

2006

## Powerful Spirits: Social Drinking in Eighteenth-Century Virginia

Sarah Elizabeth King Pariseau  
*College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/etd>



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Pariseau, Sarah Elizabeth King, "Powerful Spirits: Social Drinking in Eighteenth-Century Virginia" (2006). *Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects*. Paper 1539626517.  
<https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-p9va-1877>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, & Master Projects at W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects by an authorized administrator of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@wm.edu](mailto:scholarworks@wm.edu).

POWERFUL SPIRITS

Social Drinking in Eighteenth-Century Virginia

---

A Thesis

Presented To

The Faculty of the Department of History  
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

---

by

Sarah Elizabeth King

2006

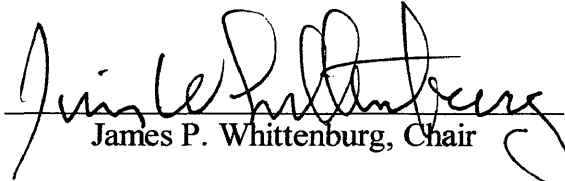
APPROVAL SHEET

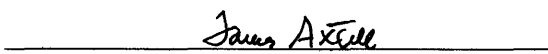
This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of


Master of Arts

  
Sarah Elizabeth King

Approved by the Committee, February 2006

  
James P. Whittenburg, Chair

  
James L. Axtell

  
Dale E. Hoak

To Mom and Dad for their constant love and support

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract.....	v
Introduction.....	2
Chapter I. "A Very Uncertain Estate:" Slave Drinking in Eighteenth-Century Virginia.....	7
Chapter II. "Without much mischief:" White Virginian Drinking.....	32
Conclusion.....	55
Bibliography.....	58
Vita.....	63

## ABSTRACT

The seventeenth century was a tumultuous one for Virginia. Due to the nature of early settlement, an elite class of planters quickly formed that controlled the majority of arable land and economic resources. As settlement continued, their interests increasingly lay at odds with those of impoverished yeoman farmers and slaves. This conflict eventually erupted into the destructive chaos of Bacon's Rebellion. Shocked by the armed collaboration of the lower classes, elite Virginians sought to neutralize the restive masses. This struggle for power soon manifested itself in eighteenth-century Virginian drinking culture.

Because Virginia consisted largely of widely scattered plantations, it had an acutely localistic and personalized society. Different social groups intermingled freely, and social distance was more often rhetorical than actual. Accordingly, power and status had to be communicated through face-to-face interactions. Culture became a conduit for the expression of social values. Since drinking was a paramount feature of Virginia life, gentlemen adopted drinking customs that reinforced their sense of proper social order. By the cultivation and propagation of this drinking etiquette, elite Virginians hoped to create a society that left their power unassailable.

This drinking culture entailed very different responsibilities for blacks and whites. Elite Virginians viewed blacks as child-like and without self-control; therefore, blacks were considered outside the bounds of drinking culture. Instead, black exposure to alcohol was to be both limited and thoroughly regulated by their masters. In contrast, elite Virginians expected more out of their fellow white men. Yeoman adherence to proper drinking etiquette made them an important buffer that separated elite Virginians from degrading cultural association with subjugated blacks.

By excluding slaves from participation in drinking etiquette while enlisting yeomen to reinforce these customs, elite gentlemen helped to create a more firmly racialized Virginia society. Instead of assuring their unquestioned dominance in a class-based society, through their drinking culture elite Virginians aided the creation of two Virginias—one black, one white.

## POWERFUL SPIRITS

## INTRODUCTION

Among eighteenth-century Virginia elites, community was valued as “the first Institution of our Nature.” A *Virginia Gazette* editorialist opined that without community ties, men were doomed to “have no Relish of Contentment or Satisfaction...and consequently are not capable of any Happiness in this Life.”<sup>1</sup> This neighborly impulse was not egalitarian. Rather, elite Virginians sought a precisely ordered society that would allay unrest and promote industry. Gentlemen were those who understood and manifested their elevated station in every act, formal or informal.<sup>2</sup> In such an environment, cultural interaction was a vehicle for expressing these social concerns. Drinking, as a paramount feature of the Virginian cultural landscape, helped elites to navigate the murky waters of their society. Through drinking etiquette and ritualized festivals of alcohol gifting, elite Virginians developed a drinking culture that created communal bonds even as it negotiated power relationships. Elite Virginians used drinking customs to tame the masses of their society, while those masses—both slave and white—tried to mold this dialogue to their own advantage.

The seventeenth century had been a period of social turmoil in Virginia, in part due to the nature of early settlement. The settlers who first came to Virginia were hardly rank-and-file Englishmen; rather, most of the families that later came to prominence were

---

<sup>1</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, 28 January-4 February 1736.

<sup>2</sup> Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 41.



descended from elite or mercantile families. Using their established capital, these transplanted elites exploited the head-right system to buy up the majority of desirable land and thus soon dominated both the early political and economic systems.

Compounding this problem, indentured servants were the primary source of labor for the fledgling colony, a situation that only served to exacerbate tensions between emerging white classes. Over time, men released from their indentures found their opportunities for social advancement increasingly limited. As elite planters consolidated their hold on the choice lands near waterways, aspiring planters were driven out into the frontier where they frequently clashed with the native Indian tribes they viewed as rivals for remaining lands. The yeoman drive to contain the Indian presence on the frontier pitted the small planters against their more comfortable, elite counterparts. This class-based conflict of interest gave rise to Bacon's Rebellion, the destructiveness of which convinced elites of the necessity of neutralizing the restive masses.<sup>3</sup>

In the aftermath of Bacon's Rebellion, racism and slavery helped create a bipartite Southern society which largely dissipated these interclass tensions. As time proceeded, Virginian planters found it increasingly beneficial to acquire slaves instead of indentured servants. The slave codes were also hardened, putting into place the infrastructure of the later slave system. By drawing these sharp lines in society, elites limited the number of disgruntled whites while ensuring the permanent slave status of the lowest class.<sup>4</sup>

This hardening of social demarcations took on cultural overtones due to the nature of Virginia settlement. Because Virginia consisted largely of widely scattered plantations, it developed an acutely localistic and personalized society. Different social

---

<sup>3</sup> Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), 215-34, 250-70.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 295-315.

groups intermingled freely, and social distance was more often rhetorical than actual. Accordingly, power and status had to be achieved in the context of face-to-face interactions. Rhys Isaac has argued that interactions, both formal and informal, memorialized personal identities and relationships through ritualized performance and symbolic role-playing.<sup>5</sup> Social status was both displayed and acknowledged by seemingly mundane, everyday actions.

These wider social struggles manifested themselves in Virginian drinking culture. T.H. Breen has argued that elite Virginians used competitive games as “a mechanism for expressing a loose but deeply felt bundle of ideas and assumptions about the nature of society.”<sup>6</sup> As with gaming, drinking culture was a flamboyant way for elites to express their wealth in both culture and material goods. This display of refined living was intended to directly contrast with the purportedly vulgar lifestyle of black slaves. Drinking culture helped elites maintain a sense of cultural superiority and mastery that was essential to their perceptions of themselves as social leaders.

This formalized drinking culture was considered exclusive to white society. Black Virginians were thought to be ensnared by their animalistic desires and entirely devoid of control in the face of alcoholic temptation. As such, they were incapable of partaking in any refined cultural activities.<sup>7</sup> Slaves were outside the bounds of drinking culture, and their exposure to alcohol was to be both limited and thoroughly regulated by their masters. Farther up the social ladder, white yeomen were held to higher

---

<sup>5</sup> Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 113.

<sup>6</sup> T.H. Breen, “Horses and Gentlemen: The Cultural Significance of Gambling among the Gentry of Virginia,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 34 (April 1977): 243.

<sup>7</sup> Michal J. Rozbicki, *The Complete Colonial Gentleman: Cultural Legitimacy in Plantation America* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 119.

expectations for behavior. The yeomanry acted as a buffer class that separated elite whites from degrading cultural association with subjugated blacks.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, yeomen were obligated to adhere to the etiquette of this drinking culture while maintaining a deferential distance from their elite betters.

Drinking culture, however, was an imperfect vehicle for social stability. While alcohol exchanges and drinking etiquette theoretically reinforced social boundaries, in reality they bestowed power upon the lower classes of Virginian life: slaves and yeomen. Harvest celebrations and rewards in the form of drink drew slaves further into the plantation world, but slave drinking behavior became a bargaining chip for slaves to use in their struggles with masters. By distinguishing self-mastery and drinking etiquette as inherent to white culture, “cultureless” slaves were held to lower expectations of behavior and responsibility, which they used to their advantage.

This conception of a white drinking culture also empowered lower class whites. By expecting yeomen to adhere to a drinking etiquette denied to blacks, elites tacitly offered the yeomanry a tie to the Virginian upper class. For the most part, yeomen readily agreed with these rules. By joining elites in a supposedly superior white culture, yeomen “hoped to join in their power, to dignify their own existence with a portion of the glory that radiated from the highest and best circles.”<sup>9</sup> In essence, yeomen could elevate their own status through their association with elite culture. In turn, elites were obliged to cultivate yeoman approval in order to lead society.

Virginia’s drinking customs echoed and reaffirmed the elite world view. By the exclusion of blacks from this drinking culture, elites demonstrated their fear of black

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>9</sup> Bushman, *Refinement of America*, 406.

slaves as an alarming, teeming mass that endangered the treasured order of their society. By their circumscribed inclusion of yeomen in their expectations of drinking behavior, elites revealed their conflicted view of yeomen as both rabble and fellow white men. Elites hoped to reflect their idealized image of an orderly society through their culture. As we shall see in the following two chapters, by their acceptance, modification, or outright defiance of these behavioral dictates, slaves and yeomen tried to reshape that image.

Chapter I demonstrates that while masters coaxed slaves into a paternalistic discourse through ritualistic alcohol distribution and interracial drinking, slaves resisted this interpretation of their drinking. Instead, slaves manipulated the dialogue to express discontent and exert control, further rebutting the notion of white supremacy while revealing white and black co-dependency. Chapter II shows that in their effort to codify a superior white culture, elites relied on yeoman compliance with drinking etiquette. Unexpectedly, by including other whites in their expectations of refined behavior, elites resolved their ambivalence towards yeomen by choosing to elevate them for their skin color rather than scorn them for their class. These chapters reveal the role of strong drink as one of the key elements that both created and maintained social boundaries, and yet promoted social cohesion in colonial Virginia.

## CHAPTER 1

### “A VERY UNCERTAIN ESTATE:” SLAVE DRINKING IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY VIRGINIA<sup>1</sup>

“I reprov'd George for being drunk yesterday,” recorded Virginian diarist and planter William Byrd II in July 1709.<sup>2</sup> This was not the slave’s first bout with the bottle nor his last. George was not an exception. Slave drinking was omnipresent in eighteenth-century Virginia. As in other pre-industrial societies, alcohol was used there as a medium of social exchange. Masters encouraged slave alcohol use in seasonal festivals and during interracial camaraderie in an effort to create a cohesive plantation community. They also reaffirmed unequal social relations through the liberal gift of alcohol to slaves, which simultaneously cultivated slave dependence and white ascendancy. It was only when masters lost supervisory control that slave drinking was deemed hazardous to society. By drinking, slaves demonstrated their disagreement with white rule and reemphasized white society’s dependence on them. At the same time, slaves used alcohol as an escape from their subjugation. Slave alcohol use, then, was a forum for two struggles. Through slave drinking, elites sought to institute a ritualized action that reinforced hegemonic white power. In contrast, slaves used alcohol in an effort to carve out a modicum of independence.

---

<sup>1</sup> Maryann Maury to John Fontaine, 20 July 1753, Fontaine-Maury Papers Part II, 1737-1937, Special Collections, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia.

<sup>2</sup> Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, eds., *The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1709-1712* (Richmond, Virginia: Dietz Press, 1941), 56. (5 July 1709)

Alcohol was integral to Virginia planter life from the beginning.<sup>3</sup> While in modern society drunkenness is considered deviant and is associated with destructive behavior, in pre-modern societies such as early Virginia, drunkenness had no negative connotations. In these societies, public houses served as epicenters of village life where all classes intermingled, creating communal feeling. In this way, drinking pervaded most aspects of daily life and was an accepted practice at important civic events such as elections, court days, and musters. W. J. Rorabaugh hypothesized that “drinking customs and habits were not random but reflective of a society’s fabric, tensions, and inner dynamics, and of the psychological sets of its people.”<sup>4</sup> It is pertinent, then, to examine the alcohol exchange involved in the most complex and dynamic relationship in Virginia society: the master-slave relationship.

