the authority of the institutions of home and family.[6]

Lucinda MacKethan, however, points out the failure of attempts to portray slaves in a domestic setting since the notions of domestic affection were naturally opposed to the patriarchal market system--of which slaves were a part and by which slaves were defined.[7] Gilman attempts to create the perfect plantation patriarch, Arthur Marion, by imbuing him with matriarchal values, by making him a caretaker rather than a business man. But just as Kennedy ends his novel with the puzzling image of Abe's mother suffering from a dementia brought on by the separation from her son, an image that calls forth the greatest claim against slavery, that it separated families, Gilman ends her novel with Arthur becoming more and more involved in the *business* of running the plantation while "[t]he plantation becomes an isolated, lonely, boring prison . . . and Cornelia becomes the Angel of the House, consigned to one corner of society."[8] Such attempts, MacKethan argues, "to try to narrate the slave into the domestic space of the home was a direct challenge to legal and market definitions naming the slave's very existence."[9] In essence, these plantation novelists failed before they even brought pen to paper because the nature of slavery, its objectification and othering of the slave, was antithetical to the inclusive sensibilities of domestic

fictions. The slave could not be part of the extended family *and* property at the same time; as a result, MacKethan argues, Gilman's attempt to create a perfect patriarch by imbuing him with matriarchal values fails in the end. Arthur cannot become Harriet Beecher Stowe's young George Shelby, who is influenced more by his mother and Uncle Tom than by his corrupted father and who eventually becomes Stowe's emblem for reform through domestic values.

While Kennedy and Gilman provide insight into the general schematics of plantation fiction as a genre, more important to this study is the intensification of this battle of representations between pro- and antislavery writers that began with the publication of Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In his study of twenty-seven proslavery responses to Stowe's novel between 1852 and 1861, Thomas F. Gossett notes that the "greatest failures in anti-Uncle Tom literature are the slave characters, who are all too obviously patterned to fit the proslavery argument."[10] Stowe's contemporary southern critics, however, found the fault of their own literature to lie not in such representations but in the boring nature of Truth. In reviewing Mary Eastman's *Aunt Phillis's Cabin* for the *Southern Quarterly Review*, William Gilmore Simms finds the novel worthy but wanting:

> As the title implies, it is designed as an answer to "Uncle Tom's Cabin."
> It is *truthful*, which cannot be said of Uncle Tom, which lies like a
> dragon; but the attraction of the work, as a story, though considerable
> cannot compare with those of the abolition books. Truth never yet
> could hold a candle to falsehood where the medium of both was
> invention. And this is as it should be.[11]

Likewise, Louisa McCord, in her review of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for the same journal argues that truthful representations cannot compete with the exaggerations engineered in the abolitionist camp. She mockingly congratulates Mrs. Stowe for not including

the stock abolitionist imagery of white southerners spicing the soup-pot with black babies. Nevertheless, McCord laments, it is spice that is at the heart of Stowe's success. "The literary taste of our day (i.e., second-rate literary taste; the fashionable novel-reading taste) demands excitement. Nothing can be spiced too high. Incident, incident, and that of the vilest kind, crowds the pages of those novels which are now unfortunately all the vogue."[12]

Nina Baym offers a comprehensive summary of reviews of Stowe's first antislavery novel. Noting that reviews of the book fell in line with the political orientation of the periodical in which the review appeared, Baym also remarks, "Reviewers would have gladly avoided this subject [slavery], but the phenomenal success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* forced it into their professional domain."[13] And those journals likely to receive the antislavery message were still anxious about the splintering effects such a novel might have on the already unstable Union. They suggest that the author may have been reckless in pursuing such subject matter. Baym writes:

> The *Southern Literary Messenger* reviewed it twice in frantic
>
> rhetoric; among its milder comments was this: "the whole tenor of
>
> this pathetic tale derives most of its significance and coloring from a
>
> distorted representation or a false conception of the sentiments and
>
> feelings of the slave. It presupposes an identity of sensibilities be-
>
> tween the races of the free and the negroes"; in fact, "the joys and
>
> sorrows of the slave are in harmony with his position, and are entirely
>
> dissimilar from what would make the happiness, or misery, of another
>
> class" (December 1852). A long angry essay entitled "Black Letters"
>
> condemning *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and all other books inspired by it
>
> appeared in *Graham's* asking, "what would the negroes do, if they

were free among us? Nothing at all, or next to nothing. They have

not the muscle or the mind of the European races" (February 1853).[14]

Baym makes clear that these opponents of Stowe's novel were overtly political,

but it may be useful to consider what Rev. Nehemiah Adams claims to have been the

reaction to Uncle Tom more generally among southerners:

> Some of the warmest advocates of slavery said that they could parallel
>
> most of the abuses in slavery mentioned in the book out of their own
>
> knowledge; and on speaking of some bad master, and wishing to ex-
>
> press his tyrannical character and barbarous conduct, they would say,
>
> He is a real Legree; or, He is worse than Legree. The book was
>
> mentioned with candor, and with little appearance of wounded
>
> sensibility.[15]

Among these more general responses, one main criticism had to do with the scene in

which Mr. Shelby entertains Haley's bid to buy Eliza. If forced into the necessity of

selling a slave, they said, the gentleman slave-holder would do so tearfully, "but to sit

and laugh, and hold up the glass . . . and haggle with a fiend like Haley" would never

happen.[16] Likewise, the characterization of Mrs. St. Clare was at odds with Rev.

Adams's observations of hard-working Southern matrons.[17] Despite these objections

(to Stowe's characterizations of *whites*) and the literary critics' vehement charges that

Stowe's work is nothing but lies and exaggeration, Adams claims that "most southern-

ers would scorn the thought of being offended or influenced from such a source."[18]

Nevertheless, the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* served as a point in history in

which the argument over slavery was taken to a higher, more intense, level; and

novelists were as quick as politicians and preachers to respond.

Of the twenty-seven anti-Tom works noted by Gossett, some are obviously

responses to Stowe: Mary H. Eastman's *Aunt Phillis's Cabin; or, Southern Life as It*

Is (1852), Robert Crisswell's *"Uncle Tom's Cabin" Contrasted With Buckingham Hall, the Planter's Home* (1852), and John W. Page's *Uncle Robin in his Cabin in Virginia* (1853). Others, such as David Brown's *The Planter; or, Thirteen Years in the South, By a Northern Man* (1853), reveal themselves as responses through chapter headings. Brown's table of contents includes: "Legree a tame beast compared with an African King;" "Uncle Pat's Irish Cabin;" "Slave families not so often as free families broken up;" Negroes most happy;" and "negroes delighted." Each of these headings positions the author within the mainstream of proslavery rhetoric: comparing slavery in the South to serfdom in Europe or slavery in Africa, for example, while signifying upon the language of the world's most famous abolitionist.

Gossett finds the stock characteristics I describe in Gilman's novel to be present in the response fiction. Among them

> [t]he opposite of the loyal black slave in anti-Uncle Tom literature
> is the rebellious slave who runs away. It is never cruel treatment
> which causes him to flee. Either he is sullen or unruly by nature or
> he is too foolish to know when he is well off and is thus vulnerable
> to the wiles of abolitionists who whisper the delights of freedom in
> his ear.[19]

This problem of runaway slaves, as suggesting a general discontent, is addressed in David Brown's *Thirteen Years in the South* (1853) through rhetoric rather than drama:

> That some of them run away, is no more of an argument against
> their general contentment, than it is an argument against the general
> contentment of the people of New England, that they sell and leave
> their pleasant homes to dare the horrors of a voyage round the Horn,
> Isthmian fever or assassination; or an overland journey to California
> in search of gold, and mark the miles with graves and bones instead

> of milestones, and guide posts.
>
> ... The Southern slave is a joyous fellow. In willing and
> faithful subjection to a benignant and protecting power, and that
> viable to his senses, he leans upon it in complete and sure confidence;
> as the trusting child holds on to the hand of his father, and passes
> joyously along the thronged and jostling way, where he would not
> dare to be left alone.[20]

Still other responses forego such heavy-handed rhetoric in an attempt to fashion a response without turning the novel into a political tract.

Aunt Phillis's Cabin (1852)[21] comes fairly close to featuring a black character fully formed by interior dialogue, though it takes Eastman nine chapters to introduce this title character. It is interesting that the author chooses Phillis as an exemplar of what the slave system can produce; yet she is characterized as a mulatto who is highly praised for her slow but regulated mind (102). The novel climaxes at her deathbed where her owner offers to free her twelve children, but Phillis decides that they are better off where they are. This decision is not only an assertion of the goodness of the system; it culminates Eastman's characterization throughout of Phillis as an exemplary African American who is surrounded by buffoons. Her children will be better off where they are because they would not know what to do with freedom. Eastman, then, is able to create a black character who serves as a bridge of sorts; Phillis is clever and white enough to listen to, yet she is still a slave and praises the system from that vantage point.

In one instance in chapter ten of the novel, the veneer of this plantation ideal is threatened by a runaway. Eastman frames this chapter and the account of the runaway with long descriptions of how wonderful Aunt Phillis's cabin is. It can hardly be called a cabin, especially her private room which is, to those privileged few who have seen it,

comparable to the master's own. It is in the midst of this domestic security that Phillis's ironing is interupted by her master, Weston, who wants her to tell him truthfully anything she knows about a neighbor's complaint that his slaves are helping a runaway. Phillis says that it was she who harbored the felon: that he had come in during a storm on a night when Bacchus, her husband, was out. She had told the runaway to go back to his master, but he had refused. She could not turn him out to the storm but sent him off at daybreak telling him never to return to her cabin. Weston tells her never to do such a thing again and Phillis agrees (112–18). Although the tranquility of Aunt Phillis's cabin initially appears broken by the entrance of her master, a violation of space that might bring Harriet Jacobs to mind, the discussion that follows creates a sense that it is the runaway, not the planter, who threatens the peace of the space. Granted, Phillis is confronted and gently castigated for harboring the fugitive, but her self-confidence and the comity of the conversation aligns her with Weston. As a result, his intrusion is reframed as a visit in contrast to the runaway's unwanted violation of her space.

Although it was one of the best-selling responses to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Eastman's novel failed, as Beverly Peterson notes, to garner the sort of positive aesthetic reviews that Stowe had. "Instead of plot or character to hold the book together, *Aunt Phillis's Cabin* has unity of purpose."[22] An example of an anti-Uncle Tom novel that puts story elements ahead of didactic rhetoric is William Gilmore Simms's *Woodcraft* (1852).[23] Some have argued whether or not this novel was actually a response to Stowe since its publication came so closely on the heels of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and since the novel offers none of the clear signifiers on Stowe that I mentioned above. Simms himself argued that *Woodcraft* was as good an answer to Uncle Tom as any work produced by his contemporaries, but whether he wrote it for that purpose seems irrelevant.[24] Regardless of intent, *Woodcraft* falls into the

cate-gory of fiction that temporally and politically responds to abolitionist charges. This tale of American soldiers on their way home after the Revolutionary War features Captain Porgy, who worries about the prospects of restoring his plantation to its productive former glory. At the heart of his concern is the fact that the land is worth nothing without slaves to work it (54-55). A secondary plot of the novel follows Porgy's neighbor, the Widow Eveleigh, as she works to assure that the departing British leave behind the slaves belonging to herself and Porgy. As Lucinda MacKethan points out, the sentimental portraits of master-slave relationships are trumped in this novel by the realities of the slave economy. The domestic space important for Stowe and Gilman cannot form within the demands of the institution, so that even the lead female character, the Widow Eveleigh, defends the plantations by entering into the masculine realms of law and economics.[25]

Ultimately, however, this novel is most noteworthy for its representation of the slave Tom, who has faithfully accompanied Captain Porgy throughout the war.

> The fourth party in this group is a negro--a native African--the slave of the captain; a fellow of flat head and tried fidelity; of enormous mouth, but famous as a cook; of a nose that scarcely pretended to elevate itself on the otherwise plain surface of an acre of face; but of a genius for stews that commended him quite as much as any other of his virtues to the confidence and regards of his master. (50-51)

Any sentimentality in the master-slave relationship is quickly subsumed by the slave's designation as property. Such can be seen in a moment where Porgy proclaims his affection for his cook: ""I love Tom. Tom is virtually a free man." But the captain goes on to say that he would kill Tom before letting a creditor take him (113).

Porgy's "love" may be especially strong for Tom, but he extends it to the rest of his property as well. When the band of men return home to an empty plantation,

they learn that most of Porgy's slaves have hidden themselves in the swamp from the British. Where other defenders of slavery may have emphasized the self-interest of the slaves in sticking together as a family under their kind patriarch, Simms emphasizes the slaveholder's economic relation to them. Porgy vows not to let any usurers take his property and warns his slaves about the possibility that such creditors may come for them. "'If any of you negroes happen to see any such lurking about the plantation, or within five miles, let me know. Don't let them lay hands on you, but make for the swamp'" (184). Much as southern whites hid silver and other family property in the swamps during the Civil War, Porgy makes plans to hide his slaves, or, rather, to have his slaves hide themselves in the swamp.

As the title suggests, much of the novel occurs in or in relation to swamplands, and the effect of slaves "stealing themselves" by fleeing to the swamps should be enough in the 1850s to conjure forth images of renegade maroons; however, Simms has established the swamp as the realm of the white soldiers, so here the Osman image is inverted. Women and slaves can only use the swamp defensively, to hide, but it is white men who feel comfortable in the swamp, who have "woodcraft," and who can cleverly turn the region to their offensive advantage to defeat an enemy.[26] When slaves use the swamps to hide from white men, Simms is marking a difference between two types of whites. This distinction is made clear when one slave, Sylvester, suggests flight to another, Toby, to avoid being taken. Sylvester says:

> "--but I tell you Toby, John Sylvester nebber guine le' Joe Sossick
>
> put he dirty, poor buckrah paw 'pon him shoulder agen! . . . dis
>
> nigger will hide hese'f in de wood, and be ready for a run; and up to
>
> de neck in de swamp, where we knows de varmints, dan le' 'em
>
> carry we off to de British hulk, I'm a t'inking." (71)

The contrast between the poor whites who would steal the slaves and Porgy and the Widow Eveleigh, who fight to keep them, suggests that even the slaves are economically motivated. Perhaps Porgy's slaves think of their relationship to the master as familial rather than economic; they are willing to brave the swamp in order to save themselves much as Stowe's George and Eliza Harris flee to avoid family separation, and they are only coincidentally saving their master's property. But Simms does not seem interested in blurring the distinction between family and property as other pro-slavery novelists do.

As Simms has unapologetically rendered the master-slave relationship in terms of economic benefit to the former, in effect answering Stowe's call for a domestic ideal by ignoring it, his ending does suggest a sentimental attachment undergirding the economic relationship. Ultimately, Porgy's most intimate relations are with his slaves. Rather than marrying the Widow Eveleigh at the end of the novel, Porgy is left the bachelor-master of his plantation with his faithful Sam running the kitchen. It is the often-cited refusal of freedom at the end of the novel that makes this Tom the quintessential contented slave we see represented in other works of the genre. When Porgy offers to free Tom, the slave responds: "'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!*'" (509). He posits the notion of ownership, which has been throughout the novel a signifier of potential wealth for the planter, here as reciprocal. As Fitzhugh would argue, neither slave nor master has liberty since each belongs to the other in this social contract. Naturally, Tom's response is meant by Simms to be humorous--and to us as the grossest form of caricature--but in a novel so opposed to foregrounding a sentimental underpinning of the master/slave relationship, this ending does seem to offer a way of reading the other slaves' actions. They too hide themselves in the swamp because Porgy and his plantation belong to them.

According to Robert Hunt, Simms's merging of sentimental attachment with bald-faced economic concern fits perfectly with mainstream proslavery thought.

> All proslavery thinkers argued that the institution of slavery was a device to avoid the injustice of the expanding market order. However, most proslavery thought did not isolate the institution from the larger economy, but held that the ownership of human beings made individualism and enterprise responsible. According to this view, slavery did not create a planter aristocrat completely untouched by the sordidness of self-interest. Rather, by turning slaves into capital investments, it made laborers worth the trouble to protect; it made the planter's self-interest and responsibility by creating an agricultural factory which, by producing commodities for sale in the capitalist marketplace, returned profit to the owner and material security to the worker. In short, mainstream proslavery thought acknowledged that the plantation used entrepreneurial individualism, and the capitalist structures of commodity exchange, to negate the worst effects of a society of self-interest.[27]

Perhaps most poignant or alarming is the fact that Simms is able to argue for a sentimental attachment while still emphasizing the economics of the slave system. Porgy seems to have no fear that his slaves will run away from him since it is in their self-interest to stay on his plantation rather than take their chances in the swamps, the realm of white soldiers, or with unknown whites. Where the attempt to deny the economic foundation of the master-slave relationship may have hindered Gilman and Eastman in their attempts to portray "the South as it really is," Simms's direct confrontation with this reality leaves little room for questioning the institution. The plot-driven novel takes for granted the nature of the relationship rather than arguing for it.

What is important for the purposes of this chapter is not the plantation novel that adheres strictly to these basic caricatures but those works that challenge their own ideology by invoking scenes that disrupt the blissful plantation setting. As noted by Simms and McCord, the southerner's "truth" about slavery did not excite attention because that truth either hides or easily explains slave rebelliousness. For that reason, Caroline Lee Hentz's *The Planter's Northern Bride* (1854)[28] is the work most worthy of deeper discussion; however, those critics who have analyzed Hentz's work have neglected to delve into her characterizations of the runaway slaves, the northern bride's reactions to people of color, and, most importantly, the near-rebellion that serves as the novel's climax. The image of the planter surrounded and greatly outnumbered by his slaves seems to be the boldest confrontation with anxiety to be found in the genre.

Carme Manuel Cuenca argues that *The Planter's Northern Bride* is less radical than other responses to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* because the author "joins Stowe's ideological stance, as she is mainly concerned here with privileging the position of American women in a new context. Like Stowe, she tries to undermine a patriarchal system and restore the basis of democratic America with an idealization of women's role."[29] In addition, Cuenca leans on Nina Baym's notion that the novel does less to justify slavery than it pleads with abolitionists to stop increasing sectional tensions.[30] Cuenca argues, "*The Planter's Northern Bride* epitomizes the kind of Southern domestic writing that flourished in the years after the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. But Caroline Lee Hentz, like many other Southern women writers in this period, does not engage in what Baym calls 'an aggressive counterresponse.'"[31] For instance, rather than attack abolitionists in her defense of the South, Hentz chooses to lampoon them. In particular, the abolitionist who is nearly successful at instigating a slave rebellion cackles as he flees the scene:

"I have made a plenty of dupes. The flames I have kindled will not

be quenched. They will burst out afresh, when people think they are gazing on ashes. Yes! I will go back to the North, and deliver such lectures on the South as will curdle the blood with horror. No matter what I say—I'll find fools to believe it all. If I pour falsehoods hot as molten lead down their throats, they will believe them all, and smack their lips with delight." (526)

Elizabeth Moss sees this caricatured abolitionist as a direct jab at Harriet Beecher Stowe.[32] In fact, Moss and other critics tend to place more emphasis on the cartoon evil and utter buffoonery of abolitionists in the novel than they do on the actual insurrection attempt. While it may be said generally that Hentz's novel is not an aggressive response to Stowe, the tensions created by testing the South's own logic with representations of aggressive slave behavior make this the most interesting of the anti-Tom works.

Speaking broadly, *The Planter's Northern Bride* masks its didacticism more artfully than other anti-Tom literature such as Eastman's *Aunt Phillis*. Hentz makes the basic proslavery arguments: that the slave institution benefits the otherwise degraded African, that southern slaves are in better conditions than the poor of the North or Europe, and that any discontent among slaves is fomented by abolitionists who take advantage of the slave's ignorance and innocence. If, as Peterson argues, one of the failings of *Aunt Phillis's Cabin* is Eastman's haphazard handling of the love-plot expected in sentimental novels,[33] Hentz puts such a plot in the foreground. Such a move not only helps make the novel more cohesive, but it addresses the growing concern over factionalism in the early 1850s. Nina Baym notes that there "is no way to account for the tone of those reviews that grappled with *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and other books, pro- and antislavery, that followed it, other than to assume that the fragility of the Union was very much a recognized fact of the national life in the 1850s."[34] Hentz

certainly seems to address that concern since, as the title promises, this novel offers a harmonious union between North and South, albeit a union on southern terms.

The novel begins with the southern planter Mr. Moreland visiting Boston where he falls in love with an abolitionist's daughter, Eulalia Hastings. Although Mr. Hastings is a leading abolitionist in Boston, and his daughter accedes to his views, her own feelings toward people of color consist of revulsion. As her father puts it, "she has a remarkable antipathy to negroes" (164). Between these two family members, then, a northern view of the South is created as a place to be reviled on the one hand because it is full of slaveholders and on the other because it is full of slaves. The particular object of Eula's revulsion is a guest, a runaway slave who had recently graced the Hastings's house: Moreland hears from a friend the story of the "runaway negro, one of the most repulsive objects I ever saw,--gigantic in stature, black as abony, with coarse and brutal features, and manners corresponding to his appearance" (41). When Moreland is eventually granted an invitation to dinner by Hastings, he dwells on the fact that the chair he occupies "was lately filled by a gigantic negro; that the fair hands of Eulalia had poured coffee for him from that silver urn" (63). Those hands, however, were most likely shaking as we hear that the negrophobia expressed by Moreland and his friend could just as well have been Eula's.

Justifying the southerners' revulsion at such a scene, the story ends with the guest becoming insolent and refusing to leave the Hastings house until he is thrown out. Since then, says Moreland's friend, Hastings "'has had a double bolt fastened to his doors; and his dreams, I suspect, are haunted by black spectres, armed and equipped for murder and robbery'" (42). Of course, the southerners, as the book later makes clear, do not live in such fear because their paternalistic system precludes the creation of such insolence in their much larger black population. Still, this is a lesson that Eula will have to learn.

Mr. Hastings's guest, the runaway slave (Nat the Giant), plays a big role in the early chapters, the northern chapters, as part of the family history and as part of the political argument. His image haunts the father as a threat to his cause, and it haunts Eula because of her innate racism (which she will learn to accept). This underlying threat, his seeming civility and need covering an insidious intent, echoes the greater sense of a simmering insurrection within the slave population. As MacKethan notes, "Hentz's slave characters . . . exhibit bestial physical power; unlike her passive, virtuous white women, her slaves are capable of violence and incapable of deep feeling or loyalty."[35] Where such threats do not enter into *Woodcraft* or is embodied only in a pathetic runaway in *Aunt Phillis's Cabin*, Hentz entertwines fear of the "St. Domingo hour" with her central love plot. In order for their love to blossom, Moreland must overcome Mr. Hastings's inane abolitionism with his own chivalric charm and logic, and Eula must overcome her irrational fear of African Americans.

When she is in church, considering her impending marriage to Moreland, Eula dwells on "going to a land of strangers, to be surrounded by a girdle of darkness, from which there was no escape,--where, she had learned to believe, the fires of insurrection were for ever smouldering" (154-55). Moreland sets the Hastings family straight in regard to their guest and their complicity in perpetuating the myth of imminent insurrection:

> "I have heard the history of your hospitality to that vagabond" . . . and he could not help speaking in an excited and indignant voice--"and I have traced him from the beginning of his infamous career. He is a vile scoundrel, who, having first robbed and then attempted to murder his master, fled and hid himself from pursuit in the Dismal Swamp of his native state. His whole story was a lie. I am sorry your compassion

> was called forth by so unworthy an object. I do not wonder that
> Eulalia shrunk with horror from the approach of such a wretch; that
> her intuitive delicacy and purity felt the contamination and withered
> under its influence." (165)

This single mention of the Dismal Swamp is used to accentuate the savage qualities of the runaway in contrast to the civilized setting in which Hastings believed Nat the Giant belonged. Moreland's "clarification" serves to transform Nat from an "authen-tic" runaway into a criminal.

But Hentz does not leave the story of Nat the Giant unfinished. On the contrary, his body serves a significant symbolic role in Eulalia's journey to the South. After they are married, Moreland and his northern bride are transferring from a train to a boat when they find themselves in the middle of a runaway chase. The slave had attempted to leave his master on board, but slipped from the deck during the pursuit and fell to his death near the gang plank. The runaway turns out to be Nat the Giant, over whose body Eulalia must step to reach the ship. As a particularized signifier of the more amorphous threat, the body of Nat is both a physical and symbolic boundary between Eula's "false" image of the South and the one into which she is being initiated. As they step over the corpse of Nat while boarding the south-bound boat, the threat is partially laid to rest.

> Eulalia could not sleep. That large, black dripping form, with glazed,
> half-opened eyes, a mouth through which the ghastly ivory gleamed,
> seemed lying before her, huge, cold, and still. . . . there it lay--a black,
> gigantic barrier between her and the fair, flowery land to which her
> bridegroom's hand was leading her. (188)

Moreland becomes worried about his wife's fear of African Americans and its effect on her ability to serve as mistress on the plantation. This situation allows Hentz to argue

through Moreland the notion that free blacks were generally far more degraded than those in captivity. However, it is not until the newlyweds are actually on the plantation that Moreland's assessment of the situation is dramatized for his bride.

The image of Nat the Giant is replaced by the contented darkie image as Moreland wades into the mass of his slaves and shows his bride the power of paternalism. The scene of the couple's arrival at the plantation serves as a microcosm for Hentz's overall strategy—which is the strong point of the book—in that it takees the reader to the edge of his/her fears regarding servile insurrection and then allays them. This Hentz certainly does with Eulalia's fears:

> Eulalia gazed with a kind of fascination on the dark procession, as one after another, men, women, and children, passed along to the gin house to deposit their burdens. It seemed as if she were watching the progress of a great eclipse, and that soon she would be enveloped in total darkness. She was a mere speck of light, in the midst of shadows. How easy it would be to extinguish her! She recollected all the horrible stories she had heard of negro insurrections, and thought what an awful thing it was to be at the mercy of so many slaves, on that lonely plantation. When she saw her husband going out among them, and they all closed round, shutting him in as with a thick cloud, she asked herself if he were really safe. Safe! Napoleon, in the noonday of his glory, surrounded by the national guard, was not more safe—more honoured or adored. (331)

This scene is recapitulated in the climactic threat of insurrection and particularly the character of Vulcan, the blacksmith.[36] All of the threats faced in the latter half of the book are defused by Moreland as he reproduces the ritualized action of the earlier scenes. Instigated by an abolitionist disguised as a preacher, this rebel-

lion is put down, not by force of arms and strengthened slave legislation, but by the reassertion of paternal authority. The planter, again, wades into the midst of his uprising slaves but this time reminds them of the social contract between them: basically, of his duty to them as father/protector and their reciprocal duty to him and his (white) family. Defusing the rebellion in this way serves as a reminder that the system is paternalistic rather than militaristic; it is benignly run, not by force. The use of arms would at least raise questions about the need for force and would, perhaps, lend legitimacy to the insurrection and to the grievances of the slaves, whereas Moreland's solution emphasizes the combination of reason and love as the foundation of the institution.

Rather than choosing to conclude this threat by having all the slaves acquiesce and lay the blame for the near-insurrection entirely at the feet of the abolitionist Brainard, Hentz has one slave refuse to submit. All of the slaves get on their knees before Moreland to beg forgiveness. However,

> Vulcan, the blacksmith, stood firm and unmoved as the anvil in his forge. All his dark and angry passions had been whetted on the edge of the murderous weapons hidden beneath his shop, and made red hot by the flames of the midnight furnace. His stubborn knees refused to bend, and a sullen cloud added luridness to his raven black face.
> (505-6)

With this emergence of Vulcan as lone rebel, Nat, the giant, has been replaced. "His was one of those animal natures which, having had a scent of blood in the breeze, snuffed it with savage delight and, being baffled of its prey, revenged itself for its unslaked thirst in roars of defiance and deeds of violence" (510). As if to explain that there are just some slaves that are surly and unruly and do not fit in with the rest of the

plantation family, Hentz has Vulcan flee to become another "bogus" runaway on the abolitionist lecture circuit.

A visit to Eula's family in Boston provides Moreland an opportunity to expose Vulcan. The entire family attends an abolitionist meeting at Grimby's inn at which a speaker is to appear with a fugitive slave to tell his tale. "Moreland's blood began to seethe in his veins when he saw Vulcan, far more embruted and animal in appearance than when he defied him over the ashes of the dead, ascend the platform and sit down side by side with his own father-in-law" (559). When confronted by Moreland, Vulcan submits and confesses to the crowd. He begs to be taken back by Moreland, but the planter says he must remain free and try to survive on his own as punishment for his rebelliousness; however, being the chivalrous southerner that he is, Moreland does offer Vulcan some money (573). In the end, Moreland's role as the compassionate patriarch extends even to those he considers the most vile and dangerous. His refusal to take Vulcan back is grounded more in his role as disciplinarian than from any fear that Vulcan will be a danger to his otherwise contented slaves. And as Eula has overcome her fear of servile insurrection, her family is gradually acculturated into the southern view.

Perhaps less constructive a punishment than Frank Meriwether gave his slave Abe, Moreland's treatment of Vulcan is meant to *teach* the runaway a lesson. Where Abe's heroism had threatened to deconstruct the plantation narrative, Hentz's portrayal of Vulcan shows African Americans to be incapable of acting on their own. Vulcan has moved from serving a southern master to serving a northern one, the abolitionist. But where he had been a prominent slave on the plantation with responsibility as a blacksmith, now he is merely a ventriloquist's dummy, a mouthpiece for the aboli-tionists. This is perhaps Hentz's attack on slave narratives that were often considered by proslavers to be the work of white abolitionists rather than the escaped slaves

themselves. At any rate, Hentz's portrait of runaway slaves on the abolitionist lecture circuit casts them as liars and fools.

Although Hentz is atypical among proslavery novelists in her willingness to address directly the prospect of slave insurrection, her characterization of slaves follows the standard set by John Pendleton Kennedy. Even though Hentz brings her readers, and Eula, to the brink of rebellion, her African American characters, in the end, are no different from those depicted in other proslavery novels. Discontented slaves are shown to be dupes of northern abolitionists, the "professional" fugitive pleads to be taken back to the plantation, and black characters generally are shown to be wholly dependent upon whites. With this in mind, we might say that *The Planter's Northern Bride* and proslavery novels of the time, were not only responding to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* but to the entire genre of slave narratives. It was not enough, it seems, to recast the master-slave relationship as the white man's burden and the black man's joy; proslavery fiction also called into question the slave's ability to speak for him/herself. As we shall see in the next chapter, runaways could and did speak for themselves, but often, especially in relation to swamps, they found it best to hold their tongues.

CHAPTER SIX

SLAVE NARRATIVES AND

EARLY AFRICAN AMERICAN FICTION

According to John Blassingame, "[w]hile less than five percent of the bonds-men successfully followed the North Star to freedom, fugitives wrote about thiry-five percent of all narratives."[1] Among these, some were sensationalized due to the manner of escape such as the narratives of William and Ellen Craft or Henry "Box" Brown. For the purposes of this chapter, tales of fugitives' ingenious escapes are important for their value in whetting the public's appetite for narratives about heroic slaves. My larger task, though, is to examine how these slave narrators depicted themselves *vis à vis* any threat they might have posed to their former masters and to the institution of slavery. Specifically, I am looking for characterizations involving the slave's relationship to swamplands and other uncultivated regions. As I have already argued that connections between swamps and slaves would tend to signify a threat to the system and to individual planters, I now wish to show to what degree African American writers were willing to raise the specter of slaves in swamps as their litera-ture became more and more consumed by white audiences in the decades preceding the Civil War. Slave narrators generally shied away from depictions of slaves making use of swamplands or exhibiting abilities that might have been termed "woodcraft." Instead, their extraordinary abilities lay in their intellects, thus demonstrating their ability to be good citizens.

Raymond Hedin declares that the interest in these slave narratives lay in its similarities to the picaresque novel and the question: "What kind of man would the slave-on-the-road be?"[2] More specifically, Frances Foster notes four major reasons for the popularity of slave narratives: 1) the conversion experience often described as "heathen" Africans finding Christianity; 2) the local color aspect--the narratives offered northern readers a glimpse into political and social scenes of the South as would travel journals or plantation fiction; 3) violence--the narratives offered salacious or otherwise improper content within a framework or context that made it appropriate reading; and 4) all of the above--they led publishers to be more pro-active in publishing and pub-licizing slave narratives, using "various promotional techniques."[3] Ultimately, the de-velopment of the slave narrative was a process of incorporating the specifics of the enslaved African American's story with existing literary forms. Most important among these were the captivity narrative and the conversion narrative, both of which walked the line between an autobiographer who was passive (to Indians or to God) and one that was self-assertive. The self-determination of this latter type provided a model for Frederick Douglass's prototypical slave narrative which chronicles the emergence and declaration of the self.

> At any rate, Foster points out that in the first half of the nineteenth century
>
> > [l]iterature was expected to enlighten, encourage, and entertain, and it was expected to do so to a larger and more diverse audience than ever before. . . . Coupled with the timeliness of the subject matter were the excitement and potential romanticism of the then popular novels but better because . . . true.[4]

At the same time, however, the slave narrator's "true" story had to conform to the expectations of readers, the demands of publishers, *and* to the overall project of abolitionism. "[T]he slave narrators made an effort to present themselves as *typical*

products of slavery in order to demonstrate that the problem was with the entire system."[5] For Foster, then, the slave narrative developed by the mid-1800s into a Judeo-Christian-informed plot format showing a process by which a chattel was meta-morphized into a man.[6] The plot cycle followed four stages: 1) loss of innocence—when the slave, as a child, realizes that s/he is a slave; 2) realization of alternatives to slavery; 3) escape, after some rash, unplanned, unsuccessful attempts to run away; and 4) freedom obtained—the arrival North/Canada/New Jerusalem.[7]

Within this framework, the wilderness very often played a significant role as a plot device, almost as a character itself. Generally speaking, characterization of the swamp could fall into three categories: the swamp as point of resistance to white authority; the swamp as passageway or temporary utility; and the swamp as place of danger, one of the many obstacles facing a runaway. For the most part, the antebellum slave narratives revealed the swamp as a mixed blessing for the runaway. Yes, it, and any thick woodland, offered the possibility for a quick escape, but it was also a place of danger and death. Rarely was a slave narrator's time spent in a swamp such that it would call to mind images of Nat Turner or stories of maroons committing "depredations" on unsuspecting whites. Instead, any intertextual associations or intended decodings of the slave's time in the swamp were routed toward the Indian Captivity model in which the narrator was victim and the swamp was a hostile, if sometimes helpful, region.

In keeping with the overall project of the genre, especially in the 1850s, after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, slave narrators tended to emphasize the hardships of the wilderness even as woods and swamps provided a means of escape or respite. In fact, such fear became the mother of invention for William and Ellen Craft, whose 1848 escape in disguise was widely known and retold throughout the 1850s.

The Crafts associated woods and swamplands not only with alligators and snakes but with the slave-catchers' relentless chase of their quarry:

> The greatest excitement prevails at a slavehunt. The slaveholders
> and their hired ruffians appear to take more pleasure in this inhuman
> pursuit than English sportsmen do in chasing a fox or a stag. There-
> fore, knowing what we should have been compelled to suffer, if
> caught and taken back, we were more than anxious to hit upon a
> plan that would lead us safely to a land of liberty.[8]

Instead, they journey in disguise: the light-skinned wife posing as a young master with the husband acting as her servant. They make their way up the coast (Savannah, Richmond, Baltimore) by a series of railway cars and steamers, bypassing the more treacherous and typical route endured by runaways.

Likewise, it is the ingenuity of a slave that was emphasized in many narratives as part of the abolitionist campaign to disprove slaveholders' arguments that their chattel were too ignorant and naturally inferior to know what to do with freedom. In his 1855 narrative, for instance, William Grimes spends much of his autobiography telling about his clever manipulations of his master. Though continually thinking and planning for escape, Grimes copes with the present, and trials such as lack of food, and supplements his food allowance while attending to the future by currying the good opinion of his owner. The trust he gains from his owner allows him eventually to hire himself out. Ultimately, as a dock worker, he too escapes by ship and bypasses the wilderness.[9] Some critics such as Keith Byerman would argue that the element of trickery in the slave narratives links the otherwise (arguably) Anglicized genre with the more "pure, unadulterated" African American expressive form: the folktale in which trickster figures like Brer Rabbit are often the central characters and heroes.[10] Or, as Lucinda MacKethan might argue, the metaphor of trickery (comparable to Douglass's

metaphor of literacy) makes the autobiographies "merit the term 'mastery narratives.'
. . . [They] are structured upon a network of metaphors of mastery that explore with
remarkable thoroughness what it means to be a master, not what it means to be a
fugitive slave."[11]

Those fugitives unable to take advantage of escape routes such as the Crafts
used may have been forced to use the swamps, but in their narratives they spend as
little time in the wilderness as possible. For example, early in his narrative, James
Pennington (1850) describes the woods surrounding his plantation as both boundary
and goal; that is, his first chapter offers several examples of slaves trying to reach the
woods but being caught and punished before they can do so. When he himself
escapes, the thick woods form a threshold between the plantation and the rest of the
world, but the wilderness is only a temporary haven. In fact, Pennington spends much
of his time trying to stay on the road, escaping back into the woods when necessary
and then trying find his way back to the road.[12] Except for the danger of running into
whites on the road, it seems perfectly reasonable for runaways to prefer the ease of
journey offered by a roadway. However, sometimes the dramatized avoidance of
these regions becomes melodrama, hammering the reader with the notion that the
woodlands were the last place a runaway wanted to be.

William Green (1853) and companions take the chance of exposing themselves
in order to avoid a swamp. Even though a recent string of runaways has local whites
patrolling more than usual, Green and his companions "walk for almost half a mile on
the causeway. A causeway is a road built above the marsh."[13] It is only with the help
of some Quakers that the band of runaways manages to make good their escape.
When they seek shelter in a grog shop which they have been told aids fugitives, they
are directed to a place in the woods where they have to spend a night before they

can make it to a boat headed for Philadelphia. It is the white Friends, not African Americans, who know how to use the wilderness to their advantage.

The lack of "woodcraft" suggested in many of these stories is amplified in a secondhand tale of a married couple's escape related by Austin Steward (1857). He tells, in a Stowe-like style, the story of these two slaves, sitting in their cabin, discussing what the husband has learned: that the master has been talking to a slave trader and that their names are on the top of the list to be sold. The husband urges flight: "'Oh, dear!' sobbed the wife, 'we shall certainly be retaken and whipped to death; or else we shall starve in the wilderness!'"[14] They escape into the dense, murky woods and lose track of the road. "They found a few roots which relieved them a little; but frequently they lost their way, and becoming bewildered, knew not which way to go. . . . Their shoes were soon worn out . . . and famishing with hunger . . . found themselves too weak to proceed."[15] They lie down waiting for death to come, but the husband is refreshed enough by a nap that he sets out to find food. He comes to a road and to a house, but something keeps him from approaching this house and proceeds to the second. The man in the second house is an abolitionist who gives him provisions and instructions for another meeting at which time he will equip them for their final push to freedom. So, again, the woods become a place of death in the narrative while the help of a white benefactor is crucial to a successful escape. This is an example of a providential narrative, as the narrator's random choice of houses ("something told me . . .") leads him away from certain reenslavement at one door to the unlikely doorstep of his savior.

Some slave narrators relate tales of long-term truancy in the woods and swamps near their plantations, but they remove the element of danger to the system that might normally accompany such rebelliousness. Instead, the empowerment and threat are undercut by the narrator's self-characterization as *victim* reacting to cir-

cumstances. John Brown, for example, writes in his 1855 narrative,

> I had frequently hidden away in the woods and swamps; sometimes
> for a few days only; at others for a fortnight at a stretch; and once
> for a whole month. . . . As long as it lasted, the release from the
> severe labour put upon me was quite grateful; and though I always
> got cruelly flogged on my return, the temptation to get a rest this
> way was too great to be resisted. It may be asked why I did not
> go right off when once I had made a start. I may as well tell the
> truth. I was frightened to take a long journey. I did not know the
> country.[16]

In his final escape, Brown uses the bayous to hide himself and briefly becomes a figure
like Osman as he sleeps "behind logs, like a wild man."[17] Nevertheless, his attempts
at concealment and his fear of alligators overwhelm this brief statement. Easily
"baulked by coming to inlets or *bayous*," Brown's wild man turns to existing tech-
nology and "would follow the bank until I came to a ferry. Here I would stop, and
watching an opportunity, draw the staple that kept the boat fastened, and cross over in
the boat to the opposite side, where I would leave it."[18] In other words, this self-
characterization as a wild man is an image of self-degradation, a state imposed upon
him by circumstances rather than a role he would assume naturally; and it is certainly a
role meant to produce pity rather than anxiety in whites.

Regardless of the stigma attached to slaves making good use of swamplands,
some slave narrators did make reference to such use. For example, Moses Roper, a
noted truant, places a footnote in his 1846 narrative explaining that "it must be recol-
lected, that when a person is two miles from a house, in that part of the country, he
can hide himself in the woods for weeks, and I knew a slave who hid himself for six
months."[19] John Thompson adds in 1856: "At that time the slaves knew little of the

friendly guidance of the north star, and therefore lingered about in swamps and among bushes, where they were fed by their fellow servants during the night, instead of fleeing to the north."[20] In these examples, the *fact* of runaways and truants is brought forward, but the characterization of the slaves as reactive and ignorant signifies anything but a threat to the system. Still, the narrator must balance the characterization of childish victims with evidence that African Americans were clever and worthy of enfranchisement. Just as John Brown thought it worth "paying" for a vacation with a flogging, he found that his expected return to the plantation would buy him time once he eventually made his run to the North. With a reputation for truancy firmly established, Brown knew he could disappear for a few days without his master suspecting that he actually started north. Knowledge of truants and/or maroons, then, is turned into a way of keeping the masters complacent rather than causing them worry. Ultimately, this is part of Brown's repetoire; his trickery is a metaphor for his mastery, just as Douglass had literacy. Brown's discussion of truancy allows him to defuse the swamp-slave connotations that might otherwise be alarming. In effect, he is saying that truancy in the swamp is normal, it is temporary, and it is unpleasant. Furthermore, since the planters are not alarmed, Brown tells his reader, you should not be either. Moreover, this discussion allows Brown to debunk the notion of African American stupidity by using his own truancy, over a long period of time, as part of his escape repetoire. It is as clever as, if less flashy than, Henry "Box" Brown's or the Crafts's plans for escape.

However, more often than not, truancy was anecdotal rather than personal; that is, it was a story told from second- or thirdhand accounts. In this way, the narrator could distance him/herself from the activity. For example, John Thompson tells of an uncooperative slave named Aaron, whose master had determined to sell him. To prevent being sold from his wife, "Aaron remained concealed nearly one year, after

which his wife got a man to purchase him."[21] Inspired by Aaron, Thompson himself

heads to the woods when he is threatened with a whipping, but two weeks in the bush

was all that he could bear. By that time, his owner "needing my services, as it was a

very busy time, told the slaves, if they saw me, to tell me to come home, and that he

would not whip me. This was to me a very welcome message, for I was tired of my

life in the woods."[22] Not only does the anecdote about Aaron serve as a plot device;

it is all the narrator needs to distance himself from the kind of slave who thrives in the

swamp.

Likewise, Solomon Northup's 1853 narrative tells of long-term residency in the

swamps anecdotally (even though he has extensive firsthand experience that will be

discussed later).

> Notwithstanding the certainty of being captured, the woods and
>
> swamps are, nevertheless, continually filled with runaways. Many
>
> of them, when sick, or so worn out as to be unable to perform their
>
> tasks, escape into the swamps, willing to suffer punishment inflicted
>
> for such offences, in order to obtain a day or two of rest.[23]

He also tells of a runaway named Celeste who came to his cabin several nights for

food:

> In the edge of the swamp, not half a mile from Epps' house, was a large
>
> space, thousands of acres in extent thickly covered with palmetto. Tall
>
> trees, whose long arms interlocked each other, formed a canopy above
>
> them, so dense as to exclude the beams of the sun. It was like twilight
>
> always, even in the middle of the brightest day. In the centre of this
>
> great space, which nothing but serpents very often explore—a sombre
>
> and solitary spot—Celeste had erected a rude hut of dead branches that
>
> had fallen to the ground, and covered it with the leaves of the palmetto.

> This was the abode she had selected. She had no fear of Carey's dogs,
> any more than I had of Epps'. It is a fact, which I have never been able
> to explain, that there are those whose tracks the hounds will absolutely
> refuse to follow. Celeste was one of them.[24]

Although Northup follows the genre's tendency to distance the narrator/character from swamp-dwelling slaves in these examples, he also offers some of the best firsthand accounts of swamp life.

Like Northup, Henry Bibb (1849) sees great potential utility in the swamp, but, as with Northup, the swamp can also be a significant obstacle to freedom. After Bibb spends one night alone "in the Red River swamp . . . exposed to wild ferocious beasts which were numerous in that section of the country," he returns to the quarter for his family.

> So we started off with our child that night, and made our way down
> to the Red River swamps among the buzzing insects and wild beasts
> of the forest. We wandered about in the wilderness for eight or ten
> days before we were apprehended, striving to make our way from
> slavery; but it was all in vain. Our food was parched corn, with wild
> fruit such as pawpaws, percimmons, grapes, &c. We did at one time
> chance to find a sweet potato patch where we got a few potatoes;
> but most of the time we were out, we were lost. . . .
>
> . . . What would induce me to take my family and go into the
> Red River swamps of Louisiana among the snakes and alligators, with
> all the liabilities of being destroyed by them, hunted down with blood
> hounds, or lay myself liable to be shot down like the wild beasts of the
> forest? Nothing I say, nothing but the strongest love of liberty, human-

ity, and justice to myself and my family, would induce me to run such a risk again.[25]

In case any reader might think this last statement to be exaggeration, Bibb follows his declaration with a description of their night in the swamp. After they have fallen asleep from exhaustion they are awakened by "the awful howling of a gang of blood-thirsty wolves."[26] Finding himself and his family surrounded, he arms himself with a bowie knife, his wife with a club, and the couple goes on the offensive and chases off the wolves. This episode, however, is merely a foreshadowing of the greater danger (as described by the Crafts), for the next day, they hear bloodhounds, are faced this time with bloodthirsty slave hunters, and are forced to surrender. The failure of this attempt at escape, coupled with the dramatic statement justifying exposing his family to such dangers, emphasizes the hostile nature of the swamp: it is alien territory that might be used to escape but is just as much a barrier.

