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CONSTRUCTING AND CROSSING COLOR LINES:
RACE AND RELIGION IN THE SOUTHERN CONFLUENCE, 1810-1865

A Dissertation
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Arch Dalrymple III Department of History
The University of Mississippi

by

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May 2019

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ABSTRACT

This project argues that the lives of African, European, and Native American peoples collided in North Mississippi between 1810 and 1865 in a “Southern confluence,” in which the lives of diverse peoples intersected as they maneuvered within the complexity of a new society. From the 1810s and through the 1840s, European Americans who arrived in North Mississippi hoped to impose their dominance by flattening the region’s diversity through “civilizing” the Chickasaws, removing them, and imposing a strict race-based system of slavery. Faced with increasing pressure to “civilize” and the specter of forced removal, elite Chickasaws accentuated their relationship to the race-based system of chattel slavery. In religious, political, and legal spaces, elite Chickasaws emphasized their status as free property holders to assert their own sovereignty and right to recognition separate from the unfreedom associated with African-descended enslaved people. During and after Chickasaws’ forced removal through the 1850s, Protestant religious beliefs reinforced European Americans’ vision of a biracial and white supremacist society based on order and black subjugation. Black people, however, continued to challenge the color line in Mississippi long after Indian Removal by appealing to indigenous ancestry and by carving out a religious and spiritual space for themselves separate from white people. Although white people attempted to order and flatten a complicated and diverse past and impose strict order on an unstable social and physical landscape, their attempts were never

entirely successful.

As an important geographic, social, and cultural meeting point, the Southern confluence demonstrates the intersections of multiple, seemingly oppositional forces alongside of one another: cultural exchange with a white supremacist racial hierarchy; native social and economic power with colonialism; enslaved people's dignity within a capitalistic system; a biracial color line with a triracial reality; and a slave society structured around religious notions of order and enslaved people's desire to test its limits. The concept of a "Southern confluence," then, reveals the lives of Europeans, Africans, and Natives within the same interpretive frame while also acknowledging multi-layered and intersecting power dynamics.

Using ethnographic accounts, oral histories, government documents, census data, church and mission records, personal diaries and journals, and other public records, the project contributes to and revises the work of other scholars on the Native South, capitalism and slavery, and Southern religion. It builds upon the work of scholars who argue that the antebellum South emerged from an older South that included European American colonizers who lived among enslaved people and shared cultural and economic ties with the Chickasaws. Within the Southern confluence, Chickasaws' embrace and defense of race-based slavery reveals the intersection of colonial exploitation and enslaving. A focus on Native Americans' enslaving practices, in addition to the making of the antebellum household and its link to religious doctrine and institutions at a localized level, further clarifies recent scholarship that highlights the links

between slavery and capitalism as well as work that deals with Southern religion. The viability of the household rested on white women's willingness and ability to uphold its basic foundations within a capitalist world economy, in which the white Southern enslavers and their property were fully ingratiated. To manage their households, white Southern women used the capitalistic tools they learned in schools, backed by religious institutions, and often cloaked their economic activities in a spiritual language. The project also uses a concept of "Black sacred space" to demonstrate how enslaved people critiqued religious justifications for white household organization. To understand the lives of enslaved people within Black sacred spaces, this project builds upon the work of historians who have interpreted music, folklore, language, and healing as constitutive of enslaved people's religious lives in both the walls of churches and the setting of brush arbors. The project concludes by considering the long term ramifications of the racially stratified and religious society created in the Southern confluence between the 1810s and 1860s. The structures that served as the foundation of antebellum society in North Mississippi resonated among elite white women during the twentieth century.

DEDICATION

For my parents, Brad and Betty Rogers.

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This dissertation would not have come to fruition without an immense support network of mentors, colleagues, friends, and family. Foremost, I thank my advisor, Elizabeth Payne. Along with an encyclopedic knowledge of Mississippi history and a brilliant critical eye, she offered me intellectual freedom and creativity in constructing this project. I am continually amazed at her candor and approach to posing historical questions. Our “tour” of North Mississippi will remain one of the highlights of conducting this research. Dr. Payne creates community among all of her graduate students by inviting them into the home that she shares with her husband, Ken Rutherford. I am humbled by their generosity. Dr. Payne’s mentorship has provided me with both a personal and professional model that I can only hope to emulate in the future. Her advocacy for students is tireless and boundless. My other committee members each offered unique support and encouragement along the way. Charles Reagan Wilson always has a clear and concise way of articulating my thoughts in ways that I sometimes fail to project onto the page. Since we first met, he has championed my work and encouraged me to read and think widely. Mikaëla Adams provided my first extensive foray into Native American history with her graduate seminar. In the process, she gave me new directions for my research. I am in awe of her scholarship and ability to succinctly characterize a given historical moment. Her comments on this project forced me to more clearly articulate myself and gave me avenues for further research. From the start, Jarod Roll made sure that my project posed new and answered older

historiographical questions. He urged me to think about the national implications of a project that centered one region. Robbie Ethridge came on board with my project well after I had started research. Her direct critiques showed me the importance of better defining the terms and parameters of my arguments. I am grateful for Jodi Skipper's support, which began long before the dissertation process during my time as a research assistant for the Behind the Big House project in Marshall County, Mississippi. Her ability to engage with the public and contemporary issues provides a model for how scholars can bring the past into the present to impact local communities in positive ways. Any mistakes in this dissertation are my own.

Funding from internal and external sources made this project possible. In the Arch Dalrymple III Department of History, the Dalrymple fund awarded me with money for travel and writing. I am grateful to the Dalrymple family, especially Martha Dowd Dalrymple, who met with me in Amory, Mississippi during the fall of 2015. I benefitted from her father's published knowledge of North Mississippi, and I hope that this project continues his legacy. Additionally, I received funding from the University of Mississippi's Graduate School, Graduate Council, and Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. Beyond the University of Mississippi, funding for this project came from a summer fellowship through the National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute Program for College and University Teachers, a John Pine Memorial Award from Phi Alpha Theta, a travel grant from the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic, a research associateship the Mississippi Arts Commission, a Lynn E.