In England, drinking was a cohesive agent in the community. To drink was to be part of the social fabric. In her study of pre-industrial English society, Marianna Adler asserted that “the shared practice of daily drinking was a primary symbolic vehicle for the generation and affirmation of social relations of community.”<sup>5</sup> Among artisans, for instance, communal bonding over group drinking was considered to be more important than actual productivity. Likewise, communal drinking was essential to farming. Rural drinking festivals solidified the relationship between the lord of the manor and his peasant workers. These festival days focused on social inferiors, who held exuberant dances and concocted pageants and parades. Usually they elected a commoner to be the

---

<sup>3</sup> Michal J. Rozbicki, *The Complete Colonial Gentleman: Cultural Legitimacy in Plantation America* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 85.

<sup>4</sup> W. J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), xii.

<sup>5</sup> Marianna Adler, “From Symbolic Exchange to Commodity Consumption,” in *Drinking: Behavior and Belief in Modern History*, ed. Susanna Barrows and Robin Room (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 381.

“lord of misrule,” to reign over the celebrations and poke fun at elites. The customary chaos and conviviality of such events sharply demarcated festival time from normal activities, establishing festivals as essentially separate from society. By doing so, participants “temporarily inverted the social hierarchy to reestablish its legitimacy again as the ‘natural’ manifestation of order that would follow on the heels of ritual chaos.”<sup>6</sup> Despite its outward appearance, drinking generated a community identity that maintained elite domination.

These drinking attitudes were readily transported to Virginia. There men consumed alcohol and participated in toasting and other rituals to stake their claims as members of society. If one did not participate in such drinking traditions, it was considered untoward. William Byrd petulantly recorded in his diary an incident in which he brought wine to contract a business agreement with a Major Merriweather. Merriweather rebuffed Byrd’s offer as “he drank no strong drink.”<sup>7</sup> Byrd was clearly puzzled and a little put off. Later, when he visited Merriweather accompanied by Governor Spotswood, Byrd recorded that “for fear of the worst I had brought two bottles of wine with me.”<sup>8</sup> Ordinary social interactions could not be conducted without the lubrication of alcohol. To abstain from drinking was to deny the importance of society, thwart the prevailing custom of the elite, and undermine communal feeling.

Because Virginians shared English drinking attitudes, they also perpetuated the English custom of seasonal festivals. Much like the English agricultural cycle, the tobacco cycle controlled the rhythm of Virginian lives. The strain of this cycle, which involved periods of extreme crisis and heightened activities, made planters appreciative

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 384.

<sup>7</sup> Byrd, *Secret Diary*, 139. (7 February 1710)

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 320. (28 March 1711)

of their old English ritual of *harvest-home*, which allowed for a ritualistic release of social tensions.<sup>9</sup> During his 1770s travels in Virginia, English visitor Nicholas Cresswell observed celebrations in which the people “were very merry, Dancing without either Shoes or Stockings and the Girls without stays.” Cresswell did not view this as alien, and noted that while the natives called it a “reaping frolic,” it was to all intents and purposes an English harvest feast.<sup>10</sup>

Superficially, these drinking attitudes appeared identical to their English antecedents. Unfortunately, this was not the case. In Virginia, time-honored drinking rituals acquired new and more nefarious undertones. English class conflict was in no way comparable to the strife inherent in Virginia’s race slavery. In large part, the maintenance of similar rural drinking customs must be seen as less the result of similarities between Virginia and England than as a conscious effort to make them seem similar.<sup>11</sup> Masters tried to mold slaves into English farm workers in order to better maintain control over them. The planter-slave relationship in colonial Virginia frequently vacillated as master and slave tacitly negotiated their roles.<sup>12</sup> While masters tried to control slaves and assert their own dominance, they were constantly forced to acknowledge the humanity of their slaves. This ambiguity led to contradictory impulses in the white slaveholding regime. While slaveholders avowed a caring, familial attitude

---

<sup>9</sup> David Hackett Fischer, *Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 370.

<sup>10</sup> Nicholas Cresswell, *The Journal of Nicholas Cresswell, 1774-1777* (New York: The Dial Press, 1924), 26. (4 July 1774)

<sup>11</sup> Fischer, *Albion’s Seed*, 388-89.

<sup>12</sup> Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 4.



toward slaves, they also ruthlessly ensured the white power hegemony with its necessary corollary, black subjugation.<sup>13</sup>

Masters endorsed slave drinking in order to realize these ends. By reproducing English seasonal festivals, masters hoped to inculcate the communality these events had traditionally produced. Planters felt they were being magnanimous when they “rewarded” slaves with harvest and Christmas festivals. To be sure, they did celebrate these seasonal events almost without exception. Robert Wormeley Carter, a member of the prominent Virginia planter family, recorded in his diary that he gave two slaves money “to buy a Bottle of rum for Harvesting.”<sup>14</sup> This matter-of-fact entry, listed beside everyday purchases of slave clothing and goods, reveals that treating slaves during plantation celebratory seasons was normal practice. Christmas festivals were so common that an old slave song rhymed:

Christmas comes but once a year;  
Every man must have his *sheer*  
Of apple cider’n ’simmon beer.<sup>15</sup>

This practice even continued in the early republic, when drinking began to be put on the defensive. Former president George Washington noted that while others had stopped giving alcohol to slaves at harvest time, his slaves “have always been accustomed to it, [so] a hogshead of Rum must be purchased.”<sup>16</sup> The distribution of alcohol to slaves at seasonal celebrations was the prevailing custom of eighteenth-century Virginia.

---

<sup>13</sup> Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 4.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Wormeley Carter, Diary Entry for July 17, 1768, Robert Wormeley Carter Diaries, 1764-1792, Special Collections, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg.

<sup>15</sup> C. C. Pearson and J. Edwin Hendricks, eds., *Liquor and Anti-Liquor in Virginia, 1619-1919* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967), 39.

<sup>16</sup> Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake & Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 142.

As in rural England, alcohol distribution unleashed bacchanalian festivals which were ultimately planter-sponsored, and therefore bound slaves to the plantation community. When William Byrd's slaves began to harvest his wheat, he provided them with "a bowl of punch and they had a fiddle and danced."<sup>17</sup> This was common. In the 1790s, French visitor M.L.E. Moreau de Saint-Mère was astonished to find that at Christmas and Easter festivals, slaves were allowed to "vie with each other in every form of indulgence—including, unfortunately, drunkenness."<sup>18</sup> The ritualized procurement of alcohol for slaves rendered these loosened proprieties non-threatening. The days on which the slaves reigned supreme actually acted to reinforce planter hegemony, since masters always acted the benevolent sponsors. The slaves, as Moreau de Saint-Mère remarked, were "never allowed to forget their dependent state."<sup>19</sup>

Masters took this one step further when they used alcohol to cultivate an informal camaraderie with slaves. This created personal connections between masters and slaves that further bonded slaves to the mores of the system. The Virginian slave Dick recalled that his first master, a young wastrel prone to alcoholic binges, had frequently encouraged him to drink in order to provide companionship. Dick developed his own taste for alcohol from sampling his master's daily juleps and joining him in his drunken revelry.<sup>20</sup> These occasions of alcohol-induced racial relaxation were sometimes on a large scale. A prosperous planter in Lancaster County became well-known for his endorsement of such events in which "a great concourse of negroes...assemble at his

---

<sup>17</sup> Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, eds., *William Byrd of Virginia: The London Diary (1717-1721) and Other Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 420. (21 June 1720)

<sup>18</sup> Kenneth Roberts and Anna M. Roberts, ed., *M.L.E. de St. Mère's American Journey [1793-1798]* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1947), 60.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> John Davis, *Travels of four years and a half in the United States of America: during 1798, 1799, 1800, 1801, and 1802* (New York: H. Holt, 1909), 414.

plantation and there to revel and drink in a very disorderly manner.”<sup>21</sup> Despite the apparent disorder of such times, these celebrations pulled slaves into a community in which the planter dominated. By accepting alcohol, they in part acquiesced to the slave system. Slaves were no longer social outsiders but were woven into the plantation community by their personal relationships. Planters, such as William Byrd, could now safely consider their slaves “my people.”<sup>22</sup>

Once ensconced in the plantation community through ritual celebrations and drinking camaraderie, slave drinking further cemented the unequal relationship between master and slave. Masters cultivated slave dependence by giving them alcohol as a reward and inducement to further work. In pre-industrial England, alcohol was used to unobtrusively perpetuate social hierarchies; “the drink payment retained elements of the older paternalistic bond that linked men of unequal status in relations of exchange.”<sup>23</sup> To give money or material goods to a subordinate was to quantify their work and release them from social obligations. To give alcohol, instead, was to thank an inferior, and reflected positively on the patron’s generosity while emphasizing the non-obligatory nature of the gift.

In this manner, slave drinking helped masters to maintain and cultivate their elite status. The act of bestowing alcohol upon slaves advertised the gentility of the planter to the rest of elite society. The Virginia gentry thrived on a society of customary deference. Devereux Jarratt, himself a member of a prosperous (though not gentry) planter family, was intimidated by the elite: “We were accustomed to look upon what were called *gentle folks*, as beings of a superior order. For my part, I was quite shy of *them*, and kept off at

---

<sup>21</sup> Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 415.

<sup>22</sup> Byrd, *Secret Diary*, 70, 126. (13 August 1709); (3 January 1710)

<sup>23</sup> Adler, “From Symbolic Exchange,” 384.

a humble distance.”<sup>24</sup> This awe-inspiring gentility best displayed itself in Virginia hospitality. Hospitality entailed a sense of liberality—a disconnection from the mundane need of worldly goods. By giving things away, planters signified that they were independent of material concerns. This liberality defined one as gentry.<sup>25</sup>

Accordingly, masters indicated their elite status by giving alcohol to slaves. Only a true member of the elite was able to spoil his dependent slaves, and doing so impressed on others the level of his material success and personal command. Slaves also recognized this connection between treating and elite status. “You never gave me the taste of a dram since I first know’d you,” one slave criticized, “you *New Jersey Men* are close shavers, I believe you would skin a louse.” The slave subsequently curbed his own generosity towards the white man and treated him with considerably less deference. The teetotaler’s companion did not have the same qualms. He therefore commanded respect from the slave, who announced he “would walk through the wilderness of *Kentucky* to serve him.”<sup>26</sup> Giving alcohol, then, was being a good master and, consequently, a worthy member of the elite. Denying slaves alcohol was stingy, and furthermore reckless by undermining the relationship that tied slaves to plantation life.

This voluntary alcohol distribution predominated to the point that many planters believed it to be necessary for stable plantation life. When William Byrd’s slaves complained that their overseer would not allow them beer, he acted immediately. Byrd remarked that he “did them right,” and made sure they consistently had access to alcohol

---

<sup>24</sup> Devereux Jarratt, *The Life of Reverend Devereux Jarratt* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 14.

<sup>25</sup> Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 131.

<sup>26</sup> Davis, *Travels of four years*, 409.

during planting.<sup>27</sup> Alcohol distribution was an essential way to reinforce the generosity and superiority of the planter and to minimize slave dissent. Ignoring this ritual threatened to release slaves from the guiding paternalism of the plantation community. By giving his slaves beer, Byrd also did much to further his own interests.

With elite domination reaffirmed, masters encouraged drinking to foster necessary slave dependence. Slaves were given alcohol as reward for skilled labor. In his account book, Orange County planter James Madison Sr. recorded a purchase of “1 quart Brandy to Carpenter George,” a slave, presumably for the adequate execution of a task.<sup>28</sup> Likewise, when William Byrd wanted to reward a neighbor’s slaves for their successful completion of a carpentry job, the neighbor denied him. Byrd recalled that instead of letting him give the slaves money, the neighbor “promised me he would give them a gallon of rum and some sugar on my account.”<sup>29</sup> Alcohol served as a reward for a job well done as well as inducement for further achievement, and was meant as a tie between master and slave alone.

This method of persuasion was most frequently used during periods of particularly strenuous agricultural work. Tobacco planting was a tedious and back-breaking process, and planters usually supplied their slaves with copious amounts of alcohol to compensate for its strain. Merchant Francis Jerdone’s notes reveal conspicuous purchases of alcohol concurrent with planting and harvesting times; in one instance, Jerdone recorded the purchase of ten gallons of rum in May 1752.<sup>30</sup> Jerdone

---

<sup>27</sup> Byrd, *London Diary*, 389. (30 March 1720)

<sup>28</sup> James Madison Sr., Entry for March 8, 1761 in Account Book 1755-1763, James Madison Papers, Special Collections, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia.