Solomon Northup's narrative seems exceptional in his descriptions of the slave community's relationship with the swamplands. Although he has a detailed account of his own attempted escape through a swamp in chapter XVII, later chapters go further than any narrative I have seen in suggesting that the swamp, perhaps considered no-man's land by whites, is a possession in the geographical mindset of slaves. Northup explains his need to venture into the swamps:

> The weekly allowance of meal scarcely sufficed to satisfy us. It was customary with us, as it is with all in that region, where the allowance is exhausted before Saturday night, or is in such a state as to render it nauseous and disgusting, to hunt in the swamps for coon and opossum. This, however, must be done at night, after the day's work is accomplished. There are planters whose slaves, for months at a time, have no other meat than such as is obtained in this manner. No objections are

> made to hunting, inasmuch as it dispenses with drafts upon the smoke-
> house, and because every marauding coon that is killed is so much
> saved from the standing corn. They are hunted with dogs and clubs,
> slaves not being allowed use of fire arms. (334)

Nevertheless, even such tame accounts of slaves in swamps, knowing and using a
territory that is unknown and unusable to the planter, is tempered by the genre's
dominant message: slavery is so brutalizing that "after a long and hard day's work, the
weary slave feels little like going to the swamp for his supper, and half the time prefers
throwing himself on the cabin floor without it . . . " (335).

These are the skills of survival learned by desperate and starving people.
Despite this assertion of woodcraft among slaves, the emphasis remains on the brutal-
izing forces of slavery that drive a slave, if he has the strength after a day in the field,
into the swamp to club his supper to death. Among these slaves who use the swamp,
Northup sets himself apart as having a special skill that makes escape possible for him
alone:

> I never knew a slave escaping with his life from Bayou Boeuf. One
> reason is, they are not allowed to learn the art of swimming, and are
> incapable of crossing the most inconsiderable stream. In their flight
> they can go in no direction but a little way without coming to a bayou,
> when the inevitable alternative is presented, of being drowned or
> overtaken by dogs. In youth I had practised in the clear streams that
> flow through my native district, until I had become an expert swimmer,
> and felt at home in the watery element. (297)

Armed with this ability, this point of mastery, he runs off into the swamp with dogs in
hot pursuit:

> From bog to bog, where I had stepped, they could still keep upon

the track, though impeded by the water. At length, to my great joy, I came to a wide bayou, and plunging in, had soon stemmed its sluggish current to the other side. There, certainly, the dogs would be confounded. . . .

After crossing this bayou the water became so deep I could not run. I was now in what I afterwards learned was the 'Great Pacoudrie Swamp.' It was filled with immense trees--the sycamore, the gum, the cotton wood and cypress, and extends, I am informed, to the shore of the Calcasieu River. For thirty or forty miles it is without inhabitants, save wild beasts--the bear, the wild-cat, the tiger, and great slimy reptiles, that are crawling through it everywhere. Long before I reached the bayou, in fact, from the time I struck the water until I emerged from the swamp on my return, these reptiles surrounded me. I saw hundreds of moccasin snakes. Every log and bog--every trunk of a fallen tree, over which I was compelled to step or climb, was alive with them. They crawled away at my approach, but sometimes in my haste, I almost placed my hand or foot upon them. They are poisonous serpents--their bite more fatal than the rattlesnake's. Besides, I had lost one shoe, the sole having come entirely off, leaving the upper only dangling to my ankle.

I saw also many alligators. . . .

About two o'clock in the afternoon, I heard the last of the hounds. . . . If the waters moved, I would go around it, if not, I would venture through. (298-99)

When night comes to the swamp, the frightened runaway hopes to find some human dwelling; however, "it was difficult to determine which I had most reason to fear--

dogs, alligators or men!" (300). So he determines to brave the night in the wilderness, but (again) the wildman image that might ordinarily accompany this plot detail is replaced by the author's romantic ruminations:

> Since the foundation of the earth, in all probability, a human footstep had never before so far penetrated the recesses of the swamp. It was not silent now--silent to a degree that rendered it oppressive,--as it was when the sun was shining in the heavens. My midnight intrusion had awakened the feathered tribes, which seemed to throng the morass in hundreds of thousands, and their garrulous throats poured forth such multitudinous sounds--there was such a fluttering of wings--such sullen plunges in the water all around me--that I was affrighted and appalled. All the fowls of the air, and all the creeping things of the earth appeared to have assembled together in that particular place, for the purpose of filling it with clamor and confusion. Not by human dwellings--not in crowded cities alone, are the sights and sounds of life. The wildest places of the earth are full of them. Even in the heart of that dismal swamp, God had provided a refuge and a dwelling place for millions of living things. (300)

Here Northup seems to be signifying on, or at least participating in, the white romantic literary approach to the swamp as described by David Miller. Speaking particularly of visitors to the Great Dismal Swamp, Miller says, "The view that attracted so many devotees was the epitome of the sentimental version of nature. Full of wilderness and melancholy, it offered a symbolic antidote to civilization's discontents. . . . Sentimentalists were given to morbid rumination on the loss of childhood and the inevitability of death."[27] Such devotees include Edgar Allan Poe whose 1847 poem "Ulalume"[28] features a speaker who wanders through the dismal landscape

pontificating on his lost love. Not actually in the depths of the swamp but at what

Miller identifies as "a point of cleared land in the Dismal Swamp known as the 'Waste

Weir,'"[29] the speaker journeys to the tomb of Ulalume, accompanied by Psyche, his

Soul. Against Psyche's advice, the speaker follows the moon, "Astarte's bediamonded

crescent" (l. 37), toward the tomb. The tension in the poem is developed through the

contrasting images of the glimmering heavens and the grave he unconsiously seeks,

which, once found, makes his heart grow "ashen and sober" (l. 82). Here the focus

shifts from contemplation of the moon and stars to the grave, the corpse, and his

surroundings:

> Ah, what demon hath tempted me here?
> Well I know, now, this dim lake of Auber -
>   This misty mid region of Weir: -
> Well I know, now, this dank tarn of Auber -
>   This ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir." (ll. 90-94)

Miller notes this ending as an identifcation of the speaker with the environment. No

longer is he filled with the hope of transcending death as he was while focusing upon

the stars; instead, the gloomy emotional state brought on by confrontation with the

grave is mirrored in the more immediate, earthly environment of the swamp.[30]

It is this use of the swamp to highlight contrasted emotional states that seems

to dominate the romantic vision of the region. Perhaps Northup was familiar with

William Gilmore Simms's 1840 poem "The Edge of the Swamp"[31] in which the

swamp "awes with strange repulsion" (l. 4). As opposed to Poe's contrast of heaven

and earth to suggest immortality and mortality, Simms's imagery is limited to the

contradictory natures within the swamp itself. "The steel-jaw'd Cayman" (l. 50) is

contrasted with the butterfly that is able to rise above "the rank waters of the turbid

lake" (l. 67). Attracted to the beauty and life of the region, the speaker is likewise

repelled by the imagery of death: "Vast skeletons/ Of forests" (ll.18-19), a crane with a

"skeleton form" (l. 43), and "Fetid shrubs" (l. 74). Despite its suggestions of death and corruption, the swamp beckons to the speaker. Still, it is from the *edge* of the swamp that the speaker offers these views, and he may resist the region's pull if he wishes:

> The example of the butterfly be ours.
> He spreads his lacquer'd wings above the trees,
> And speeds with free flight, warning us to seek
> For a more genial home, and couch more sweet
> Than these drear borders off us tonight. (ll. 84-88)

As Miller points out, the speaker's ability to discriminate the regions and draw a boundary line, choosing to remain on the life affirming side, is "only one side of a fundamentally dialectical process."[32] Where the southern white man might play with these romantic fascinations of the swamp, the runaway slave cannot be so discriminating.

As with the descriptions of runaways after the Southampton insurrection in which the horrors of the swamp are accentuated to emphasize the desperation any one must feel in order to brave the region, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 1842 poem, "The Slave in the Dismal Swamp"[33] relies on the picturesque to invoke hardship. The swamp is a place "Where hardly a human foot could pass" (l. 11). Our first picture of the escaped slave is as "a wild beast in his lair" (l. 15). But he is soon humanized and the cause of his condition placed on the institution:

> A poor old slave, infirm and lame;
>   Great scars deformed his face;
> On his forehead he bore the brand of shame,
> And the rags, that hid his mangled frame,
>   Were the livery of disgrace. (ll. 16-20)

Again, the juxtaposition of the swamplands and those things that can rise above them suggests the difference between heaven and earth, freedom and slavery. The birds that fill the air "With songs of Liberty" (l. 25) almost mock the poor slave who was struck

to earth by "the curse of Cain" (1. 28). Far from a place of freedom, the swamp is just as much a prison as the plantation. Transcendence is for those with wings or those who are not bearing the curse of Cain--those who are not black.

In contrast to these white romantics, Solomon Northup's ruminations in the swamp show that an escaped slave has the sensibility to appreciate (or notice) the contrasting natures of the swamp: a place both living and dead, a haven and a prison, of beauty and decay. But Northup's observations refuse to separate those things that can escape the swamp from those trapped in it. Where Longfellow's birds fly free and Simms's butterfly is a transitory resident of the swamp, Northup's creatures are all a part of the scene. They represent the possibility of life thriving outside of the planta-tion system. Northup's account in this single chapter (XVII) contains more swamp imagery than any other narrative in this study. Though the region is characterized as extremely hostile at times, Northup also shows it to be a place out of reach of the institution. I have argued that other slave narrators have shied away from any depic-tion of the swamps as anything but a hardship to slaves and runaways, but for Northup the swamp does not seem to be a desert region. Still, this narrator does not suggest that slaves in general are making use of the swamps in an attempt to circumvent the system. In fact, Northup seems unique among his fellow slaves in his degree of wood-craft. This self-characterization may deflate any white fear aroused by the image of maroons--replacing it with a single slave who uses his knowledge of the swamp to escape in much the same way that Douglass uses literacy.

In another move that seems uncharacteristic of slave narratives, Northup tells of a plot among the slaves of the area that had occurred the year before his arrival. It was led by Lew Cheney, considered smarter and more treacherous than others of his race, and involved drawing on the strength of many to fight their way to Mexico.

A remote spot, far within the depths of the swamp, back of Hawkins'

plantation, was selected as the rallying point. Lew flitted from one plantation to another in the dead of night, preaching a crusade to Mexico, and, like Peter the Hermit, creating a furor of excitement wherever he appeared.[34]

When he becomes convinced, however, that the project is doomed (even though all is ready to go), Lew tries to curry favor with his master by blowing the whistle. This he does, not by telling the truth of their mission, but by asserting that "their intention was to emerge from their seclusion [in the swamp] the first favorable opportunity, and murder every white person along the bayou." Northup goes on to say that talk of insurrection is not infrequent. Especially during the Mexican war, slaves' hopes were high. "In my opinion . . . there are not fifty slaves on the shores of Bayou Boeuf, but would hail with unmeasured delight the approach of an invading army. . . . They are deceived who flatter themselves that the ignorant and debased slave has no conception of the magnitude of his wrongs."[35] Again, though, the threatening image of the slave in the swamp is ameliorated by the narrator as the leader of the rebellion is proven to be a coward. The threat of a Lew Cheney visiting the plantation and instigating an insurrection is nullified in his characterization, and his exaggerated story of an insurrection is here shown to be ludicrous. Instead, a general insurrection can come only with the approach of an invading army, an outside force.

Besides distinguishing himself from other slave narrators through his repeated references to the swamp, Northup is atypical for another reason. Critic Sam Worley believes that, when compared with the logical ordering and clear mission of a work like Frederick Douglass's *Narrative*, Northup's autobiography seems disorganized and without persuasive purpose. Worley attributes this style to the author's "difficulty in making sense of his experience. . . . Northup's narrative offers a critical vision of slavery which implicitly rejects two prevailing methods for understanding both the

individual slave and the institution as a whole--the rational and the providential and their chief organizational schemes, the temporal and the spatial.[36] Enslavement, for Northup, does not follow the linear progression from ignorance and slavery to knowledge and freedom that we expect in the Franklinesque autobiographies of Douglass and Booker T. Washington. Instead of coming "up from slavery," Northup is first taken from freedom in the North and enslaved in the South, a movement that Worley characterizes as a plunge into chaos. And it is the representation of slavery as a state of chaos that, Worley argues, accounts for the questionable organization of the narrative. The resulting "open nature of Northup's representation of experience is the chief cause of *Twelve Years*'s seeming lack of rhetorical or aesthetic control" and becomes "its greatest distinction."[37]

Perhaps it is the atypical "open nature" that Worley sees in Northup's narrative that accounts for the fact that illustrations of the most threatening aspects of swamps and slaves can be found in Benjamin Drew's 1855 collection of slave testimonies, *The Refugee: A North-Side View of Slavery*.[38] These testimonies, unlike the fully developed narratives typical of the slave narrative genre, were transcribed from fugitive slaves practically the moment they reached freedom in Canada. *The Refugee*'s length and publication date, however, make it worthwhile to include in this study. These freedmen and women were not operating under the same kind of authorial restrictions and goals as the narrators who wrote their own autobiographies. They were not reaching out to white audiences in the way that Douglass and others were, and under such circumstances a different picture of swamps and the South emerges. James Adams tells of his escape from Virginia, noting that he and his companion alternated sleeping and keeping watch "while in the neighbor-hood of settlements. We did not do this in the wilderness--*there* we slept safely, and were quite reconciled."[39] John Little of North Carolina was even more emboldened by the wilderness: "I ran

about there in the bush and was dodging here and there in the woods two years. I ate their pigs and chickens—I did not spare them."[40] And John Warren of Tennessee, who had once spent his nights dreaming of running to the woods, once free asserted that "[t]he white folks down south don't seem to sleep much, nights. They are watching for runaways, and to see if any other slave comes among theirs or theirs go off among others. They listen and peep to see if any thing has been stolen, and to find if any thing is going on."[41] Given such emboldened testimonies, it seems unlikely that these newly escaped slaves were trying to please a publisher or connect with a white audience.

I have asserted above that self-characterization in slave narratives was largely qualified by the circumstances of publication and white readership. Raymond Hedin, for example, considers the authenticating frameworks that usually accompanied a slave's narrative, such as letters from white patrons or witnesses, were apparati that relegated the narrative itself to a subordinate status. Such authenticating devices, however, also signaled the "unavoidable presence of the white audience, the power that resides in that audience's standards of approval or disapproval, and the fact that form can be both instrument and sign of that power."[42] In addition to the former slave's story being subordinated, as Frances Foster argues, the narrator had to suppress the autobiography's function as a quest for individual identity: "To examine, expose, or condemn slavery by relating his experiences as a slave, it was necessary for the narrator to integrate the individual with the symbolic and the subjective with the objective."[43] Hence, writing one's self, the very thing that should be the ultimate act of rebellion against the power of the slaveholder's institution, walked hand-in-hand with objectifying the self.

Along with such attempts to submerge individuality to fit a character type, the depiction of a slave *community* suffers in the publication process. Typically, "[t]he

existence of a slave community which gives opportunity for personal and social fulfillment is barely implied. Occasionally, a description of a dance or a holiday is included in the narrative. Sometimes, the existence of semi-clandestine religious services or a school is indicated," but such positive images of slave life are most often used to present a vivid contrast.[44] Holidays, for example, are mentioned in the narratives of Douglass and others as contrivances of the planter intended to appease and thereby control the slave population: a safety valve. In other words, to a large degree, these narratives give credence to the *tabula rasa* theory of slavery: that there is no culture but what the slaveholders give to the slave.

In a way, then, the narratives themselves had qualities of a safety valve, showing whites that they had nothing to fear from blacks through the constant reiteration of the slave's gentility; and this gentility, I would argue, is characterized by (among other things) the slave's relation to the wilderness. If the slave is seen as having extraordinary skills in woodcraft or feeling at home in the wilderness, the character becomes associated with the savage aspects of those regions, noble or not. As autobiography, however, the narratives that mention a swamp do so because it is part of their story. They may qualify or ameliorate the signifying presence of the region, but it is there because it had been part of their mental as well as physical landscape of plantation life. Basically, a narrative could use swamplands to accentuate the hardships of slavery—asking the reader to imagine the conditions that would drive a person into such a horrid place. At the same time, a narrator would have to defuse the notion that slaves had lives independent of the oppressive eye of the system, so scenes of African Americans making daily use of swamps are rare in slave narratives. Above all, the mission of the slave narratives required their authors to avoid associations with swamplands that might have characterized African Americans as physically threatening to white America.

Interestingly, though perhaps not coincidentally, the most militant expression of maroons comes in a "fake" slave narrative. *Archy Moore, The White Slave; or, Memoirs of a Fugitive* (1855) written by white, northern abolitionist Richard Hildreth, offers a first-person narrative of a slave's escape. In the introduction to the 1856 edition, the author made clear that it was indeed a white author writing through a black persona, but the first edition tried to conceal the race of the author—trying to pass it off as a "genuine" fugitive slave narrative.[45] In Chapter 31, "Freedom in the Woods," Archy flees to the wilderness with his companion, Thomas, who has just killed an overseer. They come upon a man whom they recognize as a slave who had run away some months before. After initial mutual suspicion, the man leads the two new runaways to a maroon community deep within the swamp:

> There were six of them, besides ourselves;--all brave fellows, who weary of of daily task-work and the tyranny of overseers, had taken to the woods, and had succeeded in regaining a savage and stealthy freedom, which, with all its hardships and dangers, was a thousand times to be preferred to the forced labor and wretched servitude from which they had escaped. Our guide was the only one of them whom we had ever seen till now. The leader of the band had fled from his master's plantation in the neighborhood, with a single companion, some two or three years before. They did not then know of the existence of this retreat; but being sharply pursued, they had attempted to cross the pond or swamp, by which it was surrounded,--a thing, I suppose, which had never been tried before. In this attempt they were fortunate enough to light upon the islet, which being unknown to any one else, had ever since served them as a secure retreat. They soon picked up a

> recruit or two; and had afterwards been joined by their other com-
>
> panions. (208-9)

The narrator goes on to describe life in the woods and their means of subsistence by
stealing from planters and dealing with slaves.

> This wild life of the woods has its privations and its sufferings; but
>
> it has too, its charms and its pleasures; and in its very worst aspect, it
>
> is a thousand and ten thousand times to be preferred to that miscalled
>
> civilization which degrades the noble savage into a cringing and
>
> broken-spirited slave;--a civilization, which purchases the indolence
>
> and luxury of a single master, with the sighs and tears, the forced and
>
> unwilling labor, the degradation, misery and despair of a hundred of his
>
> fellow men! Yes-- there is more of true manhood in the bold bosom of
>
> a single outlaw than in a whole nation of cowardly tyrants and crouch-
>
> ing slaves! (209)

Such inflammatory depictions may speak to the relative freedom with which white
abolitionists could write as opposed to their black counterparts. More likely, how-
ever, it seems to harken back to the white romantic's interest in the swamp; certainly,
Hildreth's repeated characterization of the maroons as noble savages, reclaiming the
nobility stolen from them by slavery, speaks to this point.

Eventually separated from his group, Archy later passes for white, only to find
himself witness to the capture and punishment of Thomas, referred to by his captors as
"Wild Tom." The slave hunters had captured a runaway and forced him to tell of the
location of the maroons' camp.

> This Wild Tom had been the terror of the whole neighborhood for
>
> years. The stories of his exploits, circulating among the negroes, had
>
> done infinite damage, and might make many imitators. It was neces-

sary, therefore, to counteract this impression by having his career terminate in a wayto inspire awe and terror.

A pile of light wood was soon collected, and the victim of slaveholding vengeance was placed in the midst of it.

The pile was then lighted, and the smoke and flames began to wreathe above his head. But even yet unsubdued, he looked round on his shouting tormentors with a smile of contemptuous defiance. (304-5)

The characterization of Thomas seems drastically different from images of slaves in other narratives. True, as some fugitive slave narrators did, Hildreth places this swamp-dweller at a distance from his narrator, but that narrator *does* accompany this man, who has killed an overseer, into the swamp. Escaping by force rather than by stealth differentiates this work from the slave narratives it imitates, and the eventual metamorphosis of Thomas into Wild Tom is likewise more akin to Hentz's purging of the recalcitrant Nat or Vulcan than the sort of "slave-becoming-a-man" motif we find in other escapees.

Still, the focus in this novel is on Archy Moore, not Thomas; and it is Archy's ability to pass rather than his use of force that secures his freedom. Because of his light skin color, like the Crafts, Archy has an alternate route to freedom while Thomas becomes a denizen of the swamp. Or like the difference between George and Eliza Harris in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, who move North to freedom, and Uncle Tom, who is gradually pulled southward to the morass of Legree's plantation, Wild Tom's life in the swamp is offered as a foil for the successful escape. The sense that we get in Hildreth's narration is that the nobility offered to the savage by claiming his liberty in the swamp is transitory--that the savagery of the landscape will soon emerge in the maroon.

It is quite understandable that African American fugitives in writing their narratives would avoid the image of the slave in the swamp if the signification of such an image was so problematic. First, as I have argued, the narrators would want to emphasize their role as victim by downplaying the sort of freedom and nobility wood-craft offers the slaves in Hildreth's novel. The concept of maroons committing depredations on local planations and possibly even fomenting rebellion from the recesses of the swamp would work against the slave narrator's goal of eliciting sympathy from white readers. Such imagery may have fanned the flames of a revolutionary abolitionist like John Brown, but it was likely to frighten the majority of their white audience. Likewise, the image is fraught with savage connotations that the fugitives were working against even among abolitionists. It was not enough to expose the evils of slavery; slave narrators had to convince their readers that African Americans were ready for citizenship. Hildreth's suggestion of savagery, noble or not, would not help in this capacity.

In the year that Hildreth claimed authorship of *Archy Moore*, Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote and published *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*, a novel that, as the title says, pays much more attention than did Hildreth's to runaways, maroon communities, and possible insurrection. While the implications of Stowe's foray into the swamp is the subject of the next chapter, we should question at this point, given the boldness of these white abolitionists in portraying fictional maroons, if the earliest African American writers of fiction were likewise afforded more latitude in fiction than slave narrators were given in autobiography.

If the mission of black abolitionists was the same in fiction as in autobiography, I find it puzzling that two of the earliest black writers include swamp scenes in their works. This is similar to the question I asked in the previous chapter: why would proslavery writers conjure forth the image of swamp slaves? The assumption under-

lying my question is that writers of fiction would be able to avoid the disturbing image of the swamp more easily than the fugitive whose story centers on an escape through that region. A further assumption would be that inclusion of that imagery would carry with it particular weight or meaning: that the swamp was worthy of inclusion because of its own signifying power-- the power to conjure forth the most horrific (or thrilling) environment through which the narrative's hero must pass. I will concede to the possibility that swamplands had become such a part of southern fiction that it would be hard to write a novel in the 1850s, set in the South, without including swamps. However, my point here is that these two novels, like their proslavery counterparts, include portraits of maroons and come closer to the Osman/Nat image than the slave narratives dared. Slave narratives have, as we have seen, largely eschewed the image of Nat or Osman, yet William Wells Brown's *Clotel; or, the President's Daughter* (1853) and Martin R. Delany's *Blake; or, the Huts of America* (1859-62) portray maroons as potential dangers to the institution.

Like Hildreth, Brown includes a scene of a runaway's execution early in his tale of the mulatto daughters of Thomas Jefferson.[46] After living a life of (white) privilege, Clotel, along with her mother Currer and her sister, Althesa, are enslaved. Chapter III, "The Negro Chase," follows Currer's journey south and punctuates the seriousness of her situation as she witnesses the fate of a local runaway. Besides allowing the author a chance to portray the brutality of slavery, making it all the more real as he quotes from Natchez newspapers, this chapter may also echo the slave narrative's typical pattern of describing an early escape attempt to give a sense of what obstacles must be overcome. Since it is such an early chapter, it echoes the realization, as in childhood, that one is a slave, followed by a sense of futility in trying to change that situation. The runaway is chased for three pages; then

> [w]hile being tied, he committed an unpardonable offence: he resisted, and for that he must be made an example on their arrival home. A mob was collected together, and a Lynch court was held, to determine what was best to be done with the Negro who had had the impudence to raise his hand against a white man. The Lynch court decided that the Negro should be burnt at the stake. (66)

The grisly scene that follows serves to show the hopelessness of Currer's situation and characterizes the swamplands as obstacle rather than haven. In fact, the swamp is demystified for the white community by a detailed description of the runaway's hiding place as it appeared in the newspaper.

Near the novel's conclusion, however, Brown offers the reader a *re-mystification* of the region and its inhabitants as he narrates events surrounding the Nat Turner insurrection. He explains that Nat Turner had fled to the Dismal Swamp:

> Here the revolted Negroes numbered some hundreds, and for a time bade defiance to their oppressors. The Dismal Swamps cover many thousands of acres of wild land, and a dense forest, with wild animals and insects, such as are unknown in any other part of Virginia. Here runaway Negroes usually seek a hiding-place, and some have been known to reside here for years. The revolters were joined by one of these. (191)

Once inside the swamp, we get a picture of Picquilo, the type of runaway who is not merely a truant but a long-term resident of the swamp.

> He was a large, tall, full-blooded Negro, with a stern and savage countenance; the marks on his face showed that he was from one of the barbarous tribes in Africa, and claimed that country as his native land; his only covering was a girdle around his loins, made of skins of

wild beasts. . . . He had been two years in the swamps, and considered

it his future home. He had met a Negro woman who was also a

runaway; and, after the fashion of his native land, had gone through the

process of oiling her as the marriage ceremony. They had built a cave

on a rising mound in the swamp; this was their home. His name was

Picquilo. His only weapon was a sword, made from the blade of a

scythe, which he had stolen from a neighboring plantation. His dress,

his character, his manners, his mode of fighting, were all in keeping

with the early training he had received in the land of his birth. He

moved about with the activity of a cat, and neither the thickness of the

trees, nor the depth of the water could stop him. He was a bold,

turbulent spirit; and from revenge imbrued his hands in the blood of

all the whites he could meet. Hunger, thirst, fatigue, and loss of sleep

he seemed made to endure as if by peculiarity of constitution. His air

was fierce, his step oblique, his look sanguinary. Such was the char-

acter of one of the leaders of the Southampton insurrection. (191-92)

The inclusion of this brief but detailed portrait of Picquilo is inexplicable at first, but it

is connected to a racial hierarchy, a constant but invisible threat, and perhaps a nod to

the reader's expectations for scenes of the exotic primitive and/or the exotic landscape

of the South. Brown is able to demonize the swamp-dwellers, making them into phan-

tom bogeymen, while justifying their cause through the mulatto character of George

Green. By bifurcating the Southampton rebels into the material, articulate George

Green on the one hand and the mysterious, ethereal Picquilo on the other, Brown

balances the demands of a white audience for a character with whom they can identify

and the looming threat behind the reasoned argument for emancipation.

Widespread insurrection, however, is the central idea of Delany's *Blake*.[47] The novel is divided into two sections; the second part focuses largely on revolution on Cuba, but the first part may be considered a fantastic recasting of the slave narrative genre. It includes the typical beginning and ending: Henry (Blake) is given reason to run away when his master in Natchez sells his wife. Although his wife is still absent at the section's conclusion, there is a reunion in Canada of the other Natchez slaves whom Henry has helped to escape. In between, however, Delany's protagonist takes the longest route North of any runaway in literature. He journeys throughout the southern states, meeting with plantation slaves and entrusting certain leaders with his plan for ultimate emancipation. Only after this mission is completed, once the conspiracy is set in place, does Henry return to Natchez and aid his fellow slaves from the Franks plantation to escape.

Delany's work might be expected to include scenes of swamps full of Nat Turners ready to emerge and cut the throats of white planters in a general insurrection. And the author *does* give a nod to this source of anxiety when Henry first runs away from the Franks plantation. Like slave narrator John Brown, who uses his reputation as a truant to buy himself some time when he eventually makes his run North, Henry uses the planter's expectation of truancy to his advantage. He tells his friends/accomplices:

> " I now go as a runaway, and will be suspected of lurking about in the thickets, swamps and caves; then to make the ruse complete, just as often as you think it necessary, to make a good impression, you must kill a shoat, take a lamb, pig, turkey, goose, chickens, ham of bacon from the smoke house, a loaf of bread or crock of butter from the spring house, and throw them down the old waste well at the back of the old quarters, always leaving the heads of the fowls lying about and

the blood of the larger animals. Everything that is missed don't hesitate
to lay it upon me, as a runaway, it will only cause them to have the less
suspicion of your havingsuch a design." (41)

In addition, when Henry is spreading his plan through the state of South Carolina,

[f]or every night of sojourn in the state he had a gathering, not one
of which was within a hut, so closely were the slaves watched by
patrol, and sometimes by mulatto and black overseers. These
gatherings were always held in the forest. Many of the confidants of
the seclusions were the much-dreaded runaways of the woods, a class
of outlawed slaves, *who continually seek the lives of their masters.*
(110; emphasis added)

Despite this fearsome portrait of outlawed slaves, Delany sees swamp-dwelling
maroons as prisoners of the swamp and associates them with the conjurers who
perpetuated superstition on every plantation. However, he does credit the conjurer's
influence over average plantation slaves and sees the benefit of including them in his
plan.[48] With the support and blessing of the Dismal Swamp conjurers, the more
superstitious slaves are certain to follow Blake.

I will develop the questions raised by these representations of maroons in the
next chapter in relation to Stowe's *Dred.* The question at this point concerns the
relation between African American writers of fiction and slave narrators. Perhaps the
best way to approach this question is through Katherine Fishburn's argument that "the
slave narratives stand in for the absent bodies of the slaves."[49]

For the ex-slaves the problem of their embodiment led most
immediately to the problem of representation: how to document the
terrible abuse of their enslaved bodies without appearing to identify
their "better selves" with what their liberal humanist audience would

perceive as a debased physicality. But, at the same time, the problem of embodiment was the problem of enslavement. In other words, the ex-slaves had a certain cultural permission and narrative expectation that they would talk about the body. The dilemma facing them was what to do with this expectation. Some shied away from providing too much detail, either unwilling to offend their audience too much or out of a basic reluctance to share such private experiences with even a sympathetic public.[50]

I would extend Fishburn's discussion of the bodily or physical aspects of the slave's story to include depictions of the swamp that is certainly, as in the work of romantic poets of the day, the geographical region most analogous to the lower bodily stratum. In presenting a self that has transcended slavery to reach freedom, that has unleashed the body by unleashing the mind, whose very act of writing is a sign of the intellect triumphing over the material, the slave narrator might naturally shy away from the "taint" of the bodily swamp, as Fishburn says they would shy away from other bodily details of their enslavement. The fiction writers, however, while maintaining the same romantic sensibilities that privilege the mind over the body, could represent an arti-culate, intelligent self in the form of a George Green or a Blake while maintaining the bodily threat signified by other black characters still lurking in the swamps.

CHAPTER SEVEN

STOWE'S *DRED* AND THE DISCOURSE OF VIOLENCE IN THE 1850s

In 1856 Harriet Beecher Stowe created her own version of the Nat Turner figure offered by Hildreth's Wild Tom and Brown's Picquilo. Her title, *Dred: A Tale of the Dismal Swamp*,[1] promised not only to investigate further the mysterious character of the maroon but also to exploit fully the resonant threat to the peculiar institution offered by the swamp-dwellers. For those late twentieth-century readers who have criticized *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for emphasizing martyrdom over rebellion, advocating colonization to Africa, and colonizing African American literature by appropriating slave narratives for her own purpose, *Dred* offers the potential for Stowe's redemption. As her second anti-slavery novel, *Dred* is a more mature, well-informed, and dialectical novel (in relation to the slave narratives) than *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Written at a time of increased hostility and frustration between pro- and antislavery forces, *Dred* offers a more radical (therefore more satisfying to the modern reader) solution to the problem of southern slavery. By choosing a swamp-dwelling maroon leader as her title character, Stowe had the chance to investigate more fully aspects of African American life on the plantation, depths of a life outside the white world that does not seem to exist in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Ultimately, by viewing this novel and this character in relation to Uncle Tom and to her fellow abolitionist writers of the 1850s, I hope to develop a sense of the *degrees* of Stowe's radicalization. The failure of Dred's rebellion and the flight of the fugitives from the swamp to Canada suggest, on the surface, that Stowe was merely repeating the politics of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Where she

initially wields the image of the maroon as a threatening weapon to make southerners change their ways, she eventually repents and destroys her own violent imagery. In the end, then, is Dred just another exotic stereotype? Did Stowe conjure him forth, raising the stakes in the literary battle over slavery, bringing southern anxiety to a fevered pitch, only to release that energy, that threat, much as Caroline Hentz and other proslavery writers had done by conjuring forth the bogeyman in order to destroy and dispel him?

Where Stowe's contemporaries may have been concerned that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was stirring up too much sectional animosity, *our* contemporaries see her recapitulating the crime of objectifying African Americans. Although professional writers and critics of the South, such as William Gilmore Simms, postured over the blatant lies about their region they accused Stowe of portraying, we should remember Nehemiah Adams's claim that the average southerner found much of the novel to be familiar. They loathed Legree and cried for Tom, but objected to Stowe's characterization of *whites*.[2] Though Adams's claim may have been just one more political spin by a proslaver, it seems reasonable that southerners would react this way. After all, Uncle Tom's devotion and fidelity do nothing to shake the stereotypes of simple, contented slaves found in Kennedy and Gilman. Richard Yarborough sees this stereotyping highlighted especially in the contrast between Topsy and Little Eva. More generally, he observes, "In Stowe's world, to be born black is to be born pagan, but paradoxically close to a state of grace; once a character's heathen African nature is controlled, redemption becomes a possibility."[3] Stowe's rebellious slaves, George and Eliza Harris, are mulattoes, and their cleverness and boldness are easily attributable to their Anglo ancestors, should a proslavery southern reader wish to see them this way. In addition, their actions are the result of unreasonable masters, a premise southerners dismiss, according to Adams, as unlikely. Even so, George Harris offers Stowe the

potential for presenting a black man who is a threat to the system, but he too is tempered by Christian virtue and his wife's domesticating influence. Yarborough argues that

> Stowe's treatment of [George] Harris reveals her deep reluctance to portray the pent-up rage of an intelligent, strong-willed male slave without marbling it with a Christian restraint that entails the eschewing of violence. No such qualification is necessary in the case of Uncle Tom, who stands in antithetical juxtaposition to the aggressive, embittered George.[4]

As Tom moves further and further south to his doom on the swamp-laced plantation of Legree, George and Eliza move north to freedom.

However, while Tom transcends his earthly troubles in a martyr's death, the Harrises transcend the troubles of North America by emigrating to Africa. If this ending is troubling to late twentieth-century critics for its convenient removal from the continent of the only rebellious blacks in the novel, Robert Levine notes that Stowe's contemporary Martin Delany "regarded Stowe's novel as the work of a racist colonizationist, [and] attacked what he regarded as Douglass's naive celebration of Stowe."[5] Meanwhile, the family Tom left behind on the Shelby plantation in Kentucky find themselves in an enlightened community under the direction of young George Shelby, who makes amends for his father's deal with the devil (the slave trader Haley) by becoming the most benign of southern patriarchs, freeing his slaves, and paying them to work the land. With the benefit of historical hindsight, we may view this utopian community as prefiguring postbellum southern sharecropping; but in relation to her southern contemporaries, Stowe's solution seemed an exaggerated version of the sort of enlightened southern aristocrat we see in Kennedy's Frank Meriwether or Gilman's Arthur Marion. Stowe's first attempt to end slavery through literature, then, can be

seen to owe too much to the plantation genre's politics as well as its form. However, the novel and the author also have clear connections to African American writers.

Despite the widespread belief that Uncle Tom was based primarily on slave narrator Josiah Henson, that claim is more Henson's fabrication than a direct "borrowing" of material by Stowe.[6] Still, Stowe did use abolitionist publications including slave narratives as a guide for creating her character. This cultural borrowing is characterized as cultural theft in Ishmael Reed's satire *Flight to Canada* (1976) in the character of Uncle Robin, who "had turned down an offer from Jewett and Company of Boston's best-known writer and had put his story in the hands of Quickskill," a fugitive slave. "Quickskill would write Uncle Robin's story in such a way that . . . to lay hands on the story would be lethal to the thief. That way his Uncle Robin would have the protection that Uncle Tom (Josiah Henson) didn't."[7] At the novel's end, Harriet Beecher Stowe calls Uncle Robin to bid on his story. Reed's mixture of fictional and historical characters points to the lasting impact of Stowe and her work as cultural icons as opposed to the obscure or anonymous sources on which she relied. As the best-selling book of the time (and up to that time), *Uncle Tom's Cabin* became the monolith against which southern responders had to argue and around which African American writers had to work to present their own identities. Yarborough explains:

> In bequeathing to Afro-American protest novelists writing after her
> a literary form and stance as well as a white audience with certain
> strong expectations, Stowe also helped to establish a range of charac-
> ter types which served to bind and restrict black authors for decades.
> As a result, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was an abiding, at times daunting,
> paradigmatic influence for most early Afro-American fiction writers,
> casting its shadow over their diverse attempts to define realistically the

black capacity for heroic action while not alienating the white audience that they felt they absolutely had to hold in order to bring about political change.[8]

While I do not argue with these critiques of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*'s influence, I would question the monologic/monolithic nature of Stowe herself. Rather, as proslavery southerners engaged in a dialogic response to her first novel, increasing the tenor and the stakes, and she responded with more venom in the character of Dred, so did African-American writers respond to her and she to them.

Robin Winks's discussion of Henson's self-promotion of his own narrative by claiming to be Stowe's model for Uncle Tom shows, at the very least, one former slave's attempt to garner financial restitution for Stowe's use of "black material," and at best to demonstrate a refusal to let Stowe have the final word on African American life and slavery. Stowe herself, in the wake of her instant celebrity after the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, began more fully educating herself in order to answer the charges of inaccuracy leveled at her by southern critics. While preparing her *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, she certainly became an authority on slave testimonies and legal precedents regarding slavery. In answering charges regarding *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, she investigated further into the institution. In letters cited by Joan Hedrick, we see that

> [s]he was particularly affected by reading the legal cases: "The laws, records of courts, & judicial proceedings are so incredible, as to fill me with amazement whenever I think of them." [HBS to Eliza Cabot Follen, December 16, 1852, Dr. Williams's Library, London]. She mentioned this material again in another letter, commenting, "It is worse than I supposed or dreamed" [HBS to Lord Denman, January 20, 1853, HL].[9]

But her celebrity also brought her into personal contact with a great number of famous African Americans such as Sojourner Truth and William Wells Brown. Whereas many critics see her interactions with these people as marked by condescending, paternalistic racialism, Robert Levine argues that, as a result of these meetings, she moved away from some of the views she espoused in *Uncle Tom* such as her apparent advocacy of African colonization. In an examination of a meeting between Stowe and Sojourner Truth, Levine reads the latter as putting on a show for the former much as Eric Sundquist sees Nat Turner "putting on" his white interrogator and ghost writer Thomas Gray.[10] Ultimately, Levine warns, "We need to resist [our own] paternalistic tendency of regarding blacks as always the "victims" of racialist representations."[11]

Largely because Stowe and William Wells Brown had met in England after Brown had published his novel, Levine suggests that *Clotel* may "well be 'present' in *Dred*."[12] In particular, Levine points to the similarity in symbolic characterization of both Dred and Brown's swamp-dweller Picquilo as they are both associated with cholera epidemics. Certainly more than a coincidence, the question remains whether this similarity reveals a homage to Brown by Stowe or theft of material. In either case, Stowe does expand on Brown's character in *Dred*.

In arguing that William Wells Brown was actually reclaiming his identity as a black man by performing what was in essence a minstrel show in his role as a professional fugitive speaking to abolitionist audiences, Paul Gilmore notes that black masculinity in his fiction was likewise conditioned by audience expectation. Wells includes in his novel a character similar to Stowe's George Harris, a civil, articulate, and rebellious mulatto named George Green, for whom the maroon Picquilo is a foil. Gilmore sees the two characters this way:

> Picquilo stands mute. . . . George rebels because of his "love of
> freedom"; Picquilo fights for "revenge" because of his "barbarous . . .

character" (213-14). Picquilo becomes an animalistic spirit rising out
of the Virginia swamps, the black, atavistic Nat, the mirror image of
the submissive Sambo. . . . Because Picquilo cannot speak for himself,
because he must always be represented, he cannot account for his
actions.[13]

Besides a connection between Dred and Picquilo, we can see similarities between
Brown's characters and those in Stowe's earlier novel. Both works split black repre-
sentation between the mulatto character who escapes to live happily-ever-after with
his wife in a foreign country and the dark-skinned counterpart left in a southern
swamp. Picquilo is "tall, full-blooded Negro, with a stern and savage countenance; the
marks on his face showed that he was from one of the barbarous tribes in Africa."[14]
And Uncle Tom is "a large, broad-chested, powerfully-made man, of a fully glossy
black, and a face [of] truly African features."[15]

It does not seem too far a stretch to argue that, while Stowe may have signified
upon Brown by borrowing some traits from Picquilo to form Dred, Brown was also
signifying upon Stowe's Uncle Tom. For his part, Brown's offering of characters such
as George and Picquilo suggests a redirection of Stowe's initial energies. Similar to
George Harris in more than first name, George Green represents one half of the novel's
male resistance to tyranny. But where Harris's foil is the feminized Uncle Tom, who
practices passive resistance to Legree's tyranny, Green's foil is the hyper-masculine
maroon. Where Stowe is often criticized for repressing Harris's rebellious energy,
Brown is likewise taken to task for Green's transformation (and translocation). Ac-
cording to Christopher Mulvey, George Green and Clotel's daughter Mary, "escape
only through fantasies of fairy-tale and romance fiction and through George's denial of
a self which had led him earlier to speak as powerfully at the bar of history as any
European freedom fighter."[16] In both cases, the solution to the problems of race and

slavery seem to lie in removing the potential for African American rebellion in North America. But perhaps it is the unreal/fantastic flavor of Brown's ending that sends us back to the swamp where the very real followers of Nat Turner still reside. In effect, though muting his characters' resistance and offering a non-threatening resolution, Brown has left behind a lingering, invisible threat. As M. Giulia Fabi puts it, "whereas Brown foregrounds the traditionally relational ideal of female courage as devotion and self-sacrifice, his male heroes loom in the background as powerful, cunning, and potentially violent freedom fighters."[17] In other words, George Green's escape may be a sort of deportation of rebellious energy, but Brown leaves a piece of it, a piece of George, behind in the hidden form of Picquilo.

In addition to answering in *Dred* the increased tenor of her southern detractors, Stowe was in a position to be more in tune with the creative work and thinking of her African American counterparts. The fact that she was answering both parties in her second anti-slavery novel might account for what is universally considered her extreme ambivalence to her subject matter. She wanted to threaten the South with its much feared "St. Domingo hour," slave insurrection, but she was reluctant to move even as far as Brown in allowing such a threat to linger--to be her ultimate answer to the problem of slavery. At any rate, we should take seriously Robert Levine's assertion that Stowe's "encounters and exchanges" with African Americans between 1852 and 1856 "had a major impact on the racial politics of *Dred* . . . [which] can be regarded as an African American-inspired revision of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*."[18]

In her introduction to William C. Nell's *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution* (1855), Stowe comments that she hopes Nell's portraits will give African Americans greater self-respect and remind whites that acts of heroism are not dependent upon complexion. While a fairly mild statement in itself, one must wonder to

what degree she is advocating the stance Nell takes in presenting portraits of such notable of "patriots" as Nat Turner and the maroons of the Dismal Swamp. Nell's section on the Southampton Insurrection takes care to note, but not dispute, that Nat Turner was considered a prophet and focuses not on the actions of the rebels but on the "slaughter" of one hundred innocent slaves by whites during the reprisal.[19] His section on the Virginia maroons is filled with admiration for their accomplishments in evading the slave catchers while carrying on trade with local slaves and merchants for generations. He predicts that the slave community there will thrive "until slavery is abolished throughout the land."[20] Sandwiched in between these two portraits is a brief account of the rebellion aboard the slave ship *Creole* led by Madison Washington, who is the subject of Frederick Douglass's novella "The Heroic Slave." Douglass was wise in choosing this historical figure as his subject since Washington was characterized in documents concerning the rebellion as more a revolutionary like his namesakes than a savage insurrectionist. Placing Turner and the Dismal Swamp maroons alongside such a figure suggests heroism by association.

Dred was published during the time referred to by historian Harvey Wish as "the insurrection panic of 1856." I by no means want to credit Stowe with precipitating this crisis, but I see no coincidence in the fact that the two coincide. Rather, it was the increased pitch in the battle between anti- and proslavery forces that produced both. Stowe biographer Joan Hedrick explains that "sectional warfare that prevailed in Kansas between 1854 and 1858 was most intense between December 1855 and September 1856," the time during which Stowe wrote and published *Dred*.

> Stowe had toyed with the idea of calling her novel "Canema" after the plantation belonging to her southern heroine, but the events of the summer of 1856 convinced her that a more terrific-sounding title would strike the right chord. On May 21, 1856, proslavery men raided

Lawrence, Kansas, seizing and torching property and destroying the presses of two antislavey newpapers. In retaliation, John Brown and his sons murdered five proslavery men in a night massacre at Pottawotamie Creek. Just a few days earlier the eloquent antislavery senator from Massachusetts, Charles Sumner, had been attacked by a southern colleague on the floor of the Senate and beaten so badly that it took him three years to recover. "The book is written under the impulse of stormy times," Stowe wrote the Duchess of Aryle, "how the blood & insults of Sumner and the sack of Lawrence burn within us I hope to make a voice to say."[21]

Hedrick also notes that Stowe would regularly read radical materials, more radical than those produced by the Garrisonian abolitionists, but that she feared their circulation among the masses.[22] In the summer of 1856, however, her disapproval of radical means to end slavery was tested. Whether attributable to her increased knowledge of slave laws, her increased interaction with African Americans, or her increased anger at the wounding of her friend Sumner, Stowe moved away from the passive resistance embodied in Uncle Tom by choosing a more radical titular character: Dred, the insurrectionist maroon. The image of Dred is a powerful weapon for Stowe to wave at proslavery forces, but it is too far removed from her own sensibilities for her to maintain. The threat of slave insurrection builds throughout the novel only to fizzle out in the anti-climactic death of Dred and the loss of resolve among his followers. Stowe's handling of Dred's characterization, therefore, is precarious; she must make him frightful, a "big stick" waved at the heads of the southern slave owners, but she must also make his cause just and his rationale sound even if his conclusions are extreme.