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All historians benefit from the knowledge and expertise of archivists and librarians. At the University of Mississippi, Jennifer Ford and Lauren Rogers often pulled collections for me with late notice and responded to my queries at length. At Mississippi State University, I appreciate the help of Mattie Abraham early in the project and later, Jennifer McGillan, who responded to a request at a crucial point during the dissertation's completion. The staff at the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives braved a snow day in Nashville during the winter of 2016 and opened for me to conduct research. In Jackson, Mississippi, at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, I appreciate guidance and conversations with Katie Blount and Clinton Bagley. I am also grateful to the archival staff in the Manuscripts Division at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. and in the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the teachers and professors who set me on this path. At Person High School, JoAnne Blanks saw in me a potential writer and historian. Later,

at North Carolina State University at Raleigh, I benefitted from the mentorship of Susanna Lee, who took me under her wing and recommended me for the Department of History's honors program. Susanna first opened the world of the nineteenth century in all of its complexity and demonstrated the present-day implications of what seemed like a distant past. Katherine Mellen Charron also served as a mentor. In her seminar on the U.S. South, I began to understand my past and my family's past in new ways. Both Susanna and Kat encouraged me to apply to graduate school for history instead of law school. I am so glad that I chose to become a historian. I would make a horrible attorney. I am happy that we continue to "visit" with each other as colleagues at conferences and when our schedules align during my trips home to North Carolina.

The University of Mississippi's Arch Dalrymple III Department of History is a premiere institution for those who want to study Southern history, race, and religion. Current and former department chairs Noell Wilson, Jeff Watt, and Joseph Ward and current and former graduate coordinators Marc Lerner and Chiarella Esposito created a graduate program that I was proud to call home. Administrative staff, including Kelly Brown Houston, Suneetha Chittiboyina, Sherra Jones, Patricia Stewart, Glenna Bachman, and Betty Harness, ironed out a number of bureaucratic issues over the years, including funding and trouble with paperwork. I benefitted from courses with Mikaëla Adams, Nancy Bercaw, Deirdre Cooper Owens, Jesse Cromwell, Charles Eagles, Chiarella Esposito, Lester Field, Susan Grayzel, Darren Grem, April Holm, John

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Krauthamer, Angela Pulley Hudson, Shennette Garrett-Scott, Susanna Lee, and Susan O'Donovan improved my analysis and gave way to larger research questions. Comments from the audiences at each conference led to new sources and provided helpful feedback. I am grateful for the collegiality of my co-panelists including Julie Reed, Dawn Peterson, and Derek McKissick. Nakia D. Parker, in particular, deserves special attention for co-organizing panels or agreeing to participate. I appreciate our friendship and conversations about slavery and the Native South. In addition to the aforementioned scholars, Andrew Frank and Angela Pulley Hudson welcomed me into the world of scholars who study the Native South and race. I thank them for their mentorship.

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From a young age, my biological family, the Woods and the Rogerses, instilled in me the importance of reading. I thank Tommy and Bridget Rogers, Gary and Jane Church, and Judy

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Aside from myself, Jillian McClure is the only other person who has lived with this project on a day-to-day basis. She is my partner in life, my scholarly equal, and my soulmate. She has listened to me develop every thought and argument associated with this project and has read nearly every word on these pages. She has torn my writing to shreds and poked holes in my arguments, but she has also lifted me up when I needed it the most. I admire her grace, intellect, sophistication, and critical eye. Every day is happiness when I come home to Jillian and our family, including our two "dog-ters" Ella Baker and Florence Kelley McRogers. Quite simply,

when the going gets rough, her love is enough for me. Now it's her turn to finish writing, and my turn to lift her up.

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INTRODUCTION

From a young age, I knew that I descended from a family who enslaved people of African descent during the nineteenth century. In fact, one of my paternal family lines, the Bradsher family, comprised a group of the most prominent enslavers in Person County, North Carolina, located on the state's border with central Virginia. As a child, under the shade of large oak trees at my paternal grandparents' home, I heard numerous stories about my grandmother's family. Like many other white southern families, mine descends from Europeans, but the stories they told always included African American and Native American peoples, to varying degrees and for better or for worse. When I decided to enter graduate school for history, I knew that I wanted to study the history of the South in all of its complexity. I wanted to uncover the lives of white, black, and native southerners, the experiences of whom I knew overlapped from family lore. Inspired by the work of historians of the United States South and African Americans, I wrote a master's thesis on slavery in North Mississippi during the mid-nineteenth century. I continued that research as a doctoral student, with the intention of bringing more native southerners to the forefront and understanding how multiple groups competed for and shared space in North Mississippi. During my research, I encountered the same challenges and triumphs that other historians face: documents that did not exist, people who shared too little, records that proved difficult to find, and handwriting that appeared illegible, among other issues. I could not have predicted, however, that I would find myself at the intersection of my own

family and the subject of my research.

In general, over the course of research, census records and genealogical accounts helped me to clarify individuals' movements across time and space. During my routine browsing of census and genealogical materials, I discovered a cemetery record for my fifth great grandfather, William Deaver, whose grave is located in the Early Grove community of Marshall County, close to the Mississippi-Tennessee border. Other than the appearance of names in my family tree, I knew nothing about the Deaver family. After more digging through genealogical books at my paternal grandparents' home, I found that William Deaver's granddaughter, my third great grandmother, Rebecca Deaver, married into the prominent, enslaving Bradsher family of Person County, North Carolina. As I further combed records to trace William Deaver's steps, I discovered that he moved from Buncombe County, located in the Appalachian region of North Carolina, to Marshall County in 1852, after the death of his son, Reuben, my fourth great grandfather. William Deaver lived in Early Grove with his other son Elijah, the head of a household with fifteen enslaved people in 1850. Three years later, in 1855, William Deaver died in Marshall County at the age of ninety-one.¹ I had long known that my family reflected the broader legacy of slavery in the U.S., but I could not have predicted that I would find direct ancestors while researching a project that I started over half a decade prior to my discovery of the Deaver family.