<sup>29</sup> Byrd, *Secret Diary*, 62. (21 July 1709)

<sup>30</sup> Francis Jerdone, Francis Jerdone Memorandum Book, Special Collections, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia.

likely experienced an increased demand for rum from planters at these seasonal highpoints. Usually, these alcohol rations were given at the end of the day in an effort to keep slaves quiescent during the arduous work. During spring planting William Byrd inspected his slaves' work daily. If their work pleased him, Byrd gave the slaves a dram of liquor in the evening to ensure further productivity. Later, at harvest time, Byrd noted that he "gave most of the people a dram and made them beat cider till 10 o'clock."<sup>31</sup> Planters tried to create a concrete link in slaves' minds between the successful completion of tasks and liquor rewards. Consequently, slaves knew that their masters would deny them alcohol if they failed to perform. Drink payments underlined the dependence of the slave on the generosity of whites.

In these cases, masters regarded slave drunkenness with little concern because it reinforced their ideals of slave dependence. Drunkenness was a manifestation of a black's child-like nature. Unlike elites, who were able to rein in their baser passions, blacks were considered markedly susceptible to animal passions, including drinking. In a 1776 *Virginia Gazette* ad, Westmoreland County planter George Turberville sought the return of his slave Will and was unable to determine whether Will ran away or was stolen. Turberville recalled that a trading boat was nearby just before Will's absence, and he suspected that these traders "have enticed him away, by making him drunk."<sup>32</sup> Slaves could not help falling prey to alcohol and had no independent will when drunk. Landon Carter, a prominent landowner, reinforced this sentiment in a 1767 *Virginia Gazette* notice. Carter believed that two ex-convicts had stolen his still and had persuaded local blacks to assist them. Carter placed the ad "to let others see what a Situation they may be

---

<sup>31</sup> Byrd, *London Diary*, 451. (15 September 1720)

<sup>32</sup> *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie), 15 March 1776.

in, who have Salves [slaves] capable of being thus corrupted by Liquors.”<sup>33</sup> Slaves had a adolescent addiction to alcohol and when intoxicated were highly impressionable. They were not immediately culpable for these criminal actions, but rather their simplemindedness was manipulated by ill-intentioned whites. Drunkenness epitomized black inferiority and in some cases partially excused slave behavior.

When masters lost control of the alcohol supply, the slaves’ supposed inclination to drunkenness became a liability and a threat. In such situations, drinking not only failed to reinforce master domination but subverted it. In order to feel comfortable about slave drinking, masters had to maintain control over two important variables: the source of the alcohol and the situation in which the alcohol was consumed. If either element was not dictated by the master, it was deemed a negative drinking experience and subject to punishment. Loss of control over the situation was key to a master’s condemnation of slave drinking.

The right of masters to dictate access to alcohol was sacrosanct in eighteenth-century Virginia. Although planters maintained confused and ambiguous conceptions of slaves, for control purposes they were property. David Hackett Fischer argued that this sacred value of property dominated the minds of Virginia gentry, and to infringe on the property of another would elicit a swift and violent response.<sup>34</sup> In a plantation-based society, no property was more valuable than chattel slaves. As such, a master had inviolable control over his slaves. Since slave drinking potentially unleashed slave “passions” and inhibited their abilities to reason, control over the alcohol supply entailed

---

<sup>33</sup> *Virginia Gazette* (Rind), 12 March 1767.

<sup>34</sup> Fischer, *Albion’s Seed*, 403.

a great deal of power. In order to maintain the necessary control over slaves, it was absolutely imperative for a master to control their alcohol consumption.

Accordingly, a white interfering by giving alcohol to another man's slave was tantamount to treason; it was a usurpation of the master's property rights and dangerous to society as a whole. Despite social condemnation, such outside alcohol supplies persisted. Neighboring poor whites tended to provide slaves with alcohol. William Byrd's widowed neighbor once expressed concern that her overseer and local whites were selling her slaves alcohol. This was such a grievous offense that Byrd promptly confronted the perpetrators and threatened them with physical violence.<sup>35</sup> While usually whites were interested in the profit to be had in slave drinking, other lower-class whites provided alcohol to slaves in order to express resentment towards the elites. Landon Carter's clerk, Owen Griffith, had unhappy relations with his employer and sought revenge. As a result, Griffith helped Carter's slave Tom procure the spare key to Carter's liquor cabinet. Carter was appalled and felt betrayed by the young clerk.<sup>36</sup> The level of Carter's reaction derived from his need to control the alcohol supply; jeopardizing this subverted paternal authority as a whole. That this betrayal came from another white was especially ominous because it undermined white solidarity in the face of a threateningly large black population.

In this regard, masters especially suspected taverns. Blacks were a common presence in taverns, often accompanying their masters or working in the taverns themselves. A 1736 *Virginia Gazette* ad for the slave Betty described her as having

---

<sup>35</sup> Byrd, *Secret Diary*, 221. (22 August 1710)

<sup>36</sup> Jack P. Greene, ed., *The Diary of Colonel Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, 1752-1778*, 2 vols. (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1965), 1:475. (25 August 1770)



“been used to attend in a Publick House from her Infancy.”<sup>37</sup> The presence of these slaves in taverns did not threaten whites because the slaves were firmly under their masters’ control. Like other slave drinking environments, taverns were only regarded as menacing when slaves frequented them independently. Alongside the fundamental suspicion of any outside whites who catered to slave drinking, taverns posed another threat: whites believed that slaves provided stolen goods to purchase their alcohol.<sup>38</sup> The combination of unapproved alcohol consumption with the theft of plantation goods described precisely the disorder planters feared would result if they failed to control the alcohol supply. Sensibly, planters regarded taverns with suspicion.

Despite widespread disapproval, it was still common for taverns to sell alcohol to slaves. The slave alcohol trade was at times brazen, with slaves openly serviced at taverns and the like.<sup>39</sup> William Byrd consistently had trouble with slaves frequenting a local tavern. He finally “caused Jack and John to be whipped for drinking at John [Cross] all last Sunday.” Byrd then had to reprimand his neighbors for encouraging this practice.<sup>40</sup> Individual taverns were persuaded to cease selling alcohol to slaves, but these were not the majority. After one Williamsburg tavern owner turned away a slave, he observed the slave going immediately to another tavern, where he “was then served without the least scruple whatever.”<sup>41</sup> Taverns were quick to capitalize on the monetary opportunities presented by a drinking slave clientele.

---

<sup>37</sup> *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie & Dixon), 12 May 1774.

<sup>38</sup> Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 370.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 414.

<sup>40</sup> Byrd, *Secret Diary*, 337-338. (30 April 1711, 2 May 1711)

<sup>41</sup> Louise Pecquet du Bellet, *Some Prominent Virginian Families*, 4 vols. (Lynchburg, Virginia: J.P. Bell Company, 1907), 2:777.

Usually the community turned a blind eye, but occasionally, if the offense was blatant enough, the perpetrator's practice was called to account. In this case, the social repercussions were swift and severe. When Daniel Fisher was accused of selling liquor to slaves at his Williamsburg tavern, he was brought into court. Fisher correctly viewed this as an attempt to impugn his honor. He vehemently denied the charges, arguing that "not one merchant in the Town who sold Rum at all was so cautious of letting any Negro be supplied with rum, without a written or Verbal leave as myself."<sup>42</sup> The charges were eventually dropped, and Fisher suffered no real economic or political penalty. Instead, he suffered greatly in the social arena. The scandal of the accusation left Fisher so shamed that he quickly made plans to leave Virginia. Even fleeing the situation, Fisher felt no relief; when he asked William Nelson to recommend him for a position in Philadelphia, Nelson mocked Fisher's attempt to appear the innocent supplicant. He admonished Fisher that if he had "followed the practice of retailing Liquors to Servants and Slaves as is generally reported...you have not been that inoffensive harmless member of society you would seem to be."<sup>43</sup> While taverns that served slaves were tolerated, if they became too overt in their enterprise, Virginia society would promptly crush such reckless behavior.

While whites were subject to social intimidation, masters had little recourse to keep slaves from conspiring among themselves for alcohol. There was no social taboo that slaves felt leery about breaking, nor any white hegemony they valued and protected from threat. Because of this, independent slave drinking particularly worried masters and was associated with crime, particularly theft. This connection was not imaginary. Slaves

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 782.

did steal alcohol from their masters. Archeological work at Kingsmill Plantation testified to this phenomenon when mid-eighteenth century wine bottles with their owner's seal were found in the slave quarter.<sup>44</sup> If discovered, these transgressions were indelibly imprinted on a master's mind. William Byrd recorded an incident in his diary in which his slave girl Anaka was punished for "stealing the rum and filling the bottle up with water."<sup>45</sup> This incident impressed itself upon Byrd's memory, and several months later Byrd argued with his wife over her trusting Anaka to handle liquor. Even a more lenient master, George Washington, could recall exactly how much liquor his slaves stole.<sup>46</sup> Masters were vigilant in their fear of independent slave drinking.

There was one situation in which slave drinking was even more threatening. When slaves worked together to illicitly procure alcohol, they met with severe punishment from masters. William Byrd's slaves at one point conspired to enter his cellar and steal a large amount of liquor. When it was discovered, Byrd did not rest until he found out how the conspiracy had formed and had brutally beaten the perpetrators.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, while Landon Carter was irritated when his slave Nassau was drunk again, he became enraged when he discovered the source of Nassau's alcohol supply. Nassau, it seems, had been giving "money to a negroe of Corrie's to get him some rum and to meet him somewhere below my [house]."<sup>48</sup> The fact that Nassau had collaborated with other slaves, and that this duplicity had occurred under his very nose, infuriated Carter. In a rare act, Carter stripped, hog-tied, and whipped his beloved manservant.

---

<sup>44</sup> Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 116.

<sup>45</sup> Byrd, *Secret Diary*, 22. (17 April 1709)

<sup>46</sup> Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 356.

<sup>47</sup> Byrd, *Secret Diary*, 337. (30 April 1711)

<sup>48</sup> Carter, *Diary*, 2: 940. (11 September 1775)

Masters reacted so negatively to slave collaboration because it endangered already precarious white authority. While scholars sometimes portray the eighteenth century as a relatively placid time of white domination, there was still an undercurrent of racial discord. Tensions between whites and blacks were high throughout the early 1700s, and several uprisings occurred during the period.<sup>49</sup> While whites appeared nonchalant about such threats, it is clear that they realized the precariousness of their authority. William Byrd perhaps best expressed this wariness of slave power: “these base Tempers require to be rid with a tort Rein, or they will be apt to throw their rider.”<sup>50</sup> The independent and successful working of black community to procure alcohol revealed its ability to circumvent white control. In the minds of masters these instances exposed the reality of their uncertain hold on slave resistance.

While independent alcohol sources heightened slaveholders’ fears, inappropriate drinking situations threatened elite social decorum and order. Racially mixed drinking parties were especially reprehensible. To slaveholders such revelry undermined white solidarity. In his study of Puritan drinking, David W. Conroy argued that for the elite, an “indiscriminate gathering of men to drink became symptomatic of disorder in the hierarchy of social control.”<sup>51</sup> In Virginia, mixed drinking events likewise threatened to capsize the existing social order. William Byrd recognized this when he forbade his “man G-r-l to go to a horse race because there was nothing but swearing and drinking

---

<sup>49</sup> Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 115-121; Anthony Parent, Jr. *Foul Means: The Formation of a Slave Society in Virginia, 1660-1740* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 151-159.

<sup>50</sup> Elizabeth Donnan, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, 4 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1930-1935; reprint, New York: Octagon Books, 1969), 4:131.

<sup>51</sup> David W. Conroy, “Puritans in Taverns: Law and Popular Culture in Colonial Massachusetts, 1630-1720,” in Barrows and Room, eds., *Drinking*, 30.

there.”<sup>52</sup> At the horse race, Byrd’s servant would likely have met with both blacks and whites of varying social degree. This unauthorized mingling eroded the demarcation of Virginia society that designated blacks as an isolated, subordinate group. By fraternizing with black slaves who were clearly disobeying their masters, whites tacitly endorsed such social inversion. Doing so, they compromised the plantation hierarchy—a most grievous sin in Virginia. Logically, William Byrd quickly “settled some accounts” when he reprimanded George Carter for drinking with his slaves at a local tavern.<sup>53</sup> By drinking in mixed parties, whites were risking a valued social tradition for frivolity.