One way for Stowe to accomplish the former goal was to enshroud Dred in mystery, so for the first seventeen chapters of the novel Dred is an unspoken presence in the swamp while Stowe focuses on life on the plantation, Canema. The mistress of that plantation and heroine of the novel, Nina Gordon, has just returned to her plantation home from spending time as a belle in the city, a lifestyle that we are led immediately to perceive as insipid and that Nina herself will eventually reject along with her equally insipid suitors. Nina's brother Tom is a brute whose attempts to claim Canema as his inheritance are thwarted by Nina until she dies in a cholera epidemic. She has another brother, Harry, a mulatto who keeps the secret of their shared blood from her. Nina's eventual suitor and suitable mate is Edward Clayton, an enlightened southerner (he reads the *Liberator*) who, along with his sister Anne, plans to educate and eventually manumit his slaves. Nina's death causes trouble for all as Tom is given free rein to terrorize the slaves of Canema, especially Harry, who flees to Dred's community in the swamp. Although he is the leader of the maroons, Dred is actually a wanderer of the swamps: helping runaway slaves to establish themselves in various communities throughout the Great Dismal, waiting for God to give him the sign that it is time for him to strike with righteous vengence against the slaveholders. Other major black characters are Tiff, a seemingly Uncle Tom-ish character who cares for two white children, the children of his dead mistress whose husband is an abusive drunk, and Milly, whom most critics consider to be the voice of the New Testament arguing against Dred's Old Testament cries for vengeance.

Like Brown's Picquilo, Dred exists at the margin of society as well as of the novel, since he does not appear for eighteen chapters. Unlike Picquilo, Stowe's maroon has a voice of his own, though an antiquated, Old Testament voice of doom. What seems most radical about Stowe's creation (taking her representation of the

maroon a step further than Brown's) is the way in which Dred's existence in the swamp is well-known to slaves on the plantations, but he seems a mystery to the whites.

> The negroes lying out in the swamps are not so wholly cut off from society as might at first be imagined. The slaves of all the adjoining plantations, whatever they may pretend, to secure the good-will of their owners, are at heart secretly disposed, from motives both of compassion and policy, to favor the fugitives. They very readily perceive that, in the event of any difficulty occurring to themselves, it might be quite necessary to have a friend and protector in the swamp; and therefore they do not hesitate to supply these fugitives, so far as they are able, with anything which they may desire. (I, 257-58)

His first appearance comes as a surprise to the reader, but the character he surprises on the road, Harry, takes this unexpected appearance in stride. Robert Levine argues that the novel has, up to this point, been written in a style very near to other works of the plantation genre. As Harry and the other slaves know of Dred's existence, readers (but for the title) have not yet been initiated into his world; thus, "readers are linked with the plantation whites." With this sudden appearance of the title character, then, white readers have a "revelation" concerning the lives of slaves that has heretofore been concealed knowledge, especially the "'presence' of black revolutionism."[23]

Those southern writers who created a sense of dread through images of insurrection did so in order to overcome that fear that must have been prevalent among southern slaveholders. For Stowe, however, the initial role of the frightful image was to show those fears to be well-founded. Stowe's goal in this regard is echoed by Dred:

> "Let us die, then! . . . What if we do die? What great matter is that?

If they bruise our head, we can sting their heels! Nat Turner--they killed him; but the fear of him almost drove them to set free their slaves! Yes it was argued among them. They came within two or three votes of it in their assembly. A little more fear, and they would have done it." (II, 89)

Dred calls himself "a sign unto this people" (II, 125) and that is how Stowe uses him. If white southerners would not listen to reason, perhaps they would listen to threats.

Although the author says in her preface that her choice of the southern landscape had been partly an artistic one, for its "vivid lights, gloomy shadows, and grotesque groupings" (I, iii), these same images were her tools for pushing Dred more toward his homonymous characterization: invoking a sense of *dread*. The American mythos of civilization hewed from the wilderness is particularly resonant in the southern regions belted by "grotesque" swamplands. These uncultivated, seemingly unuseable, spaces serve as a metaphor for the institution of slavery wherein the planters are surrounded by their chattel who are seemingly serene but potentially dangerous. This basic fear is brought up in Caroline Hentz's *The Planter's Northern Bride* when Eulalia imagines her forthcoming move to the South: "she was going to a land of strangers, to be surrounded by a girdle of darkness, from which there was no escape,--where, she had learned to believe, the fires of insurrection were for ever smouldering."[24] For Hentz (and her heroine Eula), this fear is quenched by the power of love and reason that the southern planter holds over his slaves. But this girdle of darkness, the image of an uncontrollable mass, suggests both the planter's minority status, surrounded by the enslaved black population, and the southern geography, plantations and farms often miles apart, surrounded by the foreboding swamplands. Both are images of the precariousness of society in the South, threatened as it is by people and places at odds with the social order.

Mary Douglas suggests why these images would be so important in the plantation novel. These desert spaces both threaten and define the social order:

> Granted that disorder spoils order; it also provides the materials of pattern. Order implies restriction; from all possible materials, a limited selection has been made and from all possible relations a limited set has been used. So disorder by implication is unlimited, no pattern has been realised in it, but its potential for patterning is indefinite. This is why, though we seek to create order, we do not simply condemn disorder. We recognise that it is destructive to existing patterns; also that it has potentiality. It symbolises both danger and power.[25]

While within the confines of the plantation, both in terms of being geographically located and situated by a certain task and status, slaves were defined and bound by the laws of the institution. Maroons, however, were "outlaws" in more than one sense of the word. They were declared to have broken the law by removing themselves from its control, but they also placed themselves outside the law, perhaps the greater threat to the mindset of southern whites. Douglas asks us to "consider beliefs about persons in a marginal state. These people who are somehow left out in the patterning of society, who are placeless. They may be doing nothing morally wrong, but their status is indefinable."[26] In the character of Dred, Stowe can take this unarticulated existence to the extreme--a man whose marginalized status within society is underscored by his movement to the physical margins of society. Once there, however, he becomes a major threat to the social order: the implicit threat of the slave on the plantation is magnified by his escape to the swamp. As Douglas puts it, "[t]he man who comes back from these inaccessible regions brings with him a power not available to those who have stayed in the control of themselves and of society."[27] Besides representing a space that is not under the control of society, in which runaways may be free to

carve out their own space, the psychological threat of the swamp is its potential for bringing that disorder across the boundaries of society. Stowe presents such a threat, for when Dred crosses that boundary from the swamp to society he is bringing the swamp with its dangerous implications with him.

In his first encounter with Harry, Dred brings the energy of the swamp into Harry's life, threatening the social order to which Harry still adheres. Stowe's description blurs the distinction between the runaway and his environment as Harry hears "a deep voice from the swampy thicket beside him." Then it is some time before we see a man; watching instead the movement of the briers and listening to the "crackling in the swamp" (I, 240). Likewise, when Dred disappears, with one bound, back into the thicket, Harry is left addressing the swamp itself (I, 242-43). The effect on Harry seems infectious. According to David Miller, Dred saves the mediocre novel.

> Largely through this startling image, *Dred* does sporadically radiate energy and even achieves a degree of thematic coherence, despite the polemical character of many of the dialogues, frequent interludes of preaching, and a listless plot. . . . Stowe periodically interrupts the narrative to return her reader to the swamp and its inhabitants. These passages intrude like a haunting leitmotiv, conjuring up a saturnalia of half-realized moods and mental images.[28]

As with the swamp in Kennedy's *Swallow Barn*, acting as a catalyst for mobilizing an otherwise soporific gentry, Miller sees Stowe's swamp as energizing not just the characters but the novel itself.

It is in the second volume of the novel that attention shifts more heavily to the swamp as Harry and his wife, Tiff and the children, and even Edward Clayton all seek refuge there. Stowe recognizes that potential energy within nature, within the boundless regions, and in her romantic fashion dwells often on its mystical power, mostly

through the character of Clayton. At a camp meeting in volume I, in answer to his sister's annoyance at the boisterous way slaves were praising God at the camp meeting, Clayton says:

> See, in this wood, among these flowers, and festoons of vine, and arches of green, how many shocking, unsightly growths! *You* would not have had all this underbrush, these dead limbs, these briers running riot over trees, and sometimes choking and killing them. You would have well-trimmed trees and velvet turf. But I love briars, dead limbs, and all, for their very savage freedom. (I, 309)

Clayton's affinity for his slaves notwithstanding, the statement is dripping with dramatic irony as seen in the correlation between the limbs choked by briars and Dred's plan for the white establishment. The unwitting allegiance Clayton strikes here is important for seeing Stowe's stand on the potential of this natural force. Clayton's love of the swampy imagery is typical of the romantic thrill mixed with revulsion, mentioned by Miller.[29] Wholly a love of nature at a distance, this romantic view is characterized by brief sojourns into the wilds rather than complete immersion. Stowe's view in this regard becomes clearer as the runaways tend to the injured Clayton in the open air:

> As air and heat and water all have a benevolent tendency to enter and fill up a vacuum, so we might fancy the failing vitality of the human system to receive accessions of vigor by being placed in the vicinity of the healthful growths of nature. All the trees which John saw around the river of life and heaven bore healing leaves; and there may be a sense in which the trees of our world bear leaves that are healing both to body and soul. He who hath gone out of the city, sick, disgusted, and wearied, and lain himself down in the forest, under the fatherly

> shadow of an oak, may have heard this whispered to him in the leafy
> rustlings of a thousand tongues. (II, 289-90)

Here Stowe begins to distinguish between the nature that Clayton finds so soothing and that with which Dred is associated: a threatening nature. "Amidst the wild and desolate swamp, here was an island of security, where nature took men to her sheltering bosom. . . . Life began to look to him like a troubled dream, forever past" (II, 290). It is not the swamp itself, then, but this island in the swamp, the sanctuary free from both the dangers of the swamp and the confines of society, that offers relief and rejuvenation. The swamp itself and Dred, as the character associated with the mediated realm between the sanctuary and "civilization" proper, are reaffirmed as signifiers of chaos. All of this is Stowe's way, and Clayton's, of reestablishing boundaries relative to the energy of this boundless region.

Although Dred may see his clearing in the swamp as a staging ground from which to launch an assault (the wilds being unleashed against the order of society), Stowe sees it as a space in which to reproduce society, albeit new and improved. The uncontrolled wilderness of the swamp, then, becomes a space of purification through which the runaways pass on their way to renewal, to starting over. Dred, however, is or has become a part of those wilds. As with Hildreth's Wild Tom, Stowe leaves some question as to the nobility of the savage by making the swamp a manifestation of Dred's interiority. As Miller puts it, "Dred is so much in spirit with his natural surroundings, so completely a product of their influence, that the description of the swamp moves easily from outer to inner worlds."[30] The domestic region of the clearing is more a place for the new runaways and his wife, while Dred spends most of his time in the swamps where he is not only at home but revels like a hunting dog in "an ecstacy of enjoyment," experiencing "a keen and almost fierce delight, which must

excel the softest seductions of luxury" (II, 6). Stowe's commitment to domestic (thus social) order causes her to pull back from her support of Dred.

One way in which Stowe seems to distance herself from her character is through his characterization as a maniac. Rather than simply rejuvenating Dred, the swamp, with its luxuriant, uncontrolled growth, transforms his mind as well as body. In the first description of him, Dred seems to be insane: "But there burned in [his eyes], like tongues of flame in a black pool of naphtha, a subtle and restless fire, that betokened habitual excitement to the verge of sanity." In this encounter with Harry, Dred is playing the role of tempter "raising the very devil" in Harry (I, 241, 242); the danger, wildness and unpredictability of the character takes center stage. The idea, though, that Dred's insanity is infectious and that Harry may become like Dred tapers off as we see that Dred's supposed insanity is linked to his status as visionary. We see him at times in a trancelike state, speaking "in a hollow, altered voice, like that of a sleep-walker" or straining his eyes "with the air of one who is trying to make out something through a thick fog" (I, 294, 290). At other times, he is in a frenzied state of ecstacy: "tossing his hands to heaven, with a yet wilder gesture, he almost scream-ed" (I, 294), or shouting for the Lord's vengeance, he is spurred on by a lightning strike (II, 8-9). This state is not constant however. After a frenzy of biblical imagery has rolled off his tongue in a "wild, hollow wail of a wounded lion," Dred's followers see him transform, and "he spoke to them in his ordinary tone" (II, 230, 232). Just as Dred crosses the physical boundaries between the formless state and society, he moves mentally from sanity to state of apparent insanity. As Douglas notes, "a venture into disordered regions of the mind" is as much a threat as the physical "venture beyond the confines of society" (II, 5).

Later, Stowe defends this state of mind as neither insane nor sane; in fact, she raises it to a level (in Western thought) above that of African superstition by linking it to the classical world.

> There is a twilight-ground between the boundaries of the sane and
> insane, which the old Greeks and Romans regarded with a peculiar
> veneration. They held a person whose faculties were thus darkened
> as walking under the awful shadow of supernatural presence; and, as
> the mysterious secrets of the stars only become visible in the night, so
> in these eclipses of the more material faculties they held there was often
> an awakening of supernatural perceptions. (II, 5)

Stowe goes on to say how "our modern materialism . . . allows no such indefinite land." We have only sane and insane. "We should find it difficult to give a suitable name to the strange and abnormal condition in which this singular being, of whom we are speaking, passed the most of his time" (II, 5). This is either a denial that he is actually insane or acknowledgment of the power that comes from that state; in either case, Stowe justifies her character. By the time she kills him off, however, this heightened state of awareness that mimics insanity becomes merely misdirected or untutored intellectual energy. It is through Edward Clayton that Stowe offers her final characterization of the maroon. "Clayton became interested in Dred, as a psychological study. . . . and sometimes he thought, with a sigh, how much might have been accomplished by a soul so ardent and a frame so energetic, had they been enlightened and guided" (II, 291). What had been initially an enigmatic characteristic, mysterious and fearful, becomes by the end merely misguided energy: a source of pity--the model of a wasted life.

The anticipation of slave insurrection that Stowe builds from the time she introduces Dred reaches an anticlimax as Dred is shot while trying to help a runaway

evade slave hunters. The expected violence, instead, takes form in a white mob that destroys Anne Clayton's schoolhouse for slaves. Led by Tom Gordon, these white ruffians seem to offer the clichéd pronouncement that slaves who stoop to the level of violence would become no better than these men. In his study of mimetic impulses in the novel, Richard Boyd finds that "[t]o imitate the desires and be-haviors of another is revealed to be little more than a transformation of the self into a slave of that Other."[31] Although Dred may be seen to throw off the shackles of the identity imposed upon him by the plantation system once he flees to the swamp, his identity, Boyd and others would argue, is still very much defined by those Others. More than merely transferring labels ("slave" to "outlaw"), Dred's own sense of self is dependent upon white planters, in particular, Tom Gordon. According to Boyd, "Each char-acter's violence is expressed as a form of vengeance that is motivated purely by envy, by the metaphysical desire to gain the mastery that the other seems to possess."[32] While the swamp offers a space of freedom in which Dred might come to redefine himself, as the domestic community within the swamp redefines what community is, Boyd argues that Dred is as dependent upon the "civilized" world for his identity as he is for food and weapons.[33]

Boyd goes on to argue:

It is important to recognize that the designation of Dred as dehuman-ized Other is performed not only by Tom Gordon and the mob he heads, but even more frequently it is propounded by the novel's female characters and especially by the narrative voice itself. . . . Echoing Nina's exclamation that Dred's retributive theology is too 'dreadful' (I: 330) to contemplate, the narrator's label of madness denies any essential reciprocity between the black insurrectionist and those who embody domestic order and harmony. Rather,

Dred's madness brands him as thoroughly abnormal, 'fantastic,'

'outlandish' (I: 248); the sign which differentiates the world of violent

desire from the Arcadian worlds established by Nina, Anne, and

Clayton.[34]

Dred's penultimate scene involves a gathering of the fugitive conspirators in

their swamp haven at which each slave "testifies" to the wrongs done to him or her,

much as slave narratives and testimonies are seen as slaves "witnessing" against slavery

and asserting their identities in opposition to those imposed on them. Much of the

novel has involved court proceedings and legal discussions, no doubt fueled by

Stowe's research for *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and emphasizes the fact that African

Americans are not allowed to testify in court. Only in this space they have made for

themselves can they speak and judge. But of these testifying slaves, it is Milly who

speaks most, and in so doing she becomes another foil for Dred. Where Dred speaks

of the vengeance of an Old Testament God, Milly represents the forgiveness and love

of the New Testament. With the assertion of Milly's New Testament philosophy and

the Claytons' arcadian sensibilities, Dred once again is marginalized; and it is in that

margin between southern society and the island community within the swamp that

Dred is killed.

Yet, throughout the novel, Dred's plan has outlasted alternative after alter-

native: Harry's faithfulness to Nina and his hope of buying himself and his wife,

Lisette; Lisette's plea that they make a life for themselves in the swamp; Nina and

Clayton's plan to prepare their slaves for the day freedom comes. As these alternatives

are shown to be nonviable, Stowe seems to move closer and closer to Dred's solution.

However, drawn as she may be to Dred, Stowe can never embrace his methods; her

ambivalence toward her maroon is noted in most pieces of *Dred* criticism. Mary

Kemp Davis says that "[o]ne half of her thrills to Dred's jeremiads; the other half

quakes."[35] David Miller, of course, attributes her hesitancy less to the threat of violence that Dred represents and more to the standard, romantic attitude toward swamp imagery in general: "If Dred is at one with nature, it is a nature exaggerated and distorted, nature as manifested in the swamp. Stowe's vacillation on this point is a measure of her ambivalence. Obviously, there is something exciting, even erotic, in such excessiveness."[36] In any case, having created an energy in the novel that calls for revolution, Stowe seems to dissipate that energy by killing Dred and having all the fugitives escape to the North. Even Dred's heir-apparent, Hannibal, the most rebellious of his followers, is transformed into a farmer in Canada.

Clayton's establishment of a new utopian community in Canada suggests that the escalation in discourse from 1852 to 1856 led only to the conclusion that solutions such as George Shelby's, that of an enlightened patriarch ruling over free blacks (the solution to slavery attempted by Nina and Clayton and Clayton's sister Anne), was no longer viable in the South. We see that only a complete removal from the South and the reach of southern laws is the answer. The swamp's effect on Dred and Dred's effect on the other slaves amount to nothing. The swamp is a liminal space for Dred himself, but not for the movement, not for his cause. For the others, it is a way station; it is empowering in that it gives them the opportunity to get away, but it does not threaten the order of society. Lisa Whitney notes that "although she offers no criticism of slaves who choose to escape, Stowe suggests that such action actually relieves the slaveholders from a much more powerful threat, a threat that would jeopardize not only their property but the entire system that supports their ownership of property."[37] To this point, Stowe shows the same reasoning Clayton uses to overcome years of education in the South that tell him that aiding slaves in their escape is legally and morally wrong. Besides reminding himself that the runaways are people who deserve liberty, Clayton theorizes that he is actually doing the South a favor by removing the

rebellious slaves whose continued presence would almost certainly lead to bloody insurrection. Stowe's narrative voice steps in to clarify the "safety valve" function of the underground railroad:

> It is probable that nothing has awakened more bitterly the animosity of the slaveholding community than the existence in Northern States of an indefinite yet very energetic institution, known as *the underground railroad*; and yet, would they but reflect wisely on the things that belong to their peace, they would know that this has removed many a danger from their dwellings. One has only to become well acquainted with some of those fearless and energetic men who have found their way to freedom by its means, to feel certain that such minds and hearts would have proved, in time, an incendiary magazine under the scorching reign of slavery. (II, 302)

Such fugitives, instead, "endangered the shedding of no blood but their own" (II, 302). Coming on the heels of Dred's funeral, this recitation on the benefits, to peace, of successful escapes points the reader toward Stowe's conclusion to her ideological dilemma over violence.

There is no doubt that in choosing a maroon for her title character Stowe was attempting to raise the anxiety level of southern whites regarding the threat of a slave uprising, but her conclusion seems to have the same effect as Caroline Lee Hentz's representation of a near-slave insurrection: it brings those fears to the surface in order to allay them. Even though her portrait of Dred offers much greater detail and justification than even Brown's Picquilo, Picquilo is left looming in the swamp, able to continue agitating the institution, while Dred and his compatriots are whisked from the scene. In the end, it is the forgiving, loving voice of the New Testament, embodied in Milly, who has a real, lasting effect. She lives in New York and raises a rainbow

coalition of orphans to replace her many children who had been sold away from her in slavery.

Whitney and many other critics see this conclusion as offering more of a safety valve to the institution than bringing increased pressure to bear. Joan Hedrick goes so far as to say that "[i]n spite of the rich possibilities of this culture of resistance, *Dred* is neither an incendiary tract nor a good novel."[38] Richard Boyd sees Dred as "the repository for displaced violence" in the novel.[39] From this viewpoint, the chaos portrayed in southern society is brought to order by the banishment of the fugitives, first to the swamp and later to the North.

Still, some see Stowe's second antislavery novel as more radical than *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for its conclusions as well as its subject matter. As I have noted, Robert Levine sees *Dred* as an African American-informed revision of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. As such, the exploration of an African American life and community developing out-side the confines of the institution of slavery can itself be seen as a radical choice for Stowe. Readers are gradually led into this other world as they are gradually led from the edge of the swamp to the safe harbor deep within it. The swamp is a world un-known to whites, but even old Tiff, who lives on the edge of the swamp and *appears* the essence of racial caricaturing seen in proslavery novels, seems familiar with the wild landscape. In fact, Tiff even greets Dred without surprise, as had Harry, showing that there is more to the old man than meets the eye and suggesting this to be the case with all slaves that southerners claim to "know." Levine argues, "As a self-theatrical-ized 'nigger,' Tiff, like Sojourner Truth, can retain a modicum of power in a racist culture by appearing knowable and unthreatening to whites."[40] Meanwhile, Edward Clayton serves as the reader's stand-in; as he is initiated into Dred's world, so is the reader: "His arrival [in the swamp community] serves as Clayton's baptismal moment, as it were, into a black revolutionary perspective. Over the course of several inter-

views with Dred . . . Clayton begins to approach an understanding, however limited, of African-American revolutionism."[41] As for the charge that the novel's ending acts as a safety-valve for southern anxiety, Levine points to Stowe's appendix containing Nat Turner's Confession. She reprints nearly all of it except Gray's assurances to his audience that justice has been served and not one of his gang has escaped. Levine argues, "By implicitly suggesting that some of Nat Turner's retributive accomplices may still be at large, Stowe means to participate in the political terror inspired by Turner."[42]

Likewise focusing on Dred's resemblance to Nat Turner, Mary Kemp Davis argues for the swamp as a place of repressed or marginalized values. Although she views Stowe's portrait of *this* Nat to be largely parody, she does not discount the power of the image to promote anxiety in slaveholders. Even Clayton, she claims, has a latent fear of insurrection.[43] Davis ends with the suggestion that, even though it is easy to see how Stowe would be incapable of presenting revolution as an option, her letters and speeches show that she could be as fiery as David Walker.[44] But the question remains regarding how much credence Stowe would have given David Walker or any other African American voice. Gail K. Smith agrees with Levine's point that Clayton indeed is initiated into Dred's world in the swamp, and, in fact, he learns to "read" with the eyes of the Other. The novel advocates "cross-reading" but suggests more a need for blacks to learn to read with white eyes than the reverse.[45]

Still, from Davis's perspective, what counts is that Stowe presents the voices of both Clayton and Dred. Even if Davis considers Dred a parody, a straw man whose argument for revolution Stowe will knock down, she credits Stowe for showing that

parody is by its nature double-voiced. She cannot parody a voice she has never "heard," and her readers cannot recognize *as* parody a voice they have never "heard." The more Stowe listened to the rebel

slave's voice, the more she heard another "word," a dialogized word/ Word. Poking fun at Turner, Dred, Walker, and Hannibal reflected Stowe's strenuous attempt to stop the "oscillation" of the Word, as Bakhtin would phrase it.[46]

Whether she was tempted to consider more radical solutions to slavery or she wished to discredit such solutions, from the moment she chose to shift her focus from the planatation to the swamp, Stowe entered into a dialogue with African American writers that she never approached in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Though she may have felt herself to be a monologic voice trying to set forth the "correct" word on slavery, Stowe was nevertheless engaged in a genuine exchange with her African American counterparts.

It is difficult to know whether Martin Delany was responding directly to *Dred* with *Blake*, because critics argue over the dates that Delany probably wrote his novel; but he was certainly working in the wake of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Eric Sundquist, whose dismissal of *Dred*'s radical potential is based largely on his reading of Stowe's racialized politics in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, says that Delany replied to Stowe by "[c]alling instead for human wrath and externalized revolutionary force."[47] More dangerous than George Harris and more mobile than Dred, Delany's protagonist in *Blake* signifies an unambiguous threat to slaveowners. The amazing ability of Henry, the mastermind and organizer of a nationwide insurrection, to move across state lines, cross natural boundaries, and espy potential enemies is reminiscent of Richard Wright's novella *The Man Who Lived Underground*.[48] But while Wright's character literally moves beneath the ground, from sewer to basement, gaining access and knowledge of the white superstructure, Henry's is a figurative underground movement. Where Wright shows his character losing his own identity while dwelling at the margins of

society, the expansion of Blake's plan is accompanied by an expansion of his identity, seen particularly in Part Two in which he reclaims his pre-slave name.

Although Blake's abilities may prefigure those of other characters in African American literature, he also has connections to antebellum slave narratives. As Floyd Miller notes in his 1970 introduction to *Blake*,

> Some of the specific plot devices in *Blake* may have been drawn directly from the slave narratives. During Henry's escape from the plantation he carried a bridle enabling him to claim he was searching for his master's horse; this was almost identical to the strategem used by Henry Bibb during one of his many flights from slavery. The plotted slave revolt in the South has some similarities to a much smaller rebellion led by Lew Cheney in Louisiana in 1837 which Solomon Northup recounts.[49]

Miller does not mention Cheney's sabotage of his own plot, but his point is clear: that Delany was actively reading, using, and responding to slave narratives in order to create Blake. Granted, the sequence in which Blake visits maroons in the Dismal Swamp is certainly not borrowed from slave narratives but is more likely a mixture of folklore regarding conjurers and news reports of runaway communities. However, Blake's journey to the swamp does signify (if unintentionally) on Stowe's flirtation with rebellion in *Dred*. Although Stowe is somewhat daring in her depiction of slaves knowing about Dred and his community in the swamp, she still suggests that such a community is temporary and unstable. Delany, on the contrary, shows the swamp-dwellers to be a continuing community that has been in the Great Dismal for generations. As such, Delany claims for African Americans a self-determination that Stowe denies.

In his journeys, Henry has learned that slaves everywhere are ready to strike except for the minority who succumb to the "good treatment" ploy their masters use to placate them into submission and complacence. "'Tis this confounded 'good treatment' and expectation of getting freed by their oppressors, that has been the curse of the slave'" (127). Most important, however, is the sense Delany imparts that slaves lack only the knowledge to act or a sign to strike. It is not only the recalcitrant slaves or the runaways and truants who are characterized as threats to the system. Henry argues:

> A slave has no just conception of his own wrongs. Had I dealt with
> Franks as he deserved, for doing that for which he would have taken
> the life of any man had it been his case--tearing my wife from my
> bosom!--the most I could take courage directly to do, was to leave
> him, and take as many from him as I could induce to go. But maturer
> reflection drove me to the expedient of avenging the general wrongs of
> our people, by inducing the slave, in his might, to scatter red ruin
> throughout the region of the South. But still, I cannot find it in my
> heart to injure an individual, except in personal conflict. (128)

The overwhelming characterization of slaves throughout Part One of the novel suggests it is they who are the ones to be feared. Wherever he goes, Henry finds slaves eager for a sign to strike. Henry configures himself as the reincarnation of Nat Turner, as when he is in Richmond telling the locals his scheme:

> the old material extinguished and left to mould and rot after the demon-
> stration at Southampton, was immediately rekindled, never again to
> be suppressed until the slaves stood up the equal of the masters.
> Southampton--the name of Southampton to them was like an electric
> shock. (116)

It might be deliberate on Delany's part that it is in Richmond, epicenter of the failed Gabriel's Rebellion of 1800, that ripples from the rural Southampton insurrection are noted. Gabriel's was an attempted insurrection that included urban as well as rural slaves. Its power as signifier calls forth a true uprising--that is, one coming from within the institution.

The freedom of the swamp allows Blake/Henry to find recruits without the need for care and secrecy he has practiced to this point.

> When approaching the region of the Dismal Swamp, a number of old confederates of the noted Nat Turner were met with, who hailed the daring young runaway as the harbinger of better days. Many of these are still long-suffering, hard-laboring slaves on the plantations; and some bold, courageous, and fearless adventurers, denizens of the mystical, antiquated, and almost fabulous Dismal Swamp, where for many years they have defied the approach of pursuers.

> Here Henry found himself surrounded by a different atmos-phere, an entirely new element. Finding ample scope for undisturbed action through the entire region of the Swamp, he continued to go scattering to the winds and sowing the seeds of a future crop, only to take root in the thick black waters which cover it, to be grown in devastation and reaped in a whirlwind of ruin. (112)

The leaders of the Dismal Swamp maroons are not Old Testament prophets like Dred but Old African conjurers. They tell Blake that they have enough of an army in the swamps "to take the whole United States" but the reluctance of slaves still on the plan-tations stands in their way (114). Despite the bold talk of the power and freedom of the swamp, Blake sees the maroons as just one more community he needs to recruit for his rebellion to be successful. In contrast, we can see Stowe's novel as locating the

only true African American community--the only possible source of slave resistance--
in the swamp, outside the confines of either the plantation system or even the en-
lightened farming communities of the North and Canada. Still, Stowe limits the range
of slave heroism--a slave's only choice is flight--while the circuitous "flight" of Blake,
his meetings with slaves throughout the south, refuses to offer whites of the South a
safety valve of black flight. Instead, by reducing the swamp as a threat, Delany
increases the sense of threat from within.

When Blake returns to Natchez to liberate his friends, he educates them about
the North star and how to use a compass and check for moss. These "tools" stand in
contrast to the discussion they have about his journey to the Dismal Swamp. He ex-
plains how he himself became a conjurer in order to be seen as a credible leader to the
more ignorant and superstitious slaves. Although he accepts the dubious honor of
being brought into their circle, Blake considers the swamp leaders, Maudy Ghamus
and Gamby Gholar, themselves to be prisoners of the swamp rather than leaders or
symbols of freedom and resistance. He only accepted the honor they bestowed upon
him as a means of rallying slaves who might otherwise be held back by their super-
stitions.

> "Now you see, boys," said Henry, "how much conjuration and such
> foolishness and stupidity is worth to the slaves in the South. All that it
> does, is to put money into the pockets of the pretended conjurer, give
> him power over others by making them afraid of him; and even old
> Gamby Gholar and Maudy Ghamus and the rest of the Seven Heads,
> with all the High Conjurors in the Dismal Swamp, are depending more
> upon me to deliver them from their confinement as prisoners in the
> Swamp and runaway slaves, than all their combined efforts together."
> (136-37)

Here, the author is playing against the popular conception that it is those dangerous runaways out in the swamp who are the ones to be feared rather than the happy, contented ones hard at work. On the whole, it is the image of the runaway moving freely from plantation to plantation that is revealed as a threat to the system--not those who have escaped and commit occasional depredations on the plantations.

With these representations of maroons by three leading abolitionists--Stowe, Delany, and Brown--we can see various degrees to which abolitionists were willing to use the maroon as an insurrectionist image to further their cause. Delany proposes that the key to successful insurrection lies with those who are enslaved striking together against the power structure. Such action may be prompted by an extrinsic force, but that force is not to be found in the swamps. Maroons, for Delany, are pathetic prisoners of the wilderness. For Stowe, the power of the swamp lies largely in its potential to offer runaways a domestic space outside the system of slavery. Her novel calls upon slaves to escape to such a haven rather than taking arms against their masters. The argument by Robert Levine that there is a maroon lingering at the end of her text is interesting but not convincing. Of these three authors, then, it is William Wells Brown who manages to avoid demystifying the maroon and thereby maintains the figure's aura of power.

Brown offers a picture of Picquilo much as Strother brings forth Osman, as a momentary fright for his audience. As Teresa Goddu points out, however, using the maroon as a gothic effect may empty him of meaning. In her reading of dramatic renderings of the Nat Turner rebellion, Goddu finds that, in transforming an historical event into a legend, "the gothic can dematerialize and displace the source of its effect even while representing it."[50] In other words, as a legend, Goddu argues, the rebel slave or event is placed at a safe, fictionalized distance from the white audience. However, folklorist Alan Dundes considers legends to have a more powerful impact on

audiences than Goddu suggests. For Dundes, legends create an immediate connection with audiences and provoke strong responses because "the action or plot of a legend is not completed in the narrative itself. . . [t]he house down the road continues to be haunted."[51] The fact that legends are often local suggests that they do not provide an escape from reality but that the fantastic and/or threatening element of the legend actually invades the audience's reality. Dundes continues, "As a matter of fact, in many of those legends whose actions are not yet completed, the sense of immediacy may produce genuine fear of other emotion."[52] From this viewpoint, Brown's brief mention of Picquilo is more than a mere effect for the white South. Picquilo, whom Brown lets us see for only a moment, may be essentialized to some degree, but his continued presence in the swamps allows the author to create a sentimental happy-ending for his mulatto characters (making his book marketable) without removing the threat of an insurrection. It is the mystifica-tion of the maroon, provided in no small part by his mysterious environment of the swamp, that proves the most powerful representation.

SECTION III

RECONCILIATION AND LOST CAUSE

As reflected in the popularity of Joel Chandler Harris's Uncle Remus tales, the postbellum reading public had a voracious appetite for stories about the Old South, particularly for the idealized image of the plantation and the benign institution that brought order and harmony to race relations. As Grace Elizabeth Hale puts it, "The slave body had been emancipated, but representations of slavery had never been more popular or profitable."[1] This view of the antebellum period served to rationalize and justify the South's secession, reinforcing a myth of the Confederacy as a noble but lost cause. The cult of the Lost Cause was part of a larger cultural project: the recon- ciliation of North and South after the Civil War. The classic image of reconciliation reconfigured Caroline Hentz's formula in *The Planter's Northern Bride*, where the marriage of a northerner and southerner offered symbolic reunion. In the postbellum marriage the northerner was most often the groom bringing needed strength to his southern bride. Joel Williamson sums up the formula:

> The Southern woman was beautiful and impoverished by the war,
> yet her spirit was far from broken. The Yankee was handsome, well
> educated and rich. The symbolism of a spiritual South joining with a
> materialistic North was heavy-handed, but the logic of each bringing to
> each what was so desperately needed was rather compelling.[2]

Casting the South in the role of bride may have been a way of characterizing the South as emasculated by the war.[3] However, it is also likely that a chaste bride in her white

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wedding dress was meant as a sign of absolution; the South was pure, and her cause had been a noble fight for honor and states rights rather than for the continuation of slavery.

Narrative framing was a less dramatic way to portray sectional reconciliation and obscure the contradictions within the institution of slavery. Frequently, the idealized image of the Old South was seen through the eyes of a former slave. A yankee visitor, who may otherwise have believed that white southerners should feel guilty for their slave past, was confronted by the one figure who could absolve the South of any guilt; the yankee visitor would become a convert to the cult of Lost Cause, healing the rift between North and South. As narrators, Harris's Uncle Remus and other black characters were ostensibly important and more fully developed than their counterparts in antebellum fiction, but in their roles as storytellers, "African Americans are absent in this fiction, which is relayed right through them as if they were invisible."[4] Inverting the slave narrative tradition, which gave voice to otherwise silent slaves, these works made African Americans into spokesmen for the Lost Cause myth.

The prevalence of these reconciliation motifs did not mean that American whites were of one mind in the decades following the Civil War. For example, Joel Williamson divides the postbellum years into three periods and three basic white southern "mentalities" regarding race. During Reconstruction (1865-1877), the world was turned upside-down for white southerners who feared vengeance from newly empowered African Americans.[5] Reconstruction might be seen as a test of the *Liberal* argument that the country "did not yet know the potential of the Negro."[6] This liberal viewpoint had some slight ascendancy during the years following Reconstruction (1877-1889) through the efforts of such notable southerners as George Washington Cable, but its impact was minimal and short-lived. Rather it was a *Conservative* assumption of black inferiority that dominated both of these time

periods. Concerned over the loss of order and control that slavery had imposed on blacks, the conservatives "sought to save him [the Negro] by defining and fixing his place in American society."[7] According to Charles Reagan Wilson, white conservatives were not very worried about controlling blacks, but they did look to the slave past as the model of harmonious race relations.[8] By 1889, however, a fear of "uppity" blacks gave rise to a *Radical* position that maintained dominance until 1915, an era labeled by Williamson as the "Paranoid South."[9] A major cause for the timing of this ascendency was the coinciding coming-of-age of African Americans who had been born in freedom and were seen as an unknown and dangerous entity. Williamson notes that whites considered blacks to have become "bumptious;" that is, they perceived blacks to be bumping whites off sidewalks rather than giving way with traditional deference.[10] Whites bumped back with a dramatic increase in lynchings of blacks during the 1890s.[11]

With the destruction of the old order, white Americans scrambled to establish new senses of self, and the cultural products of the Lost Cause served to redefine southern whiteness by redefining blackness. Blacks had been a cause of separation of North and South and were now an obstacle to reunion. But the new view of the past, offered by the reconciliation theme, showed the struggle between North and South to be two sides of the same cause. According to Williamson, the "South and North had operated in unwitting concert, in tandem, in seeming conflict but actually in harmony to work out God's plan for blacks in America."[12] That plan, however, had not been fully realized, and white society was asking: what might the freedman become? At the same time, it tried to apply various definitions to African Americans: from rendering them invisible, nothing more than quaint relics of an idyllic past, to seeing them as a threat, as savages freed from the civilizing influence of white control.

Where the antebellum period had been a time when the southern white elite held power through association with the "black mass," Williamson argues, the post-bellum world required a shift that set the white mass on the side of the white elite.[13] The cultural works of the late nineteenth century, then, can be seen as reflections of (and participants in) the shifting power base that would result in a society segregated along color lines with a marginalized black population. "The Confederate myth," argues Williamson, "worked to bond the white elite and the white mass together. It also worked to shift the basis of Southern white identity from the black mass to the white mass."[14] Playing its part in the postbellum politics of identity, the cult of the Lost Cause offered a revision of antebellum racial equations. Grace Elizabeth Hale argues that both professional and amateur historians of the postbellum white South painted a picture of antebellum integration, a hierarchy that had solved the "race problem."[15] In turn, "[t]ales of past white southern glory became the legitimating narratives of origin for the culture of segregation."[16]

In addition to written histories of the Old South, the Lost Cause celebration of antebellum order was promulgated through various social activities. Charles Reagan Wilson argues that religion was equal to regional history as a cornerstone of white southern identity. "Lost Cause belief focused on the moral retrogression of blacks after emancipation, but preachers articulated this idea before the extreme racism of the end of the century make it a dominant article of faith."[17] Gaines M. Foster discusses a faith of a different kind:

> The central institutions of the Lost Cause were the postwar Con-
> federate organizations: the memorial associations, the Southern
> Historical Society, the United Confederate Veterans, the United
> Daughters of the Confederacy, and others. These groups sponsored
> much of the writing and oratory that helped shape southern percep-

tions of defeat. More southerners formed an understanding of their past through the ceremonial activities or rituals conducted by these groups than through anything else.[18]

In town squares throughout the South, Williamson argues, the development of the Confederate myth was reflected in the statuary. Public understanding of the purpose of the war evolved into a denial that it had anything to do with slavery, that it, in fact, was a second revolutionary war against an oppressive, distant government. As this idea took hold, statues honoring common Confederate soldiers increased[19] as did the hero cults honoring Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee among others.[20] Perhaps most indicative of the way southern whites looked to the past for a sense of self that would take them into the future, businessmen used figures from the past for support in their enterprises. According to Paul M. Gaston,

> [t]he names and signatures of Confederate generals were everywhere in demand by railroad companies and corporations, for the New South prophets were well aware that the blessing of a "colonel" (if there were no generals handy) would do as much to float bonds and raise subscriptions as a dozen columns of optimistic statistics.[21]

The diversity of outlets for Lost Cause sentiments suggests that participants were not merely a backward-looking minority of unreconstructed southern rebels. In fact, the Lost Cause phenomenon was not limited to the South; its fiction was warmly embraced by such notable abolitionists as Henry Ward Beecher and Thomas Wentworth Higginson.[22]

Although it is clear why southerners would be drawn to romantic tales that served to justify their rebellion, reasons for northern interest are less clear. Nina Silber argues that northerners "transformed their anger against the southern aristocracy into feelings of pity and respect"; they began to appreciate the benign authority southern

elite seemed to have over their slaves, and they began to see blacks as part of picturesque landscape.[23] Likewise, in her examination of this theme in the *Century Illustrated Magazine*, Janet Gabler-Hover finds a variety of reasons for northerners embracing the Lost Cause.

> At a time when America was fascinated with its diverse regions, interest in the South is not surprising. Perhaps more fundamentally, however, the North felt a prurient and exculpatory fascination with the land they had conquered and an unconscious guilt for privileging a "foreign" element--African Americans--over their own white brethren in the South. Perhaps on an even more sinister level of unconsciousness, northerners were themselves resisting the "shadow of the Negro."[24]

In 1880, *Century* editor Josiah Gilbert Holland used this term, "shadow of the Negro," to suggest feelings of *guilt* among both white northerners and white southerners; that is, the black presence in America was casting a shadow over white life.[25] The phrase is also unwittingly suggestive of the growing postbellum view of blacks as insubstantial--a preference among many whites to see only shadows rather than flesh and blood. In either case, African Americans, despite attempts by whites to the contrary, were increasingly part of a white sense of identity, serving as white America's Other or "shadow self" in a Freudian sense.

According to Teresa Goddu's notion of the gothic, the South serves as the nation's Other, the repository of the gothic that challenges the national sense of self. As Charles Joyner points out, the "South has proved to be fertile ground for legends, especially legends of haunted places and revenants, some coming back to complete some unfinished task, others to warn the living of impending disasters."[26] Goddu

argues that it is, in particular, a submerged racial history that "haunts back" as gothic elements in literature:

> However, while the gothic reveals what haunts the nation's narratives, it can also work to coalesce those narratives. Like the abject, the gothic serves as the ghost that both helps to run the machine of national identity and disrupts it. The gothic can strengthen as well as critique an idealized national identity.[27]

The Reconciliation movement formed a master narrative that was both supported by and threatened by an African American presence. As a national narrative of closure, Reconciliation required addressing the issue of race. In order to "close" the Old South, that is, to idealize it by ridding it of contradictions, blacks had to be present in order to speak for and absolve the old system. At the same time, they disrupted that closure with their presence; African Americans were the ghosts running the machine. When portrayed as happy slaves, they were a part of the old South and, as such, provided continuity; as a foriegn element, an new and unknown type of Negro, they disrupted the master narrative of reconciliation.

For a postbellum society unsure of itself, reconciliation became the first step toward a national narrative of closure. White America was having difficulty defining itself outside of a racial equation, but the uncertainty associated with free blacks created anxiety. According to Priscilla Wald, "That anxiety, [Freud] observes, grows out of the transmutation of something 'known of old and long familiar' into something frightening."[28] The cult of the Lost Cause fought against that anxiety by transmuting the emerging free black into the old stereotype.

<p style="text-align:center">*　*　*　*　*　*　*</p>

Joel Williamson's designation of three white mentality types in the postbellum South is worth mentioning here because the texts in this section cover the full spec-

trum of those ideologies. In Chapter Ten, I will examine George Washington Cable's

liberalism. Much of his novel, *The Grandissimes*, makes use of the conventions of

reconciliation narratives and southern mythmaking, but it does so in order to expose

those processes as destructive. He deliberately uses the maroon, Bras-Coupé, as a

disruptive force resisting narrative closure, but the demands of the genre threaten to

blunt his critique. Chapter Nine features Thomas Nelson Page, a conservative who

became a radical with the rise of that mentality in the 1890s. Although he is often

mentioned as the prototypical Lost Cause writer, his attempt to use a swamp and a

runaway slave in his story "No Haid Pawn" disrupts his own narrative. But first, in

Chapter Eight, I will discuss Joel Chandler Harris and his fellow collectors of African

American folk material. The longstanding arguments over Harris's contribution to the

preservation and presentation of African American folklore place him either in the

liberal or conservative camp. However, other collectors and publishers during the

period cover the entire political spectrum. In fact, as Bruce Jackson points out, "some

of the most accurate text transcriptions in the nineteenth-century articles probably

appear in those written by hostile observers,"[29] whereas more liberal collectors,

wishing to "fix" grammar and omit "vulgarities," were likely to alter their sources

drastically.[30] Taken together, these three mentalities show late nineteenth-century

white society to be grappling with issues of self-definition grounded in its definition of

African Americans. Although the movement of black characters into primary places in

fiction and the enthusiastic consumption of folklore might suggest a desire among

white Americans to understand black Americans, the project was less interested in

understanding America's new citizens than in rendering African Americans *knowable*.

CHAPTER EIGHT
DREDGING THE SWAMPS:
JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS AND THE PACKAGING
OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FOLKLORE

After the Civil War, whites in both the North and South were eager to consume images of African-Americans, and the Uncle Remus tales of Joel Chandler Harris had a great deal of competition in satifying this appetite. The enormously successful dialect stories of this era served the contradictory purposes of bringing black characters into primary roles while simultaneously diminishing their importance.[1] Sentimental fiction that gazed wistfully into the antebellum period sought a stable representation of African Americans to counteract the uncertainty of the present caused by the question: what sort of character will the newly freed slave be? As Lost Cause narratives often brought black characters from the margins to the forefront of stories, sometimes narrating stories themselves, collections of folktales and beliefs increased the exposure of African American life to a white reading public. Personal recollections by white writers of the stories and folk beliefs told to them as children by their family slaves began to fill popular magazines. According to Rosan Augusta Jordan and Frank de Caro, the increased interest in collecting folklore was "a response to the local color movement in Southern literature and art, appealing to writers' interest in the quaintness of dialect and local lore, giving them an additional impetus to actually collect such lore."[2] Although this inclusion of African Americans in postbellum periodicals might be interpreted as an attempt by white Americans to "get to know" these new citizens,

it was more likely an attempt to place an historical frame of the "old time darkey" around the newly freed slave.