This project is not about my family, William Deaver, or Elijah Deaver, or my own connections to the institution of slavery in the U.S. I have no personal stake in telling the Deaver

¹ 1850 U.S. Federal Census – Slave Schedules, *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*, M432, roll 390, Record Group 29, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

story or reviving the intricacies of their interior motivations. I only uncovered my relationship to the Deavers of North Mississippi in 2016. As my paternal grandmother stated when I recounted the story to her, “They aren’t our folks.” We do not know the Deaver family, and Rebecca Deaver Bradsher, our direct Deaver connection, died in 1918, fourteen years before my paternal grandmother’s birth. I cannot feel guilt or shame for the sins committed by my ancestors, but I can recognize that racial slavery and its cognates paved a longer trajectory with consequences that continue to structure our present-day realities. At the same time, I understand that reinterpreting familiar histories and recovering stories of marginalized peoples can provide a sense of restorative justice for society to move forward in a more equitable manner.

I outline the Deaver story because, as historical actors, they embodied the processes that transformed the Deep South from the 1810s through the 1860s. As European-descended people from North Carolina, a state located on the eastern seaboard, the Deavers, in all likelihood, hoped to make the fortunes that drew so many others like them to North Mississippi. They bought cheap land that had been stolen from Chickasaw Indians, whose presence continued to mark the region’s landscape for several generations after forced removal during the 1830s. Elijah Deaver organized a household, with himself as the head of other dependents, including his wife and their children. He also owned several enslaved people whose lives and stories remain etched, nameless, into the slave schedules of the census as statistics with ages and racial descriptors like “black” and “mulatto.” Though the Deavers are not the focus of this project, their fates intertwined with the white, black, and Indian people covered here in greater detail, and they inhabited a society and culture organized around white supremacy, proslavery ideology, and Calvinism.

The Deavers, and others like them, entered North Mississippi, where the lives of Chickasaw Indians, European Americans, and African Americans collided between the 1810s and the 1860s. This dissertation will treat North Mississippi as a “Southern confluence,” derived from Stephen Aron’s “American confluence” term for the lower Missouri Valley that “extended back on both sides of the Mississippi, principally, though not exclusively, between the mouths of the Missouri and Ohio Rivers.” With vague boundaries, Aron’s “confluence region” evolved from “a place of overlapping borderlands to one of oppositional border states” characterized by the “meetings of peoples” and “intercultural negotiations.”²

A “meeting point” at the most basic level, the “Southern confluence” will provide a new way to think about the cultural and social evolution of North Mississippi. As a geographic marker and a sociocultural process, the southern confluence provides a lens into place and the coexistence of diverse peoples from three distinct traditions—African, European, and Native American. Like a rope with distinct yet intricate and twisted threads, the southern confluence demonstrates the intersections of multi-layered, seemingly oppositional forces alongside of one another: cultural exchange with a white supremacist racial hierarchy; native social and economic power with colonialism; enslaved people’s dignity within a capitalistic system; a biracial color line with a triracial reality; and a slave society structured around religious notions of order and enslaved people’s desire to test its limits. The concept of a “Southern confluence,” then, allows us to view the lives of Europeans, Africans, and Natives within the same interpretive frame while also acknowledging multi-layered and intersecting power dynamics.

² Stephen Aron, *American Confluence: The Missouri Frontier from Borderland to Border State* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), xiii, xv, xvii.

The project, thus, argues that during the nineteenth century, African, European, and Native American peoples inhabited a “Southern confluence” in which their lives intersected as they maneuvered the complexity of a new society. From the 1810s and through the 1840s, European Americans who arrived in North Mississippi hoped to impose their dominance by flattening the region’s diversity by “civilizing” the Chickasaws, removing them, and imposing a strict race-based system of slavery. At the same time, faced with increasing pressure to “civilize” and the specter of forced removal, elite Chickasaws accentuated their relationship to the race-based system of chattel slavery. In religious, political, and legal spaces, elite Chickasaws emphasized their status as free property holders to assert their own sovereignty and right to recognition separate from the unfreedom associated with African-descended enslaved people. During and after Chickasaws’ forced removal through the 1850s, Protestant religious beliefs reinforced European Americans’ vision of a biracial and white supremacist society based on order and black subjugation. Black people, however, continued to challenge the color line in Mississippi long after Indian Removal by appealing to indigenous ancestry and by carving out a religious and spiritual space for themselves separate from white people. Although white people attempted to order and flatten a complicated and diverse past and impose strict order on an unstable social and physical landscape, their attempts were never entirely successful.

This project builds upon and revises the work of other scholars in the Native South, southern religion, and capitalism and slavery. Historians and anthropologists of the Native South have analyzed the Chickasaws from the invasion of Europeans during the fifteenth century through forced removal from their North Mississippi homelands during the nineteenth century. Until the 2000s, historian Arrell M. Gibson’s *The Chickasaws*, published in 1971, stood as the

standard interpretation of Chickasaw culture, diplomacy, politics, and social structure. Gibson's racially deterministic assumptions, however, led him to make questionable assertions regarding Chickasaw kinship ties and political dynamics.³ Over the last two decades, historians and anthropologists have more fully elucidated the world that Chickasaws inhabited after European and European Americans' invasions. Anthropologist Robbie Ethridge explicates dispersal of the Mississippian chiefdoms during the sixteenth century, and charts the emergence of the Chickasaws in the colonial world through the eighteenth century.⁴ James R. Atkinson brings the broadest chronological interpretation to date with a focus on the Chickasaws until Indian Removal in his vital reference work, notable for its synthesis of ethnographic, diplomatic, and government documents.⁵ Other scholarship on the Chickasaw Indians prior to Removal addresses their beliefs, customs, and practices within a broad matrix of geopolitics and colonization. Historian James Taylor Carson's essay on Chickasaw women locates gender within the spiritual matrices of power and production. A matrilineal society, Chickasaw Indians traced status and kinship through women, whose "power was tied to land and horticulture." The antebellum market revolution altered traditional Chickasaw gender roles as women began to perform tasks associated with animal husbandry—a realm previously reserved for men. As cotton became the South's chief staple crop, Chickasaw women learned how to spin and weave to make clothing to provide family resources. The combination of newly centralized political