Slave drinking could also threaten white reputations and consequently, customary gentry entitlement to power. Planters condemned slave drinking when it lowered them in the eyes of their white peers. This occurred when a slave’s inappropriate and disordered drunkenness became public. Self-control was key to the Virginian elite’s sense of *noblesse oblige*. Slaves were an integral part of a master’s reputation, and their behavior reflected upon the quality of their owner.<sup>54</sup> On a self-contained plantation, masters customarily accepted exuberant slave drinking with a rueful acknowledgement of blacks’ incorrigible dependence. When drinking moved into the realm of other whites, masters instead considered it both unseemly and inhospitable.

For a slave to appear ensnared by his passions would, in the presence of outside company, indict the master as well. William Byrd once whipped his slave Tom for breaking “the Rules of Hospitality by getting extreamly drunk in a Civil house.”<sup>55</sup> Tom’s

---

<sup>52</sup> Byrd, *Secret Diary*, 75. (27 August 1709)

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 338. (2 May 1711)

<sup>54</sup> Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 267.

<sup>55</sup> William Byrd, *William Byrd’s Histories of the Dividing Line Betwixt Virginia and North Carolina*, with an introduction by William K. Boyd (New York: Dover, 1967), 39. (2 March 1728)

disorder was directly correlated to Byrd's hospitality. By his action, Tom disgraced Byrd and portrayed Byrd's lot as disordered and unworthy of elite status. Loudoun County planter Leven Powell was also distressed when a slave under his care was seen purchasing whiskey, became inebriated, and generally created havoc in the nearest town.<sup>56</sup> While surely Powell was concerned for his own lack of control, his distress was heightened because he was cognizant of these events due solely to the reports of other whites. Clearly, then, whites had personally viewed all of his slave's "disorders," and this would reflect negatively on Powell's own reputation. Drunken slaves at large presented not only a threat to white hegemony, but also a more intimate threat to their master's designation as an elite gentleman.

Even when whites had control of both the source of slave alcohol and the nature of their drinking company, slave drinking held negative potential for masters. Virginians believed that alcohol stripped away reason and cast loose emotion.<sup>57</sup> While at times planters thought this could help create a biddable work force, drunkenness was problematic. When drunk, some slaves became more assertive instead of remaining docile wards. Virginia Council president William Nelson spoke for the majority of planters when he worried that giving slaves liquor "deprives them of their small share of reason and make[s] them untractable and unfit for their servitude."<sup>58</sup> In runaway slave advertisements, an overt connection was often made between slave intoxication and impudent attitudes. Instead of being acquiescent, some planters observed that slaves became "knaveish" or "sly" when inebriated. When the slave Isaac absconded with a

---

<sup>56</sup> Leven Powell to Burr Powell, 9 June 1797, Leven Powell Papers, Special Collections, Swem Library, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg.

<sup>57</sup> Rorabaugh, *Alcoholic Republic*, 47.

<sup>58</sup> Pecquet du Bellet, *Prominent Families*, 2:785.

boatload of stolen merchandise, a planter, John Mills, advertised for his capture and described him as becoming “very impertinent when in Liquor.”<sup>59</sup> Likewise, Fredericksburg resident Mann Page noted that liquor made his slave Jack forward, whereas otherwise he kept to himself.<sup>60</sup>

Such impudence led some slaves to resist punishment. In his diary, William Byrd often linked inebriation to rebelliousness. On one occasion, Byrd’s slave Johnny openly resisted punishment. Having found the slave drunk, Byrd threatened to beat him. Byrd recalled that Johnny “said I should not so I had him whipped and gave him thirty lashes.”<sup>61</sup> Johnny’s defiance was so abhorrent that Byrd increased his punishment. In a similar situation, Landon Carter attempted to punish his drunken slave. Finding Nassau drunk on the job, Carter “offered to give him a box on the ear.” The slave was not in a docile mood, and instead of submitting, Carter recalled that “he fairly forced himself against me.”<sup>62</sup> Carter was appalled, and had the slave stripped and whipped. Drinking clearly did not always subdue slave restiveness.

Masters also recognized a connection between drunkenness and a desire for freedom. In a 1773 *Virginia Gazette* ad, Amelia County widow Dorothy Jones characterized her runaway slave Tom as “remarkably fond of drink, and if indulged, will certainly get drunk.” This drunkenness, instead of transporting Tom to an innocuous child-like state, filled him with aspirations of freedom. He suddenly became “a very artful fellow” with hopes of passing for a free black.<sup>63</sup> Likewise, when William Gregory’s slave Peter became intoxicated, he was “very talkative and impudent” and told

---

<sup>59</sup> *Virginia Gazette* (Dixon), 28 January 1775.

<sup>60</sup> *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie & Dixon), 20 September 1770.

<sup>61</sup> Byrd, *London Diary*, 419. (17 June 1720)

<sup>62</sup> Carter, *Diary*, 2: 941. (11 September 1775)

<sup>63</sup> *Virginia Gazette* (Rind), 11 November 1773.

other slaves that he would run away to his old mistress.<sup>64</sup> Alcohol did not always render slaves docile, but instead released their discontent as they chafed at their degraded status.

The passions unleashed could be more than just insubordinate but life threatening. The slave Dick's libertine master was killed by a drunken slave who had found him dallying with the slave's wife. The consequences were instant and brutal. "The negur man," Dick recalled, "was hanged alive upon a gibbet."<sup>65</sup> The murder of this young cavalier was exactly what planters feared in autonomous slave drinking, and the crime was ruthlessly punished. Leven Powell wrote to a relative that he had his slave incarcerated because while inebriated the slave consistently made threats that "he would kill himself or some of them [whites] & gave hint that they had better take care of their houses."<sup>66</sup> For a society that was precariously based on a large, coerced labor force, this was a real threat, and one that intimately linked slave drinking to a planter's worst fears.

The contradictory impulses in planter thought about slave alcohol use existed because of the masters' need to control their workforce. When it served to bring slaves into the white-dominated plantation community and make them dependent upon whites, alcohol use was encouraged. Outside supplies of alcohol and mixed drinking parties undermined this ethic by making slaves "insolent and disorderly,"<sup>67</sup> they sometimes ran away or physically threatened their white masters. As such, alcohol was a strong force that masters needed to employ but feared all the same, much like slavery itself. Wary of its effects, masters anxiously attempted to control slave drinking by keeping it on their own terms. Kenneth Lockridge has argued that "the Virginia gentry maintained their

---

<sup>64</sup> *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie & Dixon), 4 May 1769.

<sup>65</sup> Davis, *Travels of four years*, 414-415.

<sup>66</sup> Leven Powell to Burr Powell, June 9, 1797.

<sup>67</sup> *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie & Dixon), 7 September 1769.



power by ceaseless attention to their control...[and] the success and exact tone of their hegemonic discourse in all its forms.”<sup>68</sup> Alcohol was just one of those forms, and Virginia planters therefore attempted to control the use of alcohol as well as its interpretations. Unfortunately for the planters, they disregarded slave agency. Slaves also made alcohol a tool of their own manufacture.

While masters attempted to create a passive workforce through the regulation and selective administration of alcohol, slaves found other purposes for their drinking. Slaves used the terms of a slaveholder’s own discourse against him. By becoming “child-like” and “irrational,” slaves could express their real discontent in ways that their owners did not recognize as rebellion. Their appropriation of such dependent behavior furthermore served to highlight their master’s reciprocal dependency. In these ways, slaves used and subverted their master’s own paternalist aspirations. If these methods of resistance failed, slaves used alcohol as a refuge from a system in which the deck was stacked against their ability to achieve independence.

Slaves adroitly manipulated the paternalist system in order to express discontent without overtly threatening white order. Slaves often deliberately became intoxicated to avoid pernicious duties or to tacitly express their rejection of a master’s decision. This was a safe method of noncompliance, for while masters invariably punished such behavior, they did not consider it outward rebellion because it confirmed their assumption that slaves could not control their addiction to alcohol. Slaves recognized

---

<sup>68</sup> Kenneth A. Lockridge, *On the Sources of Patriarchal Rage: The Commonplace Books of William Byrd and Thomas Jefferson and the Gendering of Power in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 95.

this white belief, and capitalized on it when it was to their advantage.<sup>69</sup> Purposeful drunkenness served as an outlet for slave dissent with minimal consequences.

Landon Carter's manservant Nassau is a heightened example of a slave's use of inebriation to willfully disregard a master's instructions. As a folk doctor, Nassau was highly valued at Carter's Sabine Hall. Unfortunately, Nassau was not the only one who fancied himself a medical expert. After sending Nassau to examine slaves, the caustic Carter typically subjected them to violent purges to cure their ailments. Slaves feared and avoided these remedies. It is not incidental that Nassau's chronic inebriation coincided with Carter's demands that he examine a sick slave. When Nassau was unable to perform these services due to drunkenness, Carter believed that Nassau was being irresponsible and called him a "most cursed Villian" who could remain unfeeling towards his fellow slaves' suffering.<sup>70</sup> The truth was the opposite: Nassau was shielding the slaves from the often brutal treatments they endured under Carter's mediations. Nassau perhaps realized that the slaves would suffer an easier fate if they were treated by his folk medicine or left to their own devices. Inebriation was Nassau's way to avoid the performance of what he considered a harmful task.

Slaves also used drunkenness to negotiate with whites. These points did not necessarily involve pressing matters of the moment, but rather were part of a vast continuum of black struggle to assert a modicum of independence in their enslavement. White planters treasured their personal independence beyond all other virtues.<sup>71</sup> In order to negotiate with planters, slaves then jeopardized this notion through a demonstration of

---

<sup>69</sup> Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 99.

<sup>70</sup> Carter, *Diary*, 2: 782. (30 September 1773)

<sup>71</sup> Jack P. Greene, "The Concept of Virtue in Late Colonial British America," in *Virtue, Corruption, and Self-Interest: Political Values in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Richard K. Matthews (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 1994), 38.

their master's reciprocal dependence on them. In his diary, William Byrd related that even the governor was subject to such an ignominious spectacle. The governor, Byrd recalled, "had made a bargain with his servants that if they would forbear to drink upon the Queen's birthday, they might be drunk this day."<sup>72</sup> While the slaves suitably held up their end of the bargain, it must have irked the politico to have to bargain with his dependents just to ensure propriety on a national holiday.

In this manner, Landon Carter's slave Nassau used alcohol to constantly remind Carter of his dependence on the manservant. The dealings between Carter and Nassau reveal a surprisingly equitable relationship that subsisted on back-and-forth negotiations, in which the master repeatedly threatened, the slave repeatedly apologized, but no real punishment ever occurred, nor did alcohol abuse cease. Nassau's drinking troubled Carter, who recorded that "I have threatened him, begged him, Prayed him, And told him the consequences" should he continue. This all had little effect, and one must wonder if Nassau got a thrill by forcing his lofty master to plead with him. In any case, Nassau continued to drink. Carter got the hunch that this was more than mere alcoholism; he believed that Nassau "seems resolved to drink in spight of me, and I beleive in order to spight me."<sup>73</sup> Perhaps Nassau was exceptional in his ability to argue with the formidable Landon Carter. After all, he was a trusted manservant, and house servants often had intimate relationships with their masters that enabled them to challenge white domination.<sup>74</sup> While Nassau's particular ability to negotiate may be exaggerated due to his privileged position, his relationship with Carter supports the notion that slaves used alcohol to gain more equitable treatment from masters.

---

<sup>72</sup> Byrd, *Secret Diary*, 298. (7 February 1711)

<sup>73</sup> Carter, *Diary*, 2: 778. (23 September 1773)

<sup>74</sup> Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 346.

Similarly, William Byrd's slaves used his regular gift of alcohol to avoid their duties. On one occasion in August 1720, operations on the Byrd plantation almost entirely stopped due to slave intoxication. Byrd was furious to find that his slaves "almost all got drunk with cider I had given them...and [I] threatened to punish them that I should ever see drunk again."<sup>75</sup> The slaves had manipulated the gifts that were meant to encourage productivity by putting them to their own use. Despite Byrd's admonitions to the contrary, the slaves were back in their liquor within the month. They had won the argument. Despite Byrd's blustering, planting continued the way the slaves wanted.

While slaves attempted to thwart their masters through alcohol use, they did not always succeed. In those times, some slaves turned to alcohol as self-medication. It is conceivable that many slaves became depressed by their often cruel situations, and alcohol helped to distract them. Without it, life could be unendurable. During his service to a particularly demanding master, the slave Dick recalled that he had mourned most the loss of alcohol to anesthetize his pain:

Hard work would not have hurt me, but I could never get any liquor. This was desperate, and my only comfort was the stump of an old pipe....This was a poor comfort without a little drap of whiskey now and then, and I was laying a plan to run away.<sup>76</sup>

Alcohol helped Dick accept his situation, but without it slavery became unbearable. Eugene Genovese viewed the slaves' fatalistic tendencies as a weapon of resistance, "embodying the opposite of that loss of will which so many read into them."<sup>77</sup> This may overestimate the usefulness of such drunkenness. Drunkenness often irritated masters, but it potentially worked to their advantage, inuring slaves to their condition. Instead,

---

<sup>75</sup> Byrd, *London Diary*, 437. (7 August 1720)

<sup>76</sup> Davis, *Travels of four years*, 422.