Reasons given for collecting African American folklore and snippets of folklife most often revolved around the goal of preserving remnants of a disappearing culture.[3] At best, this intent reveals a recognition that African Americans *did* have a culture of their own as opposed to a borrowed or imposed, therefore lesser, version of Anglo-America; at worst, it was an attempt to paint postbellum blacks as barbarians who were returning to state of savagery since being released from the civilizing effects of the plantation system which had held their barbarous impulses in check for so long. In this context, swamp-dwelling African Americans were not seen as a threat to the plantation system but as evidence that the peculiar institution had worked. Association with swamps signaled postbellum African Americans as essentially unfit for citizenship. Although slave narrators seem to have avoided swamp imagery for fear of essentializing the black man as an exotic primitive, slave folklore is often a murky, swampy place; it acknowledges and takes advantage of the southern landscape to provide dramatic settings. This chapter will explore folklore that is specifically set in swamps, but it is important also to consider the swamp as a metaphor for the folk material as a whole and for Anglo-America's conception of Afro-America. It was not enough that the lore of former slaves placed them, in the minds of white audiences, in a distant, rural past; that folklore also became a place that inspired awe but also revulsion in postbellum whites much as the swamp had done for antebellum romantics. It was a place that white readers would want to experience in a mediated fashion, like Simms's speaker in "The Edge of the Swamp"--not tromping into the depths of the swamp but merely taking a peek, aided by white mediators like Joel Chandler Harris.

The swamp's function as metaphor for the socio-spatial relationship between southern blacks and whites is illustrated in an article by George Washington Cable for

the *Century Magazine* in 1886. Here Cable offers some insight into the way white readers may have conceived of African American life and lore in geographical terms. Although specific to New Orleans, Cable's "The Dance in Place Congo" takes care to differentiate black and white worlds in an urban setting such that even urban blacks are associated with the wilderness of the swamps.[4] Cable begins his article by describing a landmark that visitors to New Orleans would probably remember: Saint Louis Cathedral with a "little garden" behind (190). From this signifier of white order, which could be read as an urban version of the plantation big house, Cable leads the reader to Orleans Street, which "lets away at right angles, northwestward, straight, and imperceptibly *downward* from the cathedral and garden toward the *rear* of the city" (190; italics added). The downward road is "sunny and silent" until one reaches Congo Square which is shaded by "a grateful canopy of oak and sycamore boughs" at the edge of the swamp (190). The tended, sunny garden and well-kept institutional structures provide a contrast to the dark wilderness and dilapidated buildings surrounding Congo Square. Cable does not leave it to his reader to interpret the contrast he intends: "The white man's plaza had the army and navy on its right and left, the courthouse, the council-hall and the church at its back, and the world before it. The black man's was outside the rear gate, the poisonous wilderness on three sides and the proud man's contumely on its front" (191).

But his comparison is not exactly a call for social justice; rather, the disarray and darkness of the wilderness are made to seem a suitable environment for the African drumming and dancing at Place Congo. Cable takes the reader back in time, to when the Square was a plain at which slaves would gather on Sundays. The gathering "was a weird one. The negro of colonial Louisiana was a most grotesque figure" (194); "his simple, savage musical and superstitious nature dedicated [this free time] to amatory song and dance tinctured with his rude notions of supernatural influences"

(191). Cable asks his reader to "[f]ancy the picture. The pack of dark, tattered figures. . . . behind it the *cyprière*--the cypress swamp" (195).

The swamp was a marginalized space for a marginalized population. In a scene such as Cable describes, the swamp becomes the natural habitat for the primitive (grotesque/gothic) African American; it merely adds to the picture of free blacks falling into barbarity. As a postbellum liberal, Cable responds to the scene with minimal alarm, but he still includes signs of white authority reasserting control over the wild scene. From the Place Congo, St. Louis Cathedral can be seen in the distance, "here and there a spire lifting a finger of feeble remonstrance" at the celebrants (195). And then, the festivities ended with the sound of the evening gun, which "had rolled down Orleans street from the Place d'Armes; and the black man or woman who wanted to keep a whole skin on the back had to keep out of the Calaboose" (208).

My purpose here is not to find strained examples of African Americans associated with swamps; rather, I want to suggest a way that white readers of popular periodicals may have viewed African American folklore, beliefs, and practices. From Cable, we have a scene of an American swamp becoming an African jungle to which African Americans are "naturally" drawn. Mrs. William Preston Johnston, in an 1896 *Journal of American Folklore* article, offers a more subtle version of that transformation of landscape. She frames "Two Negro Tales" with childhood recollections of her black nurse Lizzie from whom she heard the tales.

> To Lizzie, and to us as well, the people and creatures she told of were as real as were those who moved about us, whose adventures and histories were less startling and eventful. Down behind the bayou, which, from its tangle of undergrowth, we always called "the Jungle," and which was impenetrable to us, she built an imaginary habitation.[5]

Such associations in the white imagination of African Americans and their folklore as located in or around swamps helped that folklore to work in concert with the reconciliation project because it located blacks, culturally, in the wilderness. Folklore was beginning to be seen as a source of the fundamental truth about a people, and the truth it suggested about newly freed slaves was that slavery had been a civilizing influence on a people who would have otherwise reverted to the bush.

Two of the theories about folklore prominent during the last decades of the nineteenth century may help us to understand the racist potential in the collecting of African American folklore One of these, dating back to the Brothers Grimm, believed that folklore revealed the essential nature of a people; the importance of folklore in this case was its use in drawing inclusive and exclusive boundaries around those who share a common heritage.[6] A newer theory was a byproduct of Darwin's theory of evolution. Evolutionary theory regarded folklore as an artifact of the distant, uncivilized past. On the one hand, such a theory linked all people together since every civilization had grown from an uncivilized state. On the other hand, this theory sharpened distinctions between those who were currently civilized and those who were not.[7] In the case of African American folklore, many collectors were hurrying to collect and preserve it in the decades after emancipation because they assumed the material would disappear as free blacks took up the duties and responsibilities of citizenship. At the same time, however, the fact that African Americans, alive at the time, were sources for the material revealed, for some whites, the intrinsic African American identity: without the civilizing effects of the institution, the true self would emerge as a dangerous primitive.

The African American folklore collected by whites and published during this time period, then, worked at cross purposes: while preserving and acknowledging the importance of the folk culture, it generally supported the reconciliation project and

cult of the Lost Cause. The seemingly contradictory impulses of white collectors of black folklore are most notable, and most often discussed, in the popular collections of Joel Chandler Harris's Uncle Remus tales. Many critics argue that these animal tales, as analogies of plantation relationships, are indications of African American resistance to slavery. In his role as slave cognate, Brer Rabbit unleashes his frenetic energy upon stronger animals whom he defeats with his wit and cunning. From this perspective, the demands of Harris's white audience led to a framing of the original African American folk materials, a framing that seemingly undercut and diminished the power of the materials themselves. Where the tales could have offered a defiant cultural expression of an oppressed people, Harris contained that aggression, in part, by presenting his tales through the voice of Uncle Remus, the kindly old slave who entertains the son of his owner with the tales. This framing of the otherwise subversive tales has been the source of controversy for decades, as critics have argued whether or not the portrayal of the stereotypical Remus serves to suffocate the otherwise lively Brer Rabbit tales.

In his often-cited 1949 essay, "Uncle Remus and the Malevolent Rabbit," Bernard Wolfe catalogues the ways in which "We [white Americans] like to picture the Negro as grinning as us" in countless advertisements where African Americans happily offer food or services. "But," Wolfe wonders, "if the grin is extracted by force, may not the smiling face be a falseface--and just underneath is there not something else, often only half-hidden?"[8] In the wake of Disney's Harris-inspired *Song of the South*, Wolfe argues that Uncle Remus is just another "ventriloquist's dummy,"[9] the image of the Negro as white America wants him to be. "Uncle Remus was added only when Harris, in packaging the stories--using the Negro grin for gift-wrapping-- invented the Negro narrator to sustain the dialect."[10] But the violence described in Remus's tales cannot, according to Wolfe, be contained by Harris's frame device. It is questionable, even, if Harris would want it contained. Instead, Wolfe sees Harris, the

shy, clumsy, stuttering newspaperman, as envying the smooth articulation he heard in his black sources. In various instances throughout his career, Harris tried to place some distance between African Americans and Brer Rabbit by insisting on the African origins of the tales. As such, the aggressive stories that "read like a catalogue of Southern racial taboos, all standing on their heads"[11] could be attributed to a savage and distant African past. This distancing allowed the savage to share the page with the grinning Uncle Remus without the reader suspecting any malicious intent behind that grin.

Ultimately, though, Wolfe sees Harris's own conflicted nature, his love and hate for African Americans, as containing more love than hate; and in turn his frame narrator, by virtue of offering these stories, explodes the stereotype the white reader would place on him.

> Before Harris, few Southerners had ever faced squarely the aggres-
> sive symbolism of Brer Rabbit, or the paradox of their delight in it.
> Of course, it was part of the Southerner's undissected myth—often
> shared by the Negroes—that his cherished childhood sessions in the
> slave quarters were bathed in two-way benevolence. But Harris, by
> writing the white South and its Negro tale-spinners into the stories,
> also wrote in its unfaced paradoxes. Thus his versions helped to rip
> open the racial myth—and, with it, the inter-racial grin.[12]

In the end, Wolfe is not left with a contradiction between the aggression of the tales and the loving stereotype of Remus in the frame; rather, he imagines how often the little boy lies awake at night, as he does after hearing the tale of "A Plantation Witch," feeling uneasy because of what Uncle Remus has told him.

A host of prominent critics have addressed this issue since Wolfe's essay. Darwin Turner in his 1968 article, "Daddy Joel Harris and His Old-Time Darkies,"

acknowledges Harris's conflicted nature and the difficulty critics have in labeling him: he is "neither a Negrophobe nor a conventional romancer of antebellum days."[13] Nevertheless, Turner argues, Harris had enough contact with African Americans to know that his portrait of Remus was contrived, so he must have willfully blinded himself to reality, preferring "to write about those who fit into his myth of the devoted servant."[14] In a 1974 article, Louis D. Rubin, Jr., considers Turner's analysis to have merit though it is "ahistorical."[15] Instead, Rubin believes that Harris's sensitivity helped him to advance the representation of African Americans in literature by presenting them in a wider range of situations and experiencing a wider range of emotions than in earlier fiction—basically, showing that blacks were human; "It is as if there were two Joel Chandler Harrises."[16] In addition, Rubin imagines that, though there is nothing to document Harris's feelings, the author "must have secretly pondered the contradictions and compromises of his own life."[17]

Indirectly answering the question of Harris's apparent split-consiousness, Lawrence Levine notes the efforts Harris made to get black workers to tell him unedited stories. By sitting with the resting workers and telling several stories himself in dialect, Harris generated an atmosphere in which the black men felt at ease to tell stories themselves. "He was able to collect black tales, then, only by speaking the idiom of his subjects; only, in short, by becoming black himself, however temporarily."[18] But Eric Sundquist argues, in *To Wake the Nations* (1993), that any bifurcated interpretation, splitting the tales from the frame or Harris from Remus, misses the point of Harris's collections. Harris "wrote with a pronounced consciousness of the dense layers of resistance to slavery and signifying upon the masters built into the tales, but also of a legitimate African heritage that could counteract routine racist denigrations of African American culture as one rooted in ignorance and bar-

barism." (341). Sundquist sees Harris as "the first to pay careful tribute to the great complexity of inherited African American folklore."[19]

Raymond Hedin argues that "the discrepancy between framework and tale is more apparent than real, that *both* Remus and Harris are subversive of the myth of docile, selfless devotion."[20] His argument relies largely on the idea that Remus gradually acculturates the little boy to the slave's value system, eventually gaining power over the boy.

> Remus had acted in tandem with his rabbit to lure the boy, as it were, into a world where their charms had power. Harris knew plantation life first hand; he also knew what it was to feel disadvantaged. By showing how the boy was affected and how Remus was served by the cunning use of storytelling, Harris makes it clear that he knew quite well and respected the skills that the disadvantaged slaves had developed to get along.[21]

From this perspective, Harris became black, to use Levine's terms, not just when he approached potential folk sources but when he delivered material to publishers and readers. From this perspective, Harris himself would have been the African American raconteur who slyly offered moral lessons and critiques against the white power structure in such a way as to provide himself with an escape. James Scott describes such a technique:

> By the subtle use of codes one can insinuate into a ritual, a pattern of dress, a song, a story, meanings that are accessible to one intended audience and opaque to another audience the actors wish to exclude. Alternatively, the excluded (and in this case, powerful) audience may grasp the seditious message in the performance but find it difficult to

react because that sedition is clothed in terms that also can lay claim to a perfectly innocent construction.[22]

It would be more likely that, if such a subversive undertone exists in Harris's work, Harris had unconsciously transmitted it there from his sources. It is, after all, Harris's work preserving African American folk material for which he is valued. Some elements of the frame do echo "authentic" storytelling sessions such as when other slaves interrupt Remus with information from variants of the story Remus is telling.[23] However, we should accept the possibility that Harris's intent was equal to the result; as Richard Dorson argues, the Uncle Remus "collections bolstered the thesis that American Negro folklore, originating in black Africa and nurtured in the rural South, reflected primitive superstitions and ecstatic songs and dances of a childlike race."[24] Harris did not create the stereotype, but his framing of tales merged easily enough with his readers' preferred conception of African Americans.

It is likely, then, that Harris made intentional choices based on his reading of the market. While authors and collectors of folk material found a ready market of readers with tremendous appetites for all things southern, any direct confrontation with or description of power relationships in slavery would have challenged the image of blacks as children and thereby potentially undermine marketability. Harris's answer was to place his readers in the position of the little boy hearing the tales for the first time; he sent them into an idyllic past, invoking the plantation South while deflecting the realities of the slave system. The frame characterizes the old South as a tranquil place where power relationships are nonexistent. The tales, however, emphasize power dynamics, particularly the corruption of the strong. In the John/Master cycle of tales, human interactions on the plantation are overt, but Harris, by focusing on animal stories, relegated discussions of slavery, at most, to an analogous relationship between animal and plantation hierarchies.

Richard Dorson notes in the introduction to his collection, *American Negro Folktales*, that late nineteenth century collecting in general followed Harris's example by focusing largely on animal tales.[25] Harris had been inspired to collect and package African American folklore by an 1877 *Lippincott's Magazine* piece by William Owens.[26] Owens had characterized slave folktales generally: "Almost without exception the actors in these fables are brute animals endowed with speech and reason, in whom mingle strangely, and with ludicrous incongruity, the human and brute characteristics."[27] This focus on animal tales, Dorson notes, was continued in collections of "unadorned tales" by Charles C. Jones and Mrs. A. M. H. Christensen. Not until the 1920s and '30s did the focus of two black collectors, Zora Neale Hurston and J. Mason Brewer, turn to the John/Master cycle of tales.[28] Charles Joyner offers one possibility for the absence of John tales from white-collected lore of the nineteenth century:

> Unlike Buh Rabbit, the slave trickster John was neither allegorical nor remote. He expressed the values and attitudes of his fellow slaves directly. In his inevitable victories over the more powerful master (and thus over the slave system), John provided his fellow slaves with perspective by incongruity. Buh Rabbit tales might be narrated to the master's family as well as to one's fellow slaves, but John tales were for telling only within the slave community. He expressed in symbolic action their plight and their hope, and thus their very identity.[29]

In any case, the John and Master tales are absent from Harris's collections, thus reducing the signifiers, human interaction, of the reality of slavery. There are occasions, however, when Brer Rabbit has dealings with humans; that is, Harris sometimes invokes the plantation system, albeit slightly, by bringing a human element into

his tales. In one story, "Brer Rabbit and the Little Girl" (*Nights* 1883), the rabbit enters Mr. Man's garden because he is "atter he 'lowance er greens."[30] Mr. Man catches him and ties him up with fishing line. When the man goes into his house to fetch a cowhide with which to whip the rabbit, Brer Rabbit begins to sing. His performance delights the girl who has been playing in the garden so that she asks him to sing some more. The rabbit demures, saying that he can dance as well as sing. With this he convinces the girl to untie him, and he dances out of the garden to freedom. The analogy here to a slave putting on a Sambo act in order to avoid a whipping is as close to invoking the horrific imagery of the plantation as the Uncle Remus tales gets. More often, such overt acts of violence and trickery are ameliorated by having the conflict occur between the naturally aggressive animals.

Another story, "Taily-Po" (*Returns* 1918), begins with a basic master-slave conflict (by analogy) as Mr. Man accuses Brer Rabbit of stealing from his garden.

> Mr. Man say dat Brer Rabbit nipped off de tops time dey git out'n de
> groun' good. Mr. Rabbit, he 'low, dat dem what Mr. Man miss
> ain't never come out'n de groun'. Mr. Man say dat may be so, but he
> tell Brer Rabbit to des look at de cabbages, whar dey nibbled. Brer
> Rabbit 'low, he did, dat it mought be the calfies er de big green worms,
> an' he ax Mr. Man what needs do he have fer ter be nibblin' at spindlin'
> greens like dem, when he got a fine gyarden er his own.[31]

In this verbal contest, Brer Rabbit's skill at deflecting Mr. Man's accusations proves him to be the winner. Such wordplay is reminiscent of the popular trick of feigned ignorance, as discussed in Chapter Two, used by slaves to push the boundaries of their compliance. Also reminiscent of slavery is Mr. Man's eventual reaction. Frustrated and furious, Mr. Man abruptly ends the "game" and sends his dogs after the rabbit.

Although not about Mr. Man or other humans, the story of "Why Mr. Possum Loves Peace" (*Songs* 1880) is worth mentioning here because it too involves dogs chasing animal characters. In this tale, Brer Possum and Brer Coon decide upon different strategies for dealing with the dog that has chased them into the woods. The possum plays dead while the racoon fights the dog. Although dogs were used to hunt racoons and 'possums, such a scene would undoubtedly bring to the minds of black or white audiences the use of dogs by slave catchers. In addition, since these animals are often associated with swamps, Brer Possum and Brer Coon bring us back to that landscape. As analogy, this story suggests the slave's ability not only to survive the dangers already waiting in the swamps but those that follow them in. Slaves associated with swamps challenged white (preferred) conceptions of blacks generally as docile, content, and childlike. That slaves sometimes ran away to live in the swamps implied that the planter's image of his own benevolent order was untrue. I have argued in previous chapters that the swamp and its maroon residents served to disrupt white (master) narratives by opposing the control those narratives sought to impose on African Americans. The question in regard to Harris is as follows: does the appearance of swamplands or signifiers of swamps serve to disrupt what many see as the whitewashing of the tales by Harris?

Rather than telling tales of runaways fleeing to the swamps, Harris tends to focus on creatures who inhabit it. Swamps are invoked metonymically through animals associated with swampy wildernesses: alligators, turtles, snakes, possums, racoons, cranes, buzzards, as well as the occasional cypress tree and Spanish moss. "Brother Mud Turtle's Trickery" (*Friends* 1892) is a good example of a well-known motif set in a swamp or marsh. Here, the mud turtle outwits Brer Fox by convincing him that his shell can be removed (the better to eat him) by rubbing it in mud. Just as Brer Rabbit escapes when thrown into the briar patch, Brer Mud Turtle slides into the

mud to escape. Prominent among the dangers of the swamp, however, is the alligator who serves as the primary source of fear for humans and animals who venture into the swamp. Many tales, though, feature Brer Rabbit besting this beast with his mind. Harris records one story, "Brer Rabbit and the Gizzard Eater," in which Brer Rabbit catches a ride across the river on the gator's back. In another Remus story where the rabbit sets fire to the grass in which the gator is sunning himself, we learn that "You Never Know What Trouble Is Until It Finds You." Tales that show the rabbit besting the gator suggest the skill of woodcraft held by slaves that has been largely avoided in the works I have discussed so far, particularly the slave narratives.

One of Harris's contemporaries, Charles C. Jones, includes a tale of "The Negro and the Alligator" in his collection *Negro Myths from the Georgia Coast* (1888). This tale tells of how fearful Oglethorpe and the other Anglo colonists were of the alligator when they first arrived in Georgia. Their slaves, however, were not afraid; rather they saw the alligator as game and as a competitor for fish.

> Hence it came to pass that the alligator was regarded by the negro both as an enemy and as desirable game. During the spring and summer they frequently met, and whenever the former could be taken at a disadvantage its life was forfeit to the opportunity. It was killed in rice-field ditches, in shallow ponds, and occasionally upon land. The hoe, the axe, a fence rail, and the club were the offensive weapons; and loud were the cries and great was the fun while the struggling reptile was being beaten to death. In the back-waters and in swamps where the alligators made their nests, reared their young, and dug their holes, the negroes, during their leisure hours, were fond of capturing them by means of a heavy iron hook fastened to the end of a long, stout pole. This was thrust into the hole where the reptile lay.[32]

After this description of African-American bravery and competence, Jones tells a tale of one slave, Sawney, who was on his way to visit his wife on a neighboring plantation. Sawney crosses a knee-deep stream drawing a gator's attention; rather than escaping the approaching gator, however, he stands his ground and tells the moving water to back off, thinking it is a spirit. "In this idiotic and frightened manner he stood idly talking, until what proved to be a large alligator approached and laid violent hold of his right leg." He is eventually given the opportunity to escape when the gator goes after his lunch sack, but he "remained rooted to the spot, howling, praying, and calling for help."[33] Fortunately, slaves from the quarter come to his call and kill the alligator. All in all, this story that begins as an exposition on the slaves' bravery and woodcraft is undercut by the story of Sawney's "idiocy."[34]

Besides being home to threatening creatures like the "gizzard eater," Harris's swamp is itself a mysterious being. When he tells the story of "How ole Craney-Crow Lost His Head," Uncle Remus embellishes upon the crane's entrance to the swamp.

> "Now, de place whar he wuz blow'd ter wuz Long Cane Swamp, an'
> I wish I had time fer ter take you over dar an' show you right whar he
> wuz at when he lit, an' I wish I had time fer ter take you all thoo de
> Swamp an' let you see fer yo'se'f what kinder Thing it is. 'Tain't only
> des a Swamp; it's sump'n' wuss'n dat. You kin stan' in de middle un it,
> an' mos' hear it ketch its breff, an' dat what make I say dat 'tain't no
> Swamp, fer all it look like one."[35]

This characterization is similar to white romantic ruminations in which a swamp can seem a place of death while simultaneously teaming with life; in this case, it is a supernatural being that provides a home for the supernatural.

Prominent among reasons why swamps would take on supernatural significance is the frequent appearance in them of luminescent swamp gas interpreted to be a

dangerous creature usually called a variant of either "Will o' the Wisp" or "Jack-o-Lantern." In Harris's "Jacky-My-Lantern," a tale devoted to the creature's origin, Remus explains that a blacksmith who once outwitted the devil was turned away from hell when he died; "'sense dat day de blacksmif bin sorter huv'rin' 'roun' 'twix' de heavens en de yeth, en dark nights he shine out so folks call 'im Jacky-my-lantern.'"[36] Another discussion of "Spirits Seen and Unseen," in Uncle Remus's cabin with the little boy, Daddy Jack, and Aunt Tempy, sheds more light on the phenomenon. Aunt Tempy says that she has heard that the Jacky-my-lantern is the spirit of someone killed by robbers who looks for his stolen money in the swamps every night. Daddy Jack tells Remus that turning your coat inside-out is not a protection against regular ghosts but works against "Jack-me-Lantuns" specifically: "One tam I is bin-a mek me way troo t'ick swamp. I do come hot, I do come cole. I feel-a me bahck quake; me bre't' come fahs'. . . . Oona no walk in da swamp 'cep' you is keer you' coat 'cross da' arm. Enty!"[37] Similarly, as recorded by Newbell Niles Puckett in 1926, the creature could be warded off by turning one's pockets inside out, thus showing empty pockets to this "avaricious spirit."[38]

Generally considered to be of European origin, the Jack-o-Lantern indiscriminately sought black and white victims whom it "compelled to go with it into bogs and swamps and marshes, and there left to sink and die.[39] A story reported in the *Journal of American Folklore* in 1905 "explains the appearance of a mysterious light in a certain swamp as the restless ghost of a planter, Mr. Ivey, searching for the bones of his brother, Mr. Jakey, whom he had wronged in order to obtain the family plantation."[40] This example of white greed, an apt metaphor for the collateral damage in-flicted by a system that could lead one brother to victimize another, seems an appro-priate origin for this creature. However, another description of the "Jack-muh-lantern," recorded by William Owens, offers somewhat different logic.

> This terrible creature--who on dark, damp nights would wander with
> his lantern through woods and marshes, seeking to mislead people to
> their destruction--was described by a negro who seemed perfectly
> familiar with his subject as a hideous little being, somewhat human in
> form, though covered with hair like a dog. It had great goggle eyes,
> and thick, sausage-like lips that opened from ear to ear.[41]

This physical description smacks of racist caricature and brings to mind Samuel Huntington Perkins's fear that maroons would attack him as he travelled alongside the Dismal Swamp.[42] Regardless of the subtle messages postbellum readers may have found in these stories, one fact was probably clear to the white audience: "the whites of the locality pay little or no attention to such beliefs, thus making this a bit of English lore preserved almost exclusively by Negroes."[43] As if to extend the assumed difference between the rational, civilized Anglo-American and the ignorant African American, whites often used a Latin term, *ignis fatuus*, to describe the phenomenon.

A more human character often associated with swamps is the conjurer, or root-doctor.[44] At least fifteen of the nearly two hundred Uncle Remus tales deal with the supernatural, and many of these feature people with magical powers, but one recurrent character is actually referred to as a conjurer: the witch-rabbit called Mammy-Bammy Big-Money. Brer Rabbit pays her a visit in "Brother Rabbit and His Famous Foot" (*Nights* 1883). In this tale, Brer Wolf steals Brer Rabbit's lucky rabbit's foot so that it "'[l]ook lak Brer Wolf got all de luck en Brer Rabbit ain't got none. Brer Wolf git fat, Brer Rabbit git lean [etc. . .].'"[45] The ordinarily self-sufficient rabbit then makes his trek into the swamp for help from Mammy-Bammy Big-Money.

> "In dem days," he [Remus] continued, "dey wuz a Witch-Rabbit, en
> dat wuz her entitlements--ole Aunt Mammy-Bammy Big-Money. She
> live way off in a deep, dark swamp, en ef you go dar you hatter ride

some, slide some; jump some, hump some; hop some, flop some; walk some, balk some; creep some, sleep some; [etc. . . .] en ef you ain't monstus keerful you ain't git dar den. Yit Brer Rabbit he git dar atter so long a time, en he mighty nigh wo' out." (245)

Although her help in this case is limited to telling the rabbit to steal his foot back, the story is remarkable in suggesting a limit to the rabbit's tricks and his need to seek help from a more powerful trickster than himself. The same occurs in "Taily-Po." There the rabbit uses his linguistic trickery to foil the man and his agility to escape the dogs, but these powers are not enough. Desiring revenge but feeling incapable of doing it himself, Brer Rabbit again goes to the swamp. The old conjurer takes an animal skin off the wall and brings it to life with her magic. Brer Rabbit sits back and watches as the animal visits Mr. Man's house. It first frightens the man and then causes the house to burn with Mr. Man in it. In both cases, being brave enough to venture into the swamp wins the rabbit power over his enemies.

If, as many critics argue, the tales told by Uncle Remus are full of aggressive energy that had the potential to disrupt white America's preferred image of African Americans as harmless and childlike, then the rabbit's journeys into the conjurer's lair would certainly test those boundaries. Especially in "Taily-Po," the violence normally found in the animal tales steps closer to reality with the murder of a human being, Mr. Man. Likewise, despite the cartoon nature of this conjurer, a rabbit with a hyperbolic name, she is based on an historical plantation figure. Calling her a "conjurer" is like calling Brer Fox an overseer; it highlights the otherwise loose analogy between the animals and "characters" of the institution of slavery.

However, Harris's frame, again, works to sublimate these suggestions. Where the kindly image of Uncle Remus compensates for the aggressiveness of the Brer Rabbit, Daddy Jack serves to counteract the powerful figure of the conjurer. In "Brother

Rabbit's Love-Charm" (*Nights* 1883), Uncle Remus begins to tell of how Brer Rabbit, after just narrowly escaping his enemies, starts to question his superiority over the other creatures. He decides to "make enquirements" as to why his abilities are diminishing. At this point, Remus is interrupted by Daddy Jack, who wants to tell the tale. Daddy Jack then tells of how Brer Rabbit discusses his problem with the conjurer "Afriky man" who diagnoses the problem: Brer Rabbit is in love. Afriky man then gives Brer Rabbit a list of ingredients (including a gator's tooth) with which to make a love charm. Harris's portrait of the conjurer also undercuts the figure's importance because it is Daddy Jack (a.k.a. "Africa Jack") who tells the tale. This frame character is said to be a conjurer himself.

> Daddy Jack appeared to be quite a hundred years old, but he was
> probably not more than eighty. He was a little, dried-up old man,
> whose weazened, dwarfish appearance, while it was calculated to
> inspire awe in the minds of the superstitious, was not without its
> pathetic suggestions. The child had been told that the old African
> was a wizard, a conjurer, and a snake-charmer.[46]

For those readers who are unsure whether to see Jack as pathetic or awe-inspiring, Harris further degrades the power of the conjurer by emphasizing Jack's clownishness. After telling the story of love gained by magic charms, Jack looks suggestively at Tildy, a female slave who has been listening to the tale. She quickly puts Jack in his place and assures him that such a charm would not work.

These conjure tales call forth the image of the uncultivated regions surrounding the plantation as spaces of mystery and power. The rabbit must travel beyond the confines of daily life, analogous to the boundaries of the plantation, in order to partake of the conjurer's power. Ultimately, though, Harris's portraits fail to challenge stereotyped notions and the preferred images of southern African Americans. The occasion-

al confrontation between Brer Rabbit and a human being is potentially disruptive to the otherwise well-maintained frame that insists that the tales are not about slavery. However, as the insistence on African origins of these aggressive tales distances them from African Americans, this framing reinforces the sense that real life in America is much different from the analogous relationships within the tales. The stories are entertaining, Harris seems to say, but they do not reflect "our" blacks. As with much of the lore collecting of the postbellum period, references to swamps in Uncle Remus tales serve only to further the "othering" of African Americans.

This othering effect, caused by African American association with the American "jungle," is clear in antebellum white-authored fiction. Dred and other maroons are so closely associated with the swamplands that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish where the body of the runaway ends and the swamp begins. As David Miller points out in regard to Strother's sketch of Osman, subtle details such as Osman's left hand are drawn to suggest that the surrounding vines are extensions of the runaway's fingers. Likewise, Dred's psyche, his "interiority," is mirrored in his external environment.[47] Such a merging of black man and swamp is also the subject of one slave creation tale. Lawrence Levine notes that this tale,

> reported as early as 1828 in the Tarboro (North Carolina) *Free Press*, told of the Devil attempting to emulate God's creation of Adam. Lacking clay, he went to the swamp and got some mud, using thick, curly moss for hair. When he looked upon his creation he was so disgusted that he kicked it on the shins and struck it on the nose, thus establishing the physical attributes of the black race.[48]

The African American source for this tale seems to have been self-deprecating to the point of masochism as the black Adam is born in violence, created by the devil instead

of God, and made from swamp mud instead of clay. In effect, the tale seems to maintains the image of blacks as inferior to whites.

We might imagine the newspaper's white readers reacting to this story in much the same way that Eli Shepard comments on another creation tale he reports in an 1888 *Cosmopolitan* article. "Among those of the race that live far from white people, their teachings and their influence, there is a barbarous belief that, whereas God is indeed Creator of the dominant white race, they, poor blacks, are the handiwork of Satan."[49] Shepard's reaction suggests circular reasoning: it is the black man's degraded condition that leads to his self-image as one of degradation. Given the plantation interactions wherein the subject matter and *butt* of slave joking was determined by proximity to white planters or overseers, it seems likely that the sorts of folktales reported to whites might be of a fawning, obsequious kind. The context provided by Levine suggests that this tale is uncommon for its genre since slave creation tales more often showed "the white race as a degenerate form of the black."[50] For example, Puckett reports that "there is apparently that African pride of race, traces of which still remain in the folk-lore of the Southern Negro, which assumes that all men were created black to begin with but that the white man originated when Cain turned pale from fright after murdering his brother Abel."[51] As a result, we might think that, even if the white collector faithfully reported what he had heard, the editing process had begun with the black storyteller who either altered stories or told only those tales that would be appropriate for a white audience. For the white readers of the *Free Press*, this tale was sufficiently tame; its aggression was directed inward rather than against the institution or whites generally.

However, a century's worth of collected stories suggests that black storytellers used the swamps in their tales for a variety of reasons, the least of which was to please a white audience. The tellers of folktales do not seem to have been as averse to asso-

ciating African Americans with swamps as had been their slave narrator counterparts; just as white romantics found the swamp to offer rich storytelling possibilities, so did the tellers of black folk tales. But where white romantic poets only reached "The Edge of the Swamp," to borrow from Simms's poem, African American folklore penetrated into the depths of the region. If a white audience saw in swamp-lore an affirmation of their exotic primitive stereotype, a black audience was just as likely to see black characters occupying a black landscape.

The desire to keep information within the black community, to inscribe boundaries of exclusion and inclusion, may have required silence and self-editing; however, the style of storytelling allowed the teller to interact with his/her audience in such a way that may have seemed incomprehensible to white spectators. After all, if, as Roger Abrahams notes, circumlocution was part of the African American verbal aesthetic, if some points were subtle even for the in-group, all the more difficult would it have been for an outsider to decode. The particularized linguistic skills of the story-teller may have inscribed boundaries without further effort.[52] Likewise, the black audience had the specific in-group understanding of character and symbol. For example, where Eli Shepard had been shocked by black self-association with the devil, a black audience would have seen the tale much differently. As Zora Neale Hurston explains, "The Devil is next after Jack [John] as a culture hero. He can out-smart everyone but Jack. God is absolutely no match for him. He is good-natured and full of humour. The sort of person one may count on to help out in any difficulty."[53] Although white and black may have been listening to the same tales, the two groups differed in their interpretations. Likewise, the stories served different functions from one group to the other.

Whether Brer Rabbit, John, or the devil, the hero of the tales was often a trickster figure, showing, according to John W. Roberts, "that enslaved Africans

continued, throughout the period of slavery, to accept trickster-like behaviors as the most advantageous for securing their interests within the slave system."[54] However, Roberts offers a caveat: "Although enslaved Africans placed a great deal of emphasis on trickster-like behavior as a reflection of their values, their animal trickster tale tradition was precarious from the beginning as an expressive model of heroic action in the socio-cultural environment of the slave system."[55] At the heart of this statement is the commonly held belief that folktales served a significant social function in the slave quarter; the "precariousness" Roberts mentions derives both from the fact that slaves were not in a position to perform the extreme acts of trickery against whites often depicted in the tales. In fact, the point of such tales was not necessarily a call-to-arms for slaves to act like the trickster. Scholarly opinion differs somewhat on what the primary purpose was, but most agree that the tales, particularly trickster tales, provided lessons for African American children. For Charles Joyner, the tales taught that "one must learn the ways of the powerful in order to survive."[56] A slave may not have been able to appropriate the planter's (or stronger animal's) social, economic, and physical power, but knowing how the strong make use of their power is itself empowering. Perhaps more important than learning how to become a trickster is learning how to avoid being the dupe of a trickster.[57]

In one widely reported story with many variants, the trickster John becomes a dupe; one version, collected by Dorson, is called "Talking Bones."

> They used to carry the slaves out in the woods and leave them
>
> there, if they killed them—just like dead animals. There wasn't any
>
> burying then. It used to be a secret, between one plantation and
>
> another, when they beat up their hands and carried them off.
>
> So John was walking out in the woods and seed a skeleton.

He says: "This looks like a human. I wonder what he's doing out here." And the skeleton said, "Tongue is the cause of my being here." So John ran back to Old Marster and said, "The skeleton at the edge of the woods is talking." Old Marster didn't believe him and went to see. And a great many people came too. They said, "Make the bones talk." But the skeleton wouldn't talk. So they beat John to death, and left him there. And then the bones talked. They said, "Tongue brought us here, and tongue brought you here."[58]

One variant of this motif in Dorson's collection is called "Dividing Souls" in which John is a slave who acts as the master's informant. John hears what he thinks is God and the devil dividing souls but is actually two slaves in a cemetery dividing stolen apples. As he begins running to tell Old Marster, the slave trips over a skeleton that speaks to him: "Same thing got me here will get you here." When the bones fail to speak upon demand, Old Marster cuts off John's head.[59] Another version involves a "Talking Turtle" rather than human remains. Every day, John has to tote water from the pond, and every day he complains aloud about his work. The turtle tells him, "Black man, you talk too much." When the turtle fails to speak to Old Marster, John's punishment is a beating, proving the turtle's point that John talks too much.[60]

In these tales, John falls prey to a trick and serves as an example of how not to act. The lesson is one of mistrust, a theme, according to Roger D. Abrahams, that "pervades these stories as a direct reminder of how careful people should be in life."[61] It can also be seen as an injunction against sharing secrets with whites,[62] a warning that Roberts emphasizes in his analysis of the "Dividing Souls" version that addresses John's collusion with Old Marster, his willingness to place his master's interests over those of his fellow slaves. "Enslaved Africans viewed the violations of this norm as important enough to reiterate the norm in a number of tales."[63]

Discretion, however, was not merely a matter of keeping one's mouth closed.

Rather than focusing primarily on the theme or a single moral of a tale, children could

learn from the verbal skill of the trickster and storyteller; they were, in effect, "learning

wariness and counteractive devices of wit."[64] Linguistic skills were highly regarded in

the slave quarter, perhaps the reason why slave courtship often involved the telling of

riddles.[65] According to Abrahams, verbal "indirection is often the clever and master-

ful way by which the oral artist operates," and this gives "the storyteller a greater sense

of power." Such a skill was beneficial to the slave community because, among other

things, it facilitated in-group harmony. A disruptive member of the community could

be chastised through "roundabout techniques" that decreased the need for confron-

tation. It would be understood by all who was being talked about, but no names

needed to be mentioned. In addition, slaves often changed the meanings of words,

sometimes "to mean the opposite of what they mean in standard speech."[66] This and

other alterations seemed to whites to be a butchery of the language, an inability to

speak properly, thus a justification of the stereotype of uneducable ignorance. To

African Americans who knew well what whites thought of their language, these

changes to standard English provided "a kind of linguistic liberation."[67]

Linguistic liberation from the white planter's world might be viewed as an act

of resistance, as reacting against the white power structure through refusal to accept

the language of their captors; however, such linguistic resistance may also be seen as

pro-active culture-building as opposed to being mere *reaction* to white domination.

From this viewpoint, the importance of folklore was its resulting social cohesion.

Even among recently arrived Africans of disparate nationalities, Joyner argues, "[s]uch

examples of traditional expressive behavior as storytelling were among the most

striking means by which slaves proclaimed and reinforced their sense of autonomy."[68]

As Abrahams warns, the tales were not necessarily lesson plans on how to "get back at

Whitey" as much as they are models of communal behavior.[69] This idea is illustrated by one of Harris's most notable omissions. In the tar baby story retold by other collectors and in African variants, the tar-baby trap is set for Brer Rabbit because he has offended the community of animals. For example, the rabbit refuses to help dig a well, but he reaps the benefits when it is completed.[70] In contrast to the Remus version in which the rabbit's escape into the briar patch is a triumph of the weak over the strong, the other versions are more indicative of the open-ended nature of African American folklore in which, as Abrahams argues, "winning and losing seem quite beside the point. Instead, such patterned disordering displays the sheer pleasure of getting the action going through some kind of boundary-breaking revelation."[71]

Still, to the extent that it defined acceptable forms of behavior, the folklore of African Americans helped establish ideas of community. According to Roberts, "[t]he trickster tales may not have offered patterns of behavior capable of annihilating their real-life antagonists, but they did provide a conception which prevented physical and cultural annihilation."[72] Similarly, Joyner argues, "the trickster tales were in fact a crucial element in the development of an adaptive African-American culture. That culture was the most significant form of resistance against the spiritual and psychological, if not the physical, effects of slavery."[73] At the heart of lore dissemination for both black and white audiences, if only unconsciously, was a politics of identity. Where black audiences saw an active, dynamic, and significant body of beliefs, white collectors and audiences saw relics from the past, possibly a distant, African past. As a result, folklore may have been a key ingredient in the development of African American culture through which they could establish a group identity; at the same time, the lore allowed whites to relegate blacks to the antebellum South, defining them in terms anachronistic to the New South. While focusing on the image of the slave, collected folklore had implications for the freedman.

As noted in the introduction to this section, racial attitudes in postbellum America can be divided into three periods. It was during the middle period (1877-1889) that Joel Chandler Harris began publishing his Uncle Remus stories. In his 1886 essay "An Accidental Author," Harris explains how the location of his first job as a newspaper apprentice led to his career as a literary man and the country's best-known folklorist.[74]

> In truth, *The Countryman* was published in the country. A partridge
> built her nest within five paces of the window where I learned to set
> type, and hatched her brood undisturbed. The cat-squirrels frolicked
> on the roof, and a gray fox, whose range was in the neighborhood, used
> to flit across the orchard-path in full view. *The Countryman* was pub-
> lished on a plantation, and it was on this and neighboring plantations
> that I became familiar with the curious myths and animal stories that
> form the basis of the volumes credited to Uncle Remus. I absorbed the
> stories, songs, and myths that I heard, but had no idea of their literary
> value until, some time in the seventies, *Lippincott's Magazine* printed
> an article on the subject of negro folklore, containing rough outlines of
> some of the stories. This article gave me my cue, and the legends told
> by Uncle Remus are the result.[75]

Although Harris's portrait of the plantation work-space is probably intended to echo the bucolic setting of the Remus tales, his phrasing and imagery are suggestive of the nation's overall folklore project. Collecting and printing tales is seen here as partaking of the antebellum plantation without disturbing it. He travels back in time to collect these artifacts without imposing the materialist, urban, consumer-oriented New South upon the Old. Moreover, he uses the passive voice to make the tellers of the tales disappear, as if the image of an antebellum Negro was acceptable, but the New Negro

of the postbellum period was not. Another way that Harris diminishes the presence of his informants is through their association with animals. Much as antebellum, pro-slavery writers often associated black characters with animals, Harris, though much more subtly (and probably even unintentionally), makes his informants the last in a series of animal references: partridge, squirrel, fox, Negro. In fact, his use of the passive voice may even suggest that Harris, *as Uncle Remus*, would commune with the animals who told him their tales personally, without the need for black interlocutors. It is this sense of African Americans as absent, even when they are central figures, that is typical of the reconciliation project. In this way, Harris may have had a profound effect on the popularity of folktales and on the way they would be presented to white audiences, but he was merely a part of a larger project.

In her exploration of the *Century Magazine*'s treatment of race and sectional reconciliation, Janet Gabler-Hover contemplates the financial success of their Civil War series, to which high ranking officers from both sides of the conflict contributed articles between 1884 and 1887. Gabler-Hover finds that the *Century* editors believed their publishing decisions to be guided by a "sense of mission" rather than financial consideration, and the Civil War series was very sucessful financially .

> The editors certainly realized early on that, with timely albeit perhaps unwitting brilliance, they had tapped into a great need in the still regionally divided country for a moral catharsis. Exposed was the still-raw wound of North-South division and perhaps the North's need to absolve itself of the responsibility of decimating the South.[76]

If the popularity of the Civil War series was a sign that white northerners and southerners wished to know each other's hearts so that they would "love each other as never before," as the general editor told his contributors,[77] what are we to make of the popularity of African American folk materials in this and other periodicals of the time?

As some indication of just how popular slave-lore was at the time, the *Century* editors made George Washington Cable's article on "Creole Slave Songs" the lead article in the April 1886 issue.[78] But the interest in such material did not have a "reconciliation-effect" between black and white as the Civil War series was intended to have between northern whites and southern whites. On the contrary, Gabler-Hover argues, "the influential pervasiveness of the reconciliation theme indicates a strong psychological pull toward ethnic homogeneity and a resistance and denial of racial difference,"[79] Instead, the high visibility of African Americans through published folk materials placed them, and racial difference, in the antebellum past. The negrophobia, then, lying beneath the eager consumption of slave lore, was a fear of the free Negro as an unknown, no longer bound by the civilizing influence of the institution of slavery. The unspoken question was: Would the new black masses revert to their baser African natures?

Bruce Jackson argues that postbellum America, "still digesting the European Romanticism," was intrigued with African Americans as Noble Savages.[80] Such a characterization fits with the notion that Africans were saved (spiritually, morally, and physically) from heathenism by being brought to America, christianized, and civilized. Much of the discussion of the African origins of the slave tales (a position Harris argued strenuously in his early collections) served to accentuate the African-ness of African Americans in the minds of white readers.[81] Thaddeus Norris, in an 1870 *Lippencott's* article on "Negro Superstitions," emphasizes the African origins of black folk beliefs. "That the heathenish rites of the Hoodoo should exist in Louisiana [where so many slaves came directly from Africa] even at the present day is therefore not wonderful."[82] Likewise, William Owens, in the 1877 *Lippincott's* article that inspired Harris, tries to make American blacks seem exotic in their link to the "dark continent," while trying to diminish the fearsome aspects of that association. Concerning his col-

lection, he says, "These are fair samples of Americanized superstitions--puerile, it is true, but harmless. It is only when we come into contact with negroes of pure African descent that we discover evidences of a once prevalent and not wholly discarded demonology."[83] The Negro, he seems to say, has an essentially savage nature, yet clothed in American civilization, "there is nothing fierce and cruel in his nature."[84] Thus tamed, the savage could be enjoyed without fear.

In his survey of nineteenth-century articles on African American folk culture, Bruce Jackson finds a pattern to white reception of the material.