³ Arrell M. Gibson, *The Chickasaws* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971)

⁴ Robbie Ethridge, *From Chickaza to Chickasaw: The European Invasion and the Transformation of the Mississippian World, 1540-1715* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

⁵ James R. Atkinson, *Splendid Land, Splendid People: The Chickasaw Indians to Removal* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004)

authority in the hands of Chickasaw men with wealthy wives and female kin by Removal in the 1830s and women's limited economic roles weakened Chickasaw women's political authority.⁶ Historian Barbara Krauthamer's comprehensive account situates Chickasaws' ownership of enslaved people and creation of a racial ideology as part of their greater participation in the antebellum market economy and adaptation to European American customs.⁷

This project builds upon the work of scholars who argue that the antebellum South emerged from an older South that included European American colonizers who lived among enslaved people and shared cultural and economic ties with the Chickasaws. The erasure of Indians in histories of the Old South, furthermore, contributes to a "structural amnesia" that deems their stories as "insignificant" and thus "relegated to historical oblivion."⁸ As ethnohistorian Charles Hudson contends, "any approach to Southern history which fails to account of these complexities in the larger social situation must necessarily fail to adequately account for any major part of the history of the Old South," a place and space in which "racial divisions were cross-cut with cultural and economic divisions."⁹ Historian James Taylor Carson,

⁶ James Taylor Carson, "Choctaw and Chickasaw Women, 1690-1834," in *Mississippi Women: Their Histories, Their Lives—Volume 2*, edited by Elizabeth Anne Payne, Martha H. Swain, and Marjorie Julian Spruill (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 7-18

⁷ Barbara Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters: Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the Native American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 17, 46-48. For more on Chickasaws, see Otis W. Pickett, "T.C. Stuart and the Monroe Mission among the Chickasaw in Mississippi, 1819-1834," *Native South* 8 (2015): 63-88; Wendy St. Jean, *Remaining Chickasaw in Indian Territory, 1830s-1907* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011); Amanda L. Paige, Fuller L. Bumpers, and Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., *Chickasaw Removal* (Ada: Chickasaw Press, 2010).

⁸ Arica L. Coleman, *That the Blood Stay Pure: African Americans, Native Americans, and the Predicament of Race and Identity in Virginia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 16.

⁹ Charles M. Hudson, ed., *Red, White, and Black: Symposium on Indians in the Old*

furthermore, argues that the landscape existed as a “moral space” that reflected and incubated the values of the people who inhabited it in the Native South. “More than the place of contact,” landscape signifies a “space of contest” that “carries the competing cultural perceptions and economic and social relations of both native and nonnative societies.”¹⁰ Recent historians have incorporated Native Americans into their analyses of North American slavery.¹¹ Collectively they challenge notions of Native Americans’ slaveholding practices as benign or mere adaptations to market forces. Their work attests to the existence of a tri-racial American South as a response to scholars who had portrayed the South as biracial. Place names, archaeological evidence, and lines of descent among African Americans stood as perverse yet enduring tributes to the land’s aboriginal inhabitants and a testament to the relationships forged within the context of race-based slavery.

A convergence of African American, European American, and Native American cultures

South (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1971), 2.

¹⁰ James Taylor Carson, “Ethnogeography and the Native American Past,” *Ethnohistory* 49 (Fall 2002): 769, 783.

¹¹ See Pickett, “T.C. Stuart and the Monroe Mission among the Chickasaw in Mississippi, 1819-1834”; Coleman, *That the Blood Stay Pure*; Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters*; Angela Pulley Hudson, *Creek Paths and Federal Roads: Indians, Settlers, and Slaves and the Making of the American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Tiya Miles, *The House on Diamond Hill: A Cherokee Plantation Story* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Celia E. Naylor, *African Cherokees in Indian Territory: From Chattel to Citizens* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Fay A. Yarbrough, *Race and the Cherokee Nation: Sovereignty in the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Tiya Miles, *Ties that Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Claudio Saunt, *Black, White, and Indian: Race and the Unmaking of an American Family* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Alan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

and societies, then, marked the South during the first half of the nineteenth century.¹² Historian Christina Snyder challenges scholars to look toward “crossings” of peoples, societies, and cultures within particular geographic spaces during the early nineteenth century.¹³ With Snyder’s advice in mind, this project examines colonizing and colonized voices in relation to one another instead of treating identity as static. It reveals how Chickasaws maneuvered among Southeastern Indian, African American, and European American societies and cultures.¹⁴

Many scholars self-consciously employ settler colonial theory to understand the power dynamics behind European Americans’ intrusion of Native American lands and establishment of

¹² For examples related to the Native South and its connections to both African America and European America, see Kendra Taira Field, *Growing Up with the Country: Family, Race, and Nation after the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); Natalie R. Inman, *Brothers and Friends: Kinship in Early America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017); Dawn Peterson, *Indians in the Family: Adoption and the Politics of Antebellum Expansion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017); Christina Snyder, *Great Crossings: Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in the Age of Jackson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Mikaëla M. Adams, *Who Belongs?: Race, Resources, and Tribal Citizenship in the Native South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Angela Pulley Hudson, *Real Native Genius: How an Ex-Slave and a White Mormon Became Famous Indians* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Honor Sachs, *Home Rule: Households, Manhood, and National Expansion on the Eighteenth-Century Kentucky Frontier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015); Coleman, *That the Blood Stay Pure*; Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters*; Hudson, *Creek Paths and Federal Roads*; Miles, *The House on Diamond Hill*; Naylor, *African Cherokees in Indian Territory*; Gary Zellar, *African Creeks: Estelveste and the Creek Nation* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007); Yarbrough, *Race and the Cherokee Nation*; Tiya Miles and Sharon P. Holland, eds., *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Andrew K. Frank, *Creeks and Southerners: Biculturalism on the Early American Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005); Miles, *Ties that Bind*; Saunt, *Black, White, and Indian*; James F. Brooks, ed., *Confounding the Color Line: The Indian-Black Experience in North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002); Jack D. Forbes, *Africans and Native Americans: The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Hudson, *Red, White, and Black*.