<sup>77</sup> Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 641.

slave alcoholism must be seen as the final scrap of independent thought and living that slaves could muster when they knew they could not pull free from the system.

Alcoholism did not provide a way out, but it did create some succor and self-identity.

The mores and conflicts of Virginia's slaveholding regime were revealed through slave drinking. The attitudes of masters towards slave drinking reflected the elite need to control their often hostile forced labor. By ritualistic alcohol distribution and interracial drinking camaraderie, masters hoped to draw slaves firmly into a world in which the discourse was primarily on white terms. Through the continuation of treating to reward subservient black behavior and the acceptance of black drunkenness as docility, masters cultivated black dependence while minimizing dissent. It was only when masters lost control of this system, and blacks threw off appearances of tractability, that slave drinking was condemned as anathema to plantation life. Despite their efforts, masters were never fully able to control the implications of slave drinking. Slaves manipulated their masters' paternalism to express discontent and co-dependency through drunkenness, while using alcohol as a method of survival in their brutal condition of suppression. Alcohol was the medium through which the anxieties and struggles of the Virginian slave system were manifested, and over which blacks and whites contested for control. Alcohol was power in plantation relationships.

## CHAPTER II

### “WITHOUT MUCH MISCHIEF:” WHITE VIRGINIAN DRINKING<sup>1</sup>

At first, Virginia life perplexed Philip Vickers Fithian. The son of New Jersey Presbyterians, Fithian came to Virginia to be a tutor at Robert Carter’s Nomini Hall plantation. The privileged society Fithian found there was entirely alien to him. A fascinated Fithian watched as his employer’s elite guests danced in a “Violent Exercise of the Body & Spirit” while drinking “great quantities of [a] variety of Liquors.” Fithian was scandalized by these habits, which he believed contributed to the infamous “Virginia fevers.”<sup>2</sup> Despite his censure, Fithian would soon learn the values of this intemperance. In Virginia, drinking was part of a cherished social dialogue. Alcohol consumption was a mark of refined living that cemented communal loyalties while it nurtured white male friendship. Alcohol buttressed Virginian power structures, as elites gave alcohol as gifts to emphasize their prestige while courting public opinion. White drinking was a performance that relied on an individual’s attention to etiquette and capacity for self-control. The mastery of this drinking culture separated the gentlemen from the louts, leaders from followers. In this slave society, white drinking reinforced mastery and in turn, required white Virginians to master their drinking.

---

<sup>1</sup> Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, eds., *The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1709-1712* (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1941), 234. (22 September 1710)

<sup>2</sup> Hunter Dickinson Farish, ed., *Journal & Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, 1773-1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg, 1957), 153. (2 August 1774)

Eighteenth-century Virginia society was rooted in a tenuously controlled slave force. Appropriately, the quest for control pervaded Virginia life and guided not only inter-race relations but relations within the white population. While efforts to control slaves involved coercion and overt mastery, white power brokering was more subtle. Power within white society was largely asserted and maintained through cultural tradition. Virginia society acquired its shape through superficial displays of wealth and breeding, and social rituals formed the backbone of elite culture. Entertainment that required an individual demonstration of skill was most highly valued. Notably, a French dance, the minuet, was extremely popular in elite circles. In this dance, a sole couple subjected themselves to the intense scrutiny of their peers while they performed the dance's complex and challenging steps. The performance of this dance could make or break the reputation of an aspiring country squire.<sup>3</sup> Public performance and its accompanying evaluation was crucial to the ordering of elite Virginia.

While the minuet was a heightened example of this ethic, Virginia culture was, on the whole, outwardly oriented. Even in everyday affairs, Virginia revolved around performance. This was most notable among white elites, who cultivated their roles as benevolent patriarchs through public demonstrations of their refinement and liberality. Elites invited guests, many times including middling whites, to their lavish celebrations and there pointedly demonstrated their open handedness by supplying luxury goods, including alcohol. By "treating" his guests to varieties of expensive alcohol, a gentleman demonstrated both his financial security and liberal temperament—traits that were considered necessary to a leader. This message was not lost on partygoers. Traveling

---

<sup>3</sup> Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 80-87.

Englishman Nicholas Cresswell attended one gentleman's St. Andrew's Day festivities and recorded in his diary that he had been "genteelly treated and am now going to bed drunk."<sup>4</sup> Liberality with alcohol, as a luxury good, was considered the mark of a refined gentleman.

Because liberality was essential to gentility, "treating," and the quality of that treating, became a sign of power. Lancaster County planter Robert "King" Carter, as his name implies, was the wealthiest and perhaps the most powerful man in colonial Virginia. As such, his treating was expected to be exceptional in both quality and quantity. Carter lived up to his role, regularly importing expensive wines and sparing no expense at celebrations. In addition to a general feast, Carter celebrated his son's wedding by supplying friends with an enormous larder and drinking "2 bottles wine 1 Ditto rum 2 Cider or Treat."<sup>5</sup> Carter was not the only one to use alcohol in this manner; when the royal governor wanted to impress his majesty upon his elite colonial subjects, he did so with alcohol. While entertaining his most impressive subject, "King" Carter, Governor Spotswood made sure to supply a "very handsom diner" and "a great bowl [of] Rack Punch."<sup>6</sup> Alcohol displays reinforced the power roles that were so essential to elite patriarchy. The power of these displays were such that their control was vigorously defended. When Sabine Hall planter Robert Wormeley Carter questioned his father's wine selection at a dinner party, Landon Carter was piqued by his son's presumption. Landon believed such remarks to be inappropriate, as they were directed towards himself,

---

<sup>4</sup> Nicholas Cresswell, *The Journal of Nicholas Cresswell, 1774-1777* (New York: Dial Press, 1924), 48. (30 November 1774)

<sup>5</sup> Robert Carter Papers, Robert Carter Diary, 1722-1727, Diary Entry for June 17, 1725, Albert H. Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia.

<sup>6</sup> Carter Papers, Diary, 1727-January 1728, Entry for September 12, 1727



on whom Robert Wormeley “must know he depends.”<sup>7</sup> Liberality was the privilege of society’s leaders and should not be questioned or interfered with.

Drinking was not only the province of genteel entertaining but ubiquitous in white Virginia. Through its everyday use by gentlemen and yeomen alike, alcohol acted as social glue.<sup>8</sup> First and foremost, drinking reinforced the white system of deference. While gentlemen privately hosted lavish alcohol celebrations to underline their gentility, public toasting helped to formally and ritualistically secure social order. To an outward-looking Virginia society, toasting was the perfect vehicle to proclaim loyalties and cement allegiances. Elites commonly toasted their king at public gatherings. When George II ascended the throne, Robert “King” Carter, as a colonial representative in Williamsburg, necessarily “drank all the roial healths [while] Guns fired at every health.”<sup>9</sup> This formal spectacle announced the Virginian’s willing obedience to the new ruler, whereas his abstention would have raised eyebrows. Even at the less pressing occasion of a society ball, Westover planter William Byrd felt impelled to toast “all the healths consequent to the good agreement of the Governor and Council.”<sup>10</sup> By proclaiming loyalty to their rulers, elite members affirmed Virginia’s social hierarchy and legitimized their own positions of privilege. Even when the royal hierarchy was being overthrown in the Revolution, a new social order demanded recognition in Virginia

---

<sup>7</sup> Jack P. Greene, ed., *The Diary of Colonel Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, 1752-1778* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1965), 2: 762. (23 August 1773)

<sup>8</sup> David W. Conroy, “Puritans in Taverns: Law and Popular Culture in Colonial Massachusetts, 1630-1720,” in *Drinking: Behavior and Belief in Modern History*, eds. Susanna Barrows and Robin Room (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 33.

<sup>9</sup> Carter Papers, Diary 1727-January 1728, Diary Entry for September 11, 1727.

<sup>10</sup> Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, eds., *William Byrd of Virginia: The London Diary (1717-1721) and Other Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 404. (9 May 1720)

public spectacle. The new toasts, as tutor Philip Fithian witnessed, were to the “Sons of America.”<sup>11</sup>

While toasting in its public form reinforced the prevailing social order, its informal and everyday use was as a community builder. This kind of toasting was not aimed at saluting kings but to demonstrate the warmth and neighborliness essential to the face-to-face nature of Virginian community. Participating in these impromptu rituals affirmed one’s place in the community, while abstaining marked a person as aloof and outside the communal bounds.<sup>12</sup> Philip Fithian found this informal toasting to be a fixture in the elite household of his employer, Robert Carter. Though generally disapproving of drinking, Fithian joined the company by toasting his sweetheart, Laura, and drinking “her Health from my Heart in generous Medaira—Yes, best of Women, when you are the Toast I drink wine with Pleasure.”<sup>13</sup> These friendly toasts were often light-hearted and jovial, reinforcing sociability more than loyalty. In his expedition along the Virginia-North Carolina border, William Byrd fondly recalled that the company “remember’d our Wives & Mistresses in a Bumper of excellent Cherry Brandy.”<sup>14</sup> These good times around a campfire cemented fraternity and were a counterpoint to the paternalistic formal toasts.

Gentlemen often engaged in informal toasting and other mixed-company drinking precisely to disprove charges of snobbery and to appear more as a men of the people. While staying at a Williamsburg boarding house, Robert “King” Carter joined in the

---

<sup>11</sup> Fithian, *Journal, 1773-74*, 57. (18 January 1774)

<sup>12</sup> Marianna Adler, “From Symbolic Exchange to Commodity Consumption,” in Barrows and Room, eds., *Drinking*, 381-82.

<sup>13</sup> Fithian, *Journal, 1773-74*, 141. (13 July 1774)

<sup>14</sup> William Byrd, *William Byrd’s Histories of the Dividing Line Betwixt Virginia and North Carolina*, with an introduction by William K. Boyd (New York: Dover, 1967), 197. (12 October 1728)

inter-class revelry and helped drink “4 bottles Madera in Complem[en]t to Coll Jones & rest of the Comp[any],” even though Carter dreaded the sickness it would bring the next day.<sup>15</sup> Even more unusual, he occasionally drank with his trusted overseer Stagg.<sup>16</sup>

Informal toasting was a community-building and male-bonding experience.

Because of alcohol’s role in creating and maintaining white fraternity, gentlemen often felt considerable pressure to drink. Bystanders at elite events found it hard to resist these ostentatious displays of grandeur. Philip Fithian tried to “Drink as little Wine as possible, & when I must drink Toasts I never fail to dilute them well with Water.”<sup>17</sup>

Despite his attempts at moderation, Fithian occasionally was lured into a “Day spent in constant Violent exercise, & drinking an unusual Quantity of Liqueur.” The effect of this day of “Fatigue, Heat, Liqueur, Noise, Want of sleep, And the exertion of my Animal spirits” was that Fithian now “felt a Fever fixing upon me.”<sup>18</sup> Moderation did not often rule these events, often to the detriment of one’s health. Cuthbert Harrison recounted the trials of his acquaintance, Major Charles West, who drank to excess and “could never be Wakened, [out of his stupor], thou his hardened & incorrigible Companions attempted it by holding a glass of grog before him.”<sup>19</sup> Men were expected to drink, with little regard for their own inclinations. In a 1700 letter to Governor Francis Nicholson, James Blair recognized this social pressure to drink. Apologizing for a friend’s inopportune and shameful drunkenness, Blair remarked that “Sober Men are forced sometimes for Peace’s

---

<sup>15</sup> Carter Papers, Diary 1727-January 1728, Diary Entry for August 14, 1727.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Carter to [Mann Page], 3 March 1721, Robert Carter Letter Book, 1720 July – 1721 July, Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, California.

<sup>17</sup> Fithian, *Journal, 1773-74*, 158. (12 August 1774)

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 155. (2 August 1774)

<sup>19</sup> Cuthbert Harrison to Leven Powell, 30 March 1786, Leven Powell Papers, Special Collections, Swem Library, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg.

Sake to Submitt & bear many things, w[hi]ch they cannott help.”<sup>20</sup> Likewise, a *Virginia Gazette* editorialist lamented the fact that many a “sober inclined man is forced into excesses he dreads and detests, by fear of offending the company.”<sup>21</sup> It was often easier to please others by drinking than to mark oneself an outcast by abstaining.