> Early in the century the Negro is a curiosity to be described with
> humor or paternalistic condescendsion. . . . Minstrelsy was for many
> Northerners a way to shelve the problem posed by the free Negro:
> hide him in caricature. But by the middle of the century a reaction
> against this had set in, and Kinnard and Nathanson published articles
> suggesting they have realized that the Negro may have a very real
> contribution to make. Just before, during, and immediately after the
> war, the Northern Abolitionists--C. W. D., the McKims, Spaulding,
> Higginson--comment on the Negro's spirituals. It is not surprising that
> they should find this one aspect of his culture most worthy of public
> attention, for it helped make their point that the Negro is a human
> being, one with a soul.[85]

During the postbellum years, the collection of black folk materials expanded to include more types of folk expression, but it was also during this period that folk materials, in large part, were offered with "paternalistic condescension" once again.

However, as Joel Williamson argues, with the rise of Radicalism America's love of quaint, childlike relics of the old plantation began to shift toward fear of the free Negro as an unencumbered barbarian. For example, an 1891 *Atlantic Monthly*

article extended the notion that African Americans were naturally unfit for enfranchisement by suggesting that blacks willfully reject civilization. "[S]eeing how he reaches toward the light, reaching out of the darkness of an ignorance near akin to barbarism, it is strange to note how he retards his progress toward the acquisition of clear light by clinging to purposeless and very curious superstitions"[86] The collection of folk material was an activity that inherently acknowledged blacks as "bearers of culture" who "may have a very real contribution to make" to the larger American culture,[87] perhaps the first step to acknowledging that African Americans had already contributed. However, when emphasis was placed on African origins and superstitions, the activity of collecting, printing, and consuming African American folk culture by whites actually contributed to disenfranchisement.

Zora Neale Hurston offers one explanation for how white audiences viewed the New Negro in a 1950 article titled "What White Publishers Won't Print."[88] She tells a story "of slavery time" in which a planter sets out to test the intelligence of one of his slaves. After teaching the slave Latin and higher mathematics, the planter shows off the slave to his doubting neighbor. Although the planter is confident he has proven the black man equal with the white man in intellectual potential, the neighbor sets him straight: "It is all an aping of our culture. . . . Turn him loose, and he will revert at once to the jungle. He is still a savage, and no amount of translating Virgil and Ovid is going to change him. In fact, all you have done is to turn a useful savage into a dangerous beast.'"[89] Hurston sarcastically sums up the viewpoint of the neighbor that she sees as typical of white Americans since slavery time: "No matter how high we may *seem* to climb, put us under strain and we revert to type, that is, to the bush."[90] It is such a reversion that is seen by the Radicals of the 1890s, who believed that the heights to which blacks could climb had been achieved during slavery. Reversion to

type was signaled by a folklore that linked African Americans to African jungles more than to southern plantations.

In 1941, African American scholars were wary of accepting Melville Herskovits's argument that black folkways in the western hemisphere were "survivals" that could be traced to specific sources in Africa. According to Charles Joyner, "for African Americans to acknowledge a continuing African heritage was tantamount to acknowledging that they had a very tenuous hold on 'civilization.'"[91] Similarly, even those enthusiastic collectors of folklore in the late nineteenth century who wished nothing more than to recognize African American contributions, as Jackson puts it, were participating to some degree in the "othering" of black Americans. White consumers of black folklore were simultaneously fixing an image of African Americans in the antebellum past and developing a picture of the postbellum Negro. This process defined a time and place in which African Americans were known to white America, and therefore were tolerable. As long as postbellum blacks did nothing to disturb such a beloved image, white America was comfortable. Folktales and superstitious beliefs borrowed from European traditions were considered quaint; if they were retained from Africa, they might have been seen as harmless signs of a race in its infancy; but with an antebellum frame removed, the tales became less quaint and more sinister.

Another frame placed around African American folklore in the 1880s and 1890s was that of scientific analysis. During his early years of writing Uncle Remus stories, Harris saw himself, and was seen by folklorists, as a serious scholar of folklore. As an introduction to his 1883 collection, *Nights with Uncle Remus*, he published copious notes on sources and storytelling contexts. "Although his entrance to the field of folklore was accidental, Harris proved to be an amazing student. He adhered to contemporary collecting and editing standards, and he wrote clearly on issues of significance to folklorists of that day."[92] However, Harris's collections were even-

tually thought of as children's literature. This was due, in par:t, to the framing device in which the tales were, in fact, addressed to a child. Likewise, tales in popular magazines were often framed as childhood reminiscences, making the Old South an eternal, idyllic childhood and making African Americans into the loving companions of children. But in the 1890s Harris began to despise folklorists as people who drained the life out of stories, so he began to consider himself more and more to be a children's author.[93] Folklorists seem to have bemoaned the loss of Harris in their ranks because his association with children's literature diminished the seriousness of folklore study.

The *Journal of American Folklore*, which began publishing in 1888, gave considerable attention to African American lore and sought too give the study a more scientific basis than seen in the hodgepodge of contributions tto more popular periodicals.[94] One popular magazine, *Popular Science Monthly*, did try to hold Harris to scientific standards in a review of *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings* by T. F. Crane in 1881. After summarizing many of the tales, Crane notes the "remarkable" similarities between not just Remus's tales and European or African tales, but also with those of some South American Indians and considers ways that the tales may have travelled from one group to another. Jackson calls this review the most important one from a folklorist's viewpoint because "[w]ith it, the study of Negro folklore became academically respectable."[95]

Another journal that tried to lend academic credibility to the study of black folklore was the *Southern Workman and Hampton School Record*. It had largely avoided publishing or discussing slave folklore for fear that itt would perpetuate racial stereotypes and counteract their efforts toward racial uplift. It was only after Antonin Dvorak's "public praise of the Negro songs and the steady recognition of Negro folklore by the *Journal of American Folklore*" that the editors, along with the Hampton Institute's teachers and students, began a project to collect, preserve, and study

African American folk materials.[96] In the September 1895 issue, the editors announced this project to their readers and asked for assistance, arguing that the collection "would be of great scientific value, not only to students of folk-lore, but to the future historians of the Negro race in America."[97] As opposed to the seemingly arbitrary collecting and publishing typical of the popular magazines, the *Southern Workman* outlined the school's methodology, including fieldwork and on-campus sorting of what was collected. One effort that distinguishes their work from Harris's, for example, was their insistence that the lore collected not be altered in any way, "for their scientific value depends largely upon their being the truthful record of the words of the original story teller."[98] Perhaps too they recognized that well-meaning collectors often tried to "clean up" the original teller's language and material.[99]

The purpose and goals of the Hampton project were implied in their questions:

[H]as a tradition of former tribal relations been preserved among the descendants of those African importations, or did the horrors of the middle passage blot out all remembrance of a free and savage past? Are there not in many parts of the South to-day Negroes who point with pride to some African chief or medicine man as their ancestors?[100]

The article ends with a final gesture toward academic legitimacy, quoting suggestions of Harvard's Professor Shaler on how to proceed collecting in a way that would record peripheral data such as the racial mixture of the storyteller and the community as a whole from which the lore was collected.[101] Ultimately, they make clear, "It is our wish . . . to make out of the scattered, unwritten history . . . an ordered and comprehensive whole."[102]

The *Southern Workman*'s attempt to frame African American folklore in scientific terms was also reflected in the focus of its articles. As opposed to the

Journal of American Folklore which published an equal number of stories as of superstitions, the *Southern Workman* published twice as many tales as super-stitions.[103] The Hampton project was much more concerned with discrete actions and daily practices in order to record slave life and culture; when they approached belief systems that might seem to a white audience to connote savagery or back-wardness, the editors and contributors did so within the confines of their scientific methodology. For example, in a request for more information to add to their already plentiful collection of witch/hag-lore, the editors asked:

> We would like a little more detail in regard to how the hag obtains her fearful power. We would like to know whether hags and witches are the same. We should like reports on the hag and witch belief, and stories about hags and witches from a great many parts of the South, that by a careful study of data drawn from many sources we may try to make out how much of this belief is a survival from Africa and how much is European, which has been held and preserved by the Negroes, after the whites from whom it was originally obtained have forgotten it.[104]

Still, the editors of the *Southern Workman* agreed with most other collectors of the time that Africans were evolutionary infants, "a race in its childhood."[105] The Hampton collectors used an academic framework to distance themselves from "the folk." In doing so, they were able to create and project an identity for themselves that included slave lore as a unique and important heritage without jeopardizing their "talented tenth" identity.

Rosan Augusta Jordan and Frank de Caro offer an examination of another folklore-collecting community at the end of the nineteenth century, the Louisiana branch of the (then new) American Folklore Society. Their essay, "'In This Folk-Lore

Land': Race, Class, Identity, and Folklore Studies in Louisiana," traces society members' attempts to define themselves through the act of collecting African American folklore. The racial boundaries in Louisiana were unique in the United States, and the antebellum period marked a final step toward "Americanization" that meant drawing a color line more akin to that of other southern states.[106] According to Jordan and de Caro, "[t]he folklore studied by members of the Louisiana association was being used in part to delineate by contrast racial identity at a time when to do so was politically and psychologically important for Southern whites."[107] In a state where skin color had traditionally been more compli-cated as a marker of class than it was in the rest of the country, Jordan and de Caro argue, "[r]acial identities were being drawn according to folk practices participated in!"[108]

Besides drawing racial distinctions, knowledge of folklore could also provide the folklorist with upper-class credentials. Folklore was associated with the newly rarefied plantation, and white tellers of black folklore would frame their stories as a remembrances of childhood. Instead of identifying themselves with Joel Chandler Harris, who came to a plantation to work at age 13, these people identified with the Little Boy who heard the stories firsthand, from "authentic" old-time Negroes.[109] Framed in this way, the writings of the society members "allowed for indulgence in a nostalgia for an Older South."[110] Jordan and deCaro find it paradoxical that the same process that "distinguishes between the observer and the observed [self and other] suggest[s] a harmony, drawing master and slave, white and Black, into a vision of happy coexistence, so that the folklore that is 'theirs' also becomes 'ours,' giving a sense of completeness to a world of the past."[111] This is especially ironic when compared with the Hampton project, which, to a large degree, attempted to make what was "ours" into "theirs."

Where Hampton's black students and teachers and the editors of the *Southern Workman* faced a stigma of barbarism, a guilt by association with African American folk material, similar material potentially conferred an upper-class status upon white members of the Louisiana Folklore Society and presumably among other folklore societies around the country. For example, Thaddeus Norris's 1870 Lippincotts article stresses the first-hand experience the author had with the folk: "In my childhood I firmly believed in witches, and it was with some dread that I went out of doors or through a room when it was dark, and frequently dreamed of them after hearing some of the stories told by the servants on long winter evenings."[112] Likewise, Susan Showers begins her 1898 *New England Magazine* article by claiming an intimate relationship with her slaves: "One of our girls was going to be married."[113] Despite the implied intimacy accompanying these statements, it was only the antebellum African Americans that the sons and daughters of planters knew and loves; the New Negro of the New South was viewed much more dimly.

Norris's childhood fear of witches was easily dismissed in the daylight of adult experience; however, the "shadow of the Negro" was the new source of white anxiety. An unsigned article called "Word Shadows" in an 1891 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly* illustrates this point. Though the author ostensibly addresses the "mangling" of the English language by African Americans, s/he also characterizes the more general apprehension among whites concerning what free blacks would do to American culture.

> If shadows of material objects are grotesque, even more so are the
> shadows cast by words from fairly educated lips into the minds of
> almost totally ignorant people. . . . This grotesquerie, this quaint
> transformation of something well known, real, and admirable into
> something queer, fanciful, and awkward, yet bearing resemblance to

the fair formation it shadows, gives to dialect writing and to dialect
speech that piquant flavor that all the world favors. . . . The words
of our language that enter the mind of the old-time negro have indeed
found their way into a dusky realm.[114]

From this writer's perspective, African Americans inhabited a dark other-world
linguistically, much as the revelers at Place Congo, in Cable's article, occupied a
geographical shadowland. However, where the latter author tried to accentuate the
social inequality of the segregated landscape and placed much of the exotic imagery in
the antebellum past, the former located the "dusky realm" in his present. In contrast to
Cable, "Word Shadows" suggested that physical separation provided inadequate pro-
tection from the shadow of the Negro that threatened to corrupt Anglo-American
culture as it did the language. If white Americans imagined African Americans meta-
phorically inhabiting a swamp, the *Atlantic Monthly* article expressed a fear that white
America would be dragged into the cultural swamp as well--sinking like victims of a
Jack o' Lantern.

The striking images of blacks revelling wildly in swamps provided an
alternative text to the beloved Uncle Remus. In particular, continuing voodoo
festivities in Louisiana swamplands probably contributed a good deal to the image of
black heathenism in the minds of white Americans. Cable reported one such affair
from June of 1884.

It took place at a wild and lonely spot where the dismal cypress swamp
behind New Orleans meets the waters of Lake Pontchartrain in a
wilderness of cypress stumps and rushes. It would be hard to find in
nature a more painfully desolate region. There was singing--"*M'allé
couri dans déser*" ("I am going into the wilderness"), a chant and
refrain not worth the room they would take--and there was frenzy and

a circling march, wild shouts, delirious gesticulations.[115]

New Orleans journalists likewise reported strange affairs. "These meetings were held out in the swamps along the river edge and always at night, and it is said that frightful, savage dances and other barbarous incantations took place at these gatherings."[116]

Aside from such specific accounts to thrill and frighten white readers, we should consider how African American folklore generally might have offered, in more subtle ways, such associations that "helped" white Americans in the process of "othering" black Amerians. For Roger Abrahams, "these tales betray an aesthetic fascination on the part of Afro-American storytellers with the transformative possibilities that can occur where the bush and human habitation abut. . . . The delight of these stories, then, lies in their dramatization of a disordering of society that opens us up to life itself."[117] At a time when white narratives attempted to heal sectional animosity by creating a coherent, undisturbed image of the past, such "opening up" threatened reconciliation. As a body of cultural work that was becoming more overtly a part of American discourse, African American folklore *should* have disrupted those attempts at closure. Instead, when the Uncle Remus-type image dissolved into one that was less familiar and less comforting to white America, the free black man set adrift from slavery's civilizing influence, anxiety led to a different stereotype, the reverted black man. Either image, however, supported the nobility of the old South by showing that slavery had been justified as a means of civilizing the heathen African.

As part of the larger reconciliation project, the movement to collect and consume African American folklore and folkways served a number of functions. First, it reinscribed race boundaries such that white northerers were no longer aligned with African Americans against white southerners. The presentation of folk material characterized black Americans as figures from the past--simple, ignorant, with delightful if bizarre beliefs. To some degree, such characterization rendered postbellum blacks

invisible to white society to prevent whites from wondering and worrying what the free Negro would be like. At the same time, those "old Negroes" were often infantilized as the companions of their young white masters who served as audiences. Thaddeus Norris's statement that he actually believed in witches when he was a child implies that the black adults who told him about witches were themselves childlike. In general, cultural expressions of the cult of the Lost Cause reinscribed boundaries of knowledge around now free blacks in order to render them less threatening in the white imagination. The collection and publication of African American folklore, whatever the intent of the collectors, helped to label African American belief systems as childlike imaginings and thereby to objectify the sources of that lore. To objectify is to know; to know is to control.

However, where reports of black folk beliefs focused on the strange and exotic, the image of a harmless antebellum uncle or auntie gave way to an unknown and threatening New Negro who, despite the appellation, was considered a throwback to the African jungle. As exotic Others, African Americans were seen less and less as worthy of enfranchisement; on the contrary, the collected lore seemed to support the thesis that slavery had been the only thing keeping them out of the bush. This does not mean that collectors of folklore were actively working to denigrate blacks or that publishers who printed folk material felt the same sense of mission that Gabler-Hover describes among the *Century Magazine* editors. Rather, given the times, given the fact that the spur to collect coincided with the Lost Cause mentality, it should not be surprising that the folklore project might have been framed and/or subsumed by the reconciliation project. Though postbellum collectors of African American folklore performed a great service for later generations of folklorists, historians, sociologists, and writers, they also served the purposes of their contemporaries who were devoted to the Lost Cause.

CHAPTER NINE

THOMAS NELSON PAGE AND THE CULT OF THE LOST CAUSE:

IMAGINED COMMUNITIES IN "NO HAID PAWN"

Though widely praised for his contribution to the preservation of African-

American folktales, Harris also attracts criticism regarding his portrayal of Uncle

Remus and the little boy. Through these frame characters, Harris seems to perpetuate

the myth of the Old South, as did other postbellum writers in the plantation genre, by

undermining the otherwise subversive content of the tales in favor of the postbellum

sentimentality and sorrow over the loss of an edenic way of life. This cult of the Lost

Cause is most often referenced through the works of Thomas Nelson Page, in which

the master-slave relationship is romanticized. Page's story "Marse Chan" is usually

noted by critics as the epitome of the genre in the postbellum era; but the author's at-

tempt to bring swamp-lore into the plantation project, in "No Haid Pawn," introduces

a disruptive element to the otherwise self-assured ideology. The image of the maroon

seems incompatible with Page's otherwise idyllic portrait of life before the war. Harris,

however, manages to synthesize the two, creating a sentimental portrait of swamp-

dwellers, in his story "Daddy Jake the Runaway" (1889) as does Harry Stillwell

Edwards in "Two Runaways" (1889). While romanticizing the master-slave relation-

ship, these two writers also manage to defuse the potentially explosive image of the

maroon.

Despite his emphasis on animal tales, Harris did offer his audience a view of a

slave taking action in "Daddy Jake the Runaway."[1] By conjuring forth images of

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swamps and maroons, this story peeps beneath the veneer of the Old South in a way that the Uncle Remus tales do not. In this three-part story, a beloved Uncle Remus-type slave, Daddy Jake, a favorite of the planter's young children, is struck by a new overseer and returns the blow. Fearing that the overseer is dead, Daddy Jake heads for the wilderness. The plantation owner fires the overseer who had struck Daddy Jake, but this late assertion of paternal authority cannot assuage his children's need to "save" Daddy Jake from the horrors of the wilderness. So Lillian and her brother Lucien set off down the river to find him. In putting a friendly, smiling, Uncle Remus face on the otherwise threatening visage of the maroon, Harris subscribes to the notion that it is the Legree-type who caused trouble to the institution; it is the abberent bad master or overseer who triggered abberent behavior (such as running away) in slaves. Indeed, the fear in this story is generated by concern for Daddy Jake's safety. The planter believes that the harsh conditions of the wilderness will suffice to send Daddy Jake back to his cozy home and only organizes a search for Jake as a byproduct of his search for his children.

In the second section, one slave, Sandy Bill, obstructs the planter's search for the children by not offering information on where their boat landed. As aggressive an act as this might seem in a story that otherwise smooths out fears of rebellious African Americans, Sandy Bill does so to protect a community of runaways living in the cane-brake where the boat landed. Sandy Bill explains himself to another slave: "Master thinks 'cause he treats niggers right—everybody else does" (31-32). The fact that other, less enlightened masters do mistreat their slaves enough to provoke marronage is fully established in the third section, when the children wake up in their boat to see an "almost hideous" face of a black woman peering at them (53). But this momentary shock is ameliorated quickly as the children are ushered into the recesses of the swamp where runaways, including Daddy Jake, have formed a community. The blame for

their condition--being forced to live in such a way--is reemphasized as slaves tell narratives of mistreatment similar to Daddy Jake's. Then, to emphasize the benign nature of the swamp community, the children find themselves in the familiar pattern of domesticity: slaves cooking them a nice chicken dinner followed by a Remus-like storytelling session.

The lesson, moral, or cultural significance of "Daddy Jake" is offered very early in the story by Lillian, the six-year-old daughter of the plantation owner: "I used to be afraid of runaways . . . but I'm not afraid now, 'cause Daddy Jake is a runaway" (12-13). If a child's fear of the unknown is analogous to the adult planter's fear of the unseen (the runaway slave), then this statement sets forth the underlying motivation for the story: to demystify the maroon as part of the ongoing rejuvenation of the antebellum South and its institution of slavery. Though critics still argue over Joel Chandler Harris's complicity in perpetuating the myth of the Old South in the Uncle Remus tales, his direct address of the troubling image of the maroon has the same effect as that of other southern apologists; he removes the runaway from the realm of legend.

"Daddy Jake" was published at approximately the same time as Harry Stillwell Edwards's collection of southern tales entitled *Two Runaways and Other Stories*.[2] The story, "Two Runaways," follows the same ideological pattern as Daddy Jake in its demystification of the otherwise threatening image lingering from the antebellum period-- an image that had to be demystified if the rejuvenation of the Old South was to succeed. To this end, Edwards depicts a planter, Major Worthington, who is determined to learn the secret life of his slave Isam, who is an annual truant: "old Isam had run away annually about the same time of year, and this without any apparent cause" (4). The idea of the planter's (and the postbellum reader's) need to understand, to know what the slave does when he is out of sight, is emphasized from the start

when Major Worthington is described as a man who despised books but for whom Isam was an "unfailing source of amusement" (2). This opposition *does* poke fun at the major and his political affiliation (the narrator points out that he is a Whig), but the juxtaposition of books and slaves puts the planter in the position of *reading* the runaway: to read, to know, to understand, and not to fear. "He cared not one iota for his lost time, nor for his bad example; but it galled him to think that there was anything in connection with a negro that he could not fathom" (5). And so, when the day comes for Isam's stolen vacation to commence, the major is by his side.

The major goes as Isam's guest into the swamp, where the planter is very impressed with Isam's prowess and woodcraft: "He seemed a veritable genius of the swamp" (20). But such bursts of praise are muted by the concern that Isam, in addition to stealing his time, has to steal from neighboring planters to survive in the swamp. The Major imagines that "'it must be hard for an *honest* nigger to live comfortably out here,'" but instead of being appalled, the "Major became an accessory . . . to the daily sins committed" (13, 21). He "goes native," finding himself in a bucolic spot he has not seen since he fished it as a child; and at this point the major becomes a willing accessory, turning any image of the runaway's fight for survival into innocent devilment that allows for a luxurious vacation in childhood. The adventures of the two runaways, the Major and Isam, have the same effect as Harris's depiction of life in the swamp; both stories show the black population to be knowable—even when shrouded in the mystery of the swamps, blacks themselves are shown to be simple and anything but threatening. Although tales of the postbellum era are not typically set in swamps, I would argue that these two examples *do* provide the ultimate test for the cult of the Lost Cause. If a major concern for postbellum whites, northern or southern, revolved around the sudden enfranchisement of the black population and the

chaos they feared might ensue, these stories allay fears by presenting even this fear-some antebellum image, the maroon, as harmless.

As one of the primary postbellum defenders of the Old South, Thomas Nelson Page not only romanticizes the southern plantation system as a community sharing chivalric values but also obfuscates the obvious boundaries between planters and slaves to create an image of community that includes both groups. The journey into a forbidden swampland in his short story "No Haid Pawn"[3] echoes Page's own pene-tration into the past, his effort to idealize the image of the antebellum South. At the same time, crossing into the swamp serves to dramatize a young southerner's con-frontation with a reality of slave-ownership hidden from him beneath the glossy veneer of the plantation family's self-delusion. In trying to banish to the swamplands the image of a bifurcated southern community where master and slave are in opposition instead of familially bonded, Page shows all the more how inextricably linked are the chivalric and horrific images of the Old South. In a collection of short stories, *In Ole Virginia* (1887), that is often cited as the epitome of the postbellum cult of the Lost Cause narrative, this story stands out because of what Jan Bakker calls the "geo-thermal rumblings" of insurrection and black rebellion beneath the surface of the South's veneer.[4]

In a 1974 critique of the story, Louis D. Rubin notes how "No Haid Pawn" stands out from the rest of the stories in *In Ole Virginia* because of its suggestions that all was *not* well on the old plantation. He ends by quoting Marshall Fishwick's 1958 plea that anyone wanting to know the mind of Virginia should read Page's classic collection. Rubin responds: "And so they should, but along with 'Marse Chan' and 'Meh Lady' and 'Unc' Edinburg's Drowndin" they should read 'No Haid Pawn,' for it has something to tell that none of the other stories has." At this point the critic be-comes advocate, urging people to read, study, and teach this story that stands out

from the others: "set in the middle of a book of stories which otherwise glorify the joys and delights of plantation life before the war, and which are designed to show how the black slaves were perfect retainers, humble, loyal, gentle, content with their lot, devoted to their owners."[5] Whether individuals and educators have taken Rubin's advice is unknown; but little work has been published on Page generally, let alone on this particular story since Rubin's 1974 essay.

Instead, Page has become the prime example of Lost Cause fiction. He is often cited in the first paragraph or two of critical essays when an critic wants to set the stage for a discussion of other writers of the postbellum era. As such, Page remains as important a figure as Joel Chandler Harris as an icon of postbellum writing; in fact, Joseph Boskin, in his study of the Sambo stereotype, considers Page's work to be "a continuation of the Uncle Remus stories."[6] If Page is himself an icon, it is his story "Marse Chan" that serves as the Rosetta stone of postbellum white southern fiction and its lamentation of the Lost Cause. In the recent *Norton Anthology of Southern Literature*, "Marse Chan" takes its place in the postwar section, just as it had done in Rubin's 1979 anthology, *The Literary South*.[7] This story seems to stand as an example of the author's early publishing success that signals the embrace of the myth of the Lost Cause by his northern readers. Understandably, teachers faced with the choice of choosing one story from his famous *In Ole Virginia* collection would find it difficult to choose other than "Marse Chan." Indeed, even Rubin, the advocate of "No Haid Pawn," was unwilling or unable to substitute that story for "Marse Chan" in his own anthology. Such a choice seems to echo Rubin's 1974 argument; it is as if you must have a primer in Page with "Marse Chan" before the significance of "No Haid Pawn" is apparent.

"Marse Chan" takes its place in southern anthologies as an exemplar of the Lost Cause romance because, in this story, Page brings forward most of the stock elements of antebellum narrative (the duel, the separated lovers, the faithful slave, etc. . .) but sets them in an idyllic past that is gone forever: the time "befo' de wah." The author frames this dialect story with the first-person narration of a northern visitor to the South who observes the postwar reality of "once splendid mansions, now fast falling to decay" (1). The bucolic scenery is disturbed by a black man helping an old dog climb over a fence. This former slave, Sam, chastises the dog: "'Jes' ez able to git over it as I is! Jes' like white folks--think 'cuz you's white and I's black, I got to wait on yo' all de time. Ne'm mine, I ain' gwi' do it!'" (3). When he notices the white man, he explains that the dog had belonged to his former master "Marse Channin'." This reference to the absent master precipitates the long history of loyalty to his former master that has now passed on to his master's dog, and Sam takes over the narration. Critic Caroline Gebhard sees this scene as the only moment in the story that threatens to disrupt the otherwise seamless portrait of black devotion and deference. Even so, Sam's castigation of the dog, functioning metonymically as Marse Chan himself, "embodies black resistance in comic form."[8] As we have seen so often, by portraying the black man as comic, the author is able to elide any disturbance in the master-slave or postbellum black-white relationship. Gebhard argues that the white northerner's demand to hear the story of Sam's former master serves as a reassertion of white control over this masterless black man.

Sam's story begins when he is a young boy and the newborn Marse Chan is put into his arms by "Ole Marster." In an interesting inversion, the old master places his son in Sam's hand as if he is a present, when actually Sam is a birthday gift to his son:

> "'Now, Sam, from dis time you belong to yo' young Marse Channin';
> I wan' you to tek keer on 'im ez long ez he lives. You are to be his

> boy from dis time. An' now,' he sez, 'carry 'im in de house'. . . . An
> from dat time I was tooken in de house to be Marse Channin's body-
> servant." (6)

The best-of-times that follow are filled with antebellum clichés. The Channings' neigh-

bor, Colonel Chamberlain, is a rival of old Master Channing; young Marse Chan is the

childhood friend and eventual sweetheart of the colonel's daughter, Anne; the two are

torn apart by the family feud that climaxes when young Marse Chan and the colonel

fight a duel; and their story ends with the tragedy of Sam carrying Marse Chan's body

home from battle in the Civil War.

Within this framework, Page offers touches, such as we have seen in ante-

bellum plantation narratives, that emphasize the edenic qualities of this southern life-

style that is now lost. Sam mourns:

> "Dem wuz good ole times, marster--de bes' Sam ever see! Dey wuz,
> in fac'! Niggers didn' hed nothin' 't all to do--jes' hed to 'ten' to de
> feedin' an' cleanin' de hosses, an' doin' what de marster tell 'em to do;
> an' when dey wuz sick, dey had things sont 'em out de house, an' de
> same doctor come to see 'em whar 'ten' to de white folks when dey
> wuz po'ly. Dyar warn' no trouble nor nothin'." (10)

In this last sentence, Sam makes overt the underlying message of the story and of Lost

Cause project in general: that there was no trouble, no animosity between black and

white during the old plantation days. Despite the wonderousness of Sam's life during

slavery, it was the issue of slavery itself that proved to be a serpent in the garden. Part

of the feud between Old Master and Colonel Chamberlain springs from the colonel's

attempt to sell some of his slaves. Not liking to see slaves sold from their home and

wanting to keep families together (particularly one slave, Maria, who is married to one

of Old Marster's slaves), old Master Channing arranges to buy the slaves from the colonel, who then increases the price of Maria to three times her value.

In contrast to Colonel Chamberlain, the Channings are portrayed as the pro-totypically good masters. For example, the old master loses his sight in an attempt to rescue one of his slaves from a burning stable. When the slave, Ham Fisher fails to return from saving the animals in the stable, Old Marster kisses his wife and jumps right into the blaze: "'to keep de flame from gettin' down Ham Fisher's th'ote he hed tuk off his own hat and mashed it all over Ham Fisher's face, an' he hed kep' Ham Fisher from bein' so much bu'nt; but *he* wuz bu'nt dreadful!'" (14). Likewise, his son, from an early age, is portrayed as a defender of slaves. As children, Marse Chan, Anne, and Sam wait for the old master to leave so that they can play on a haystack, which the master had forbidden them to do. When they are caught, Marse Chan takes his own licking without a sound, but when the master goes to beat Sam

> Marse Chan he bu'st out cryin', an' stept right in befo' ole marster, an' ketchin' de whup, sed:
>
> > "'Stop, seh! Yo' sha'n't whup 'im; he b'longs to me, an' ef you hit 'im another lick I'll set 'im free!'" (15)

Although both of these tales of heroism reflect a defense of property as much as any-thing else, the author's purpose is clearly to show the Channings as defenders of slaves rather than defenders of slavery. The contrast between these characters and their neighbor comes to a head as the Civil War looms before them.

In the debates over whether Virginia should secede from the Union, Marse Chan follows in his father's Whig footsteps to argue publicly against Colonel Chamberlain and the Democrats. Colonel Chamberlain slanders the Channings by calling them traitors, abolitionists, and thieves. Although we never get to hear Marse Chan's argument against secession in which he must defend his father's honor, we

might assume that it would sound much like Frank Meriwether's view of eventual freedom for some slaves in *Swallow Barn*. This argument leads to the duel in which the colonel loses his honor rather than his life as Marse Chan fires his gun into the air; but the damage is already done to his relationship with Anne, not to be restored until Marse Chan has reluctantly but bravely taken up his responsibility and goes to fight the war. When he is killed in battle, he has a letter of reconciliation from Anne in his pocket. Within a year Marse Chan's parents are dead, followed soon by Anne. The promise of the next generation is gone; there will be no reconciliation between the disparate views toward slavery portrayed by the Channings and the Chamberlains.

As the narrator of the main tale, Sam becomes the caretaker of the Lost Cause just as he cares for his former master's grave and his dog. The yankee frame narrator becomes an initiate into the cult of the Lost Cause, perhaps longing, as Sam does, for those days of order and happiness.[9] Though much could be made of this narrative choice, I should first take stock of the points of view of the other five tales. "Unc' Edinburg's Drowndin'" follows the same frame technique as "Marse Chan," though the narrator here makes more overt his disdain for the yankee "visitor" with his one case (suggesting a carpetbagger) as well as his disdain for the ways of the freed black folk. "Meh Lady" uses the frame, but without the overt yankee-stranger as audience. The white frame narrator says very little and seems local. "Polly," at the end of the collection, is told by a limited third-person narrator but sticks to the formula of threatened (white) love and good-natured master-slave relationships. In fact, the relationship is so benign that the master tolerates his rascally, drunken slave, Torm.

The point is that "Marse Chan" is the best of these four stories both in technique and as a representative of the general cultural project at hand: the reconciliation between the North and South through the cult of the Lost Cause. A fifth story, "Ole 'Stracted," diverges a bit in point of view and subject matter. It takes on a third-

person perspective and focuses exclusively on black sharecroppers trying to buy the land on which they have always lived and worked but which has gone from the hands of one yankee after another since the war. The time is their penultimate day on their land. While potentially drawing attention to the injustice of the black farmer's situation, the overt message of the tale is embodied in the person of Ole 'Stracted himself. In the end, we learn that he has money enough to buy the land. Since being sold "down the river" to ease his master's financial crunch, he has dedicated his life and work to bringing back to his master enough money to save the plantation, his master, and the old ways. When he returns after the war, he seems deranged as he takes up residence in a dilapidated shack. When he dies, the others find his store of cash that, we are led to believe, Ole 'Stracted was unable to use himself. Rather than emphasizing the tragic aspect of Ole Stracted's inability, as a commodity himself, to conceive of using the money for himself, the author focuses on the effect the loss of the old system of slavery has had on the former slave. He became "'stracted" when he found the changes wrought by the war and was unable to conceive of himself outside the bounds of slavery. In this sentimental view of the old days, despite the differences from the other tales, the upshot of this story is the same as the others in that it casts the institution as the protector of African Americans, who are threatened only when that institution no longer exists.

It is "No Haid Pawn" that marks the most drastic change from the formula in Page's first collection. The title itself provides insight into the author's thinly veiled intent. While "No Haid Pawn" (No Head Pond) marks the tale as a ghost story, the title is also the name of the vilified plantation, the dark, swampy region spurned and set apart from the idealized plantation community. Broadly speaking, "No Haid Pawn" is divided into three sections. The first is the narrator's recollections of his idyllic childhood on the plantation where he spends his days with black uncles and

aunties who warn him about the evil spirits that inhabit the swamp. These tales coincide with the story of the evil owner of the No Haid plantation. The second section brings us to the 1850s when the narrator is older, returning home from school during a time when abolitionists have just been run off for having agitated the slaves with their rhetoric. All the slaves in the region have ultimately resisted the abolitionists or otherwise seen the institution as protective; that is, all but one: the irrascible "Congo desperado," who had never fit in with the local slaves and who is assumed to have left with the abolitionists. The final section involves the narrator finally braving the swamp only to become trapped there by a storm. It is here that the background information from the first two sections merges into a tale of horror as the narrator must stay the night in the abandoned, and seemingly haunted, manor house.

In the first section of the story, No Haid Pawn plantation is characterized and its boundaries clearly defined by its geographical layout, history, and folklore. It is separated physically from the rest of the community by the river that horseshoes around it and the swamp that closes off the remaining side. In addition, the generations of owners are considered foreigners: "[T]he owners never made it their permanent home. Thus, no ties either of blood or friendship were formed with their neighbors, who were certainly open-hearted and open-doored enough to overcome anything but the most persistent unneighborliness" (166). Furthermore, the owners of the swamp-plantation become notorious for the death rate among their slaves, since the act of trying to reclaim the land from the swamp proved a very unhealthy undertaking with slaves dying by the dozens from malaria. "The bodies, it was said [among slaves and to the young narrator], used to float about in the guts of the swamp and on the haunted pond; and at night they might be seen, if any one were so hardy as to venture there, rowing about in their coffins as if they were boats" (168). This general reputation as a place of death is particularly marked by the house itself under which

"[o]ne of the negro builders had been caught and decapitated between two of the immense foundation stones" (167). Thus, the house at No Haid Pawn, unlike other plantation houses in Page's world, is built, literally, on the corpses of its black builders.

The plantation is ultimately set apart by the incident that echoes the building of the house and cements the place's notoriety. The final owner was "more gloomy, more strange, and more sinister than any who had gone before him—a man whose personal characteristics and habits were unique in that country" (168). Although the neighboring plantations had long been abuzz with stories of the isolated No Haid Pawn, the new master, a French Creole from the West Indies, became the focus of legend. Beginning with rumors that he would maintain his strength by drinking human blood, the Creole's story ends in execution and burial on the property after he is found guilty in court of the most heinous crime imaginable to his fellow planters: destroying his own property. The narrator only hints at the crime at this point in the story:

> Making all allowances, his life was a blot upon civilization. At length it culminated. A brutal temper, inflamed by unbridled passions, after a long period of license and debauchery came to a climax in a final orgy of ferocity and fury, in which he was guilty of an act whose fiendishness surpassed belief, and he was brought to judgment. (169)

Only when the narrator is on the site does he offer more details regarding the crime. Seeking cover from rain in the haunted house, he reflects upon its former master, "the gigantic maniac whose ferocity even murder could not satiate, and who added to murder awful mutilation: he had dragged the mangled corpse of his victim up those very steps and flung it out of the very window which gaped just beyond me in the glare of the lightning" (182). The odd history gives way to ghost stories that keep intruders away from this domain of the dead; hunters and runaways turn away from the boundary of the swamp rather than reap the benefits and/or penalties of entry. As a result,

"No Haid" refers not only to the sourceless pond at the swamp's center, but to the disconnectedness of the plantation, which is not only cut off physically from its neighbors but from southern traditions as well. It and its owners have no source, no lineage, in common with the narrator's community. As with "Marse Chan," Page is attempting to deflect the "downside" of slavery away from the idyllic setting of the narrator's youth, trying instead to lump any evils associated with the institution into this one locale. But where Colonel Chamberlain's excesses helped cast a positive light on the Channings' form of slave ownership, the owners of No Haid plantation make the rest of the plantation system shimmer pristinely by comparison.

Page's attempt to differentiate the No Haid plantation from the other planters, and from the institution of slavery as it is "normally" practiced, serves to idealize further the antebellum South. All that is potentially wrong with slavery is invested into the No Haid plantation and particularly into the figure of the final owner. This maniacal master's crimes against his own property are so horrendous that the author can only offer the details in fragments: flogging, beheading, and throwing a corpse from the upstairs window. The horror genre, then, allows the author to create a distinction between a benevolent institution of slavery and the rare abuses that have falsely characterized the whole. The horror story format serves to accentuate the "Other-ness" of No Haid plantation, thus purifying the ideal. The iconography of Page's two plantation worlds is clear: No Haid Pawn is a mirror image of the true South—the dark Other of the narrator's community. The plantation house at No Haid Pawn is set in a clearing in the middle of this wilderness, receiving light only when the sun is directly overhead. This world of darkness is contrasted to the "daylight" plantation world of the narrator's youth, filled with children who play with the slaves and neighbors whose doors are always open.

By creating a dark place in which the evils of slavery might be segregated and contained, Page is doing what Teresa Goddu claims American literature in general does: foisting the unpalatable episodes of history onto one region, the South. For Page, however, within the South those evils could be drained away from the plantation proper and relegated to the swamps. Such displacement, Goddu argues, brings forth the unpalatable ideas by the very act of trying to remove them.

> [A]t the same time that the term *blackness* displaces the gothic's unpalatable associations, it is stripped of its racial connotations. By evacuating *darkness* of racial meaning, critics can claim that the blackness that typifies American romance is, for the most part, symbolic and not societal, a sign of an inner darkness or moral truth. This conjunction between the displacement of the gothic as a critical term and the abstraction of the American romance's blackness is hardly coincidental. . . . the American gothic is haunted by race: resurrecting the term *gothic* reasserts the racial roots of the romance's blackness.[10]

We might add that it is not only critics who try to empty "darkness" of its racial meaning; certainly, Page tries to do the same thing in attributing the darkness of the swamps to the master's wicked ways.

Even within the happy daylight world of the plantation, however, boundaries do exist; thus, the ideal of a single community including both white and black is threatened. These boundaries run in concentric circles from the big house to the slave quarters and on to the swamp with the world getting stranger for the boy as he moves outward. The big house is the safe region, the place characterized by "the cold reasoning of those who hardly ever stirred abroad except in daylight" (165). The swamp is everything that is Other: strange, forbidden, and dangerous. The slaves, then, who occupy the space both physically and socially between the big house and the

swamp, "in remote cabins" (165) act as intermediaries for the child. They are describ-

ed as worldly people who have experienced the outside world and seen the unknown

with their own eyes. It is they who entice him with forbidden knowledge and act as a

bridge between the boy's safe world and the unknown world beyond. But this sense

that the slaves are somehow set apart from the plantation community is quickly sub-

sumed into a larger social picture, for the boy also acts as an intermediary. He serves

to link the white and black worlds, tying them together. In one sense, the slaves are

his playmates: "The old mammies and uncles . . . were our companions and comrades"

(164); yet the narrator implies that the slaves' role in his childhood went beyond play.

He is also raised by them: "We were brought up to believe in ghosts. Our fathers and

mothers laughed at us, and endeavored to reason us out of such a superstition" (164).

The disjunction between the way he is brought up and the way his parents think may

show an opposition between black and white worlds, but it also provides a common

ground, the children, on which Page can assert community. The owners of the No

Haid plantation have become the evil Others of the system while slaves are included in

the narrator's sense of "Us." From this perspective, the narrator cannot imagine slaves

being at all unknowable. Yes, they have knowledge of the margins of the plantation

world, but they are not a part of those margins.

The second section of the story, which brings the narrator to the time of his

adventure (the 1850s), serves to solidify the sense that slaves are a part of the plan-

tation community. The narrator tells of the local fuss caused by abolitionists, who,

incidentally, are equated in the local vernacular with emissaries of the devil. They

offer a parallel with the strangers who had originally built the No Haid Pawn planta-

tion, foreigners whose ideas about slavery do not conform to community standards.

As the "alien" plantation had eventually passed on to the brutal, Creole-speaking

master, the abolitionists likewise produce a descendant in the "Congo desperado"

whom they influence to lead an insurrection. This rebellious slave from the West

Indies not only differed from other slaves in language, speaking a French-creole:

> In character also he differed essentially from all the other slaves in our
>
> country. He was alike without their amiability and their docility, and
>
> was as fearless as he was brutal. He was the only negro I ever knew
>
> who was without either superstition or reverence. Indeed, he differed
>
> so widely from the rest of the slaves in that section that there existed
>
> some feeling against him almost akin to a race feeling. (172)

By differentiating the "normal" slaves from this brutish outcast, Page again strengthens

the ties between slaves and planters since the runaway slave is as alien to the other

slaves as the abolitionists are to the gentry. Unlike John Pendleton Kennedy's Abe,

however, this disgruntled slave helps to heal the community by (apparently) leaving it;

an action to which his owners do not seem to object: "It was a subject of general

felicitation in the neighborhood that he was gotten rid of, and his master, instead of

being commiserated on the loss of his slave, was congratulated that he had not cut his

throat" (172).

Yet this is the end of the Congo desperado's story, as far as the planters are

concerned. He is worth mentioning as an aberration, but his story seems to conclude

satisfactorily. Once he has run away, his story ends; he is not the stuff of legends.

Alan Dundes explains that legends "can spring anew whenever an appropriate person-

age, place, or event is deemed legendworthy by a folk group."[11] But it is not simply

that the planter community sees little of note in the desperado; rather, they did not see

his story as directly linked to a social problem. According to Dundes, "[n]ew prob-

lems create new legends,"[12] and the problem with slavery, from the perspective of

Page and his planters, was not slaves themselves but whites whose lives were not in

harmony with the slaves: bad Legree-like masters and meddlesome northern aboli-
tionists.

Having established, in the story's first two sections, that he has nothing to fear
from blacks, the narrator moves from the background of the story to his actual ad-
venture. At this point, the horror format merges with another: the initiation story.[13]
The narrator's penetration of the swamp is, as Joseph Campbell notes, standard mythic
fare in which "the princely hunter . . . has followed the lure of a deer into a range of
forest that he has never been in before."[14] This is certainly true of Page's partially
grown narrator who, having abandoned some but not all of his childish superstitions,
stands on the threshold of maturity and, in the name of adventure, pursues a duck
across the boundary line of No Haid Pawn swamp. Such metaphorical initiation into
manhood is typical of medieval romances and thus well suited to Page's purpose, for
just as the horror genre helps to differentiate good and bad forms of slavery, so the
romance format resonates with the ideals of southern chivalry. More important, how-
ever, are the psychic implications of the initiation story, for such a trip is as much a
journey into the self as into the Unknown.

Although it is literally a duck that lures the narrator from his daylight world
into the swamp, the background given thus far suggests that he is after much more.
During his school vacation, the narrator goes duck hunting often in his old haunts;
despite his lack of success and the sight of ducks escaping him into the marsh, he
always stops at the boundary line of No Haid plantation. "Beyond that point I had
never penetrated partly, no doubt, because of the training of my earlier years, and
partly because the marsh on either side of the hammock would have mired a cat"
(175). Ostensibly, it is his frustration at his inability to shoot a duck that drives the
narrator into the swamp; but he is also "determined to gratify" his curiosity about

No Haid Pawn. At first, this gratification centers on the physicality of the swamp. Mastering his environment seems a necessary part of his development into manhood as he boasts: "The marsh was far worse than I had anticipated, and no one but a duck-hunter as experienced and zealous as myself, and as indifferent to ditches, briers, mire, and all that make a swamp, could have penetrated it at all" (175). As he conquers the landscape, he is also conquering the fears of his childhood--taking a step into the rational world of his parents and away from the superstitions of the slaves. Still, in following the old path that is supposedly maintained by ghosts, he shudders to think "what feet had last crossed them" (176). Whether the author intends it or not, the reader can acknowledge that the runaway Congo desperado (along with, perhaps, the slaves who have told him these tales) is likely responsible for maintaining the path. If only unconsciously, then, the ghosts of No Haid Pawn and the slaves are mixed together, and the narrator's confrontation with the unknown region and its ghostly inhabitants coexists with the unuttered belief that his slaves might have lives that he does not know about.