¹³ Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 5, 17.

¹⁴ Frank, *Creeks and Southerners*, 4.

new societies, but this project proposes the notion of a “southern confluence” as an alternative.¹⁵ This does not deny the imposition of a settler colonial state in North Mississippi, but instead points to theoretical weaknesses. The southern confluence exposes how settler colonialism—as a theory—falls short of capturing the multiple layers of power in the Native South and the experiences of Southeastern Indians within the same frame. As an analytical tool and an alternative to settler colonial theory, the notion of a “southern confluence,” allows for a focus on personal relationships rather than institutional structures to emphasize the agency and complicity of indigenous peoples in transforming settler colonies. Interpersonal connections forged in the context of slavery and Indian Removal propped a matrix of white supremacy that connected individuals in the Deep South to the eastern seaboard. Scholars of settler colonialism tend to focus on the nature of institutionalized imperial dimensions of Indian Removal at the local, state, and national levels.¹⁶ Historian Lori J. Dagggar’s study of the civilization policy in Ohio Country, for instance, characterizes a layered state-driven “mission complex” that linked mission work to colonization, economic development, networks of market and capital, and cross-cultural negotiation amid the U.S.’s westward expansion.¹⁷ By focusing on a “mission complex,” Dagggar

¹⁵ For an overview of settler colonialism, see Mikal Brotnov Eckstrom and Margaret D. Jacobs, “Teaching American History as Settler Colonialism,” in *Why You Can’t Teach United States History without American Indians*, edited by Susan Sleeper-Smith, Juliana Barr, Jean M. O’Brien, Nancy Shoemaker, and Scott Manning Stevens (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 261-265.

¹⁶ See also Jodi A. Byrd, “Souths as Prologues: Indigeneity, Race, and the Temporalities of Land; or, Why I Can’t Read William Faulkner,” in *Faulkner and the Native South*, edited by Jay Watson, Annette Trefzer, and James G. Thomas, Jr. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2019), 15-32; Jodi A. Byrd, “A Return to the South,” *American Quarterly* 66 (September 2014): 609-620.

¹⁷ Lori J. Dagggar, “The Mission Complex: Economic Development, ‘Civilization,’ and Empire in the Early Republic,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 36 (Fall 2016): 467-491; See also

deals primarily with empire and its enactment. Focusing on personal relationships and a “southern confluence,” instead, provides insight into empire’s and white supremacy’s perpetuation on day-to-day bases.

Out of this southern confluence, including the complicity of Chickasaws in race-based slavery, emerged a black-white color line that would define the region for several generations. This work unravels the ways in which Chickasaws found themselves caught in a web of colonial exploitation and enslaving as “both perpetrators and victims” and “partners to the very racial oppression they fought tenaciously against.”¹⁸ In scholarship, the historical experiences of African Americans and Native Americans often compete for hegemony.¹⁹ This conflict over representation and identity results in a “cacophony,” which theorist Jodi Byrd (Chickasaw) characterizes as “[being] in transit.” To better understand colonialism and its perpetuation, Byrd urges scholars to think about “a world of relational movements and countermovements.”²⁰ As Byrd notes, the Chickasaws and Choctaws understood this cacophony as *haksuba*, and

imagine[d] worlds with relational spirits and a center that does not so much hold as stretches, links, and ties everything within to worlds that look in all directions. It is an

Laurel Clark Shire, *The Threshold of Manifest Destiny: Gender and National Expansion of Florida* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Margaret D. Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009). For analyses of settler colonialism on a global level, see Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010 [2002]); Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

¹⁸ Miles, *Ties that Bind*, 83; Coleman, *That the Blood Stay Pure*, 8.

¹⁹ Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xiii

²⁰ *Ibid.*, xvi-xvii.

ontology that privileges balance, but understands that we are constant movement and exist simultaneously among Upper and Lower Worlds, this world and the next.²¹

This perspective, moreover, must follow the “subjective experience of native people in the land” not as mere objects of colonialism.²² Only by recognizing that Indians lived in relation to African American enslaved people and European American colonizers can historians gain a more comprehensive and sophisticated understanding of the antebellum South. In the final analysis, according to Byrd, scholars can “[restore] life and allow settler, arrivant, and native to apprehend and grieve together the violences of U.S. empire.”²³

Interpreting black and white Americans within a racial binary absent of Native Americans reifies and replicates the colonial and imperial agenda that produced indigenous dispossession.²⁴ As scholar Jodi Byrd asserts, “the necessary conditions of settler colonial sovereignty” require a black and white binary based on inclusion and exclusion. Indianness, therefore, “exists alongside racializing discourses that slip through the thresholds of whiteness

²¹ Ibid., 20.

²² Carson, “Ethnogeography and the Native American Past,” 775.

²³ Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*, 229.

²⁴ For more on the creation and maintenance of racial ideology, see Watson W. Jennison, *Cultivating Race: The Expansion of Slavery in Georgia, 1750-1860* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012); Timothy James Lockley, *Lines in the Sand: Race and Class in Lowcountry Georgia, 1750-1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001); Alden T. Vaughan, *Roots of American Racism: Essays on the Colonial Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991); Barbara Jeanne Fields, “Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States of America,” *New Left Review* (May/June 1990): 95-118; Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Verso, 1990); George M. Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1971); Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968).

and blackness.”²⁵ Like other Southeastern Indians, Chickasaws understood themselves, as a group and as individuals, in terms of matrilineal kinship ties, not as biologically or phenotypically distinct, or racially defined. They could, however, simultaneously maneuver about and among Chickasaws and European Americans.²⁶

One way that this project applies Byrd’s theoretical framework is by examining the confluence of Chickasaws’ relationship to white supremacy, as well as their desire to remain an autonomous people. By possessing the cultural practices of white Americans, one possessed a form of whiteness as property. As historian Andrew Frank surmises, even though historical documents for pre-Removal Southeastern Indian societies reflect European American preoccupations with family lineage and race, the racial assumptions contained therein provide a pretext for the connections among European Americans, African Americans, and Native Americans.²⁷ Historian Tiya Miles, likewise, points out that “in early America, property ownership could not be disentangled from racial categorization and prejudice.”²⁸ Indeed, according to historian Ariela Gross, the “day-to-day creation of race” resides “at the intersection of law and local culture.”²⁹ As historian Claudio Saunt argues, “race was a central element in the lives of Southeastern Indians, not just as a marker of difference between natives and white newcomers but as a divisive and destructive force within Indian communities themselves.” Adaptation to an increasingly rigid racial hierarchy represented a “survival strategy—part

²⁵ Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*, 26-27.