Although drinking created a community, it was a finely demarcated one.

Gentlemen tried to use the seemingly egalitarian drinking atmosphere to reinforce their ascendancy. Elite liberality was symbolically asserted and in turn accepted by yeomen through the practice of alcohol tipping. Much like masters rewarding slaves, gentlemen “tipped” white working men with liquor. “King” Carter frequently gave alcohol to his brickmakers, mill workers, and sloop men. In December 1725, Robert Carter “signd Conditions with Westmd Overseers [and] gave them a bottle [of] rum.”<sup>22</sup> Likewise, George Washington stipulated in a contract with his workers that they be provided the “usual allowance of Rum” for their troubles.<sup>23</sup> The custom of giving alcohol did not reflect elite ascendancy so much as expose the tenuousness of elite control over white working men. Much like slaves, white working men took alcohol tipping, which was meant to be a privilege, and turned it into a requirement for work performance.

Gentlemen were bound to give alcohol to subordinates regardless of its detrimental effect on work: Nicholas Cresswell watched his shipmates tip the sailors rum at landfall until “every Man aboard (the Captn., Passengers, and First Mate excepted) [were] drunk, swearing and fighting like madmen.”<sup>24</sup> Liquid benefits were so expected that when a

---

<sup>20</sup> James Blair to Francis Nicholson, 9 August 1700, Francis Nicholson Papers, Special Collections, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia.

<sup>21</sup> *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie & Dixon), 3 August 1769.

<sup>22</sup> Carter Papers, Diary, 1722-1727, Diary Entry for December 20, 1725.

<sup>23</sup> John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington, 1757-1769*, 39 vols. (Washington: United States Govt. Printing Office, 1931), 1:530. (20 December 1756)

<sup>24</sup> Cresswell, *Journal*, 14. (14 May 1774)

Continental army regulation neglected to provide a rum ration for Virginia waggoners, officers approached Thomas Jefferson, complaining that work had ground to a halt.<sup>25</sup> Alcohol gifts, meant to underline elite leadership, instead contested it by becoming a worker's right.

While negotiations in the alcohol reward system had its parallel in the master-slave relationship, treating had another use entirely unknown in the slave world. By treating lesser whites, elite members were not trying to squash discontent or exact labor but woo the community's approval. This was especially common at militia musters. At musters, gentlemen provided alcohol, letting other whites celebrate and social boundaries relax in the time and place of their choosing. This notice in an October 1757 *Virginia Gazette* was an all-too-common occurrence:

A Man returning home from the last General Muster of *York County*...drank so freely, that as he was going home, he fell from his Horse, and was so mortally wounded, that he died soon after.<sup>26</sup>

This kind of drinking was widely accepted and little criticized. Instead of worrying about the debauchery, planters proudly surveyed the success of their celebrations. As colonel of a colonial militia, William Byrd gloried in the fact that his hogshead of liquor had "entertained all the people and made them drunk and fighting all evening, but without much mischief."<sup>27</sup> This apparent chaos was unthreatening and squarely under elite control. Even the fairly temperate George Washington gladly had his colonels provide soldiers "so long as they deserve it, four gallons of rum, made into punch, every day."<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Julian P. Boyd, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, 25 February 1781-20 May 1781*, 32 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950--), 5:12. (26 February 1781)

<sup>26</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, 21 October 1737.

<sup>27</sup> Byrd, *Secret Diary*, 234. (22 September 1710)

<sup>28</sup> Washington, *Writings*, 1:441. (7 August 1756)

Treating, then, was an elite gesture of good-will that was routinely given and expected. Though it may have made yeomen inclined to look favorably upon certain gentlemen, treating was not a command of obedience. Despised royal governor Francis Nicholson lavished alcohol on his militia, causing alarmed townspeople to claim that there were “five hundred drunk for one Sober.” However, this did not make up for the multitude of Nicholson’s alleged sins: a friend of Nicholson’s reported that the yeomen resented the muster and “they Cursed you for it, w[i]th the Meal and Drink you entertained them with all, in their Mouths.”<sup>29</sup> Treating could help elites win mass approval, but it could not create it out of thin air.

Regardless of its questionable utility in securing obedience, alcohol treating was a standard practice in colonial military life, so much so that Virginians adopted it in their interactions with Indians. During the Seven Years War, a young George Washington instructed a subordinate to win a tribe’s trust by giving them “a little rum mixed with water.” In order to make sure the Indians felt the full effect of this symbolic exchange, Washington further advised the subordinate to “inform them [it] is procured thro your own influence upon the *White people*, on account of their good Behaviour, and not by virtue of Orders.”<sup>30</sup> Washington wanted the Indians to recognize that their enjoyments were contingent upon their obedience to white authority. In this manner, the colonial military tried to replicate the psychological impact of elite treating by giving alcohol to complaisant tribes while denying it to troublesome ones. The colonial army thereby became elites to the Indian yeomanry; the army’s liberality and beneficence were

---

<sup>29</sup> Unknown Person to Francis Nicholson, 8 December 1702, Francis Nicholson Papers, Special Collections, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia.

<sup>30</sup> Washington, *Writings*, 2:47. (7 June 1757)

calculated efforts to secure military mastery. Mastery, in Virginia society, had to be earned, not commanded.

The tenuousness of this mastery was most obviously on display during electioneering. Contrary to their ideals of deference, elite whites had to court voters in their election campaigns. As Charles Sydnor relates, despite colonial candidates' efforts to appear above the vulgar crowd, "all of them, with hardly an exception, relied on the persuasive powers of food and drink dispensed to the voters with open-handed liberality."<sup>31</sup> It was no fluke, then, when Nicholas Cresswell witnessed a candidate for the Virginia House of Burgesses giving the crowd "a Hogshead of Toddy."<sup>32</sup> Even the fairly moderate George Washington relied on liquid persuasion in his 1758 election campaign. Among the items in his expense bill were fifty gallons of rum punch, fifteen gallons of wine, and thirty gallons of strong beer.<sup>33</sup> Despite the prodigious amounts of alcohol given in these election events, no one considered the elite to be buying votes. Rather than securing an election outcome, to the yeomen, a planter was only doing his duty by his friendly supplying of alcohol. It was more noticeable when an elite did not treat, thereby signifying his aloofness and individualism. Election times were one of the few occasions that yeomen expected to approach gentlemen as friends, not superiors. By cultivating parity between himself and voters, an elite candidate bred feelings of neighborliness and camaraderie. Election treating thereby impressed and complimented the masses while it sought to maintain elite mastery.

---

<sup>31</sup> Charles Sydnor, *American Revolutionaries in the Making: Political Practices in Washington's Virginia* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 53.

<sup>32</sup> Cresswell, *Journal*, 28. (14 July 1774)

<sup>33</sup> Washington, *Writings*, 2:242 (21 July 1758)

At these public drinking events, the boisterous activities of yeomen were often the subject of the elites' amused condescension. A French visitor to Williamsburg was shocked by the court-day spectacle of middling whites "hurrying back and forwards from the Capitoll to the taverns, and at night, Carousing and Drinking."<sup>34</sup> William Byrd witnessed a similar court day where people got "drunk in defiance of the sickness and the bad weather" and jokingly represented them as "great examples of virtue."<sup>35</sup> Drunken yeomen sometimes forgot social protocol during their binges and impinged upon elite privacy. Some gentlemen, such as Robert Carter, were lenient with offenders and used the yeomen's effrontery as opportunities to display their own beneficence. When a yeoman stumbled into Nomini Hall "very drunk, & grew exceeding noisy & troublesome," Carter took pity on the man and allowed him to stay in the kitchen for the night.<sup>36</sup> Other gentlemen were not as forgiving. At a muster, an inebriated soldier affronted his officer, whereupon William Byrd "broke his head in two places."<sup>37</sup> Yeoman boisterousness was indulged, but subjected to admonishment when it offended elite sensibilities.

While gentlemen encouraged ritualistic inebriation at musters and elections, they conducted their own drunken escapades differently. Though they condescendingly smiled upon middling whites' antics at public events, elites mainly overindulged while among their own kind, within the safety of private homes and posh coffeehouses. Drunken gentlemen were a common sight at Robert Carter's Nomini Hall, where a prominent Westmoreland County planter, Joseph Lane, surely felt little embarrassment

---

<sup>34</sup> Anonymous, "Journal of a French Traveler in the Colonies, 1765," *American Historical Review* 26 (1921), 742-743.

<sup>35</sup> Byrd, *Secret Diary*, 173. (3 May 1710)

<sup>36</sup> Fithian, *Journal*, 1773-74, 70. (4 March 1774)

<sup>37</sup> Byrd, *Secret Diary*, 414. (2 October 1711)



when he arrived to dinner “(as they say) ‘Half Seas over.’” Instead, offenders like Lane were indulged; the Carters pleasantly entertained Lane while he “chated noisily til nine.”<sup>38</sup> Similarly, William Byrd did not disparage a peer when he arrived at Byrd’s house drunk. The same intractable Byrd who was intolerant of slave drinking kindly helped the man to his next destination in order to “keep him from falling down the bank.”<sup>39</sup>

In the company of their peers, gentlemen loosened their inhibitions and behaved in a manner not unlike the muster crowds. Among his equals, William Byrd could drop his patriarchal guard and adopt a more congenial manner. At high-society taverns and coffeehouses, Byrd and his friends often “talked very lewdly...and played at dice.”<sup>40</sup> These drinking sessions sometimes became quite raucous, with practical jokes and hijinks taking center stage. On one occasion, Byrd and his friends drank until they were “very merry and then went to the coffeehouse and pulled poor Colonel Churchill out of bed.”<sup>41</sup> Byrd was a repeat offender; the beleaguered Colonel Churchill was the subject of Byrd’s pranks later that week when Byrd, caught up in tavern revelry, became “very merry and in that condition went to the coffeehouse and again disturbed Colonel Churchill.”<sup>42</sup> Byrd found this to be harmless fun, and evidently so did Colonel Churchill, since Byrd mentions no rebuke or hard feelings from that source. These sorts of shenanigans were accepted with little ado as another flamboyant demonstration of the high-flying elite lifestyle. Gentlemen expected acceptance of their escapades and tacitly demanded their indulgence by neighbors. Unlike lower-class whites or slaves, elites did not fear

---

<sup>38</sup> Fithian, *Journal, 1773-74*, 172. (20 August 1774)

<sup>39</sup> Byrd, *London Diary*, 389. (30 March 1720)

<sup>40</sup> Byrd, *Secret Diary*, 442. (23 November 1711)

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 98. (27 October 1709)

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 101. (1 November 1709)

impinging upon accepted decorum. Instead, the very outlandishness of their behavior proved an important point. Rhys Isaac argues that this devil-may-care elite attitude “stemmed from the importance of demonstrating before all the world that one was not a socially immobilized, apparently humbled slave.”<sup>43</sup> When elites drank and misbehaved with their peers, they marked themselves as masters and above the rules that constrained their inferiors.

While these elite binges were excused, inebriation was deemed offensive when it interfered with duty. When William Byrd arrived at Colonel Carter’s Williamsburg lodgings and found the assemblymen there drunk, Byrd found much to criticize. He reminded the gentlemen that they were neglecting their duties as hosts and husbands by idling while their wives waited on their social calls.<sup>44</sup> Drinking was fine, then, as long as it did not interfere with one’s social obligations and leadership roles. Because the failings of dependents were attributed to the moral shortcomings of their guardians, an individual’s neglect of duty quickly resonated throughout society.<sup>45</sup> A 1752 *Virginia Gazette* editorialist urged elites to “discourage Gaming, Swearing, and immoderate Drinking” because such bad habits were already “much practiced among the lower Class of our People...who in all Countries are very apt to follow the Examples of their Superiors.”<sup>46</sup> By neglecting their duties and allowing their inferiors to go unguided, gentlemen opened the door to all forms of chaos and vice and thereby jeopardized the

---

<sup>43</sup> Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 119-120.

<sup>44</sup> Byrd, *Secret Diary*, 432. (3 November 1711)

<sup>45</sup> James Baird, “Between Slavery and Independence: Power Relations Between Dependent White Men and Their Superiors in Late Colonial and Early National Virginia with Particular Reference to the Overseer-Employer Relationship” (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1999), 10.

<sup>46</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, 24 April 1752.

integrity of Virginia society. Leaders were both expected and duty-bound to set the standard for moderation.