Page builds the story upon a series of confrontations: the physical challenge posed by the swamp's topography gives way to the emotional challenge accompanying memories of the the many victims of the No Haid owners. When he comes upon the manor house "with numberless vacant windows staring at me," the sight it nearly causes him to turn back "had not shame impelled" him to continue (176). The per-sonification of the house may or may not be a conscious homage to Poe's house of Usher, but Page extends the comparison as the narrator draws nearer: "the broken windows glared like eyeless sockets" which, along with the open front door, give "the place a singularly ghastly appearance, somewhat akin to the color which sometimes lingers on the face of a corpse" (177). Perhaps more heavy-handedly than Roderick Usher's allegorical poem, "The Haunted Palace," the description of the No Haid manor

house as a head echoes the earlier story of the slave who was decapitated while building the foundation. The narrator pushes on, however, and makes his way through the thicket to the side of the house. Here, he again finds himself confronting a story from his childhood as he comes upon the "gallows where the murderer of No Haid Pawn had expiated his awful crime" (178) and imagines that he is standing where the body of the last owner had fallen. At this point a storm breaks and drives him inside the house itself. Here, all of the stories come together:

> My surroundings were too vivid to my apprehension. The awful
> traditions of the place, do what I might to banish them, would come
> to mind. The original building of the house, and its blood-stained
> foundation stones; the dead who had died of the pestilence that had
> raged afterward; the bodies carted by scores and buried in the sobby
> earth of the graveyard, whose trees loomed up through the broken
> window; the dreadful story of the dead paddling about the swamp in
> their coffins; and, *above all* [italics added], the gigantic maniac whose
> ferocity even murder could not satiate, and who had dragged the
> mangled corpse of his victim up those very steps and flung it out of the
> very window which gaped just beyond me in the glare of the lightning.
> (181-82)

Having confronted each of the stories of the murdered slaves, the narrator settles on the story of the master's actions as the most fearsome. As he settles down for the night, it is the image of the murderous white man that disturbs him the most.

The climax of the ghost story, the moment when the narrator comes face to face with the object of his childhood nightmares, is also the moment of truth in the psychic journey. That climax arrives when the narrator confronts the figure of what he

assumes to be the ghost of the maniacal master of No Haid Pawn and the torso of his decapitated victim.

> For a moment there was not a sound, and then the awful silence and
> blackness were broken by a crash of thunder that seemed to tear the
> foundations asunder like a mighty earthquake, and the whole house,
> and the great swamp outside, were filled with a glare of vivid, blinding
> light. Directly in front of me, clutching in his upraised hand a long,
> keen, glittering knife, on whose blade a ball of fire seemed to play,
> stood a gigantic figure in the very flame of the lighting, and stretched at
> his feet lay, ghastly and bloody, a black and headless trunk. (185)

It is clear that the narrator interprets this vision to be the ghost of the former master retracing the steps of his crime, but the earlier tale of the escaped slave offers a rational explanation. Ultimately, the middle section of the story concerning the abolitionists and the runaway has no point if the reader takes this to be a "true" ghost story, which the narrator apparently does. The author, however, has equipped the story with the information about the runaway to ameliorate the fantastic ending. He provides a logical explanation for what the narrator sees: not the ghost of the brutal master carrying the headless body of his black victim, but the flesh and blood Congo desperado carrying a stolen, butchered pig in a sack.

Besides the purely rational explanation, the author *does* offer a second fantastic explanation: that the apparition is actually a ghost of one of the murdered slaves. When the narrator sees the figure rowing toward the house, just as the slaves on the plantation had described the ghosts rowing about the swamp in their coffins, he exclaims, "The story of the dead rowing in their coffins was verified!" (184). Yet the narrator fails to follow through on this conclusion, for when, a few minutes later, he hears the door slam and footsteps on the stairs, he does not assume it to be the same

figure he had seen on the pond. Instead, "I knew that the murderer of No Haid Pawn had left his grave, and that his ghost was coming up that stair" (185). The sublimation of this possibility in the narrator's mind converges with his emphasis on slaves as passive victims of this particularly brutal master. The slaves merely row about aimlessly in their coffins, but the master reenacts his crime: dragging the body up the stairs, "he flung his burden on the floor" (185). The narrator cannot conceive of African Americans, even in death, as taking action (against him); or perhaps it is the idea that not even a dead slave would be so brazen as to intrude upon the big house that prevents the narrator from entertaining this possibility. Instead, the danger to himself and to the plantation system lies in those Legrees who abuse their power as they abuse their slaves. The demon is, in death as in life, the white man who breaks the social contract between master and slave.

In either case, though, an interpretation of the apparition as truly a ghost, whether white or black, suggests that the sins of the institution are being visited upon this young wanderer. If the apparition is the ghost of the brutal master, his reappearance subjects the narrator to an unflattering reflection of his own potential as a master. If the ghost is one of the murdered slaves, then the narrator has unwittingly stepped into the former master's place by taking up residence in the house for the night. Any vengeance the dead slave might inflict is transferred to the boy. The author, however, does little to promote this second interpretation. Instead, it is the linguistic link between the former master and the Congo Desperado that plays a key role. The ghost climbs the stairs, speaking "a string of fierce oaths, part English and part Creole French" (185). While Page's background story of the Congo Desperado offers the reader a logical explanation for this vision, the narrator imagines that it is actually the ghost of the Creole master swearing on the stairs. This moment, in which the character and audience may read the situation differently, creates a slapstick effect as

the nar-rator flees from the supposed ghost. As such, the horror story becomes a racist joke turning on the term "spook."

This doubling of possibilities is probably intended by the author to create just the effect outlined above, but the doubling also opens up the psychological implications of the story.[15] As an initiation story, the narrator's journey has been a psychic plunge to confront the self. The young man has gone back to confront the biggest fear of his childhood, which on the surface would appear to be his potential to abuse the institution of slavery, embodied in the maniacal master--a potential in the self which the narrator strenuously denies. However, the object of fear turns out to be a runaway slave. When the narrator deludes himself regarding the true identity of the "spook," we begin to see cracks in the facade of Page's community. To borrow Berndt Ostendorf's terms, the "negrophilia" of his youth has turned to "negrophobia."[16] This is, in the larger sense, the deep-rooted fear hiding just beneath the surface of the idealized image of the peculiar institution as a benevolent family.

This is not to say that the story is about one boy's realization that he lives in fear of slave insurrection. Rather, what is significant is the *initiation* motif. The narrator's journey is a movement away from his childhood conception of the institution to the adult reality in which he must abandon his "childish" notion that the slaves are his friends and take responsibility for disciplining his property (and other unfriendly duties). The swampy plantation, then, becomes not the scapegoat for the plantation tradition, but the harsh reality. One point at which Page cracks the facade of "otherness" he has created around the swamp comes when the narrator mentions that his father had been a lawyer for the maniacal master of No Haid Pawn. Certainly, this could add to the reliability of the narrator's information and could be an example of the charity- and humanity-loving southerner who would come to the aid of *any* neighbor; but it also serves as a link among white adults. As distinct as the narrator wants to

make the world of his parents' house and that of No Haid Pawn, the two worlds are joined. Thus, although the psychic journey of adolescence may be seen as a moment of separation, where the young man distinguishes himself from his parents, it is also the moment of becoming like the parent.

Another crack in the image of an idealized, inclusive community occurs in relation to the slaves from whom the narrator gathers much of his horrific information about the swamp and its inhabitants. The story offers the possibility that the slaves are putting one over on the young master because for years the boy has gone nowhere near the swamp; yet the one path into it is always well worn, supposedly by the ghosts. Such information suggests that the slaves are keeping the boy away so that they might enjoy the swamp as their own personal space, despite the author's attempts to deny the possibility. This denial is made most vociferously when the narrator claims that all of the escaped slaves return, echoing the earlier statement that runaways would rather be caught than enter the swamp. The only slave not caught is the strange, unsuperstitious Congo desperado. Despite this suggestion of the slaves' aversion to the swamp, the understanding that it is a living runaway clearing the path opens up the possibility that the living slaves have been doing this all along. As Louis D. Rubin points out, more impressive than the idea that the Congo desperado has been using the swamp is that he is calling out from his boat; but calling out to whom?[17] This moment suggests that, despite attempts to portray him as a rebel even within the slave community, other slaves are using the swamp and associating with the desperado. In doing so, they are stepping outside of the framework of understanding the young narrator has placed around them; in effect, they are upsetting his notion of the plantation community. By believing the confrontation in the climax of the story to be truly supernatural, the narrator can maintain the delusion that it is the ghosts and not the slaves that are keeping the path into the swamp clear. Although the surface world of Page's fiction is a happy

place where black and white live in harmony, the facade cannot be maintained because it is based on the reality of slavery. The plantation tradition attempts to construct a community as seen through a child's eyes, yet, in this story, adolescence serves to deconstruct that vision. The young man who has been a friend to the slaves through childhood must eventually differentiate himself from them: to be a man, he must learn to be their master.

If the clarity of vision in "Marse Chan" is only disrupted by Sam's scolding of Mars Chan's dog at the story's opening, Page's idealization of the Old South falls apart at the conclusion of "No Haid Pawn." Susan Donaldson suggests that Page's artistic failure is a result of the problematic nature of his subject matter. After posing three possible interpretations of the specter, Donaldson explains, "So disturbing are these three possibilities that Page concludes the tale in an unpersuasive rush, and the story as a whole casts a dark and ominous shadow upon sunny memories of Marse Chan, 'Meh Lady,' and the time 'befo' de wah.'"[18] The narrator interprets, on the surface, the apparition to be the ghost of the former owner of No Haid plantation; but Page's attempt to offer a rational explanation to balance the supernatural effect seems too much for the narrator *or the author* to handle. After the moment of "recognition," the narrator claims that he

staggered to the door and, tripping, fell prostrate over the sill.

* * * * * * *

When we could get there, nothing was left but the foundation. The haunted house, when struck, had literally burned to the water's edge. The changed current had washed its way close to the place, and in strange verification of the negroes' traditions. No Haid Pawn had reclaimed its own, and the spot with all its secrets lay buried under its dark waters. (186)

What are we to make of this rushed ending, especially the ellipsis? From an aesthetic perspective we might say that the author cannot maintain its form, that the story simply implodes along with the house. Part of Page's problem is his attempt to create a hybrid of the plantation tradition and the horror story following in the tradition of Edgar Allan Poe; for, as Goddu argues, "the gothic disrupts the dream world of national myth with the nightmares of history. Moreover, in its narrative incoherence, the gothic discloses the instability of America's self-representations; its highly wrought form exposes the artificial foundations of national identity."[19] In this case, it may be more appropriate to say that Page's attempt to make use of the gothic for purposes of regional identity-formation failed.

As the only story from *In Ole Virginia* told from the first-person perspective of the southern gentry, "No Haid Pawn" recapitulates the postbellum project itself: the narrator's journey serves as a metaphor for Page's own journey into the past. Just as the young narrator plunges into the swamp, fulfilling a life-long dream to confront his fears and finally bag the elusive game, Page plunges into this realm (the swamp) that has occupied a peripheral space in southern literature--a dramatic backdrop that no one actually dares to enter. As the landscape equivalent of a haunted house, the swamp seems an obvious choice as the setting for an antebellum horror story; within this realm, however, are horrors that are all too clearly based on plantation realities.

In his other stories, the ultimate horror is caused by loss and separation; here Page must create a *place* of horror, but in so doing he implicates the institution of slavery in creating that horror in a way that the other stories avoid. Yes, the horror of separation in "Marse Chan" is a product of the differing views on slavery represented by the Channings and Colonel Chamberlain, but these differing views occur on the narrow spectrum of proslavery thought. The fact that Page ameliorates the South's connection to slavery by foisting its abuses on Colonel Chamberlain does very little to

fracture the planter community and says nothing of an oppositional relationship between black and white. "No Haid Pawn," however, is important because the horror comes from an underlying oppositional master-slave relationship. The swamp's use by slaves and runaways suggests that they view it differently than whites do, that they feel some ownership of it. When the old slaves warn the boy to stay away from the swamp, the apparent concern for his well-being seems to be a verbal "No Trespassing" sign. Such ulterior motives on the part of slaves suggests fractures in the antebellum community between black and white that the other stories do not. In trying to merge the plantation and horror genres, then, Page risks bringing to the surface realities that his other stories manage to hide.

In dialect stories such as "Marse Chan," Page is able to present a sentimental picture of plantation life through the eyes of African Americans whom he characterizes as simple and happy in their servitude. "No Haid Pawn," however, is remarkably devoid of dialect. Instead of showing the "aunties" and "uncles" telling the narrator, in dialect, to stay away from the swamp, their words are usually summarized. What dialect *is* present has become part of the narrator's idiolect--most obviously his acceptance of the slave's name for "No Head Pond." The way the narrator peppers his speech with black idioms seems to bolster Page's suggestion, mentioned earlier, that planter's children were raised by the slaves. As such, Page's choice of the adolescent narrator is not too far removed from the formulaic use of African American narrators. Where slaves and freedmen are characterized as childlike and offer a vision of plantation life from this simple perspective, the No Haid narrator likewise presents sunny recollections of old times there. What disrupts the narrative is his impending adulthood.

When the narrator flees from the apparition and chooses to believe that it was a ghost, he has stepped away from embracing his parents' perspective, stepped back

from his initiation into manhood. This seems the only way he can maintain his pleasant, sentimental view of slavery. The more likely scenario, that the ghost is actually the runaway Congo desperado, disrupts the narrator's notion of the plantation community. Still, the willful omission of this possible explanation seems telling. First, it may suggest that the narrator is more consumed by the story of this one evil man than by the masses of dead slaves said to inhabit the swamp. Further, it fits with the pattern of plantation literature that portrays African Americans as harmless, even the ghost of one.

Although Page has gone to great lengths to set up a rational explanation for the vision by telling the tale of the Congo desperado, he ultimately wants to minimize the time that readers might dwell on that possibility. Still, in his overt attempt to portray a "bad master" as the boy's worst nightmare, Page sets up an underlying answer: the greatest source of disharmony to the institution of slavery, to the Edenic southern lifestyle, *appears* to be the white man who abuses the system but is really the maroon, the insurrectionist. Again, this could be a subtle intent on Page's part as well. He may, like Caroline Lee Hentz and other antebellum proslavery writers, be conjuring forth the threat of insurrection and laying the blame for it at the feet of abolitionists and the very uncommon wayward slave. If this is indeed Page's intent, then he fails because he leaves unresolved the possibility that the old aunties and uncles who were the narrator's childhood companions were not what they appeared to be; that they had secret lives or alternative values that did not involve the unswerving devotion of Marse Chan's Sam.

The narrator's willful refusal to interpret his experience as an encounter with a runaway slave instead seems an *unintentional* dramatization of the white southern project (by white writers and planters) to elide any threat or aggression posed by slaves or freedmen. In depicting this self-delusion in his narrator, however, Page

seems to reveal something about himself; he comes close to showing his own portrayals of the master-slave relation to be a fiction. The sudden ending of the story could reveal the author's inability to control the threatening image he has conjured forth. Where other authors in the genre have called forth an Osman in order to frighten their readers, they have also expelled the image as an act of reassurance. Once this figure enters the horror format, once Page tries to combine the two genres, how is he to create the effect of fright as a climax, yet still reassure the reader that all is well? The brief epilogue may do so in three ways: first, the narrator's insistence that the slaves had always been right in their superstitions recasts them as simple in the minds of the more enlightened, unsuperstitious white readers; second, the destruction of the manor house serves to deny the runaway shelter. Anyone with lingering images of the Congo desperado in mind is encouraged to believe that he has been forced to move on to the North; third, the effect of the final confrontation is to cast the narrator, who had been in search of his manhood, back into the role of little boy. From this perspective, he can once again perceive the aunties and uncles of the plantation as part of his family: unthreatening, loyal, and happy.

CHAPTER TEN

GEORGE WASHINGTON CABLE'S *THE GRANDISSIMES*

AND PLANTATION NARRATIVE(S)

The dilemma of the narrator (and perhaps the author) of "No Haid Pawn" is the same as we have seen in other works of plantation literature that sought to idealize the plantation system. Writers in the plantation tradition attempted to maintain a unified image of plantation life, cohesive and undisturbed, which allowed for the continuation of the institution while leaving unrippled the pools of the southern psyche. However, the psyche of the southern slaveholder must have been profoundly assaulted by the knowledge that some runaway slaves, besides fleeing to the North, were forming maroon communities in the woods and swamps of the South and sometimes fomenting rebellion on the plantations. This image of the rebellious slave, and particularly the maroon, challenged the logic on which the idealization of the plantation community was based. Whereas antebellum writers of this tradition produced apparently seamless tales, works that served as undisturbed reflections of a southern reality in which the narrative controlled potential threats, postbellum writers such as Thomas Nelson Page and Joel Chandler Harris made overt their strategies of containment. In particular, I am referring to the narrative device of the frame tale, the interaction of characters in the "present day" to contextualize a story told. Page, as in "Marse Chan," framed the plantation world as Edenic, an uncomplicated world that had passed away, lost except in memories of the past. As a postbellum southern writer, George Washington Cable followed in this tradition with his novel *The Grandissimes* (1880),[1]

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but he rejected the plantation myth by exposing the mythmaking process itself. Besides offering less stereotyped and in some cases deeper characterizations of Americans of African descent, Cable set the troublesome image of the maroon at the heart of his novel in the form of "The Story of Bras-Coupé." Cable's revision of the short story about the maroon, Bras-Coupé, into a novel that includes this story is a comment on the power of the publishing industry and one writer's attempt to please by obfuscation. By focusing on storytelling, the author highlighted fissures rather than covering them up and destabilized the sense of wholeness that a narrative would otherwise create.

The exercise of legal authority on the body of the captured maroon serves as the centerpiece of *The Grandissimes* and highlights a major contradiction of the institution of slavery. Laws regarding the management and control of slaves in the U.S. were often tethered to news of insurrections and bands of runaways; in other words, the white community responded to such news largely through strengthening legal control over slaves. The security provided by such action may well have allowed a planter family to sleep at night, surrounded and outnumbered by a class of potential insurrectionists, but the need for legislation implicitly questioned the legitimacy of slavery. Indeed, such willfullness on the part of slaves would have been just one of many facts pointing toward the basic contradictions of the institution, making slavery, in the words of Lewis P. Simpson, "the beast lurking at Monticello." From the Jeffersonian era to the Civil War, according to Simpson, "we see a continuing struggle in the Southern literary mind against accepting the meaning of the garden of the chattel."[2] The resulting myth of the benign institution created the image of slaves as family members, while the planters were charged with protecting and disciplining, not exploiting and abusing, these adopted children. As such, legal measures were revised as paternal guidance.

Cable avoids the narrative strategies of containment and absolution that we see in Page's northern visitors and former slaves; still, it may be argued that the story of Bras-Coupé is "framed" by the window dressing of sentimentality that is the rest of the novel. Much of the plot of *The Grandissimes* revolves around the attempts of an emigrant from the North, Joseph Frowenfeld, to understand the ways of his new home, New Orleans of 1803. Since he disapproves of the slave and caste system, Frowenfeld is not seeking assimilation or acculturation into New Orleans society; rather, as an amateur scientist he looks for objective truth from scattered bits of information. Just as he chronicles the weather in his journal, Frowenfeld tries to piece together local stories to create a unified whole of his puzzling new environment. In particular, various stories, founding myths, of the prominent Grandissime family (and their rivals the De Grapions) dominate the New Orleans historical landscape. The traditional way of life for the Grandissimes is preserved through mytho-historical narrative: stories about their ancestors that provide the present generation with a sense of identity. Cultural production in such a context is shown to be rooted in the past, looking backward. Since Cable objects to what he sees as the southern practice of reinscribing the past in its fiction, he puts that practice under scrutiny in *The Grandissimes*, making his major subject the idealization of the past and the processes by which history is brought into line with ideology.[3] Cable's presentation of the Grandissimes' mythmaking is an attack on his contemporaries' embrace of a romantic, sentimentalized version of the slave South and an attempt to expose how that institution was perpetuated by the same narrative processes of the antebellum period.

Although emigrating with his entire family to New Orleans, Frowenfeld finds himself the sole survivor of a fever that claims the rest of his family. He becomes acquainted with Dr. Charlie Keene, from whom he begins to learn about the feud between two local families, the Grandissimes and the De Grapions. The feud provides

a framework for a "Marse Chan" type of love story because it separates Honoré Grandissime and Aurora Nancanou (a De Grapion). A peace had been struck between the two families some sixteen years earlier until Honoré's uncle, Agricola Fusilier, won Aurora's estate from her husband in a card game, was accused of cheating, and killed M. Nancanou in a duel. Agricola is further reviled by Aurora because of an injury he has caused her childhood companion and half-sister, the mulatto Palmyre Philosophe. Frowenfeld is first introduced to such overlapping blood-lines (white and black) when he rents a shop in which to open a pharmacy and finds that his landlord's name is Honoré Grandissime. Much to Dr. Keene's amusement, Frowenfeld is confused to find that the leader of the Grandissime family is a mulatto. The doctor explains that the landlord is actually a free man of color (f.m.c.) and the half-brother of the white Honoré. To further complicate matters, Honoré the f.m.c. is in love with Palmyre, who is in love with the white Honoré, who is in love with Aurora. Helping Frowenfeld sort out the current cast(e) of characters as well as the local history is one of the younger Grandissimes, Raoul Innerarity, whom the apothecary has hired as a shop assistant. "To a student of the community he was a key, a lamp, a lexicon, a micro-scope, a tabulated statement, a book of heraldry, a city directory, a glass of wine, a Book of Days, a pair of wings, a comic almanac, a diving bell, a Creole *veritas*" (118). For all its web of complexity, *The Grandissimes* might be seen as merely a period piece and a melodrama if not for the story of the runaway African prince, Bras-Coupé. His story intersects, intertwines, and disrupts the otherwise conventional melodrama of feuds and love triangles. He too, however, is part of a love triangle as he demands that Palmyre become his wife. It is at their wedding, which is held the same day as his owner's wedding, that Bras-Coupé strikes his master and becomes an outlaw.

Cable's choice of Frowenfeld as a "foreign element" through which the reader views New Orleans society is particularly apt for the author's exploration of the New

Orleans caste system and the shifting color line of two historical periods. Cable is drawing parallels between his own post-Civil War era and the "Americanization" of New Orleans after the 1803 Louisiana Purchase. Not only does Frowenfeld stand in for the reader who is no less schooled in the complexities of New Orleans society, but he also embodies the cause of the city's identity crisis; it was the presence of Americans such as Frowenfeld that produced a shifting in the city's color line after 1803. According to Joseph Tregle, "It was the clash between original Louisianians and migrant Anglo-Americans after the Louisiana Purchase which for the first time made place of birth a critical issue and gave the *creole* label its crucial significance."[4] Free "black" creoles at the time had become accustomed to rights they would not have had in other states. As a result, according to Joseph Logsdon and Caryn Cossé Bell,

> [n]ew American officials soon face the self-confidence of free black creole leaders of the city, who felt that the Louisiana Purchase treaty had assured them of equal citizenship in the United States. Even before the transfer to the American authority, the explosive events of the revolutions in France and Haiti had raised the aspirations of black New Orleanians for equality and freedom. When they petitioned for civil rights, American leaders showed no desire to perpetuate, much less extend, the rights of black Louisianans. Instead, the new rulers tried to impose their own American racial order on New Orleans and the rest of Louisiana.[5]

Where the new authorities saw a threat from the seeming status granted creoles of color, the *ancienne population*, those descended from the French and Spanish settlers, were not concerned because within the term "creole" the "two groups were culturally intertwined, yet maintained separate identities."[6] Frowenfeld, like the incoming American authorities, is slow to understand the complexities of the New Orleans caste

system. Yet Frowenfeld, as a representative of Cable's own viewpoint, brings with him not the strict racial boundaries found elsewhere in America but a liberal perspective that questions the need to draw boundaries at all.[7]

The identity crisis that followed the Louisiana Purchase, according to Tregle, repeated itself in a postbellum moment during which the New Orleans conception of the color line grew to resemble that of the rest of the South; at that point, white creoles began to fear being labeled as "black."

> Whereas once the danger confronting them had been humiliating loss of Gallic identity to a devouring Anglo-Saxon homogenization, now it was the infinitely more horrible possibility of being consigned to debased status in the "inferior" race, identified as half-brother to the black. . . . the cardinal tenet of the now familiar myth [was] born: for those so threatened, henceforth to be creole was to be white.[8]

Although New Orleans society had resisted attempts by the new American authorities after 1803 to restrict the rights traditionally given to free people of color in New Orleans, no such efforts were made after the Civil War. Rather, Tregle continues, "[t]his identification of creolism with racial purity and an implicit white supremacy so met the emotional needs of a distraught society that it defied rational examination."[9] What Cable seems to have attempted by drawing parallels between these two time periods, then, was an address to two audiences. For the larger audience outside of New Orleans, Cable offered a color-line melodrama featuring characters trapped between two worlds and wanted by neither. In addition, the author reminded his New Orleans audience of a time when distinguishing between black and white was not so simple as was suggested by the postbellum standard of a "drop" of African blood. In both cases, Cable was using the earlier color-line crisis as a setting in which to address the growing postbellum racial unrest.[10]

According to Alfred Bendixon, "Cable went on [after *The Grandissimes*] to devote many years of his life to saying 'no' to racism and the lies of the plantation myth."[11] In other words, Bendixon and other critics claim that Cable is directly challenging the plantation tradition in literature, especially through positive or sympathetic representations of African Americans in *The Grandissimes*. Although some critics, such as Robert O. Stephens and Louis D. Rubin, Jr., have tried to determine what Cable had been reading that might have influenced his writing, none has found proof that he had read any of the antebellum plantation writers other than William Gilmore Simms.[12] Without evidence that Cable actually read works from the genre, we can still see that he held definite opinions about his predecessors by looking at his 1882 commencement address at the University of Mississippi, "Literature in the Southern States." For him, these writers were involved in looking backwards for literary themes, subjects, and styles; as a result, the genre served to sterilize rather than advance southern literature. "Its mission did not comtemplate the evolution of one new idea. It was to uphold the old. It was to cut by the old patterns. It was to steer by the old lights. It was to echo the old voices."[13] Whereas he sees writers of the North (especially the Northeast) as pioneering a new American literature by exploring the fissures in American life, he sees the southern writer as concerned only with maintaining the status quo by avoiding or covering those fissures. Such an imposed order seems, to Cable, antithetical to a good, innovative literature.

Besides holding this general opinion about his southern literary forebears, Cable directly challenges in *The Grandissimes* the major tenets of plantation fiction. Although there may be no clear connection between Cable's attack on proslavery rhetoric of the antebellum period and the purveyors of that rhetoric via literature, Cable is subverting the main points of their rhetoric. The primary feature he attacks is the plantation genre's dedication to portraying slavery as a benign institution. As a

stand-in for the author and the reader, the northerner Frowenfeld represents the objective (that is, the "correct") viewpoint: a stern moral revilement of the institution. Despite what is often noted as a wooden characterization, Frowenfeld's obstinate perspective provides a locus for moral judgment around which the more conflicted characters revolve and through which readers must view the situation. Related to this use of narrative perspective is Cable's inversion of one of the dominant strategies of the plantation novel: the conversion of the northerner to southern ways. Cable directly overturns this strategy with his own northerner, who not only resists conversion but begins to create changes of his own in New Orleans.

Perhaps most notably separating Cable from the plantation tradition are his complex portrayals of characters of African descent, which, though not entirely free of stereotype, are a far cry from the flat figures more typical of the genre. The overwhelming effect of the typical plantation novel is to frame the slaves as childlike in their love for and need for the system, keeping them, as it does, free from harm, care, and responsibility. In contrast, Cable's "black" characters are both integral parts of the story and catalysts for action. Through them, the author offers a more frank discussion of "the color line" than other white, southern authors.

We may question the extent to which Cable's characters of color may be described as "fully realized," but Cable does *aim* for variety and depth among his black population. He puts the definition of "colored people" in the mouth of Agricola Fusilier: "[W]hen we say, 'we people,' we *always* mean we white people. The non-mention of color always implies pure white; and whatever is not pure white is to all intents and purposes pure black" (59). This statement may be a reflection of the argument that, despite the complexities of the New Orleans caste system, there was no question that the "pure white" citizens were firmly at the top of that system. More important for Cable, however, is the clear differentiation between those people con-

sidered white and those considered black, even if such a picture is more reflective of 1880 than of 1803. In addition, the novel clearly differentiates between those who are "pure black" such as Clemence and Bras-Coupé, and mulattoes such as Palmyre and Honoré the f.m.c., a simplification that allows Cable to attack the caste system through the established literary figure, the tragic mulatto. The mulattoes share, to a great extent, stereotypical qualities of their character "type": spending a great deal of time in emotional turmoil, languishing over their unfair placement in the social hierarchy, and coming to more or less tragic ends. This is certainly true of Honoré the f.m.c., who pines away for Palmyre and eventually kills himself. Palmyre likewise pines for the white Honoré and swears vengeance upon those who arranged her marriage to Bras-Coupé, thereby cutting any ties she may have had to a white identity.

As if to argue that white and black ancestry bring with them essential and opposing traits, Cable gives Palmyre conflicting characteristics. The narrative suggests that Palmyre's grace and intelligence are attributable to her white blood while her more dangerous characteristics belong to her African portion.

> Such a type could have sprung only from high Latin ancestry on the one side and--we might venture--Jaloff African on the other. To these charms of person she added mental acuteness, conversational adroitness, concealed cunning and noiseless but visible strength of will; and to these, the rarest of gifts in one of her tincture, the purity of true womanhood. (60)

After she is freed, she lives in New Orleans and is "noted for her taste and skill as a hair-dresser, for the efficiency of her spells and the sagacity of her divinations, but most of all for the chaste austerity with which she practiced the less baleful rites of the voudous" (60). These references to Africa and voudou, not to mention her feline qualities, overshadow any "true womanhood" by characterizing her as wild and exotic.

"It was a femininity without humanity,—something that made her with all her superb-ness, a creature that one would want to find chained" (71). In bifurcating his character in this way, Cable may be simply adding to the degrading stereotypes of African Americans in literature; however, this stereotyping serves to emphasize Cable's point about the color line. A society that adopts a radical and arbitrary system for defining people based on ancestry will itself be torn in two.

For all their stereotypical traits, these mulatto characters provide a richness to the narrative in the threats, implicit or explicit, they pose to white society. The author seems to call forth the more stereotypical signifiers not so much for the ease of char-acterization or to reflect his own biases as to demonstrate the feelings of New Orleans' "white" citizenry. Agricola, Dr. Keene notes, is afraid of Palmyre (61). As a teenager, she is separated from Aurora because hers is the dominant personality of the two girls, and, therefore, we must assume, a threat to Agricola's race mentality. In addition, Honoré the f.m.c. serves to create a doubling effect similar to the "changelings" in Twaine's *Pudd'n'head Wilson*. The confusion caused to Frowenfeld by the two Honorés is laughable to Dr. Keene, but when the white Honoré blurs the line of blood by bringing his half-brother into the family business under the name "Grandissime Brothers," no one is laughing.

The "darker" characters also call forth familiar stereotypes of the plantation tradition and reveal Cable's willingness to play with southern stereotypes for his own purposes. Bras-Coupé and Clemence serve as the Nat and Sambo figures of the novel. Bras-Coupé's role as Nat is obvious, but Clemence's Sambo act requires some ex-plication. Cable notes that Clemence appears to be, and is, harmless; even in her biting remarks about the institution, she is never a threat to it. "To Clemence the order of society was nothing. No upheaval could reach the depth to which she was sunk." Instead, whites knew her as a "constant singer and laugher." She "went up one street

and down another, singing her song and laughing her professional merry laugh" selling her goods. More specifically, though, her repartee with Dr. Keene is the stuff of plantation minstrelsy: "You know, Mawse Chawlie, I dunno noth'n' 'tall 'bout nobody. I'se a nigga w'at mine my own business" (251-52).

The playful interchange between Clemence and Dr. Keene calls forth the stereotype of the happy slave in order to challenge it directly in Clemence's cutting remarks. Dr. Keene has inflamed Clemence with his remark that "'you niggers don't know when you are happy.'" After some argument, Clemence makes her point about white folks' love of constructing masks of happiness to put on their slaves: "'Dey wants us to b'lieb we happy—dey *wants to b'lieb* we is. W'y, you know, dey 'bleeged to b'lieb it—fo' dey own cyumfut'" (250-51). But just as Charlie Keene doesn't pay any attention to Clemence's protests, attributing them, in fact, more to clownishness than true feeling, the reader may also ignore the assertion that the "happy darky" is just a white construction. As a safeguard, then, Cable makes a narrative intrusion to point out that slave-owners used to call their slaves "the happiest people under the sun" and that "we may still hear it said by those who will not be decoyed down from the mountain fastnesses of the old Southern doctrines" (249). Such a characterization suggests the backwardness of those doctrines, equating their maintenance with a siege mentality. Earlier, the author had more explicitly condemned them: "We ought to stop saying that" (135). In both cases, the traditionally imposed characterization of African Americans as happy slaves is shown to be a social construct: a characterization inscribed by words and stubborn traditionalism. Cable further clarifies his stance in his University of Mississippi commencement address when he says, "It is very human for the stronger classes of society to assume that the classes below should allow the stronger to think and act for them. As truth loves to present herself hooded in the cloak of paradox, so tyranny, in the mask of protection."[14]

Cable may be referring to his predecessors in this speech, but he is also holding up a mirror to his contemporaries. Indeed, Cable's contemporaries tended to portray slaves and freedmen as needing white authority to keep them in line. Such narratives cast a positive light on the developing Jim Crow laws, absolving whites of any guilt that might be associated with curbing the rights of African Americans. As I argue in chapter two, white-black interactions adhered to a set of rules either implicitly or explicitly determined. Whatever degree to which Clemence may challenge Dr. Keene's notion of white righteousness, she is doing so within the confines of well-established black-white interaction. As I will discuss later, once Clemence crosses the line from what is perceived by white characters to be "play" into "not-play," the consequences are horrendous.

With Bras-Coupé, Cable offers a much more explosive version of this black-white negotiated interaction. An African prince who refuses to work, Bras-Coupé gains the attention of his master who sees in the slave a kindred spirit. They negotiate a settlement that allows each to maintain his dignity, but the peace is an uneasy one.

> Many a day did these two living magazines of wrath spend together in the dismal swamps and on the meagre intersecting ridges, making war upon deer and bear and wildcat; or on the Mississippi after wild goose and pelican; when even a word misplaced would have made either the slayer of the other. (177)

Cable is clearly playing with the stereotype of the noble savage, moving constantly between nobility and savagery as the dominant trait. Still, in the light of the more jovial antagonism between Clemence and Dr. Keene, and especially in relation to other master-slave relationships in the plantation tradition, this one is extraordinary for its simmering antagonism.

The issue that these relationships bring forth involves the mechanisms by which social control is maintained. Other works in the genre offer a more naturalistic solution to rebellious slaves and freedmen: they are easily brought in line by the nonviolent assertion of white authority. The use of arms would at least raise questions about the need for force and would, perhaps, lend legitimacy to insurrection or to the grievances of the slaves. Instead, such works restore the clarity of myth to an otherwise troublesome reality by casting rebellious black characters as wayward children in need of some stern, but loving, paternal guidance. "Official" solutions, such as the legal system may mete out, could discharge the anxiety caused by the immediate physical threat posed by the surly slave, but their likely punitive nature may have left doubt as to the ultimate beneficence of the institution. With "The Story of Bras-Coupé," Cable highlights rather than hides the brutal exercise of white authority. The name itself (the missing or severed arm) anticipates the eventual mutilation of the captured maroon.

Where other white southern writers sought to hide the historical reality of rebel slaves and the punishments they received, Cable tried to bring a local New Orleans legend of a maroon and his punishment to the national literary scene. Originally a short story titled "Bibi," the tale is based on the story of a one-armed runaway named Squire who led a band of outlaws for three years before being caught, killed, and publicly displayed. An account from the New Orleans *Picayune* of July 19, 1837 is worth quoting at length:

> This notorious black scoundrel was yesterday killed by a Spaniard in
>
> the swamp near the Bayou road. It will be remembered by all our
>
> citizens that Squire was the negro who has so long prowled about the
>
> marshes in the rear of the city, a terror to the community, and for
>
> whose head a reward of two thousand dollars was offered some years
>
> ago.

The life of this negro has been one of crime and total depravity. The annals of the city furnish records of cruelty, crime, and murder.

He had killed several white men in this place before he fled to the swamp and has up to the time of his death, eluded, with a dexterity worthy of a more educated villain, all the searching efforts of justice to capture him. He has lived for the last three years an outlaw in the marshes in the rear of the city. Many years since he had his right arm shot off; he is said, nonetheless, to have been an excellent marksman, with but the use of his left arm. Inured by hardships and exposure to the climate, he has subsisted in the woods and carried on, until this time, his deeds of robbery and murder with the most perfect impunity-- the marshes surrounding the city being almost impenetrable to our citizens.

This demi-devil has for a long time ruled as the "Brigand of the Swamp." A supposition has always found believers that there was an encampment of outlaw negroes near the city and that Squire was their leader. He was a fiend in human shape and has done much mischief in the way of decoying slaves to his camp, and committing depredations upon the premises of those who live on the outskirts of the city. His destruction is hailed, by old and young, as a benefit to society.[15]

Although various legends sprung from this account, Lafcadio Hearn claimed in 1929 that Cable worked directly from an 1850s version featuring a Bras-Coupé who rebels when he is sold by a kind but impoverished master to one whose brutality the slave could not tolerate. The slave's arm is destroyed when he tries to strike this new master. Besides focusing on the slave's viewpoint, sympathizing with his subjection to a "Legree," this version ends with the capture of a dangerous maroon who, when put

on display, ceases to be the bogeyman the people of New Orleans had made him out to be: "When the body was carried into New Orleans, people were astonished to discover that the fearsome Bras-Coupé was 'only' old Squire, who had fled so long ago in order to save his own life."[16] This account emphasizes the pathetic rather than the ferocious aspects of the maroon's image. At the very least, it calls into question the ferocity and savagery of the maroon. In effect, the insurrectionary figure is made an object of pity rather than fear. Such a version of Squire's story may argue for the humanity of runaways, but it says little in support of their self-sufficiency.

Barbara Ladd argues that in all versions of the Bras-Coupé legend, "the runaway is reduced (or elevated, if you choose) to a figure of legend, a bugaboo for children and tourists";[17] yet Cable failed in his first attempt to sell Bras-Coupé's story under the title "Bibi." It was rejected by publishers for being too "horrific" and having a "distressful effect."[18] Robert O. Stephens outlines the story's path:

> What exactly Cable put in his story "Bibi" cannot be determined until the manuscript of the story is recovered. It was apparently never published. Through his friend Edward King, then touring the South to gather materials for his series of articles in *Scribner's Magazine* on "The Great South," Cable sent "Bibi" to Scribner's by March 25, 1873. On May 19, Scribner editor Robert Underwood Johnson returned the manuscript with a standard rejection notice. The story was then refused by *Appleton's Journal* in late June 1873 and by *The Atlantic Monthly* soon after.[19]

Whether the publishers found Bras-Coupé's fate or his insurrectionary character to be the distressing part is unclear. Ladd theorizes that, compared with "The Story of Bras-Coupé" in *The Grandissimes*, "'Bibi' was probably a very different story altogether, with more overt connections with the history of slave resistance in the West

Indies and in colonialist Louisiana."[20] If this is true, we should consider the degree to which the frame formed by the rest of Cable's novel serves to undermine the signifying power of the maroon. By making the story more palatable for a reading public hungry for southern melodrama, Cable may have tamed the otherwise disruptive figure.

In its eventual form, "The Story of Bras-Coupé" forms two chapters (28 and 29) in the center of *The Grandissimes*. It begins as Bras-Coupé is bought as part of a string of slaves by Agricola and sold to Don José Martinez, the fiance of Honoré's sister and Agricola's niece. The prince, when induced to work, hits the overseer with a hoe, kills the driver, and injures other slaves. Don José sees a kindred spirit in Bras-Coupé and decides to negotiate a peace. After Agricola sends Palmyre to translate, Bras-Coupé agrees to become Don José's slave-driver if Palmyre will marry him. All agree, though Palmyre's acquiescence is only a front, buying time for the white characters to change their minds, certain that her mistress will step in to stop the marriage. Eventually, however, Bras-Coupé and Palmyre are married on the same day as Don José and his Grandissime bride. The master's wedding seems overshadowed by his slave, who "has painted himself all rings and stripes, antelope fashion" and caused the attendants to worry because "Bras-Coupé is a voudou" (178, 177). Palmyre goes to him and gets him to dress.

> There is Bras-Coupé, towering above all heads, in ridiculous red and blue regimentals, but with a look of savage dignity upon him that keeps every one from laughing. The murmur of admiration that passed along the thronged gallery leaped up into a shout in the bosom of Palmyre. Oh, Bras-Coupé--heroic soul! She would not falter. She would let the silly priest say his say--then her cunning should help her *not to be* his wife, yet to show his mighty arm how and when to strike. (178)

At the reception, Bras-Coupé gets drunk for the first time in his life. When Palmyre hides the wine, the prince goes to demand more from his master, whom he then strikes.

> The guests stood for an instant as if frozen, smitten stiff with the instant expectation of insurrection, conflagration and rapine (just as we do today whenever some poor swaggering Pompey rolls up his fist and gets a ball through his body), while single-handed and naked-fisted in a room full of swords, the giant stood over his master, making strange signs and passes and rolling out in wrathful words of his mother tongue what it needed no interpreter to tell his swarming enemies was a voudou malediction. (181)

Bras-Coupé flees and declares his independence in the middle of the swamp. "And what surroundings! Endless colonnades of cypresses; long, motionless drapings of gray moss." He accepts his new residence "as a matter of course" knowing that he has driven other slaves, while doing his duty for Don José, to seek refuge in the swamps. He instead "casts about him for a future" (181-82).

Palmyre has vowed revenge against those who have dishonored her by wedding her to a black man, but now that very man, who would have been the instrument of her vengeance, seems lost to her. "She had heard of San Domingo, and for months the fierce heart within her silent bosom had been leaping and shouting and seeing visions of fire and blood. . . . The lesson she would have taught the giant was Insurrection" (183-84). Rather than taking arms against his former master, Bras-Coupé's revenge takes the form of his voudou curse--making him seem all the more an *intangible* threat. Don José is certain that he has been bewitched by Bras-Coupé's curse; his fields are eaten up by worms; "fever and death . . . fell upon his slaves" (184). Eventually, Don José himself becomes ill, only to be visited in his sick bed by

Bras-Coupé, who says repeatedly, "'Bras Coupé wants his wife." Before leaving, he again curses the house and fields, and these curses come to be (186, 187).

Bras-Coupé is captured when he comes in from the swamp to dance (again drunk) at Congo Square. According to the runaway slave code,

> the runaway slave who shall continue to be so for one month from the day of his being denounced to the officers of justice, shall have his ears cut off and shall be branded with the flower de luce on the shoulder; and on a second offence of the same nature, persisted in during one month of his being denounced, he shall be hamstrung, and be marked with the flower de luce on the other shoulder. On the third offence he shall die.[21]

Agricola pushes for the most severe punishment, but Don José and Honoré wish to be more lenient. Against Honoré's wishes, however, Bras-Coupé has his "ears shorn from his head, and the tendons behind his knees severed." Asked by a priest if he knows where he is going, Bras-Coupé says from his death bed, "Africa" (191, 193).

Whatever defiance might be read into these final words—the African refusing to accept the Christian priest's notion of the afterlife—Bras-Coupé is ultimately a defeated character in this story. Even the smile he gives in answer to Don José's demand that he lift the curse is balanced by the "mangled ear" into which Palmyre pours the news of his master's death. Ladd suggests that, like other versions of Bras-Coupé, "The Story of Bras-Coupé" in *The Grandissimes* can easily be read as sentimental fiction, under-cutting the inherent power and threat of the maroon's image. For example, the savage who has, directly or indirectly, defeated the master is ultimately redeemed by the women of the plantation. Don José's wife comes to Bras-Coupé,

> her infant boy in her arms, knelt down beside the bed of sweet grass and set the child within the hollow of the African's arm. Bras-Coupé

> turned his gaze upon it; it smiled, its mother's smile, and put its hand
>
> upon the runaway's face, and the first tears of Bras-Coupé's life, the
>
> dying testimony of his humanity, gushed from his eyes and rolled down
>
> his cheek upon the infant's hand. . . . The curse was lifted. (193)

But when considered in its historical context (which Cable would have done) of white

concerns regarding runaways, Ladd argues, "the story is very different."[22]

Indeed, the novel's focus on history and narrative serves to highlight the

creative tension between sentimentality and insurrection. Though "The Story of Bras-

Coupé" is encapsulated in two chapters in the middle of the novel, it bleeds through

the rest, coming up mysteriously in conversations and revealing the effect the maroon

had on the people of New Orleans. By rejecting what most critics assume to be the

more overt representation of slave rebellion in "Bibi," publishers actually unleashed the

story's potential. When he framed his "horrific" story (much as Harris and Page

framed theirs), Cable was able to use the story, as Charles Swann puts it, "to show

how stories are used and misused to construct world views."[23] In other words, Cable

began to critique not just the system of slavery and postbellum racism but the myth-

making of the plantation genre itself.

Cable's story of Bras-Coupé is more than a "bonus" tale, more than a recycled

story within a story that serves to offer local color or local folklore such as "The Devil

and Mike Brown" in *Swallow Barn*; rather, the maroon's presence permeates the entire

novel. In presenting Bras-Coupé to his readers in this way, Cable is emphasizing Bras-

Coupé's status as legend; he is part history and part fantasy, and because of his

notoriety among the New Orleanians, his story is fragmented, intruding here and there

into conversations.[24] From the very start, the most powerful mystery of the South

seems to be hiding in the "funereal swamps" as the Frowenfeld family, soon to sicken

and die except for Joseph, stands on a riverboat approaching the city, "looking out

across the waste, and seeing the sky and the marsh meet in the east, the north, and the west." "[I]n the afternoon they entered a land--but such a land! A land hung in mourning, darkened by gigantic cypresses, submerged; a land of reptiles, silence, shadow, decay" (8-9). This scenery entices a local man to tell Joseph's father about Bras-Coupé, the man, "'if one may call a negro a man,'" who proved it possible to live in those swamps. As is common among tellers of legends, the local man claims personal experience with the subject matter, having once run from the maroon at the edge of the swamp. When asked who Bras-Coupé was, "[t]he stranger . . . told . . . the story of a man who chose rather to be hunted like a wild beast among those awful labyrinths, than to be yoked and beaten like a tame one" (10). Joseph only catches a bit of this conversation, making all the more mysterious the story of Bras-Coupé and his connection to Honoré Grandissime. Throughout the entire novel, Bras-Coupé intrudes upon conversations. For example, when pushed for information by Frowenfeld, Dr. Keene exclaims, "'What? Why, it would take until breakfast to tell what 'all this means,'--the story of that pestiferous darky Bras-Coupé, with the rest?" (100). Likewise, Aurora, in telling her own story as well as that of Palmyre, touches on Bras-Coupé only to be prompted for more information by Frowenfeld. She responds, "'Ah! 'Sieur Frowenfel', iv I tra to tell de sto'y of Bras-Coupé, I goin' to cry lag a lill bebby'" (145). Frowenfeld is left, along with the reader, to ponder how this one man could generate such a range of responses: fear, anoyance, and tears.