²⁶ Frank, *Creeks and Southerners*, 5.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁸ Miles, *Ties that Bind*, 83.

²⁹ Ariela Gross, *What Blood Won’t Tell: A History of Race on Trial in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 12.

cynical ploy, clever subterfuge, and painful compromise.”³⁰

The law, in effect, collapsed the boundary between Indian and white to protect chattel slavery for Chickasaw enslavers, especially women.³¹ The increasing rigidity of racial boundaries, and the legal solidification of chattel slavery within the state of Mississippi, went hand-in-hand with the law’s valorization, valuation, and protection of whiteness. “To be successful in the Old South,” as historian Kathryn E. Holland Braund asserts, “an Indian had to become a white person; those who refused to do so were either removed, exterminated, or enslaved.”³² As society rested on racial subordination, according to legal scholar Cheryl Harris, the privileging and privilege of white Americans over all others “became an expectation” and whiteness “became the quintessential property for personhood.”³³ Though most legal cases that involved Native Americans’ possession of property “could be safely ignored... contingent on the race of the possessor,” some like Betsy Love, examined in the first chapter, demonstrated that “particular forms of possession—those that were characteristic of white settlement” gained legitimation and recognition. For Love, possession of whiteness amounted to the acquisition of slaves, an understanding of a racial hierarchy that degraded blackness, and the ability to navigate the European American legal system. While Love acted within the Chickasaw matrilineal system, her understanding of European American norms meant that she comprehended the legal

³⁰ Saunt, *Black, White, and Indian*, 4.

³¹ See also Gregory Ablavsky, “Making Indians ‘White’: The Judicial Abolition of Native Slavery in Revolutionary Virginia and its Racial Legacy,” *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 159 (2011): 1457-1530.

³² Kathryn E. Holland Braund, “The Creek Indians, Blacks, and Slavery,” *Journal of Southern History* 57 (November 1991): 636.

³³ Cheryl Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” *Harvard Law Review* 106 (June 1993): 1728, 1730.

advantages that whiteness could secure even as she acted as a Chickasaw woman.³⁴

Unlike other scholarship that concentrates on the legal and political ideologies that surrounded Indian Removal or scholarship that follows exiled tribes into Indian Territory, this project remains in place, or the Chickasaws' North Mississippi homeland. It illuminates how the remnants of indigenous societies could continue to order and structure the establishment of white settler societies.³⁵ Contests over forced removal and land speculation, for example, accentuate and reveal the personal relationships among European American colonizers, Chickasaws, and enslaved people. The confluence of Chickasaws' desire to retain a sense of identity, missionaries' vision for the future, and land speculators' search for profit set the stage for a reimagining of the landscape, which would be ordered at the intersection of Calvinistic theology and white supremacy. The relationships among European American colonizers, Chickasaw leaders, and enslaved people would provide the reordering of the landscape with a social foundation.

The southern confluence framework also highlights the experiences of black Indians, a

³⁴ For an extended discussion of these issues, see *Ibid.*, 1721-1725.

³⁵ For examples of scholars who emphasize the legal and political dimensions of forced removal among Southeastern Indians, see Tim Alan Garrison, *The Legal Ideology of Removal: The Southern Judiciary and the Sovereignty of Native American Nations* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002); Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 189-207. For examples of scholars who emphasize institutional dimensions of forced removal among Chickasaws, see Paige, Bumpers, and Littlefield, Jr., *Chickasaw Removal*; Atkinson, *Splendid Land, Splendid People*, 180-235; Monte Lewis Ross, "Chickasaw Removal: Betrayal of the Beloved Warriors, 1794-1844," (Ph.D diss., North Texas State University, 1981); Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 138-178; Mary Elizabeth Young, *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks: Indian Allotments in Alabama and Mississippi, 1830-1860* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961); Muriel Wright, "Notes on Events Leading to the Chickasaw Treaties of Franklin and Pontotoc, 1830-1832," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 34 (Winter 1956-1957): 465-483.

term for people of African descent who also claimed Indian descent and who may have been left behind, possibly through sale, during the process of forced removal. Black Indians held a three-ness, or a triple connection to Americanness, Africanness, and Indianness.³⁶ W.E.B. Du Bois's concept of a "two-ness" reflected African Americans' "contested connection... to 'Americanness' and to the United States itself." Historian Celia Naylor relates the idea of "two-ness" to enslaved people and freedpeople living in Indian Territory. She argues that "some formerly enslaved African Cherokees who had been born and raised in the Cherokee Nation described themselves as close to, rather than separate from Cherokees." At the same time, according to Naylor, "some enslaved and free African Indians in Indian Territory used specific cultural manifestations of 'Indianness'... as a way of declaring their bloodlines or establishing their blood claim to Indians," whether or not they could substantiate such blood claims.³⁷ Historian Barbara Krauthamer, likewise, evokes Du Bois to argue that scholars must recognize the history black Indians in "its messy complexity, plurality, and legacies."³⁸ While other historians have recognized the contradictory aspects of black Indian life in Indian Territory, by remaining in place, this story demonstrates additional angles of alienation. Black Indians had native ancestry that could have entitled them to tribal privileges if they descended from matrilineal lines. Some black Indians may have retained knowledge of Chickasaw customs, regardless of their access to tribal recognition. The institution of slavery tore asunder black Indians' ties to their Chickasaw relatives. By denying black Indians' identities as both

³⁶ See W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1903 [1999]), 11.