Most notably, teachers were expected to maintain a heightened level of sobriety. To Virginians, the influence these instructors had on young minds made their independence from alcohol crucial. Fredericksburg tutor John Harrower's watchful employers so scrutinized his temperance that he complained that he had not "drunk a dram of plain spirits this seven Mo[nths] past."<sup>47</sup> Harrower was wise to abide by their guidelines, for intemperate teachers were subject to censure. Robert Carter was openly disgusted by the professors' antics at the College of William and Mary and determined that "he cannot send his Children with propriety there for Improvement & useful Education" because "he has known the Professors to play all Night at Cards in publick Houses in the City, and has often seen them drunken in the Street."<sup>48</sup> Likewise, William Byrd was outspoken in his disapproval of professorial drinking. One William and Mary teacher, the drunken Mr. Blackamore, took to avoiding Byrd due to Byrd's incessant reprimands. His nervousness had merit; Byrd later campaigned to dismiss Blackamore from his post "for being so great a sot."<sup>49</sup> Teachers could only drink at an appropriate place and time that did not conflict with their duties. John Harrower's employer, as a reward for his sobriety, gave Harrower "two Bottles of the best Rum and some sugar" at Christmas.<sup>50</sup> Such holiday celebrations did not interfere with a teacher's responsibilities to his students. The drunkenness of teachers outside of these sanctioned perimeters was unacceptable.

---

<sup>47</sup> Edward Miles Riley, ed., *The Journal of John Harrower: An Indentured Servant in the Colony of Virginia, 1773-1776* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1963), 73. (6 December 1774)

<sup>48</sup> Fithian, *Journal, 1773-74*, 65. (12 February 1774)

<sup>49</sup> Byrd, *Secret Diary*, 98. (28 October 1709)

<sup>50</sup> Harrower, *Journal*, 79. (25 December 1774)

Drunkenness was even more egregious among clergymen. This may have been due to the ubiquitous public presence of a clergyman—after all, the church was the center of Virginia social life.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps more important, the alcoholic transgressions of clergymen jeopardized the spiritual welfare of an entire community. When, as Nicholas Cresswell witnessed, a clergyman was too inebriated to perform services, the congregation was simply forced to forgo their religious instruction for the week.<sup>52</sup> Without the guidance of a clergyman, the profoundly hierarchical Church of England faltered. Philip Fithian’s congregation was continually frustrated by the lackluster efforts of their leader, Parson Gibbern. Fithian related that Gibbern’s drinking bouts often left him “quite out of his Sences” and totally unequipped to perform his duties. Virginians disdained this behavior in their spiritual leaders. Fithian found Gibbern’s drunkenness a “rare tale this to relate of a Man of God.”<sup>53</sup>

Likewise, female drunkenness garnered disgust. As mothers and wives, women had important duties in the formation of Virginia society. Women were considered integral to the development of their children’s character, as well as to the maintenance of their husband’s virtue. By drinking to intoxication, mothers set a bad example for their spouses and their children, who would be influenced to follow this route in their adult lives. Non-elite women were believed to be particularly susceptible to this folly. Operating on this premise, William Byrd once refused to reimburse a yeoman woman in specie because “it would have been spent in rum.”<sup>54</sup> As with slaves, non-elite women were considered to have essentially licentious natures. Alcohol was believed to unleash

---

<sup>51</sup> Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 58-61.

<sup>52</sup> Cresswell, *Journal*, 52. (1 January 1775)

<sup>53</sup> Fithian, *Journal, 1773-74*, 200. (3 October 1774)

<sup>54</sup> Byrd, *Secret Diary*, 12. (3 March 1709)

these base predilections. When they drank, common women were often described as animalistic, childlike, and utterly lacking in self-restraint. William Byrd was unsurprised when he heard from a captain that Byrd's nurse had gotten "drunk aboard his ship and that smith lay with her."<sup>55</sup> Instead of being concerned about his nurse's possible assault, Byrd believed that drinking had exposed the nurse's inherent lasciviousness. Alcohol obliterated a woman's already tenuous sense of control. One York County woman, appropriately known as "Drunken Frank," fell into the fire while drinking and was found naked and burnt to death. The *Virginia Gazette* used this news to "deter others too much addicted to excessive drinking" but also more subtly to warn any woman who "too often disguis'd herself in Liquor" of the ignominious results.<sup>56</sup> The message was clear: common women were shameful and untrustworthy when they pursued alcohol and did better to stay away from it entirely.

While elite women were regarded more highly than their non-elite counterparts, their drunkenness had worse social consequences. While lower-class female drunkenness was usually considered an individual flaw, in elite circles, female drunkenness was reflective of the quality and integrity of an entire family. Upon visiting his friends the James Blairs, William Byrd was disgusted to find Mrs. Blair drunk. Byrd indignantly noted that drunkenness "is growing pretty common with her" and pitied her family. The Blair family clearly felt the shame of Mrs. Blair's addiction and tried to "disguise it under the name of consolation."<sup>57</sup> Byrd's reaction to Mrs. Blair's condition was one that could jeopardize her family's integrity and right to social prominence. Her drunkenness shamed and discredited her entire family.

---

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 340. (5 May 1711)

<sup>56</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, 27 October 1738.

<sup>57</sup> Byrd, *Secret Diary*, 11. (2 March 1709)

While guardianship over children and students was important in Virginian society, control over slaves was the keystone of its culture. Eighteenth-century Virginians viewed slaves as a restive mass, seething and ready to overthrow them at any time. Overseers, as elites' employees, were the first line in a chain of defense that rose up the Virginian hierarchy. Overseers had a direct, face-to-face contact with slaves, and acted as proxies for the slaves' masters, thus making it essential that they maintained strict mastery over slaves. Consequently, anything that could jeopardize an overseer's ability to control his subordinate slaves was judged to be inappropriate.

As such, plantation owners strictly monitored their overseers' drinking habits, and overseer inebriation was a frequent source of complaint. Landon Carter dismissed at least one overseer for being drunk on the job.<sup>58</sup> He was not alone in his problem; William Byrd had to constantly monitor his overseer to make sure he was sober. All too often, however, Byrd would visit his fields only to find "Mr. G-r-l drunk...and the business not in so good order as I expected." Byrd would berate the young overseer, who "cried and then was peevish" for the rest of the day.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, George Washington felt it prudent to warn his new overseer, Thomas Green, that should drinking make him negligent, Washington would immediately fire him.<sup>60</sup> Elites felt that overseer drinking was both inappropriate and that it jeopardized the proper plantation order that was so crucial to Virginia society.

Not only did elites fastidiously monitor the drinking of their white subordinates, they were also exacting of the manner of their alcohol use. Gentlemen, as society's leaders, felt obligated to maintain moderation and dignity through prescribed drinking

---

<sup>58</sup> Greene, *Colonel Landon Carter*, 1: 331. (9 January 1767)

<sup>59</sup> Byrd, *Secret Diary*, 14. (28 March 1709)

<sup>60</sup> Washington, *Writings*, 30: 263. (31 March 1789)

rules and etiquette. This etiquette involved not simply one's company or location but how one imbibed the alcohol. As Charles Sydnor observed, the "possession of power that was almost dictatorial over his own little world left its mark on the manners and character of the planter."<sup>61</sup> Since elite planters viewed themselves as beneficent monarchs of their own kingdoms, it was imperative that they acted the part. While drinking, a man had to be measured and polite, betraying no dependence on the substance. Guests at Robert Carter's Nomini Hall were disgusted when, while drinking healths, a man "held the Glass of Porter fast with both his Hands, and then gave an insignificant nod to each one at the Table, in Hast, & with fear, & then drank like an Ox." Great offense was taken when it seemed clear that the clueless guest was "better pleased with the Liquor than with the manner in which he was at this Time obliged to use it."<sup>62</sup> Being overenthusiastic in one's pursuit of alcohol revealed a base hunger for material goods unbecoming a white gentleman.

Drinking also did not excuse a gentleman's bad behavior. Elites believed that whites, unlike slaves, possessed self-control and were accountable for their alcoholic weaknesses. When an inebriated Dudley Digges insulted his social superior, "King" Carter, it was a scandal. The shamefaced Digges was panic-stricken by his misstep and not only apologized in person, but sent two relatives to intercede with Carter on his behalf. After a respectable amount of coaxing, Carter forgave the young miscreant and sent two bottles of wine to his interceding relatives to smooth things over.<sup>63</sup> In a more serious case, the *Virginia Gazette* reported in 1775 the execution of William Pittman, who had drunkenly killed his slave. The witnesses for the prosecution were Pittman's

---

<sup>61</sup> Sydnor, *American Revolutionaries*, 16.

<sup>62</sup> Fithian, *Journal, 1773-74*, 138. (12 July 1774)

<sup>63</sup> Carter Papers, Diary 1727-January 1728, Diary Entry for February 3, 1727.

own children, who testified that their father “in the heat of passion, and when in liquor, had, for some triffling offense, tied his poor negro boy by the neck and heels, and beat him most cruelly with a large grape vine, and then stamped him to death.”<sup>64</sup> The court did not view Mr. Pittman’s concurrent inebriation as any excuse for such vile behavior. Likewise, when a Gloucester County ordinary’s ejection of a “quarrelsome and troublesome” drunk resulted in the man’s death, the public had no pity. Though the coroner determined the cause of death to be the rough pushing and subsequent fall, no charges were pursued.<sup>65</sup>

In fact, the inebriated often lay claim to the greater fault in altercations. In a fatal tavern fight between Colonel Chiswell and Robert Rutledge, Chiswell was exonerated, both by the courts and the public, largely due to the fact that Rutledge had been drunk. While with company in the tavern, Chiswell “began to be very liberal of oaths, in conversation, upon which Ru[t][ed]ge who was a friend of C[hiswe]ll signified his displeasure: at which rebuke C[hiswell] called R[utledge] a fugitive rebel, a villain who came to Virginia to cheat & defraud men of their property.” Upon this insult, Rutledge threw a glass of wine at Chiswell, prompting the man to retaliate by stabbing Rutledge through the heart with a saber. Despite his obvious overreaction and his role in instigating the quarrel, Chiswell was believed to be in the right. Robert Carter, relaying the incident to a friend, noted that “it has been said that C[hiswell] was sober, & that R[utledge] was not sober.”<sup>66</sup> In the view of their peers, alcohol had caused Rutledge to lose his sense of place and thereby instigated the fight. Men who lost control due to

---

<sup>64</sup> *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie), 21 April 1775.

<sup>65</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, 2 February 1739.

<sup>66</sup> Robert Carter to Thomas Bladen, 26 July 1766, Robert Carter Letterbook, 1764-1768, Special Collections, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia.



drinking were not to be excused. Unlike slaves, a white's drunken impertinence was not easily forgiven.

Appropriately, alcoholism, the ultimate loss of drinking control, was a major fear of white Virginians. Elites especially feared an alcoholic tendency in lower or middling whites. Time spent idling in drunkenness was considered a luxury that a yeoman's station could not afford. George Washington characterized rum as the "bane of morals and the parent of idleness."<sup>67</sup> Dependence on hard liquor was unfitting for a proper white Virginian. Likewise, William Byrd criticized Norfolk's West Indies trade as contributing towards "debauching the Country by importing [an] abundance of Rum, which, like Ginn in Great Britain, breaks the Constitution, Vitiates the Morals, and ruins the Industry of most of the Poor people of this Country."<sup>68</sup> Inebriation created white idleness and stunted productivity. William Byrd lamented the lost potential of a young yeoman whose "good Father intended for the Mathematicks, but he never cou'd rise higher in that Study than to gage a Rum Cask" due to his constant insobriety.<sup>69</sup> While gentlemen could be idle, lower or middling whites were required to be industrious. Alcoholism potentially stunted productivity and was condemned.

Gentlemen, unlike yeomen, were not warned against idleness, but instead a loss of composure. Proper public demeanor demonstrated a man's gentility and mental soundness. A gentleman was impelled, at all times, to demonstrate his right of leadership in this society through self-control. In the realm of drinking, this required that a gentleman drink moderately in mixed company, and indulge heavily only in the company of his peers at appropriate times. Drinking was part of good living, but drinking to excess

---

<sup>67</sup> Washington, *Writings*, 30: 162. (15 December 1788)

<sup>68</sup> Byrd, *Dividing Line*, 36. (1 March 1728)

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 95-97. (27 March 1728)

risked succumbing to “passion” and becoming unruly—fit to be one of the governed, not the governing.<sup>70</sup> This moderate, deliberate drinking was meant to demonstrate that “there is no greater Argument of a Man’s Wisdom, than an absolute Command of his Temper.”<sup>71</sup> Alcoholism could strip away the façade of a cultured man to betray his base passions. George Washington was amazed by “how little a drunken Man differs from a beast; the latter is not endowed with reason, the former deprives himself of it; and when that is the case acts like a brute.”<sup>72</sup>

Alcoholism was the antithesis of self-mastery. Virginia elites feared alcoholism because it indicated a loss of will and subordination. In his travels throughout North America, Englishman Andrew Burnaby noted that while whites dominated enslaved blacks, they were themselves “impatient of restraint, and can scarcely bear the thought of being controuled by any superior power.”<sup>73</sup> To be dependent on alcohol was to be beholden to a foreign power, one that robbed a white man of his self-sovereignty and leadership. Sabine Hall planter Landon Carter sadly wrote about the death of the local tailor who had “inflamed himself with drink.” Carter had often warned the tailor that such drinking would be his death, but the tailor could not help himself.<sup>74</sup> While this event saddened Carter, it undoubtedly reaffirmed the aging patriarch’s belief that only those who could control their passions should rule.