Sometimes, however, Bras-Coupé's name is invoked as a signifier of nobility. When Joseph first meets white Honoré, at the graveyard in chapter seven, they discuss the difficulty and necessity of the German's assimilation into the local culture. Agreeing with Frowenfeld that one ideally should stick to one's principles, Honoré still cautions against sticking too closely to principle. As an example he motions to a grave and says that the person buried there would have lived longer if he, Honoré, "had not

spoken so rashly for his rights." Honoré then asks if Frowenfeld has ever heard of the maroon. "'Ah! Mr. Frowenfeld, *there* was a bold man's chance to denounce wrong and oppression! Why, that negro's death changed the whole channel of my convictions'" (38). This statement by a southern aristocrat is remarkable given the typical uses of the maroon's image in plantation fiction. Even Edward Clayton in Stowe's *Dred* could not have claimed that a maroon had such an impact on him. In the second half of *The Grandissimes*, after the maroon's tale is told, the name of Bras-Coupé is often invoked as a figure of noble resistance by people other than Honoré. As Aurora and her daughter, Clotilde, await the "rent hour," knowing that their poverty will land them in the street, Aurora tells white Honoré, "There are many people who ought to have their rights. There was Bras-Coupé; indeed, he got them—found them in the swamp. Maybe Clotilde and I shall find ours in the street" (240). This invocation, along with their tears, leads Honoré to bring them a check from the sale of their former plantation.

Perhaps most important is Bras-Coupé's effect on his wife Palmyre. He becomes not only a sign of her disgrace, being wedded to a full-blooded Negro, but the instrument of her revenge against Agricola for arranging the marriage. Their connection is further emphasized while he is still hiding in the swamp and Don José's overseer imagines that "Bras-Coupé is dead and his spirit has gone into Palmyre" (188). Furthermore, Honoré f.m.c. mentions Bras-Coupé in a letter proposing marriage to Palmyre, offering to take his place as the instrument of justice that Palmyre had seen him to be. Frowenfeld, who is translating the letter for Palmyre, explains (when he sees the loss of pride in Palmyre's face), "It would not be insurrection—it would be advocacy. He would give his time, his pen, his speech, his means to get them justice—to get them their rights" (291). But such a pale reflection of Bras-Coupé does not impress Palmyre, who says that it is vengeance she wants. Once Frowenfeld tells

Palmyre that the white Honoré is in love with someone else, she feels free to carry out her revenge, and, though dead, Bras-Coupé is still her instrument of vengeance.

For the most part, Bras-Coupé's actions against the slaveholders were more symbolic than physical. His greatest threat, the curse uttered to his former master, seems to stand in place of any physical, armed insurrection. This lack of direct action against the system may relate to the fact that most maroons and runaways were too busy sustaining their existence to bother with insurrection, but it also suggests the power of invisibility offered by the swamp. It was merely the maroon's existence, his presence beyond the control of white society, that was deemed a threat to the institution. Even in death, Bras-Coupé serves Palmyre's purposes; she invokes his name as she begins her assault upon Agricola. Having found numerous charms and curses around his house, Agricola exclaims to Frowenfeld, "'I can lift up this right hand, Joseph, and swear I never gave a slave--man or woman--a blow in my life but according to my notion of justice. And now to find my life attempted by former slaves of my own house-hold, and taunted with the righteous hamstringing of a dangerous runaway?'" (317). However, such righteousness is belied by the treatment Clemence receives at the hands of the Grandissimes.

She is caught in a bear trap set by Capt. Jean-Baptiste Grandissime in an attempt to catch whoever has been hoodooing Agricola. Claiming that Palmyre has sent her, she is carrying a "coffin" wrapped in a dress: "resting on a cushioned bottom, the image, in myrtle-wax, moulded and painted with some rude skill, of a negro's bloody armed cut off near the shoulder--a *bras-coupé*--with a dirk grasped in its hand" (314). In the form of a talisman, Bras-Coupé has become both a sign of Palmyre's revenge and an instrument for carrying it out; poor Clemence, however, suffers for her complicity. Taken to the woods to be hanged, she is forced instead to run and one of the party shoots her from behind. As the only other act of fatal violence in the novel,

Clemence's fate echoes Bras-Coupé's own death and mutilation. Perhaps it is the conflation of Bras-Coupé's open defiance and Clemence's seeming passivity that provokes the Grandissimes into overreacting; or perhaps it is the abstract nature of her crime. Whether or not they believe that Clemence can do any harm with the talisman, it, like Bras-Coupé's curse, resonates with an intolerable willfullness.

Palmyre and Clemence serve as extensions of the Bras-Coupé story, as evidence that the *Code Noir* has not ended that story. One of the shortcomings of the official solutions to dangerous slaves, from the official's viewpoint, was that the threat could never be fully overcome. A law allowing hunters to shoot runaway slaves drew attention to the existence of such slaves and the unpredictability they represented: they were out there, in the woods and swamps, beyond the control of society, and could only be brought back under control if they came within range of a gun. As we have seen in other plantation novels, writers counted on the closure that narrative brings to a chaotic, unpredictable reality. Cable shows, through his various versions and contexts of the Bras-Coupé story, that narrative is not always sufficient to the task of bringing order to reality.

By placing the reader largely in the position of Frowenfeld as a stranger to the world of the Grandissimes, struggling to understand, Cable places his original story of a maroon into a context where it takes on a greater significance than it could as an isolated short story. In effect, Cable creates his own context for reading Bras-Coupé's story by creating his own audience(s). Frowenfeld's attempts to piece together the bits of local history into a coherent narrative show the Grandissimes' history linked inextricably to the story of Bras-Coupé. Their stories of ancestors are sometimes told in detail and sometimes mentioned in passing, but often they are interrupted by the runaway's story, as when Dr. Keene refuses to explain "what it all means" to Frowenfeld because to do so would entail talking about "'that pestiferous darky Bras-Coupé, with

the rest'" (100). Thus, the figure from the past that most threatened the security of the family takes on greater importance than the actual progenitors of the line. The story becomes "the shadow of the Ethiopian" (156) cast over the family history. In fact, when Raoul tells the tale to the young Grandissimes at the Fête de Grandpère, the family ball, it is in the context of dispelling shadows. Raoul stands on the veranda watching children playing hide-and-seek "gliding from one black shadow to crouch in another. He himself was in the deep shade of a magnolia" (166), and groups of adults were unrecognizable black forms. From this darkness the young Grandissimes are herded into the parlor to gather round the fire and be entertained by Raoul's songs and stories. As with Haffen Blok's tale of "Mike Brown and the Devil" in *Swallow Barn*, the late-night hour calls for a tale of horror. Uninterested in the staid tales of their ancestors, the young Grandissimes unanimously demand that Raoul conjure forth the maroon: "'But mark,' they cried unitedly, 'you have got to wind up with the story of Bras-Coupé!'" (167). Only a gothic tale that shakes the foundations of their reality can properly fill the late-night hour.

Despite its disruptive nature, however, Raoul's version of the tale seems to strengthen the family's sense of identity.[25] Throughout the novel, we have seen how the sense of history for the Grandissimes seems largely a justification of the present, a need to maintain the traditions of the South by stripping the beautiful past of any blemishes, worshipping history rather than confronting it. In this light, storytelling about Bras-Coupé mixes horrific fascination with the need for closure, a unity that reestablishes security. Within the setting of the ball, the story serves to initiate the young people into the family, to bring the bogeyman into their circle and objectify him, to narrate him (and therefore the idea of insurrection) into a position of pity. After the tale is told,

The fair Grandissimes all agreed, at the close, that it was pitiful.

> Specially, that it was a great pity to have hamstrung Bras-Coupé, a
> man who even in his cursing had made an exception in favor of the
> ladies. True, they could suggest no alternative; it was undeniable that
> he had deserved his fate; still, it seemed a pity. They dispersed, retired
> and went to sleep confirmed in this sentiment. (194)

In this way, they reinscribe the institution as benign rather than allowing to stand the implicit critique of the system embodied in Bras-Coupé's rebellion. While the narrative serves to draw boundaries around the chaotic threat of Bras-Coupé, it also inscribes boundaries of blood by differentiating between those within their circle and those out-side. By "correctly" reading the story as a reflection of the burden planters are under to maintain order, as unpleasant a duty as that may be, the young Grandissimes en-circling Raoul are drawn closer into the bosom of the family.

In contrast, the white Honoré leaves this circle and seeks the company of Frowenfeld. It is here that Cable challenges the notion that we have heard *the* story of Bras-Coupé or that we have even heard the same version of the story that was told to the young Grandissimes. Instead, we find that the story is told two other times that day, both times to Frowenfeld: once by the white Honoré Grandissime and once by his half-brother Honoré the f.m.c. The latter tells "such part of the story of Bras-Coupé as showed how he came by his deadly hatred of Agricola" (197), while the former tells it in the context of his increasing disaffection from his family. Whereas the young Grandissimes were familially bonded by Raoul's tale, white Honoré was "feeling a kind of suffocation" at the Fête (168). Up to this point in the novel, Frowenfeld's piecing together of the various local stories suggested the power these narratives have to draw the stranger into the circle of the larger New Orleans society.[26] In fact, at their first meeting Honoré had advised Frowenfeld to "'get acclimated . . . not in body only, that you have done; but in mind—in taste—in conversation—and in convictions too'" (37).

Despite his resistance to Honoré's proposal of assimilation, Frowenfeld has, through his search for answers, been drawn into the lives of these people. "The Story of Bras-Coupé" should be the culmination of that assimilation; instead, the contrast between the young Grandissimes and Frowenfeld as audiences shows the northerner still to be an outsider. It is, in fact, his outsider status that brings the two Honorés to him, for he is the only audience for their versions of the tale. Rendered into a sentimental tale, the runaway's story stirs emotion but does not shake the Grandissimes' sense of self or their faith in the social structure. The two Honorés, however, must tell Frowenfeld the story because the image of Bras-Coupé *does* disturb them.

The only clue we have as to which version of the tale Cable is giving us comes in a parenthetical question from Frowenfeld to the white Honoré that interrupts the tale (191). Still, the notion that the story presented to the reader is, at best, one of the three versions and possibly an entirely new version (a synthesis) highlights the subjectivity of the narrative. What is at one moment shown to be a founding myth, or at least a story confirming the *status quo*, is at the next moment shot through with fissures: each version used to a different end and the clarity of meaning broken into various possible meanings. Within these multiple meanings, Cable has offered two distinct types of storyteller-audience relationships. First, we have Raoul and the young Grandissimes, a model of the storyteller and a receptive audience. The other features the two Honorés as confessional storytellers with Frowenfeld as the skeptical audience. Where Frowenfeld "found very soon that a little salt improved M. Raoul's statements" (119) regarding the grandeur of his family history, the group of young Grandissimes are eager to accept what Raoul says—their worldviews reassured rather than challenged by the tale that amounts to nothing but pabulum. While Raoul tells stories that glorify the family, the two Honorés tell their versions of the Bras-Coupé story in order to explain to Frowenfeld the reasons for their own actions and feelings.

The result of these confessional tales is disturbing to the audience, as Frowenfeld wonders, "'What does he want with me?'" (198). Where the two Honorés and Frowenfeld find the story of Bras-Coupé to be a challenge to each one's sense of self, the young Grandissimes find in this portrait of the exotic Other a reaffirmation of who they are.

Despite the lingering sense of fragmentation and Frowenfeld's continued skepticism, the novel does take a somewhat sentimental turn after "The Story of Bras-Coupé," as if the maroon has been demystified and, thus, is no longer a disruptive gothic element. In particular, the second half of the novel focuses heavily on the romance plots, and we speed toward the inevitable double wedding and happily-ever-after. Frowenfeld's marriage to Clotilde and white Honoré's marriage to Aurora seem to be a double reconciliation: between North and South with the former and between feuding families with the latter.[27] This double wedding, then, echoes the earlier one that had ended in disaster as the black groom, Bras-Coupé, struck and cursed the white groom, Don José. By ending with this second double wedding, Cable suggests that a reconciliation is possible between North and South but not between white and black.

Furthermore, as Charles Swann argues, the seeming wholeness and clarity of the ending is bought at the expense of the "colored" characters who have all been killed or otherwise removed from the scene. Swann notes that the chronology of events in the final chapters tells a much different story than the double wedding asserts. The stories of the two Honorés intertwine, but the dictates of the caste system relegate the f.m.c. to a secondary status. Though occurring later than Honoré and Aurora's reconciliation, the fates of the mulattoes are told first. "In other words, the last experiences are those of two people of color. Honoré's suicide comes historically after Aurora and Honoré have healed the family feud and denied the authority of the

past . . . by appealing to romantic love. So we read the white Honoré's and Aurore's embrace, knowing that the future contains the other Honoré's suicide."[28] The love plots offer the sense of closure and reconciliation that Cable's publishers and audience would have demanded, but the intertwining stories of Palmyre and the f.m.c. serve to challenge the sense of wholeness the novel appears to impart.

Rather than a clear glass through which the audience may peer into the past, Cable's narrative technique shows how an agenda can skew the audience's perception. The two models for the relationship between storyteller and audience correspond to Cable's view of the tradition of southern literature. While Frowenfeld serves as the model for critical reading, the young Grandissimes correspond to the reader of plantation romances (Cable's own audience!) as all too willing to embrace a mythic past. As we have seen with other authors in the plantation tradition, even the most clearly racist or proslavery works include points of disruption, gothic features that disturb the otherwise seamless picture of an idyllic South. When Raoul tells the story of Bras-Coupé at the Grandissimes ball, Cable demonstrates how these disruptive qualities can be tamed or exorcised by the storyteller. By fracturing the storyteller's work into multiple perspectives, however, Cable highlights the relativity of the "truth" and reveals a connection between teller and tale: an individual's claim of authorship, or authority, over the tale is fleeting. Ultimately, there is no single story of Bras-Coupé that puts an end to his status as legend. Instead, he "pops up" in the form of the talismanic severed arm, in Palmyre's oath of vengence, in Honoré the f.m.c.'s promise of advocacy, in Aurora's assertions of dignity, and even on Agricola's death-bed as his demise echoes that of Don José--victim of Bras-Coupé's curse.

Those two curses add to Bras-Coupé's role as the novel's gothic element; but, besides his "haunting" of white New Orleans by his invisible presence in the swamp, his execution can also be labeled a gothic effect. Where the reader might readily admit

that his disruptive power as a maroon is formidable, s/he may see his execution as an

elimination of that power. The fact that he continues to be invoked by other char-

acters certainly cannot compare to the threat posed by his actual presence in the

swamps. An escaped slave who is never caught, whose story is never completed,

retains the character of a bogeyman. He is still out there, extending beyond the boun-

daries of his own story and still threatening to the system. Thus, one reason for the

dramatic public punishments and displays of captured runaways' corpses, like that of

Squire in 1836, may have been not only to serve as a warning to other slaves but to

bring the fugitive's story to an end. In this way, public proceedings may have narra-

tivized themselves, asserting authority on the body of the fugitive and bringing a sense

of closure. Similarly, Cable's "conclusion" to Bras-Coupé's story, his pillory scene,

seems to provide closure to the maroon's story so that the sentimental plot can domi-

nate the novel. In the next chapter, I will explore this final problem of the maroon:

does the scaffold nullify the disruptive power of the maroon?

CONCLUSION

THE BODY OF THE ACCUSED

As we see in the example of Squire/Bras-Coupé, the danger posed to the institution of slavery by runaways, truants, and maroons went beyond the depredations they committed. Although many scholars and witnesses have remarked that slave-holders did not concern themselves terribly about the disappearance of slaves, knowing that they would return eventually, the severe anxiety created by Squire suggests the potential subversive influence maroons were thought to have among the slave population. Free in the swamps, the runaway could become a legendary figure, an exemplar of resistance for those remaining on the plantation. The fate of Squire, then, gives us some idea of the threat a slave's unregulated body posed to the institution--the consequences of the slave who no longer lived under the gaze of whites. I have argued that the use of the swamp, while perfectly understandable in practical terms, was also a slave's attempt to carve out a space that was not part of the slaveholder's realm of domination and definition. I would go further to say that escape to the swamp not only removed the slave's body from his master's control, but it showed a refusal to be defined by the Other. In short, while on the plantation, the slave was defined by his/her body; and if definition of the self is determined *through* the body,[1] removing the body from view would foil attempts to define.

John W. Roberts offers background on Squire's transformation, in the minds of the people of New Orleans, from fugitive slave to the legendary Bras-Coupé:

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Enslaved Africans in the area attributed Bras Coupé's success to the
fact that he was a conjurer possessed of extraordinary supernatural
powers. His abilities to elude successfully patrols and others bent on
his capture for several years caused some to speculate that he could not
be killed. Others told of how hunters who spotted him fired bullets at
him that bounced off his chest and reversed their course, barely missing
those who fired them. Still others told how an army expedition sent to
capture him was lost in a mysterious fog and never found its way out of
the swamp. Some even claimed that, in the recesses of the swamp,
Bras Coupé became a cannibal and enhanced his power by eating
human flesh.[2]

Despite these supposed supernatural powers, Squire was wounded by hunters on April
6, 1837. Three months later as he was recuperating, he was killed by a friend, no
doubt for the $2,000 reward. His body was taken to the mayor, mutilated, publicly
displayed, and all slaves were required to view it. In this way, white authorities could
transform the object of their own fear into a reason for slaves to be fearful.

While southern justice was being meted out on the bodies of captured run-
aways, proslavery literature presented runaways being tortured in another way: by
being denied return to the plantation. He had been cast out of Eden. As David Miller
argues, white northern writers also enjoyed the bodily stereotype attached to African
Americans and merged it with their romantic fascination with swamps. Harriet
Beecher Stowe fashioned the runaway into a weapon with which to bludgeon her
proslavery opponents: the image became a threat of pontential insurrection. At the
same time, the power of the image caused African American slave narrators, already
walking a fine line with publishers and white readers, to eschew any association with
it. Instead of linking themselves to this threatening icon of self-reliance, they sought to

prove their intellectual equality and their readiness for citizenship; instead of giving white readers more reason to assume African Americans were closer to nature and more *bodily* than whites, the narrators proclaimed profound fear of the swamp.

In the testimonies that I have already reviewed, there is a division among critics and witnesses regarding white fear of runaways and truants. Some argue that planters were generally unconcerned with these acts of rebellion because they knew their slaves would eventually return, be punished, and go back to work. Others, such as Samuel Huntington Perkins, the "Yankee Tutor," paint a picture of anxiety caused by the runaways living in such places as the Dismal Swamp. Perkins was hesitant to travel in the region for fear of being robbed and/or killed by maroons who could appear on the road and disappear into the swamp, striking with impunity. With the case of Squire, we catch a glimpse of this same kind of concern among whites that went beyond a mere consideration of property. The critical motivating factor for white authorities was not merely desire to eliminate a runaway who robbed with impunity by slipping back into the swamp; rather, the authorities were engaged in a battle of symbolism--the maroon represented the threat of insurrection rumbling beneath the veneer of the idyllic South. They were fighting not only to protect property but to eliminate a slave who had taken on heroic proportions. To that end, white control was reasserted over the minds as well as the bodies of the black population by publicly enacting their authority on the mutilated body of the captured runaway.[3]

Through the act of mutilation, white authorities were able to make the invisible threat manifest, the legend into fact, the spirit into *body*--to reinscribe the body of the accused into the realm of white control. As part of the mechanism of that control, notices of punishments in newspapers supplemented public punishments. I have already noted how newspapers such as the Richmond *Daily Dispatch* reported the outlaw's story *after* punishment had been meted out so that the threat to the institution

was rendered in the past tense. Herbert Aptheker also makes note of newspapers being used to justify extreme punishment.

> Olmsted tells of the burning of a slave near Knoxville, Tennessee, for the offense of killing his master and quotes the editor of a "liberal" paper as justifying the lynching as a "means of absolute, necessary, self-defense." He remarks that the same community shortly found six legal slave executions necessary to the stability of its social order. Similarly, a slave in August, 1854, killed his master at Mt. Meigs, Alabama, and, according to the hastily-formed vigilance committee, boasted of his deed. This Negro, too, was burned alive, by the decision of a meeting of that committee, constituted, said a local paper, of "men of prudence, deliberation and intelligence." These men acted "from an imperative sense of the necessity of an example to check the growing and dangerous insubordination of the slave population."[4]

In one sense, the torment of the pillory was expression of white authority written upon the body through whipping, hanging, burning, beheading, and/or dismemberment, all bearing the message: "This is *our* body to do with as we please." Besides justifying and emphasizing this message, newspaper accounts provided a metaphorical recasting of the confrontation between white authorities and black accused. In the account quoted by Aptheker, the mob's intelligence is emphasized in contrast to the brutish and bodily nature of the criminal. The bodies of the white men, though clearly the instuments of the burning, seem to disappear from the pillory scene. In effect, the punishment is justified as the natural duty of the mind to exercise its control over a body.

Where the wilderness may have represented freedom to slaves, the slave's connection to the swamp served to reinforce the white belief that Africans were *bodily*

creatures as opposed to the more intellectual and spiritual European.[5] Planters, however, wished that cultural assumption to be proven in the fields, through a slave's work on the planter's land: space owned and bounded by white control; actions regulated by white demands. Once outside of this well-regulated, white-dominated world, the slave was no longer subject to definition by whites. When captured, the audacity of the slave to claim use of his own body reaped a heavy punishment upon that body. Just as the whipping of a rebellious or truant slave might have served to reinscribe white power on the body of the slave (the whip writing on her/his back), the more severe punishment visited upon Squire's senseless body was meant as a sign to others that their bodies did not belong to them. From the perspective of southern law, then, the case of Squire's mutilation and display is an example of the punishment fitting the crime. If we see the movement into the swamp as an attempt to create a space of subjectivity--slaves refusing to be objectified or bound by white authority--then Squire's fate may be seen as the ultimate act of domination over that self; a fate that is replicated and perpetuated in fiction.

In literary representations of such events, the reader is offered dual gothic effects: first, the maroon is a haunting, ghostly presence; then, the pillory is a bloody site of torment.[6] Since the punishment is the conclusion to the maroon's story, we might say that the second gothic effect trumps the first. Bras-Coupé, for example, who had been a mysterious, invisible, but ever-present threat to the system, is in the end presented as flesh and blood despite Cable's clever fracturing of the narrative perspective. As the pieces of his story are pulled together, the pieces of his body are pulled apart in a heavy-handed display of power by the white authorities. In this way, the author replicates the action of the authorities as he brings his story to an end. In addition to Cable's problematic conclusion to Bras-Coupé's story, two other authors that I have discussed present the reader with horrific scenes of white justice exercised

upon the bodies of runaways captured in swamps. William Wells Brown uses the burning of an unnamed runaway to accentuate the hopelessness of Currer's situation in *Clotel*; Richard Hildreth forces his narrator, who is passing for white, to witness the execution of "Wild Tom." In each of these cases, the sympathy aroused for the victim seems secondary to the effect each execution has on the characters who witness it. The degree to which they identify with the captured fugitive determines the actions and/or fates of these characters.

The importance of one's perspective toward a scaffold scene is highlighted by one of Brown's and Hildreth's more famous contemporaries, Herman Melville. His novella, "Benito Cereno" (1855), ends with the trial and execution of Babo, the leader of a slave ship rebellion. "Some months after [the trial], dragged to the gibbet at the tail of a mule, the black met his voiceless end. The body was burned to ashes; but for many days, the head, that hive of subtlety, fixed on a pole in the plaza, met, unabashed, the gazes of the whites."[7] Although Babo is not a maroon, not empowered by being out of sight, his most potent weapon is an intangible one. Babo's "brain, not body, had schemed and led the revolt"; therefore, it is his head ("that hive of subtlety") over which white authority must focus its power.[8] As a result, Babo is decapitated and his head put on public display, rendered visible and powerless. The visibility, more than the decapitation, seems to reassert white power over the rebel. Dana Nelson argues:

> In ordering Babo's head to be affixed to a pole for the "gaze of the whites," the legal discourse of the Lima Court merges with another kind of discourse prominent in "Benito Cereno"--that of the aesthetic. The two types of discourse exist in a symbiotic relation; legal discourse sanctions power for an elect group, while aesthetic discourse defines pleasure. Babo's head as a legally produced artistic object both sym-

bolizes this power and provides its viewers a pleasurable sensation of power.[9]

Nelson goes on to explain how Melville has set up this aesthetic subtext in Captain Delano's "appreciation" of the scenic slaves aboard ship who seem oblivious to his gaze. The subject notices the object but does not create it. "Through aesthetic recognition, then, the viewer identifies himself with and confirms his place in the Subject community."[10] Certainly, literary representations of punishment are a form of aestheticized violence, but if Nelson is correct, the historical acts on which these writers are basing their works were also functioning in the realm of aesthetics. In all cases, whether literary or historical, the aesthetic functions to establish the identity of the viewer. When the fugitive is rendered visible (a spectacle), the authorities have succeeded in destroying the legend by objectifying the body and the process of "othering" is complete. What happens next is dependent upon the viewer's positioning in relation to the "Subject community." White viewers identifying with the authorities would gain a sense of confidence in the legal system while black viewers, who were sometimes forced to witness the scene, would receive a different message (this could be you!) that implied their identification with the victim.

Teresa Goddu addresses the problem with the literary representation of pillory scenes by viewing them as gothic effects. In her reading of tales growing out of the Nat Turner rebellion, Goddu finds, "The gothic's conventions, then, gave whites responding to Turner's rebellion a discourse to symbolize and contain their terror. Once subsumed into symbols, imagined instead of experienced, the event could be read as an effect rather than as a reality." This displacement is the same problem faced by slave narrators who found gothic conventions useful in representing the horrors of slavery, "but its narrative construction could also empty slavery of history by turning it into a gothic trope."[11] The young Grandissimes in Cable's novel certainly react to the story

of Bras-Coupé as a sentimental tale, finding it "a great pity to have hamstrung Bras-Coupé, a man who even in his cursing had made an exception in favor of the ladies" (194). As with other descriptions of torment, here the victims seem to be the white witnesses to the event, their emotional response to it being the focal point of the narrative.[12] Following this line of reasoning, the body of the fugitive would stand for the unfortunate evils of slavery even as it hid the source of those evils--the white authorities.[13]

Goddu notes that such is the case in Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* where Legree's slave Cassey becomes the embodiment of the evils of slavery; however, she argues, Harriet Jacobs avoids this trap by "locating the gothic's evil blackness in Dr. Flint's shadow."[14] Likewise, Frederick Douglass resists the potential romantic effects of the gothic in his presentation of Aunt Hester's whipping. "Douglass deploys the gothic with a twist: instead of waking *from* a nightmare, he wakes *to* it. . . . he suggests that the reader, like himself, is awake to the nightmare of slavery: the gothic effect does not dematerialize the event but makes it ever-present."[15]

For abolitionists and early African American writers, scenes of brutal white "justice" became key ingredients for creating sympathy and outrage among white readers. In fact, Trudier Harris argues, by the twentieth century the lynching ritual had become an *expected* characteristic of African American literature.

> The tradition [William Wells] Brown began is a fascinating one to which each author adds his individual voice in addition to sharing in the collective portrayal of lynchings and burnings. As each author adapts and alters the scene to suit his or her purpose, it is sometimes not immediately relevant to the thematic or structural development of the work in which it appears. Indeed, lynching and burning scenes sometimes become accessory devices, embellishments to suggest the

innate character of white society, its destructive nature and brutality.

Persistence in the inclusion of the scene suggests, nonetheless, that it

has reasons for being, reasons that are central to the history of Blacks

in America as well as to the individual writers and how they view

themselves as writers.

These scenes of brutality allow African American authors to "show white attitudes

towards Blacks" and potentially move white readers into the black subject com-

munity--providing a spur to action rather than an ending; yet the problems related to

the *maroon's* punishment persist.[16] The pillory seems to take the disruptive image of

Osman and transform him to the mutilated figure of Squire, thereby erasing the effects

of the disruption. In the process of eliciting sympathy, then, does the author not also

replicate the white southern code of justice?

Besides inspiring pity, the mutilated fugitive could also demand respect by

suffering the torment with dignity. For example, William Wells Brown's unnamed

fugitive suffers bravely the fires that consume his body until the pain overwhelms his

pride, and he leaps from the fire--only to be thrown back again to be burned until "'not

a vestige remain[ed] to show that such a being ever existed.'"[17] Rather than seeing

this detail as only a sign of dignity, we might read it as metaphor: this brief passage

sums up the perpetual back-and-forth in the battle of representations in which the rebel

slave bursts out of the frame only to be thrown in again. Brown's victim may literally

try to leap out of the frame (the flame) as a way for the author show the runaway's

continued attempts to defy representation. Similarly, the legend of the maroon might

have waxed and waned depending on the degree to which his presence was palpable

on the plantation. The records presented by Aptheker and others suggest that authori-

ties would *occasionally* send men into the swamps to hunt down bands of runaways--

occasioned by the degree to which the maroons made their presence intolerable to the authorities.[18]

It is likely, then, that on the plantation, as in plantation literature, the figure of the maroon would "pop up" unexpectedly to challenge the planter's peace-of-mind and, possibly, sense of self. Priscilla Wald takes a psychological approach to understanding such disruptions to national identity(ies). She uses Freud's term the "uncanny" as a label for such disruptive elements and "untold stories":

> the uncanny continues to haunt the narrative, drawing attention to its obscured origin in the reformulation (hence to the conventionality) of personhood. Intrinsic to the narrative of identity is the ongoing possibility of a return to its own genesis in the uncanny (the unrecognized self)--in its efforts, that is, to establish continuity where there has been a rupture.[19]

From Wald's perspective, then, we might see the white missions into the swamp and the pillory of captured runaways as effort made to "reabsorb" the "untold story" of the maroon. By trying to bring him in line with the plantation myth, however, the authorities actually called attention to others in the swamps; in effect, they actually perpetuated the legend in their attempts to warn other slaves.

Folklorist Alan Dundes has explained that legends are by nature open-ended; "in an open system, one can never achieve the ultimate climax, one can never achieve perfection."[20] The pillory was an attempt by white authorities to complete the action of the legend, but, as Wald argues concerning such untold stories, "the extra work required by that reabsorption threatens to expose the discontinuity it is supposed to obscure."[21] An occasional foray into the swamps to capture maroons and the occasional display of a mutilated body serves to remind both black and white that there are runaways out there, beyond the grasp of white authority. Ultimately, the freedom

of the swamp is as much a part of the maroon's story as the seeming "conclusion" of the public mutilation and *vice versa*. Likewise, the mutilation is just as much an exercise of white power on the body as it is a sign of the body's resistance. More importantly, perhaps, the body of the captured maroon, which is subjected to such humiliating punishment, is the sign of yet another runaway's body, free and invisible, hiding in the swamps.

NOTES

Notes to Chapter One

1. Joan D. Hedrick, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

2. Jan Bakker, "Something Barely Breathed: The Twist in Mary Virginia Terhune's Autobiography of Marion Harland," Society for the Study of Southern Literature, 1998 Conference (Charleston, S.C., 16 April 1998).

3. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963), 275.

4. Harvey Wish, "The Slave Insurrection Panic of 1856" *The Journal of Southern History* 5.2 (May 1939): 206.

5. "Republican Party Platform," *Historic Documents on Presidential Elections, 1787-1988*, ed. Michael Nelson (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1991), 196.

6. "A Fremont Voter Driven from Virginia," *The Liberator* 28 November 1856: 2.

7. Guion Griffis Johnson, *Antebellum North Carolina: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 567.

8. David Hunter Strother, "The Dismal Swamp: Illustrated by Porté Crayon," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 13.76 (September 1856): 441-455. Subsequent citations made within text.

9. George Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 74.

10. See Drew Gilpin Faust, *Southern Stories: Slaveholders in Peace and War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992). "If, then, a basic component of the reform impulse was a commitment to the maintenance of social order, the reformer would consequently take a particular interest in the elements of society which seemed to threaten its stability. Therefore in the South, a region obsessed with the fear of slave insurgency, the reform movement sought to control blacks as individuals and as a race. . . . [I]f benevolence was to be seen as moral stewardship, what better exemplified this humanitarian guardianship over others than the paternalism of slavery?" (21). "The South must come to recognize that in caring for slaves, in leading them out of barbarism, it fulfilled God's will and served as an instrument of His mercy. Ownership of slaves was itself a kind of moral stewardship. . . . The Scriptures

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showed clearly that God had made men socially, morally, and politically unequal, and thus slavery was invented so that by uniting the interest and sympathy of the superior white master with his property right in the slave, it might protect and elevate the black man" (23).

11. Teresa A. Goddu, *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 3-4.

12. Ibid., 10.

13. Ibid., 91.

14. Edward T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimensions* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1969), 2.

15. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1991), 182.

16. John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 231.

17. Ibid., 229.

18. See Vlach (164-169) regarding these contradictory impulses among slaveholders.

19. Ibid., 231.

20. As dramatized in Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* when Miss Ophilia sets about to organize the kitchen. "Old Dinah, the head cook, and principal of all rule and authority in the kitchen department, was filled with wrath at what she considered an invasion of privilege. No feudal baron in *Magna Charta* times could have more thoroughly resented some incursion of the crown" (211).

21. Priscilla Wald, *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995), 10.

22. See Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1973). Slotkin notes the difference between the New England view of the wilderness as a place of devils (Native Americans and Putitan backsliders) and the more economically-based southern view. "The Puritans saw in the wilderness an incalculable potential to produce good or evil, a true City of God or a true City of Satan; they feared and loved both the physical wilderness and the Faustian dreams they projected upon it. The southern antipathy for the wilderness was a kind of snobbery, reflecting a desire to associate their culture with that of London by criticizing the country 'provinces' in which they had perforce to dwell. . . . Southerners affected unconcern or humorous annoyance with their surroundings when in a literary mood. When speaking of business and of their real concerns in the wilderness, they spoke in the matter-of-fact tone appropriate to purely economic transactions" (14). In either case, the wilderness provided a locus against which colonists defined themselves.

23. Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre," in *On Narrative*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 55.

24. Goddu, 5.

25. Ibid., 10.

26. Ibid., 143.

27. Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 52-3.

28. Although women did belong to maroon communities, the image of the maroon is largely a male one, such as Osman. For more on women's roles concerning marronage, see Charles Joyner, *Shared Traditions: Southern History and Folk Culture* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 86-7.

Notes to Section One Introduction

1. Ann Jefferson, "Bodymatters: Self and Other in Bakhtin, Sartre, and Barthes," *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, eds. Ken Hirschkop and David Shepherd (New York: Manchester University Press, 1989), 152-77.

2. Ibid., 161.

3. Ibid., 164.

4. Ibid., 167-68.

5. Ibid., 172.

6. Alan Dundes, "On the Psychology of Legend" in *American Folk Legend: A Symposium*, ed. Wayland D. Hand (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 23.

7. Sander Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 19.

8. Ibid., 19-20.

9. Charles Joyner, *Shared Traditions: Southern History and Folk Culture* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 48.

10. James Sidbury, *Ploughshares into Swords: Race, Rebellion, and Identity in Gabriel's Virginia, 1730-1810* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 72.

11. Ibid., 4.

Notes to Chapter Two

1. Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, (New York: Random House, 1989), 16.

2. Joseph Boskin, *Sambo: The Rise and Demise of an American Jester* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 13-14.

3. Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1963).

4. Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 23.

5. Mel Watkins, *On the Real Side: Laughing, Lying, and Signifying* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1994), 58.

6. John Bernard, *Retrospections of America: 1797-1811*, ed. Mrs. Bayle Bernard (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1969), 126.

7. Ibid., 131.

8. Ibid., 131.

9. Ibid., 132.

10. Ibid., 132-33.

11. For a discussion of the African roots of such satirical techniques see Roger D. Abrahams, *Singing the Master: The Emergence of African-American Culture in the Plantation South* (New York: Penguin, 1992), 111-16.

12. Bernard, 132.

13. Ibid., 126.

14. See Boskin, 63-4. Also John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 224-30.

15. Ralph Ellison, *Shadow and Act* (New York: Signet, 1966), 69.

16. Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Random House, 1976), 148, 583. Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 22-23. John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 293.

17. Genovese, 612.

18. Qtd. in James O. Breeden, ed, *Advice Among Masters: The Ideal in Slave Management in the Old South* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), 278.

19. Watkins, 58.

20. James Sidbury, *Ploughshares into Swords: Race, Rebellion, and Identity in Gabriel's Virginia, 1730-1810* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 94-96.

21. Besides the many references made to corn shuckings in slave testimonies, detailed descriptions of the festival can be found in William Cullen Bryant, *Letters of a Traveller; or, Notes of Things Seen in Europe and America*, 2nd ed. (New York: George P. Putnam, 1850); David C. Barrow, Jr., "A Georgia Corn-Shucking," *The Century Magazine* 24.6 (1882): 873-78; Lewis W. Paine, *Six Years in a Georgia Prison: Narrative of Lewis W. Paine* (New York: Printed for the Author, 1851); and Abrahams, *Singing the Master*.

22. Genovese, 318-19.

23. Abrahams, 18.

24. Bryant, 87.

25. Qtd. in Charles L. Perdue, Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Phillips, eds., *Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), 98-99.

26. Qtd. in Purdue, et al., 99.

27. Gregory Bateson, "A Theory of Play and Fantasy," in *Semiotics: An Introductory Anthology*, ed. Robert E. Innis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 138.

28. Barrow, 876.

29. Paine, 182.

30. Bateson, 133.
31. Paine, 182.
32. Ibid., 182.
33. Qtd. in Breeden, 261.
34. Mary Douglas, "Jokes," in *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*, eds. Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 302.
35. See Winthrop D. Jordan, *The White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974). Jordan remarks on the reactions of Virginians to the Gabriel Rebellion of 1800. They "detected a spark of liberty burning in the slave, a spark which made the specter of Negro rebellion the more abhorrent because it confirmed that the rebellious Negro was merely responding to the claims of his nature and asking what was rightly his. Slave revolt was a deadly reminder that slaveholding violated the purpose for which the nation existed" (211).
36. Qtd. in Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control Of Negro Labor As Determined by the Plantation Regime* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966), 116. The scope of the current project will not allow a detailed study of these representations in antebellum southern newspapers, so it should be noted that the newspaper business changed quite a bit from the 1830s to the 1850s. This project is skewed toward the latter date, though a detailed comparison between reports of the insurrection panic of 1856 and coverage of the Nat Turner insurrection of 1831 would be of interest. See Henry Irving Tragle, *The Southampton Slave Revolt of 1831: A Compilation of Source Material* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973). "In using the newspaper as historical source material, one must give due consideration to the time when the paper was published and must know something of the transformation which newspapers have undergone. The press of 1831 was more closely akin to that which had existed fifty years earlier, than it was to the press which would exist a mere thirty years later. Major changes, both in the news gathering process itself, and in the technological means for disseminating the finished product, lay just beyond the horizon of the future" (31).
37. Harvey Wish, "The Slave Insurrection Panic of 1856" *Journal of Southern History* 5.2 (May 1939): 206-22.
38. Ibid., 208.
39. Ibid., 209-11.
40. Ibid., 213-14.
41. Ibid., 219.
42. See Dana Nelson, *The Word in Black and White: Reading "Race" in American Literature, 1638-1867* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). "During the mid-seventeenth century, representations of both African and Native Americans began a shift from theories of cultural and climate-imposed physiological difference, grounded in assumptions of original commonality, to speculations about profound and ineradicable racial difference that derived not from climate, but from the

moral condition of Indians and Africans, thereby creating a focus on fundamental difference in identities, histories, and futures" (7).

Notes to Chapter Three

1. See Dana Nelson, *The Word in Black and White: Reading "Race" in American Literature, 1638-1867* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 29-37. Nelson argues that the frontier was seen as a *racial* border in the colonial texts of William Byrd and Cotton Mather.

2. David C. Miller, *Dark Eden: The Swamp in Nineteenth-Century American Culture*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

3. John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 5.

4. Ibid., 5.

5. Dell Upton, "White and Black Landscapes in Eighteenth-Century Virginia," in *Material Life in America: 1600-1860*, ed. Robert Blair St. George (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988), 361.

6. Ibid., 363.

7. Ibid., 365.

8. Vlach, 231.

9. Ibid., xi.

10. Upton, 366.

11. Charles Joyner, *Shared Traditions: Southern History and Folk Culture*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 48. Joyner continues: "They received greater attention from the whites due to their greater contact, but that attention was not necessarily a positive influence on their situation. It is true that slaves in the Big House had the advantage of obtaining better food, clothing, and furniture, but their working hours were irregular and they were always under the scrutiny of the whites."

12. Mark P. Leone and Gladys-Marie Frye, "Conjuring in the Big House Kitchen: An Interpretation of African American Belief Systems Based on the Uses of Archeology and Folklore Sources," *Journal of American Folklore* 112.445 (1999): 381.

13. Vlach, 12.

14. Ibid., 13.

15. William Byrd, *Histories of the Dividing Line Betwixt Virginia and North Carolina*, ed. William K. Boyd (Raleigh: North Carolina Historical Commission, 1929), 56.

16. Samuel Warner, "Authentic and Impartial Narrative of the Tragical Scene," *The Southampton Slave Revolt of 1831*, ed. Henry Irving Tragle (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1971), 297-97.

17. Herbert Aptheker, "Maroons Within the Present Limits of the United States," *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas*, 3d ed, ed. Richard Price (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 152. The degree of

organized maroon society in the Great Dismal is open to dispute. See Bland Simpson, *The Great Dismal: A Carolinian's Swamp Memoir*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990). "How many Osmans there must have been, how many women and children living in the horror of desperation in clawed-out camps, in lightning-burnt patches. Surely a few of them managed a little Swamp society, like those at the rogues' harbor of Culpeper Island, but any notion of reconstructed African villages springing up whole and happy in the Great Dismal before the War--the dreamy vision of a recent scholar--seems fantasy run away" (76).

18. Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, (New York: International Publishers, 1993), 30. Eugene D. Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 76.

19. Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, "The Formation of Afro-Creole Culture," *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization*, eds. Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 78. Hall continues: "The ecology of the land made it possible for slaves to live on their own while maintaining close ties with those who remained with their masters. Plantations were measured in arpents along the Mississippi River and larger bayous, their lands trailing back from these waterways an undeterminable distance into the impenetrable cypress swamp, the *ciprière*. The cypress industry grew in economic importance under Spanish rule. To develop the Louisiana economy, Spain required that sugar from the Spanish Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico ports be carried in boxes made of Louisiana cypress. Slaves toiled in the *ciprière*, cutting and hauling the logs almost entirely on their own. Few whites were eager to follow them into the swamp. Each plantation had its trackless *ciprière*, where slaves from various estates met, worked together, learned how to survive on their own, and eventually escaped in large numbers."

20. Miller, 71.

21. Genovese, *Roll*, 650.

22. Ibid., 653.

23. Linda Brent [a.k.a. Harriet Jacobs], *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, (New York: Harcourt, 1973), 116.

24. Joyner and Hall comment on the relatively small number of women becoming maroons. Joyner writes: "Slave women were less likely than men to run away, not because they loved freedom less, but because their mobility--crucial to a successful escape--was limited by their responsibility for the care of their children. Fugitive slaves typically were between fifteen and thirty-five years of age. Most slave women in this age group were either pregnant, nursing an infant, or had a small child to car for. When slave women did resort to flight, it was more often in response to immediate personal grievances than to an effort to emancipate themselves" (86). Hall writes: "Although to some extent these maroon settlements in Louisiana were similar to others throughout the Americas, Louisiana maroons were different in several respects. there was a high proportion of women as well as some children among the runaways. . . . They were the refuge of families rather than single men" (79).

25. Qtd. in John W. Blassingame, ed, *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1977), 340.

26. Recorded in Norman R. Yetman, *Life Under the "Peculiar Institution": Selections from the Slave Narrative Collection* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1970), 40.

27. Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990), 113.

28. Qtd. in Yetman, 128.

29. Qtd. in George Rawick, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1972), AL VI[1]123-24.

30. Qtd. in Blassingame, *Testimony*, 395.

31. Genovese, *Roll*, 652.

32. Qtd. in Blassingame, *Testimony*, 395.

33. Johann David Schoepf, *Travels of Confederation: 1783-1784*, trans. Alfred J. Morrison (Philadelphia: William J. Campbell, 1911), 99-100.

34. Aptheker, "Maroons," 163.

35. Phillips, 509-10.

36. Qtd. in Aptheker, "Maroons," 156.

37. Warner, 296.

38. Ibid., 297.

39. R. H. Taylor, "Slave Conspiracies in North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 5.1 (1928): 25.

40. Aptheker, "Maroons," 161.

41. Ibid., 154.

42. On rebels' use of military titles, see James Sidbury, *Ploughshares into Swords: Race, Rebellion, and Identity in Gabriel's Virginia, 1730-1810* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997). "Many travelers in eighteenth-century Virginia commented on Whites' obsession with military titles. The [Gabriel] conspirators shared it, and a persistent motif running through the depositions is the request for titles of authority. The trial records are peppered with testimony that a recruit had "wanted the appointment of Captain," or that, "being a Captain," a conspirator planned to go recruiting. Gabriel sometimes used the promise of rank to motivate followers" (70).

43. George Blow to Richard Blow, 31 October 1816, Blow Family Papers, Swem Library Archives, College of William and Mary.

44. Qtd. in Yetman, 128.

45. Qtd. in Robert G. McLean, ed, "A Yankee Tutor in the Old South," *North Carolina Historical Review* 47.1 (1970): 54-80. 55.

46. Taylor, 24.

47. Aptheker, "Maroons," 163.

48. Ibid., 160-61.

49. Qtd. in McLean, 57.

50. Olmstead, 178.

51. This man's testimony was published in James Redpath, *The Roving Editor; or, Talks with Slaves in the Southern States* (New York: A. B. Burdick, Publisher, 1859).