³⁷ Naylor, *African Cherokees in Indian Territory*, 203-204.

³⁸ Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters*, 153.

Chickasaw and African, natives affirmed their own status as enslavers and their degradation of blackness. Black Indians experienced alienation not just from native societies, but also from white societies due to their enslavement. They had to navigate white societies with attention to racial boundaries. Within both Indian and white nations, black Indians faced the ever-present threat of sale, regardless of connections to kin.

A focus on Native Americans, in addition to the making of the antebellum household and its link to religious doctrine and institutions at a localized level, allows this project to build upon and clarify recent scholarship that has highlighted the links between slavery and capitalism.³⁹ Embedded in worldwide webs of exchange and the commercial imperatives, enslavers sought to expand westward, cultivate cotton, reap profits, and use innovative techniques in the management of enslaved bodies and plantations.⁴⁰ Historian Walter Johnson centers the

³⁹ See Daina Ramey Berry, *The Price for their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved from Womb to Grave, in the Building of a Nation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2017); Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman, eds., *Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of Economic Development* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015); Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2014); Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013); Joshua D. Rothman, *Flush Times and Fever Dreams: A Story of Capitalism and Slavery in the Age of Jackson* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012); Robin Blackburn, *The American Crucible: Slavery, Emancipation, and Human Rights* (New York: Verso, 2011); Gene Dattel, *Cotton and Race in the Making of America: The Human Costs of Economic Power* (Lanham: Ivan R. Dee, 2009). For more on natives and the economy, see Sarah H. Hill, *Weaving New Worlds: Southeastern Cherokee Women and their Basketry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Daniel H. Usner, Jr., *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992). For an older, though still relevant interpretation of slavery and capitalism, see Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944 [1994]).

⁴⁰ For more on westward expansion's connections to slavery, see Adam Rothman, *Slave*

Mississippi Valley within the context of global capitalism, a system that scholar Sven Beckert finds linked North American slavery, manufacturing, and trade to Europe and Asia. Making a similar argument, historian Edward E. Baptist shows how the expansion of slavery forced the innovation of business practices that drove the rise of modern capitalism at the expense of human life.

Recent scholars do little to demonstrate how capitalistic logic played out in more localized interactions. This project, however, demonstrates how the viability of the household rested on white women's willingness and ability to uphold its basic foundations within a capitalist world economy, in which the white southern enslavers and their property were fully ingratiated. To manage their households, white southern women used the capitalistic tools they learned in schools, often backed by religious institutions, and often cloaked their economic activities in a spiritual language. Securing and maintaining wealth depended on family connections, and tied women to the family's financial prosperity.

By situating the household as a localized unit within the history of capitalism, this project revises conventional thinking about the economic activities of southern white women. Foremost, the project calls into question historian Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's characterization of the antebellum South as reliant upon a dominant "pre-capitalist" system of slavery that depended on, though did not embody, the capitalist world market. As a result, the household remained central to production in the South. In the antebellum North, by contrast, an emerging capitalism had led

Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

to a decline in the household's economic importance.⁴¹

The southern household, then, functioned as a capitalistic enterprise upheld by the religious doctrine and white supremacist ideology of the antebellum period. In these ways, the project builds upon scholarship on gender in the South. Historian Stephanie McCurry depicts white southern men as “masters of small worlds” who used the gendered language of family to defend their patriarchal authority over household dependents, including wives, children, and enslaved people. She argues that familial language, in effect, connected the private sphere of the household to the public world of politics and strengthened proslavery arguments by aligning small farmers with planters.⁴² Historian Cynthia A. Kierner argues that the growth of a Protestant evangelicalism that emphasized female humility, dependency, and submissiveness, alongside of the spread of an ideology that popularized female virtue, domesticity, and modesty, manifested in ideas about women's moral superiority. As white southerners mounted a more defensive posture in the face of white northerners' attacks on slavery during the 1820s and 1830s, the maintenance of patriarchal authority depended on white southern women's ability to uphold class status and social norms in the domestic sphere of the household.⁴³ The household operated as a political space in which women enslavers wielded power with force as they perpetrated violence against enslaved women, according to historian Thavolia Glymph. Elite white women, though “subordinate in fundamental ways to white men,” never fell victim to the

⁴¹ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 55-56.

⁴² Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

⁴³ Cynthia A. Kierner, *Beyond the Household: Women's Place in the Early South, 1700-1835* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

institution of slavery and instead “dominated slaves.”⁴⁴

The process of westward migration forced white settlers to remake their households. Unlike Fox-Genovese, McCurry, Kierner, and Glymph, historian Joan E. Cashin centers migration from the eastern seaboard to the Old Southwest, a “family venture” in which “many men tried to escape... intricate kinship networks” and “women tried to preserve them if they could.” Cashin argues that migrant men and women rejected earlier assumptions about “the supreme importance of family connections in their lives,” and thereby opened “a gulf... between the sexes.” According to Cashin, while men sought liberation in the pursuit of riches, women valued the preservation of kinship ties and personal connections with other women migrants.⁴⁵ While Cashin is right to emphasize men’s lust for wealth, she discounts women’s active participation in and acquiescence to this system.

Religious ideas in the antebellum South provided a justification for household order in a capitalist society. Scholarship on religion in the Old South demonstrates how religious ideas shaped familial relationships and informed concepts of race and gender that played out in the antebellum household. Early examinations of Southern religion highlighted white Protestants, but the field has diversified to account for the strong presence of Native Americans and African Americans.⁴⁶ Prolific scholar of Southern religion Samuel S. Hill, Jr. concentrated mainly on

⁴⁴ Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 4.

⁴⁵ Joan E. Cashin, *A Family Venture: Men and Women on the Southern Frontier* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 4-5.