Though elites believed in their superior capacity for moderate drinking, they nevertheless expected similar efforts from middling whites. The white mass was an all-

---

<sup>70</sup> Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 327.

<sup>71</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, 3-10 December 1736.

<sup>72</sup> Washington, *Writings*, 33: 215. (23 December 1793)

<sup>73</sup> Rev. Andrew Burnaby, *Travels through the Middle Settlements in North-America, in the Years 1759 and 1760*, 2nd ed. (London: T. Payne, 1775), 20.

<sup>74</sup> Carter, *Diary*, 758.

important buffer between elites and the restive slave class, and as such was integral to the maintenance of white rule. If elite gentlemen lived as gods in colonial Virginia, it was important that their white brethren had at least the appearance of demi-gods. Middling whites, then, while not held to the standard of elite propriety, were expected to maintain a decent level of self-mastery in their drinking habits. Perhaps this was the source of William Byrd's alarm when he encountered an alcoholic yeoman family on a frontier expedition. Byrd was disgusted that the "Wife & Heir Apparent were so enclin'd to a cheerfull Cup" that they "made themselves happy every day, before the Sun had run one third of his course."<sup>75</sup> To Byrd, these whites were no better than slaves, and his militia's liquor was not safe in their keeping. Dependency on "Laziness effeminate pleasures [and] drunkenness" stripped sturdy white men of their reason and hinted that whites, like slaves, could be made to be something less than their own masters.<sup>76</sup>

Whites had an obligation to prove themselves superior to perceived black puerility. While elites tolerated drunken yeomen revelry, and themselves drank with conspicuous panache, they still expected white commoners to know and respect the rules of moderate drinking. Drinking as refinement, loyalty, and neighborliness were accepted and encouraged. Alcoholism, however, connoted unmanly dependence and social upheaval and was therefore scorned. To guard against this, elites dictated drinking etiquette and used their adherence to these rules to underscore their gentility and right to rule. Elites did not hold other whites to this same standard, but expected them instead to conduct their drinking in an orderly manner that would sharply contrast with the animalistic and indulgent drinking culture of slaves. A white man's drinking reflected

---

<sup>75</sup> Byrd, *Dividing Line*, 95. (27 March 1728)

<sup>76</sup> Carter Papers, Diary, 1722-1727, Diary Entry for July 21, 1723.

not only on himself but on the integrity of the white community's ascendancy in Virginia slave society. The *Virginia Gazette* editorialist who opined that man, "as a reasonable Creature, is a sociable One; and so long as he keeps within the Rules of Reason and society, he must of Course desire and seek the Welfare of the whole Community," unwittingly articulated this ethic.<sup>77</sup> The need to maintain and outwardly demonstrate the virtues of the white community was the keystone of elite drinking attitudes.

---

<sup>77</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, 28 January 1736 – 4 February 1736.

## CONCLUSION

From the everyday, social uses of alcohol to formal toasting, white drinking culture manifested the values and tensions of eighteenth-century Virginia society. The foremost of these tensions was racial, and accordingly, drinking culture was profoundly racialized. White expectations of drinking conduct differed drastically between the races. Blacks were perceived as child-like and animalistic, with no capacity for self-control. White Virginians believed that slaves, if left to their own devices, would easily fall into alcoholism and negligent behavior. Plantation owners therefore tried to control slave consumption of alcohol in order encourage plantation production by drawing slaves into a community in which the master was both benevolent and omnipotent. Slave misbehavior or negligence was usually dismissed with only minor punishment, because it was attributed to the natural wantonness of the simple bondspeople. Such misbehavior was inoffensive because it reinforced the notion that slaves were meant to be powerless, because they did not even have power over their own impulses.

In contrast, whites held much greater expectations of personal rectitude during their own social drinking. Drinking etiquette, because it encouraged moderation and self-control, played into elite ideals of white male leadership. In a letter to John Christian Ehler, George Washington lamented the corrosive effects of alcohol: "By degrees it renders a person feeble and not only unable to serve others but to help himself, and being

an act of his own he fall[s] from a state of usefulness into contempt.”<sup>1</sup> White males had a duty to lead and maintain social order. White adherence to accepted drinking etiquette reinforced this order. By disregarding etiquette—whether by giving alcohol to another man’s slaves or through alcoholism—whites subverted the very society that ensured their privilege. Instead of being useful, such a man was contemptible, and his leadership forfeit. He became, in essence, like a slave: cultureless, passionate, and abject—a master of no one.

Drinking was an imperfect system of social control. While drinking customs cultivated elite domination, at the same time they also provided disadvantaged groups with a tool for advancement. For instance, by playing into their master’s low expectations, slaves used their drunkenness to control work conditions and to bargain for greater privileges. Likewise, instead of creating an unassailable elite dominance, drinking culture blurred the line between gentlemen and yeomen. Because drinking etiquette was the province of white culture, gentlemen included yeomen in their expectations of drinking propriety. By doing so, elite gentlemen bound yeomen to the upper strata of Virginian society—white society—where they were more valued for their skin color than devalued for their class.

In the struggle to maintain their own dominance, Virginia gentlemen developed a drinking code of conduct that at times actually undercut class divisions. While these drinking customs often buttressed a tripartite class hierarchy of slave, yeoman, and the elite, they more commonly split Virginia society into two parts—black and white. Because symbolic role-playing and face-to-face contact characterized Virginia society,

---

<sup>1</sup> John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington*, 39 vols. (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1931), 33:215. (23 December 1793)

this racialized drinking culture became all the more pervasive. In Virginia, every gesture, every toast, and every drink reward was part of a dialogue about who should lead—and who should be led.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## PRIMARY SOURCES

- Anonymous. "Journal of a French Traveler in the Colonies, 1765." *American Historical Review* 26 (1921): 70-89.
- Boyd, Julian P., ed. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*. 32 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950--.
- Burnaby, Rev. Andrew. *Travels through the Middle Settlements in North-America, in the Years 1759 and 1760*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: T. Payne, 1775.
- Byrd, William. *William Byrd's Histories of the Dividing Line Betwixt Virginia and North Carolina*. With an introduction by William K. Boyd. New York: Dover, 1967.
- Carter, Robert. Robert Carter Diary, 1722-1727. Robert Carter Papers. Albert H. Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.
- Robert Carter Diary, 1727-January 1728. Robert Carter Papers. Albert H. Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.
- Robert Carter Letter Book, 1720 July – 1721 July. Huntington Library, Arts Collections and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, California.
- Carter, Robert. Robert Carter Letterbook, 1764-1768. Special Collections. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia.
- Carter, Robert Wormeley. Robert Wormeley Carter Diaries, 1764-1792. Special Collections. Rockefeller Library, Williamsburg, Virginia.
- Cresswell, Nicholas. *The Journal of Nicholas Cresswell, 1774-1777*. New York: Dial Press, 1924.
- Davis, John. *Travels of four years and a half in the United States of America: during 1798, 1799, 1800, 1801, and 1802*. New York: H. Holt and Company, 1909.



- Donnan, Elizabeth, ed. *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*. 4 vols. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1930-1935. Reprint, New York: Octagon Books, 1969.
- Eddis, William. *Letters From America*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969.
- Farish, Hunter Dickinson, ed. *Journal & Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, 1773-1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion*. Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg, 1957.
- Fitzpatrick, John C., ed. *The Writings of George Washington*. 39 vols. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1931.
- Fontaine Family. Fontaine-Maury Papers Part II, 1737-1937. Special Collections. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia.
- Greene, Jack P., ed. *The Diary of Colonel Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, 1752-1778*. 2 vols. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1965.
- Jarratt, Devereux. *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*. New York: Arno Press, 1969.
- Jerdone, Francis. Francis Jerdone Memorandum Book. Special Collections, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Williamsburg, Virginia.
- Madison Sr., James. Account Book, 1755-1763. James Madison Papers. Special Collections, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library. Williamsburg, Virginia.
- Nicholson, Francis. Francis Nicholson Papers. Special Collections. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia.
- Pecquet du Bellet, Louise. *Some Prominent Virginia Families*, 4 vols. Lynchburg: J.P. Bell Company, 1907.
- Powell, Leven. Leven Powell Papers. Special Collections, Swem Library, College of William and Mary. Williamsburg, Virginia.
- Riley, Edward Miles, ed. *The Journal of John Harrower: An Indentured Servant in the Colony of Virginia, 1773-1776*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963.
- Roberts, Kenneth and Anna M. Roberts, eds. *M.L.E. Moreau de St. Mère's American Journey [1793-1798]*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1947.

*Virginia Gazette* (Parks)

*Virginia Gazette* (Purdie)

*Virginia Gazette* (Purdie & Dixon)

*Virginia Gazette* (Rind)

Wright, Louis B. and Marion Tinling, eds. *William Byrd of Virginia: The London Diary (1717-1721) and Other Writings*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1958.

-----*The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1709-1712*. Richmond: Dietz Press, 1941.

#### PUBLISHED SECONDARY SOURCES

Barrows, Susanna and Robin Room, eds. *Drinking: Behavior and Belief in Modern History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

Berlin, Ira. *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998.

Breen, T.H. "Horses and Gentlemen: The Cultural Significance of Gambling among the Gentry of Virginia." *William and Mary Quarterly* 34 (April 1977): 239-257.

Brown, Kathleen M. *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

Bushman, Richard L. *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992.

Fischer, David Hackett. *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Genovese, Eugene D. *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*. New York: Vintage Books, 1972.

Isaac, Rhys. *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982.

Kulikoff, Allan. *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986.

- Lockridge, Kenneth A. *On the Sources of Patriarchal Rage: The Commonplace Books of William Byrd and Thomas Jefferson and the Gendering of Power in the Eighteenth Century*. New York: New York University Press, 1992.
- Matthews, Richard K., ed. *Virtue, Corruption, and Self-Interest: Political Values in the Eighteenth Century*. Bethlehem, Pennsylvania: Lehigh University Press, 1994.
- Morgan, Philip D. *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake & Lowcountry*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.
- Morgan, Edmund S. *American Slavery American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1975.
- Parent, Jr. Anthony S. *Foul Means: The Formation of a Slave Society in Virginia, 1660-1740*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.
- Pearson, C.C. and J. Edwin Hendricks. *Liquor and Anti-Liquor in Virginia, 1619-1919*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1967.
- Rorabaugh, W.J. *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Rozbicki, Michal J. *The Complete Colonial Gentleman: Cultural Legitimacy in Plantation America*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998.
- Salinger, Sharon V. *Taverns and Drinking in Early America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.
- Sobel, Mechal. *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.
- Sydnor, Charles. *American Revolutionaries in the Making: Political Practices in Washington's Virginia*. New York: Collier Books, 1962.

#### UNPUBLISHED SECONDARY SOURCES

- Baird, James. "Between Slavery and Independence: Power Relations Between Dependent White Men and Their Superiors in Late Colonial and Early National Virginia with Particular Reference to the Overseer-Employer Relationship." Ph.D. diss., Department of History, The Johns Hopkins University, 1999.
- Gibbs, Patricia Ann. "Taverns in Tidewater Virginia, 1700-1774." M.A. Thesis, Department of History, College of William and Mary, 1968.

Morgan, Timothy E. "Turmoil in an Orderly Society: Colonial Virginia, 1607-1754; A History and Analysis." PhD. Diss., Department of History, College of William and Mary, 1976.

## VITA

Sarah Elizabeth King

Sarah Elizabeth King was born and raised in Homewood, Illinois. In 1999, she graduated from Homewood-Flossmoor Community High School in Flossmoor, Illinois. In 2003, Sarah graduated *summa cum laude* with a B.A. in History and American Studies from Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington, Illinois. She entered the History M.A. program at the College of William and Mary in 2003. She is currently working at the National Institute of American History and Democracy in Williamsburg, Virginia.