52. Ibid., 291.

53. Ibid., 292.

54. Ibid., 294.

55. Ibid., 294.

56. Qtd. in Charles L. Purdue, Jr., Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Phillips, eds, *Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 125.

57. Qtd. in Tragle, 298.

58. Qtd. in Perdue, 209-10.

59. Qtd. in Rawick, TX IV [1], 97-98.

60. Ibid., 261.

61. Qtd. in Blassingame, *Testimony*, 537-38.

62. Qtd. in Perdue, 67.

63. Reported in Blassingame, *Testimony*, 395.

64. Qtd. in Perdue, 67. In his groundbreaking work on slavery, Kenneth M. Stampp offers a different view of how the name "Nat" might have resonated in the slave quarter. Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1956). "That there was no slave conspiracy comparable to Denmark Vesey's and no rebellion comparable to Nat Turner's during the three decades before the Civil War, has been explained in many ways. The explanations, however, do not sufficiently emphasize the impact which the Turner rebellion had on the slaves themselves. The speed with which it was crushed and the massacre that followed were facts soon known, doubtless, to every slave in Virginia and, before long, to almost every slave in the South. Among the Negroes everywhere, news generally spread so far and so fast as to amaze whites. The Turner story was not likely to encourage slaves to make new attempts to win their freedom by fighting for it. They now realized that they would face a united white community, well armed and quite willing to annihilate as much of the black population as might seem necessary" (139-40).

65. John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). They continue, "There were few slaves who could not picture themselves in the same position as those who were striking out for freedom. At times this commiseration and empathy . . . translated into practical support. Plantation slaves harbored runaways from other plantations, protected, clothed, and fed them, and offered information about routes of travel. Some fugitives hid out for many weeks, even months, on neighboring plantations. Considering the possible reprisals for engaging in such activity, the support given in this manner was remarkable. The bonds forged were strong ones, born in crisis and hardened by the fear of retribution" (292-93).

66. Qtd. in McLean, 62.

67. According to R.H. Taylor, "[a]gainst incorrigible runaways proclamations of outlawry were sometimes published, summoning the slaves to surrender at once upon pain of being shot at sight" (23).

68. Concerning slave communication networks, Joyner writes, "At the center of the slave community was a communications network known as the 'grapevine.' The grapevine was a crucial element of slave resistance. 'We used to carry news from one plantation to the other I reckon, 'cause mammy would tell about things going on some other plantation and I know she never been there,' recalled Phyllis Petite, a former slave. How did slaves learn what was going on in the larger world? According to Benjamin Russell, who had been a slave in South Carolina, 'many plantations were strict about this, but the greater the precaution the alerter became the slaves, the wider they opened their ears and the more eager they became for outside information. Among the sources were girls that waited on tables, the ladies' maids, and the drivers; they would pick up everything they heard and pass it on to the other slaves.' Slaves also used 'field calls and other kinds of whoops and hollers, what had a meanin' to 'em'" (82).

69. See Hall, 79, on cooperation between slaves and maroons around New Orleans. Also see Aptheker, "Maroons": "Maroons were important factors in causing slave insubordination in Sampson, Bladen, Onslow, Jones, New Hanover, and Dublin Counties, North Carolina, from September through December 1830. Citizens complained that their 'slaves are become almost uncontrollable. They go and come and when and where they please, and if an attempt is made to correct them they immediately fly to the woods and there continue for months and years Committing grievous depredations on our Cattle, hogs and Sheep' (Johnson 1937: 515, 517; Taylor 1928, V: 31). One of these fugitive slaves, Moses who had been out for two years, was captured in November. From him one elicited the information that an uprising was imminent, that the conspirators "had arms & ammunition secreted, that they had runners or messengers to go between Wilmington, Newbern & Elizabeth City to 'carry word' & report to them, that there was a camp in Dover Swamp of 30 or 40--" (160).

70. Aptheker, "Maroons," 154.

71. Ibid., 160.

72. Qtd. in Perdue, 266.

73. Ibid., 245.

74. George Washington Cable, "Creole Slave Songs," in *The Negro and His Folklore in Nineteenth-Century Periodicals*, ed. Bruce Jackson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967), 242.

75. Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 22-25.

76. Herskovits, 233.

77. M. Charles Jedrej, "Cosmology and Symbolism on the Central Guinea Coast," *Anthropos* 81 (1986): 497-515.

78. Ruth Bass, "Mojo," in *Mother Wit from the Laughing Barrel: Readings in the Interpretation of Afro-American Folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 285.

79. Qtd. in Yetman, 37.

80. Redpath, 293.

81. Qtd. in Blassingame, *Testimony*, 461.

82. Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 25.

83. Qtd. in Rawick, AL VI [1], 263-65.

84. J. G. Clinkscales, *On the Old Plantation: Reminiscences of his Childhood* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 30-34.

85. Qtd. in Rawick, AL VI [1], 78.

86. Qtd. in Rawick, TX IV [2], 28.

87. Upton, 367.

Notes to Chapter Four

1. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., *The Edge of the Swamp: A Study in the Literature and Society of the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989). William Gilmore Simms, "The Edge of the Swamp" (1840), in *The Literary South*, ed. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1979), 105-07.

2. David C. Miller, *Dark Eden: The Swamp in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 71.

3. John Pendleton Kennedy, *Swallow Barn; or A Soujourn in the Old Dominion* (New York: G. P. Putnam & Co., 1856). Subsequent citations made within text.

4. Miller, 3.

5. Alan Henry Rose, "The Image of the Negro in the Pre-Civil War Novels of John Pendleton Kennedy and William Gilmore Simms," *Journal of American Studies* 4.2 (1971): 217, 218.

6. Ibid., 219.

7. Teresa A. Goddu, *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 8.

8. Lucinda H. MacKethan, "Plantation Fiction, 1865-1900" in *The History of Southern Literature*, eds. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., et al. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 210.

9. Jan Bakker, "Time and Timelessness in Images of the Old South," *Tennessee Studies in Literature* 26 (1981): 79.

10. Ibid., 79.

11. Miller, 3.

12. Lucinda H. MacKethan, introduction to *Swallow Barn; or, A Soujourn in the Old Dominion*, by John Pendleton Kennedy (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), xxiv.

13. Ibid., xiii.
14. Ibid., xxv.
15. Ibid., xxv.
16. Rose, 219.
17. Goddu, 10.
18. MacKethan, "Introduction," xxvi.
19. Goddu, 10.
20. Lucinda H. MacKethan, "Domesticity in Dixie: The Plantation Novel and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," in *Haunted Bodies: Gender and Southern Texts*, ed. Anne Goodwyn Jones and Susan V. Donaldson (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997), 228-29.
21. William R. Taylor, *Cavalier & Yankee: The Old South and American National Character* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). Taylor says that in the wake of the Turner rebellion the state legislature of "Virginia thus began 1832 with its ranks divided and many of its individuals deeply troubled over the issue of slavery" (301-02).
22. MacKethan, "Domesticity," 228.
23. Ibid., 228-29.
24. Ibid., 224. MacKethan argues, "Any novel that wanted to display plantation home life in this period could hardly structure a vision of its society without somehow incorporating the values of home valorized by domestic ideology. However, to enlist domesticity's attractions in the service of the plantation meant invoking images of fatherhood, motherhood, and childhood that might easily collide with some of the harsh realities of the chattel system. Moreover, to try to narrate the slave into the domestic space of the home was a direct challenge to legal and market definitions naming the slave's very existence."
25. Ibid., 231.
26. Ibid., 231.
27. MacKethan, "Introduction," xii.
28. See MacKethan, "Plantation," 210.

Notes to Section II Introduction

1. George Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro- American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 74.
2. Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 26-27.
3. See Rollin G. Osterweis, *Romanticism and Nationalism in the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971). According to Osterweis, one of the "subcults" of the chivalric ideal "revolved around the concept of Greek democracy. The central theme in this cult called for the establishment of a free state

based on a slave proletariat after the manner of Pericles' Athens. Here was an ingenious attempt to bring into harmony two obviously irreconcilable facts: the system of Negro slavery and the rising spirit of democracy" (94).

4. John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 291.

5. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., *The Edge of the Swamp: A Study in the Literature and Society of the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989),14-16. Drew Gilpin Faust, *Southern Stories: Slaveholders in Peace and War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992), 72-74.

6. Faust, 24.

7. George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All! or, Slaves Without Masters*, in *Antebellum: Three Classic Works on Slavery in the Old South* ed. Harvey Wish (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1960), 113.

8. Ibid., 113-14.

9. Ibid., 122.

10. Harvey Wish, introduction to *Antebellum: Three Classic Works on Slavery in the Old South*, 12.

11. Qtd. in Ulrich B. Phillips, *Plantation and Frontier Documents: 1649-1863*, Vol. II (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1909), 117.

12. Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), ix.

13. Ibid., 21.

14. Jan Bakker, *Pastoral in Antebellum Southern Romance* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 53-54.

15. William R. Taylor, *Cavalier & Yankee: The Old South and American National Character* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 155-56.

16. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., *The Edge of the Swamp: A Study in the Literature and Society of the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 47.

17. Lucinda Hardwick MacKethan, *The Dream of Arcady* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 10.

18. Ibid., 11.

19. Faust, 21.

20. Franklin and Schweninger, 291.

Notes to Chapter Five

1. Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Random House, 1976), 612.

2. Caroline Gilman, *Recollections of a Southern Matron* (New York: G. P. Putnam and Co., 1852). Subsequent citations made within text.

3. Mechal Sobel, *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 11.

4. Jan Bakker, "Caroline Gilman and the Issue of Slavery in the Rose Magazines, 1832-1839," *Southern Studies* NS 2.3/4 (1991): 370-71.

5. Susan J. Tracy, *In the Master's Eye: Representations of Women, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Antebellum Southern Literature* (Amherst: University of Massachussetts Press, 1995), 44-45.

6. Elizabeth Moss, *Domestic Novelists of the Old South: Defenders of Southern Culture* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 70.

7. Lucinda MacKethan, "Domesticity in Dixie: The Plantation Novel and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," in *Haunted Bodies: Gender and Southern Texts*, eds. Anne Goodwyn Jones and Susan V. Donaldson (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997), 223-42.

8. Ibid., 234.

9. Ibid., 223.

10. Thomas F. Gossett, *"Uncle Tom's Cabin" and American Culture* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1985), 223.

11. William Gilmore Simms, "Review of *Aunt Phillis's Cabin*," *Southern Quarterly Review* 23 (April 1853): 523.

12. Louisa S. McCord, "Review of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," *Southern Quarterly Review* 23 (January 1853): 81+.

13. Nina Baym, *Novels, Readers, and Reviewers: Responses to Fiction in Antebellum America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 220.

14. Ibid., 222.

15. Nehemiah Adams, *South-Side View of Slavery; or, Three Months at the South, in 1854* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 158.

16. Ibid., 159.

17. Ibid., 161.

18. Ibid., 169.

19. Gossett, 229.

20. David Brown, *The Planter; or, Thirteen Years in the South* (Philadelphia: H. Hooker, 1853), 79-80.

21. Mary H. Eastman, *Aunt Phillis's Cabin; or, Southern Life As It Is* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: The Gregg Press, 1968). Subsequent citations made within text.

22. Beverly Peterson, "*Aunt Phillis's Cabin*: One Reply to Uncle Tom," *Southern Quarterly: A Journal of the Arts in the South* 33.1 (1994): 99.

23. William Gilmore Simms, *Woodcraft* (Atlanta: Martin & Hoyt Co., 1880). Subsequent citations made within text.

24. Gossett, 226. See also MacKethan, "Domesticity," 234-35.

25. MacKethan, "Domesticity," 235.

26. It should be noted that woodcraft in this novel is largely a skill based on social class among white men, as demonstrated in Chapter 14 in which Lady Eveleigh's son, Arthur, and overseer, Fordham, find themselves in swamp combat with the men who are trying to steal the slaves. Fordham reproaches Arthur for making noise while

loading his gun: "'Ah! Mister Arthur,' whispered the woodman, reproachfully, 'that will never do. You've got a mighty deal to l'arn. That click kin be heard jest as far as the whistle of that ere bird. One talks to the other so as he kin *onder*stand. In these swamp woods, so still as they are now, I kin hear the click of a rifle fify yards, and ef I'm not mightily mistaken, these scamps can hear it too'" (84).

27. Robert Hunt, "A Domesticated Slavery: Political Economy in Caroline Hentz's Fiction," *Southern Quarterly: A Journal of the Arts in the South*. 34.4 (1996): 26.

28. Caroline Lee Hentz, *The Planter's Northern Bride* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970). Subsequent citations made within text.

29. Carme Manuel Cuenca, "An Angel in the Plantation: The Economics of Slavery and the Politics of Literary Domesticity in Caroline Lee Hentz's *The Planter's Northern Bride*," *Mississippi Quarterly* 51.1 (1997-98): 87-104. 91.

30. Ibid., 97.

31. Ibid., 102.

32. Moss, 117.

33. Peterson, 105-06.

34. Baym, 220.

35. MacKethan, "Domesticity," 237.

36. For more on blacksmith's as rebel figures see James Sidbury, *Ploughshares into Swords: Race, Rebellion, and Identity in Gabriel's Virginia, 1730-1810* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997). "Their status, along with blacksmiths' very practical ability to make and repair weapons, helps to explain their prominence within the [Gabriel] conspiracy. . . . Just as literacy afforded those who enjoyed it both practical advantages, like the ability to forge passes, and cultural advantages, like access to God's word, blacksmiths' ability to shape metal afforded dual advantages. Splitting scythes to make weapons provided arms for rebels, but it also entailed the transformation of powerful symbols of subordination into weapons of liberation" (83-84). Sidbury continues to discuss blacksmiths in relation to African cosmology (84-85).

Notes to Chapter Six

1. John Blassingame, "Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves: Approaches and Problems," in *The Slave's Narrative*, eds. Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 83.

2. Raymond Hedin, "Strategies of Form in the American Slave Narrative," in *The Art of the Slave Narrative: Original Essays in Criticism and Theory*, ed. John Sekora and Darwin T. Turner (Macomb: Western Illinois University Foundation, 1982), 26.

3. Frances Foster, *Witnessing Slavery: The Development of Antebellum Slave Narratives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 21.

4. Ibid., 53-54.

5. Ibid., 70.

6. Ibid., 87.

7. Ibid., 85.

8. William Craft, *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom, or, The Escape of William and Ellen Craft from Slavery*, in *Great Slave Narratives*, ed. Arna Bontemps (Boston: Beacon, 1969), 286.

9. William Grimes, *Life of William Grimes, the Runaway Slave, Brought Down to the Present Time*, in *Five Black Lives*, ed. Arna Bontemps (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1971), 59-128.

10. Keith Beyerman, "We Wear the Mask: Deceit as Theme and Style in Slave Narratives," in *The Art of Slave Narrative*, 70-82.

11. Lucinda H. MacKethan, "Metaphors of Mastery in Slave Narratives," in *The Art of Slave Narrative*, 56.

12. James W. C. Pennington, *The Fugitive Blacksmith; or, Events in the History of James W. C. Pennington*, in *Great Slave Narratives*, 193-267.

13. William Green, *Narrative of Events in the Life of William Green, (Formerly a Slave) Written by Himself* in *Afro-American History Series: Collection 8: Slave Narratives* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1969), 17.

14. Austin Steward, *Twenty-Two Years a Slave and Forty Years a Freeman*, in *Four Fugitive Slave Narratives*, eds. Robin W. Winks, *et al*. (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1969), 125.

15. Ibid., 125-26.

16. John Brown, *Slave Life in Georgia: A Narrative of the Life, Sufferings, and Escape of John Brown, A Fugitive Slave*, ed. F. N. Boney (Savannah, Ga.: Beehive Press, 1991), 61-62.

17. Ibid., 116.

18. Ibid., 116.

19. Moses Roper, *Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper, from American Slavery* (Berwick-upon-Tweed: Published for the Author and Printed at the Warder Office, 1846), 36.

20. John Thompson, *The Life of John Thompson, a Fugitive Slave containing His History of 25 Years in Bondage, and His Providential Escape* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1968), 28.

21. Ibid., 28.

22. Ibid., 54.

23. Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, in *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, ed. Gilbert Osofsky (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 359.

24. Ibid., 361.

25. Henry Bibb, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, An American Slave, Written by Himself*, in *Puttin' on Ole Massa*, 124, 126.

26. Ibid., 127.

27. David Miller, *Dark Eden: The Swamp in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 30.

28. Edgar Allan Poe, "Ulalume - A Ballad," in *Great Short Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. G. R. Thompson (New York: Perennial, 1970), 78-81.

29. Miller, 42.

30. Ibid., 42-43.

31. William Gilmore Simms, "The Edge of the Swamp," in *The Literary South*, ed. Louis D. Rubin, Jr. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1979), 105-7.

32. Miller, 80.

33. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The Slave in the Dismal Swamp," in *The Poetical Works of Longfellow* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975), 21-22.

34. Northup, 363.

35. Northup, 363.

36. Sam Worley, "Solomon Northup and the Sly Philosophy of the Slave Pen," *Callaloo* 20.1 (1997): 244.

37. Ibid., 257.

38. Benjamin Drew, *The Refugee: A North-Side View of Slavery* in *Four Fugitive Slave Narratives*.

39. Ibid., 16.

40. Ibid., 144.

41. Ibid., 130-31.

42. Hedin, 25.

43. Foster, 75.

44. Ibid., 111-12.

45. Richard Hildreth, *Archy Moore, The White Slave; or, Memoirs of a Fugitive* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1971).

46. William Wells Brown, *Clotel; or The President's Daughter*, in *Three Classic African-American Novels*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: Random House, 1990), 3-223.

47. Martin R. Delany, *Blake; or The Huts of America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).

48. Denmark Vesey, who led an attempted insurrection in South Carolina in 1822, also considered important a conjurer's contribution. See Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: International Publishers, 1993), 269. Aptheker quotes from the conspirator's trial report: "Gullah [slave of P. Pritchard] was regarded as a Sorcerer, and as such feared by the natives of Africa, who believe in witchcraft. He was not only considered invulnerable, but that he could make others so by his charms; and that he could and certainly would provide all his followers with arms. He was artful, cruel, bloody; his disposition in short was diabolical. His influence amongst the Africans was inconceivable."

49. Katherine Fishburn, *The Problem of Embodiment in Early African American Narrative* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 76.

50. Ibid., 16.

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2. Nehemiah Adams, *South-Side View of Slavery; or, Three Months at the South in 1854* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 158-69.

3. Richard Yarborough, "Strategies of Black Characterization in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Early Afro-American Novel," in *Literary Influences and African-American Writers*, ed. Tracy Mishkin (New York: Garland, 1996), 27.

4. Ibid., 31.

5. Robert S. Levine, *Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, and the Politics of Representative Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 6.

6. Robin W. Winks, "The Making of a Fugitive Slave Narrative: Josiah Henson and Uncle Tom--A Case History" in *The Slave's Narrative*, ed. Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 122-25.

7. Ishmael Reed, *Flight to Canada* (New York: Atheneum, 1989), 13, 11.

8. Yarborough, 50.

9. Qtd. in Joan D. Hedrick, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 231.

10. Eric J. Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993), 36-56.

11. Robert S. Levine, "The African-American Presence in Stowe's *Dred*," in *Criticism and the Color Line: Desegregating American Literary Studies*, ed. Henry B. Wonham. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 174.

12. Levine, *Martin Delany*, 165.

13. Paul Gilmore, "De Genewine Artekil': William Wells Brown, Blackface Minstrelsy, and Abolitionism," *American Literature* 69.4 (December 1997): 765-66.

14. William Wells Brown, *Clotel; or The President's Daughter*, in *Three Classic African-American Novels*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: Random House, 1990), 191.

15. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963), 22.

16. Christopher Mulvey, "The Fugitive Self and the New World of the North: William Wells Brown's Discovery of America," in *The Black Columbiad: Defining Moments in African American Literature and Culture*, eds. Werner Sollors and Maria Diedrich (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 107.

17. M. Giulia Fabi, "The 'Unguarded Expressions of the Feelings of the Negroes': Gender, Slave Resistance, and William Wells Brown's Revisions of *Clotel*," *African American Review* 27:4 (1993): 641.

18. Levine, *Martin Delany*, 146.

19. William C. Nell, *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution* (Boston: Robert F. Wallcut, 1855), 223-26.

20. Ibid., 229.

21. Hedrick, 258.

22. Ibid., 251.

23. Levine, *Martin Delany*, 160.

24. Caroline Lee Hentz, *The Planter's Northern Bride* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), 154-55.

25. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), 94.

26. Ibid., 95.

27. Ibid., 95.

28. David C. Miller, *Dark Eden: The Swamp in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 95.

29. Ibid., 3.

30. Ibid., 96.

31. Richard Boyd, "Models of Power in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Dred*," *Studies in American Fiction* 19.1 (1991): 17.

32. Richard Boyd, "Violence and Sacrificial Displacement in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Dred*," *Arizona Quarterly* 50.2 (1994): 57.

33. Ibid., 58-59.

34. Ibid., 65.

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36. Miller, 100.

37. Lisa Whitney, "In the Shadow of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: Stowe's Vision of Slavery from the Great Dismal Swamp," *New England Quarterly* 66.4 (1993): 568.

38. Hedrick, 259.

39. Boyd, "Violence," 69.

40. Levine, "Presence," 175.

41. Ibid., 181.

42. Ibid., 185.

43. Davis, 129.

44. Ibid., 139.

45. Gail K. Smith, "Reading with the Other: Hermeneutics and the Politics of Difference in Stowe's *Dred*," *American Literature* 69.2 (1997): 300-01.

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47. Sundquist, 20.

48. Richard Wright, "The Man Who Lived Underground" in *Eight Men* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 19-84.

49. Floyd J. Miller, introduction, to *Blake, or The Huts of America*, by Martin R. Delany (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), xxi.

50. Teresa Goddu, *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 134.

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52. Ibid., 24.

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2. Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 336.

3. See Nina Silber, "Intemperate Men, Spiteful Women, and Jefferson Davis," in *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*, ed. Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 283-305.

4. Janet Gabler-Hover, "The North-South Reconciliation Theme and the 'Shadow of the Negro' in *Century Illustrated Magazine*," in *Periodical Literature in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Kenneth M. Price and Susan Belasco Smith (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 239-56.

5. Williamson, 103.

6. Ibid., 5.

7. Ibid., 6.

8. Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause 1865-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980), 100-01.

9. Williamson, 6.

10. Ibid., 187.

11. Ibid., 185. Williamson says, "In the 1890s in fourteen Southern states, an average of 138 persons was lynched each year and roughly 75 percent of the victims were black. From 1900 to 1909, the number of lynchings declined by half, but Negroes were 90 percent of those lynched and the lower South remained its special scene. Between 1885 and1907 there were more persons lynched in the United States than were legally executed, and in the year 1892 twice as many."

12. Ibid., 337.

13. Ibid., 513-14.

14. Ibid., 517.

15. Hale, 86-87.

16. Ibid., 48.

17. Wilson, 101.

18. Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South 1865 to 1913* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 4-5.

19. Williamson, 517.

20. Ibid., 337.

21. Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 184.

22. Gabler-Hover, 248.

23. Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 6.

24. Gabler-Hover, 245.

25. Ibid., 244-45.

26. Charles Joyner, *Shared Traditions: Southern History and Folk Culture* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 15.

27. Teresa A. Goddu, *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 10.

28. Priscilla Wald, *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 5.

29. Bruce Jackson, *The Negro and His Folklore in Nineteenth-Century Periodicals* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967), xvii-xviii.

30. Elsie Clews Parsons, *Folk-Lore of the Sea Islands, South Carolina* (Chicago: Afro-American Press, 1969), xxi.

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1. See Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 30, 339-40.

2. Rosan Augusta Jordan and Frank de Caro, "'In This Folk-Lore Land': Race, Class, and Folklore Studies in Louisiana," *Journal of American Folklore* 109 (1996): 33.

3. For example, the primary goal of the American Folklore Society as stated in the first issue of the *Journal of American Folklore* (April-June 1888) was "the collection of the fast-vanishing remains of Folk-Lore in America" (3).

4. George Washington Cable, "The Dance in Place Congo," *Century Magazine* XXXI (1886): 517-32. Rpd. in Bruce Jackson, *The Negro and His Folklore in Nineteenth-Century Periodicals* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967), 189-210.

5. Mrs. William Preston Johnston, "Two Negro Tales," *Journal of American Folklore* 9.34 (1896): 194.

6. Elliot Oring, "The Arts, Artifacts, and Artifices of Identity," *Journal of American Folklore* 107.424 (1994): 214-15.

7. Ibid., 215-16.

8. Bernard Wolfe, "Uncle Remus and the Malevolent Rabbit," *Commentary* VII (1949): 31.

9. Ibid., 32.

10. Ibid., 35.

11. Ibid., 34.

12. Ibid., 35.

13. Darwin Turner, "Daddy Joel Harris and His Old-Time Darkies," *The Southern Literary Journal* 1.1 (1968): 22.

14. Ibid., 41.

15. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "Uncle Remus and the Ubiquitous Rabbit," *Southern Review* IV (1974): 799.

16. Ibid., 800, 802.

17. Ibid., 789.

18. Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought From Slavery To Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 100.

19. Eric Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 341.

20. Raymond Hedin, "Uncle Remus: Puttin' On Ole Massa's Son," *Southern Literary Journal* 15.1 (Fall 1982): 84.

21. Ibid., 88-89.

22. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 158.

23. Such as Daddy Jack's interruption of "Brother Rabbit's Love-Charm." *Nights with Uncle Remus* (1883) in Joel Chandler Harris, *The Complete Tales of Uncle Remus* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1955), 261-64.

24. Richard Dorson, *Folklore and Fakelore: Essays toward a Discipline of Folk Studies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 45.

25. Richard M. Dorson, *American Negro Folktales* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1967), 13-14.

26. Bruce Jackson, *The Negro and His Folklore in Nineteenth-Century Periodicals* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967), 144.

27. William Owens, "Folklore of the Southern Negroes," *Lippencott's Magazine* XX (1877): 748-55. Rpd. in Jackson, 145.

28. Dorson, *American Negro Folktales* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1967), 14.

29. Charles Joyner, *Shared Traditions: Southern History and Folk Culture* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 100.

30. Harris, *Complete Tales*, 128.

31. Ibid., 806-07.

32. Charles C. Jones, Jr., *Negro Myths from the Georgia Coast* (Columbia: The State Company, 1925), 163.

33. Ibid., 167.

34. Jones is one of those collectors whose hostility, according to Jackson, served well the purpose of accurate reporting. Jones's collection features fifty-seven tales told in a dialect unadorned for mass consumption (as was Uncle Remus's). However, Jones ends his collection with four pieces on slave folklife and beliefs offered in standard (white) English. In doing so, Jones lets an authoritative white voice get the last word--framing the heretofore unadorned tales with an assertion of white superiority.

35. Harris, *Complete Tales*, 642.

36. Ibid., 109. Also Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 172.

37. Harris, *Complete Tales*, 232.

38. Newbell Niles Puckett, *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro* (Montclair, N.J.: Patterson Smith, 1968), 134.

39. Owens, 147.

40. Cecilia Viets Jamison, "A Louisiana Legend Concerning Will o' the Wisp," *Journal of American Folklore* 18 (1905): 250. Summarized in Jordan and de Caro, 37.

41. Owens, 147.

42. Robert G. McLean, ed., "A Yankee Tutor in the Old South," *North Carolina Historical Review* 47 (1970): 49-66.

43. Puckett, 133.

44. Such associations are found in Delany's *Blake*, chapter 24; Hurston's *Mules and Men*, chapter V; and Charles Chesnutt, "The Conjurer's Revenge."

45. Harris, *Complete Tales*, 244.

46. Ibid., 214.

47. David C. Miller, *Dark Eden: The Swamp in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 92.

48. Levine, 84.

49. Eli Shepard, "Superstitions of the Negro," *Cosmopolitan* V (1888): 47-50. Rpd. in Jackson, 248.

50. Levine, 85.

51. Newbell Niles Puckett, "Race Pride & Folklore," in *Mother Wit from the Laughing Barrel: Readings in the Interpretation of Afro-American Folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 5.

52. Roger D. Abrahams, ed., *Afro-American Folktales: Stories from Black Traditions in the New World* (New York: Pantheon, 1985),10-12.

53. Zora Neale Hurston, "Characteristics of Negro Expressions," in *Zora Neale Hurston: Folklore, Memoirs, and Other Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1995), 836.

54. John W. Roberts, *From Trickster to Badman: The Black Folk Hero in Slavery and Freedom* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 44.

55. Ibid., 45.

56. Joyner, 16.

57. Ibid., 16.

58. Dorson, *American Negro Folktales*, 148-49.

59. Ibid., 146-47.

60. Ibid., 148-49.

61. Abrahams, *Afro-American Folktales*, 8.

62. Carl Lindahl, Maida Owens, and C. Renee Harvison, ed., *Swapping Stories: Folktales from Louisiana* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1997), 338-39.

63. Roberts, 60.

64. Abrahams, *Afro-American Folktales*, 6-7.

65. John W. Blassingame, ed., *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 643.

66. Abrahams, *Afro-American Folktales*, 9.

67. Ibid., 10.

68. Joyner, 101-02.

69. Abrahams, *Afro-American Folktales*, 9.

70. Florence E. Baer, *Sources and Analogues of the Uncle Remus Tales* (Helsinki: Academia Scientarium Fennica, 1980), 29. Also, T. F. Crane, "Plantation Folk-Lore," *Popular Science Monthly* XVIII (1881): 824-33. Rpd. in Jackson, 157-67. Crane includes a tar baby story in which the Jackal refuses to help the other animals build a dam and then muddies the water.

71. Abrahams, 23.

72. Roberts, 43-44.

73. Joyner, 101.

74. Joel Chandler Harris, "An Accidental Author," *Lippincott's Magazine*. XXXVII (1886): 417-420. Rpd. in Jackson, 243-46.

75. Ibid., 245.

76. Janet Gabler-Hover, "The North-South Reconciliation Theme and the 'Shadow of the Negro' in *Century Illustrated Magazine*," in *Periodical Literature in Nineteenth Century America*, ed. Kenneth M. Price and Susan Belasco Smith (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 241.

77. Qtd. in Gabler-Hover, 242.

78. Jackson, 211.

79. Gabler-Hover, 240.

80. Jackson, xxiii.

81. Dorson, *American Negro Folktales*, 13.

82. Norris, Thaddeus, "Negro Superstitions," *Lippincott's Magazine* VI (1870): 90-95. Rpd. in Jackson, 138.

83. Owens, 146.

84. Ibid., 145.

85. Jackson, xxii.

86. "Certain Beliefs and Superstitions of the Negro" (in "Contributors' Club"), *Atlantic Monthly* LXVIII (1891): 286-88. Rpd. in Jackson, 258.

87. Jackson, xxii.

88. Zora Neale Hurston, "What White Publishers Won't Print," in *Zora Neale Hurston: Folklore, Memoirs, and Other Writings*, 955.

89. Ibid., 951.

90. Ibid., 953.

91. Joyner, 35.

92. Eric L. Montenyohl, "Joel Chandler Harris and the Ethnologists: The Folk's View of Early American Folkloristics," *Southern Folklore* 47.3 (1990): 229.

93. Ibid., 228-30.

94. Regarding the collection of African American folklore, the American Folklore Society stated its goals in the first issue of the *Journal of American Folklore* (April-June 1888): "Such inquiries are becoming difficult, and in a few years will be impossible. Again, the great mass of beliefs and superstitions which exist among this people need attention, and present interesting and psychological problems, connected with the history of a race who, for good or ill, are henceforth an indissoluble part of the body politic in the United States" (5).

95. Jackson, 157.

96. Ibid., 275.

97. "Folk-Lore and Ethnology" (by the Editors), *Southern Workman* 24.8 (September 1895): 154-56. Reprinted in Jackson, 274-283. 277.

98. Ibid., 282.

99. Jackson, xvii-xviii, discusses the irony that collectors who were blatantly hostile to African Americans frequently proved to be the most faithful recorders. See also the 1933 collection: Elsie Clews Parsons, *Folk-Lore of the Sea Islands, South Carolina* (Chicago: Afro-American Press, 1969), xxi.

100. "Folk-Lore and Ethnology," 282.

101. Ibid., 283.

102. Ibid., 282-83.

103. Jackson, Appendices B and C: Articles on African American folklore in the *Southern Workman* 1893-1901, and the *Journal of American Folklore* 1888-1900.

104. "Folk-Lore and Ethnology," 277.

105. Ibid., 278.

106. See Joseph G. Tregle, Jr., "Creoles and Americans," in *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization*, ed. Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 131-85.

107. Jordan and de Caro, 40.

108. Ibid., 41.

109. Ibid., 42-43.

110. Ibid., 45.

111. Ibid., 45.

112. Norris, 142.

113. Susan Showers, "A Weddin' and a Buryin' in the Black Belt," *New England Magazine* XVIII (1898): 478-483. Rpd. in Jackson, 293.

114. "Word Shadow" (in "Contributors' Club"), *Atlantic Monthly* LXVII (1891): 143-44. Rpd. in Jackson, 254-55.

115. George Washington Cable, "Creole Slave Songs," *Century Magazine* XXXI (1886), 807-828. Rpd. in Jackson, 237.

116. W. H. Seymour, "A Voudou Story," *Times Picayune*, New Orleans, July 3, 1892. Qtd. in Puckett, 376.

117. Abrahams, 23.

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2. Harry Stillwell Edwards, "Two Runaways," in *Two Runaways and Other Stories* (New York: The Century Company, 1904), 1-32.

3. Thomas Nelson Page, *In Ole Virginia* (Nashville, Tenn.: J. S. Sanders & Co., 1991).

4. Jan Bakker, "Something Barely Breathed: The Twist in May Virginia Terhune's Autobiography of Marion Harland," Society for the Study of Southern Literature, 1998 Conference (Charleston, SC, 16 April 1998).

5. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "The Other Side of Slavery: Thomas Nelson Page's 'No Haid Pawn,'" *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 7.1 (1974): 99.

6. Joseph Boskin, *Sambo: The Rise and Demise of an American Jester* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 102.

7. William L. Andrews, *et al.*, ed., *The Literature of the American South* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1998). Louis D. Rubin, Jr., ed., *The Literary South* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1979).

8. Caroline Gebhard, "Reconstructing Southern Manhood: Race, Sentimentality, and Camp in the Plantation Myth," in *Haunted Bodies: Gender and Southern Texts*, ed. Anne Goodwyn Jones and Susan V. Donaldson (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997), 141.

9. See also Lucinda MacKethan, *The Dream of Arcady* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980). In particular, MacKethan notes that "Page's Negroes. . . . gave testimony to an idyllic relationship between themselves and their masters, and by speaking to the consciences of a white society, they reestablished for northerners and southerners alike a sense that the old system supported a feeling of solidarity between the races that was sadly lacking in the present" (53-54).

10. Teresa A. Goddu, *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 7.

11. Alan Dundes, "On the Psychology of Legend," in *American Folk Legend: A Symposium*, ed. Wayland D. Hand. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971. 25.

12. Dundes, 25.

13. Such a merging of the initiation rite and the gothic setting is not unusual. See Carl Lindahl, Maida Owens, and C. Renee Harvison, eds., *Swapping Stories: Folktales from Louisiana* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1997), 19. "[L]egends are not merely stories or debates; they are often rituals as well. Stories of ghosts that haunt forbidden settings give rise to ritual visits in which teenagers search for these monstrous figures. . . . Folklorist Alan Dundes (1971) once attempted to explain such strange stories simply as warnings. But if they are warnings, they are the most singularly ineffective warnings imaginable, becasue these stories are told again and again by people visiting the haunted sites. . . . Obviously, these stories are more than warnings; they also serve as challenges to young people, testing if they are

grown-up enough to make such nighttime visits. During the ritual visits, storytellers act out the plot of the legend, and when they return to the company of friends, they tell the story of their experiences; these account become a part of the legend process."

14. Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 129.

15. Susan V. Donaldson sees a tripling of possibilities: "the narrator comes face to face with what may be the headless ghost of the owner *or* one of his murdered slaves *or* an escaped slave masquerading as a ghost to protect a station on the Underground Railroad." Susan V. Donaldson, "Gender, Race, and Allen Tate's Profession of Letters in the South" in *Haunted Bodies: Gender and Southern Texts*, ed. Anne Goodwyn Jones and Susan V. Donaldson (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997), 500.

16. Berndt Ostendorf, *Black Literature in White America* (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Noble Books, 1982), 81. "Minstrelsy is proof that negrophilia and negrophobia are not at all contradictory."

17. Rubin, 99.

18. Donaldson, 500.

19. Goddu, 10.

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1. George Washington Cable, *The Grandissimes: A Story of Creole Life* (New York: Penguin, 1988).

2. Lewis P. Simpson, *The Dispossessed Garden: Pastoral and History in Southern Literature* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1975), 39.

3. See Cable's June 28, 1882 speech, "Literature in the Southern States" in *The Negro Question: A Selection of Writings on Civil Rights in the South*, ed. Arlin Turner (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1958).

4. Joseph G. Tregle, Jr., "Creoles and Americans," in *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization*, ed. Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 133-34. Tregle continues: "To state simply that a person was "a creole" meant that he ws native to the state, whether white or black, free or slave, Gallic or Yankee. Reference to "the creoles" implied equation with the *ancienne population*, the indigenous Latin inhabitants" (141).

5. Joseph Logsdon and Caryn Cossé Bell, "The Americanization of Black New Orleans 1850-1900," in *Creole New Orleans*, 204-5.

6. Carl Lindahl, Maida Owens, and C. Renee Harvison, eds., *Swapping Stories: Folktales from Louisiana* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1997), xxxii. Also, according to Tregle, "Nothing in any of this involved the slightest need to exclude black or colored natives from membership in the creole community, where they remained, as countless references in newspapers, correspondence, and judicial records certify, for the whole antebellum period. . . . Within such a society, legal definition as white gave practically impenetrable protection from black or colored

challenge. As a consequence, antebellum New Orleanians perceived no danger from common acceptance of blacks and whites under the creole rubric. . . . One simply does not find, therefore, any antebellum insistence in Louisiana on pure whiteness as a condition for acceptance as a creole, there being not the slightest possibility that local birth might be thought to confer political or social status upon the black or colored man" (139).

7. Frowenfeld might also be seen to stand in for Cable himself who, though a native of New Orleans, was hated by the creoles. Tregle explains: "The tumult set off by Cable's writings [especially *Old Creole Days* (1879) and *The Grandissimes* (1880)] erupted with such violence because they appeared at the very moment of radical transformation in long-established ethnic and racial conventions within the New Orleans community, challenging emerging new concepts of identity and producing confusion in altered relationships" (132).

8. Tregle, 173.

9. Ibid., 181.

10. Bras-Coupé's punishment resonates especially with the lynch law that developed in the decades following Cable's publication of *The Grandissimes*. See Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984). "In the 1890s in fourteen Southern states, an average of 138 persons was lynched each year and roughly 75 percent of the victims were black. From 1900 to 1909, the number of lynchings declined by half, but Negroes were 90 percent of those lynched and the lower South remained its special scene. Between 1885 and 1907 there were more persons lynched in the United States than were legally executed, and in the year 1892 twice as many" (185).

11. Alfred Bendixen, "Cable's *The Grandissimes*: A Literary Pioneer Confronts the Southern Tradition," *Southern Quarterly* 18.4 (1980): 32.

12. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "The Division of the Heart: Cable's *The Grandissimes*," in *Critical Essays on George Washington Cable*, ed. Arlin Turner (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1980),195-208. Robert O. Stephens, "Cable's Bras-Coupé and Merimée's Tamango: The Case of the Missing Arm," *The Mississippi Quarterly*. 35.4 (1982): 387-405.

13. Cable, "Literature," 42-43.

14. Ibid., 45-46.

15. Qtd. in Barbara Ladd, *Nationalism and the Color Line in George W. Cable, Mark Twain, and William Faulkner* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 56-7.

16. Ibid., 55.

17. Barbara Ladd, "'An Atmosphere of Hints and Allusions': Bras-Coupé and the Context of Black Insurrection in *The Grandissimes*," *Southern Quarterly*. 29.3 (1991) 66.

18. Stephens, 394-95.

19. Stephens, 394.

20. Ladd, *Nationalism*, 52.

21. Quoted in Cable, *The Grandissimes*, 190.

22. Ladd, "Atmospheric," 56.

23. Charles Swann, "*The Grandissimes*: A Story-Shaped World," *Literature and History*. 13.2 (Autumn 1987) 274.

24. See Linda Dégh, "Folk Narrative" in *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*, ed. Richard M. Dorson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 53-83. Dégh notes that "the legend has only content and no fixed form at all and depends on the nature of the message it communicates. The reason for telling a legend is basically not to entertain but to educate people, to inform them about an important fact, to arm them against danger within their own cultural environment" (73). Dégh continues, "This educational essence is dramatized by an example that is the narrative content of the legend. The story does not have to be recited in full from the beginning to the end, for its components are traditionally known in the given community. Hence the fragmentary and unfinished form of the legend narrative. It seems to be a segment or an episode of a nonexistent, longer autobiographical narrative, of which only some facts remain stable" (74).

25. As Teresa Goddu says, "while the gothic reveals what haunts the nation's narratives, it can also work to coalesce those narratives. Like the abject, the gothic serves as the ghost that both helps to run the machine of national identity and disrupts it. The gothic can strengthen as well as critique an idealized national identity" (10).

26. This idea, which structures this chapter, comes from the author's independent study with Susan V. Donaldson at the College of William and Mary, Summer and Fall 1996.

27. See Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

28. Swann, 273.

Notes to Conclusion

1. As seen in Ann Jeffereson, "Bodymatters: Self and Other in Bakhtin, Sartre, and Barthes," in *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, ed. Ken Hirschkop and David Shepherd (New York: Manchester University Press, 1989), 152-177.

2. John W. Roberts, *From Trickster to Badman: The Black Folk Hero in Slavery and Freedom* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 135.

3. Herbert Aptheker, "Maroons Within the Present Limits of the United States," in *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas*, 3rd ed, ed. Richard Price (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 151-67. Aptheker relates a news item from the *New York Evening Post*, October 24, 1823: "In October of this year runaway Negroes near Pineville, South Carolina, were attacked. Several were captured, and at least two, a woman and a child, were killed. One of the maroons was decapitated, and his head stuck on a pole and publicly exposed as 'a warning to vicious slaves'" (159).

4. Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: International Publishers, 1993), 341.

5. Concerning nineteenth-century conceptions of the body as they relate to slavery, see Katherine Fishburn, *The Problem of Embodiment in Early African American Narrative* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1997). Fishburn argues: "[B]ecause the slaves were to a larger extent than white Americans identified with their bodies (however debased they were), because slaves on a daily basis had to use their bodies (however unwillingly) in grueling physical labor for the enrichment of others, and because slaves retained some knowledge (however attenuated or modified) of what has been called a West African world view, they (or at any rate, many of those who survived to write their narratives) did not completely forget the bodily knowledge of our relatedness-to-*being*. It was this knowledge—sometimes conscious, sometimes unconscious—that helped them resist the otherwise dehumanizing conditions of enslavement and recognize the philosophical truth. . . . that black slave and white master were dependent upon one another . . . intertwined—part of one another, flesh of the same flesh, the very insight that the concepts of race and racism were invented to conceal" (2-3).

6. It may also be argued that, even when there is no actual scene of punishment, no "bloody gate" as in Douglass's narrative, that the violence against the body of the maroon is merely *displaced*, not absent. For instance, Kennedy's Abe is neither captured nor pilloried, yet he is last pictured in a scene of fragmentation, his boat being ripped apart by the storm. Stowe's Dred is likewise spared the mutilation to which Squire is subjected, and the angry mob, instead, burns the slaves' school-house. Finally, Thomas Nelson Page cannot permit the Congo desperado to remain lurking in the swamps any more than his narrator can bring himself to face the possibility of slave rebellion. In this case, it is the No Haid manor house that burns and crumbles in the place of the runaway slave. For Page, however, getting rid of that manor house seems to have the same cleansing effect that a lynching would.

7. Herman Melville, "Benito Cereno" (New York: Dover, 1990), 104.

8. Ibid., 103.

9. Dana D. Nelson, *The Word in Black and White: Reading "Race" in American Literature, 1638-1867* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 123.

10. Ibid., 125.

11. Goddu, 134, 135.

12. Ibid., 135.

13. Ibid., 147.

14. Ibid., 147.

15. Ibid., 139.

16. Trudier Harris, *Exorcising Blackness: Historical and Literary Lynching and Burning Rituals* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 69.

17. William Wells Brown, *Clotel; or The President's Daughter*, in *Three Classic African-American Novels*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: Random House, 1990), 66.

18. For example, Aptheker (in "Maroons") quotes South Carolina Governor David R. Williams in 1816; the maroons had been committing depredations for some time, but the governor did not take action "until at length their robberies became too serious to be suffered with impunity" (156). Sometimes authorities took action merely because maroons had been discovered by accident, as occured in South Carolina in 1929 when "'a large gang of runaway negroes' . . . was accidentally discovered by a party of deer hunters" (160). Perhaps most important, Aptheker notes, "Maroons were important factors in causing slave insubordination" (160).

19. Priscilla Wald, *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995.), 10.

20. Alan Dundes, "On the Psychology of Legend," in *American Folk Legend: A Symposium*, ed. Wayland D. Hand (Berkeley: University of California Press), 113.

21. Wald, 10.

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VITA

William Tynes Cowan

Born in Birmingham, Alabama, September 4, 1963. Graduated with a BA in
English from Birmingham-Southern College, May 1985. Taught English, History, and
Art at a private high school before entering the graduate program in Secondary
English Education at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Decided one MA was
not enough. Entered the graduate program in English at Northeastern University in
Boston in 1990. After completion of the MA in English, continued at Northeastern as
an instructor of English.

In August 1995, the author entered the doctoral program in American Studies
at the College of William and Mary where he also worked as an adjunct instructor for
the Department of English. After completing coursework and comprehensive exams,
and aided by a generous Dissertation Fellowship provided in part by Ms. Jennifer Luff,
the author moved back to Alabama where his wife worked to support him. With the
fellowship completed, the author secured a position as instructor of English at the
University of Alabama.

Shortly before this text had gestated fully, the author's wife gave birth to their
first child, Molly.