⁴⁶ For work that deals with Native Americans and religion, see Linford D. Fisher, *The Indian Great Awakening: Religion and the Shaping of Native Cultures in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Clara Sue Kidwell, *Choctaws and Missionaries in Mississippi, 1818-1918* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995); Gregory Evans Dowd,

white people, but set the agenda for the field with his arguments for a distinctive version of Southern Protestantism based on a “vertical” relationship between the individual and God, faith through individual conversion, honesty and integrity, and morality hinging on personal behavior. He argued for a continuity in the history and practices of Southern churches that made them “de facto defenders of the status quo, even though—and in part because—their theology was otherworldly.”⁴⁷ Southern white Protestantism, therefore, lacked a “social ethic.” Historian Charles Reagan Wilson elaborates a concept of a “spirit” to explain Southerners’ investment in social identity. The spirit, “performed and enacted in everyday life, links Southern history and ideas to the supernatural and divine—the region’s “metaphysical grounding” for traditions and creativity—and creates emotional attachments among diverse peoples and gives resonance to their attachments to communities, places, animals, objects, and surroundings.”⁴⁸ Southern society, as Wilson shows, existed as a composite of Native American, European American, and African American beliefs and practices, and scholarship on religion should reflect such diversity of traditions.

A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Joel W. Martin, *Sacred Revolt: The Muskogees’ Struggle for a New World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991).

⁴⁷ Samuel S. Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999), 105; John B. Boles, “The Discovery of Southern Religious History,” in *Interpreting Southern History: Historiographical Essays in Honor of Sanford W. Higginbotham*, edited by John B. Boles and Evelyn Thomas Nolen (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 513. Another early historian of southern religion, John L. Eighmy observed a social ethic among Southern Baptists, but attributed the dominance of an “individualized evangelical faith” to the “cultural captivity” of churches, a contention that Hill rejected. Gaines Foster, “The End of Slavery and the Origins of the Bible Belt,” in *Vale of Tears: New Essays on Religion and Reconstruction*, edited by Edward J. Blum and W. Scott Poole (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2005), 149.

⁴⁸ Charles Reagan Wilson, *Flashes of a Southern Spirit: Meanings of the Spirit in the South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 218-219.

As Protestant Christians sought to transform and save souls, they also constructed institutions like churches and schools that altered the moral and social fabric of southern communities and provided a guide for antebellum social hierarchy. Historian Donald G. Mathews characterizes evangelicalism as incorporating individual perception and operating as a social process.⁴⁹ Religion functioned simultaneously as institution, theology, and discourse, according to historian Mitchell Snay. By the 1840s and the 1850s, major Protestant denominations in the South differed little in their proslavery stances. By advocating an ethic for enslavers and establishing missions for enslaved people, southern clergymen connected the institution of slavery to religion and morality.⁵⁰ Historian Janet Duitsman Cornelius finds that during late 1820s through the 1830s, missions to enslaved people operated with purported spiritual goals but had secular functions that “perpetuated the image of a patriarchal slave system based on religious values and preparation of slaves and masters for a better future in this world and the next.”⁵¹ Relationships between white enslavers and enslaved people, according to scholar Charles F. Irons, helped to mold “politically relevant” proslavery arguments among Protestants in antebellum Virginia.⁵² Historian Randy J. Sparks’s study of Mississippi’s Protestant churches extends from 1773 to 1876 and demonstrates how religious white people envisioned a society organized around the patriarchal household. Social interactions among

⁴⁹ Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), xvii-xviii.

⁵⁰ Mitchell Snay, *Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 75-76, 79.

⁵¹ Janet Duitsman Cornelius, *Slave Missions and the Black Church in the Antebellum South* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 2.

⁵² Charles F. Irons, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity: White and Black Evangelicals in Colonial and Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 2, 15.

black and white Mississippians needed to meet the demands of Christian conceptions of duty, order, and virtue. Protestant Christianity ultimately informed the political behavior of Mississippians through its shaping of individuals' self-perceptions and power over "basic assumptions about the nature of society, economic structure, and government."⁵³ This project concentrates less on denominational differences, and instead looks at how Calvinistic ideas shaped the culture and society of North Mississippi.⁵⁴

Unlike other scholarship on religion in the Old South, this project takes Calvinism into special consideration. White settlers in North Mississippi desired a hierarchical society based on race and gender, and found justification in Biblical ideas about order. Not mere expressions of individual faith, religious beliefs materialized within the ordered antebellum household as white enslavers pondered their financial fortunes and gender roles in society, and attempted to entrench a racial color line. Calvinistic Presbyterians especially saw the world in terms of order versus

⁵³ Randy J. Sparks, *On Jordan's Stormy Banks: Evangelicalism in Mississippi, 1773-1876* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 3, 111.

⁵⁴ For other interpretations of religion in the Old South, see Luke E. Harlow, *Religion, Race, and the Making of Confederate Kentucky, 1830-1880* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Charity R. Carney, *Ministers and Masters: Methodism, Manhood, and Honor in the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011); Jeffrey Williams, *Religion and Violence in Early American Methodism: Taking the Kingdom by Force* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); Monica Najar, *Evangelizing the South: A Social History of Church and State in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); John Patrick Daly, *When Slavery Was Called Freedom: Evangelicalism, Proslavery, and the Causes of the Civil War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2002); Beth Barton Schweiger, *The Gospel Working Up: Progress and the Pulpit in Nineteenth-Century Virginia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Kenneth Moore Startup, *The Root of All Evil: The Protestant Clergy and the Economic Mind of the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997); David T. Bailey, *Shadow on the Church: Southwestern Evangelical Religion and the Issue of Slavery, 1783-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); Anne C. Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1980)

disorder, and often viewed white supremacy as the proper avenue to achieve an ordered society. Not every white settler in North Mississippi articulated a Calvinistic belief system, but Calvinistic ideas influenced the ways in which many white settlers thought about place, their surroundings, and education.⁵⁵

The project extends the arguments of other historians by using the notion of a southern confluence to place the voices of enslaved people and white enslavers within the same interpretive frame. This methodology complicates the “invisibility” of what Albert J. Raboteau and other scholars have called the “invisible institution” of enslaved people’s religion. Since the early twentieth century, probed the nature of enslaved people’s religious and spiritual lives and practices. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois characterizes enslaved people’s spiritual beliefs as a “philosophy of life” rooted in both African practices and evangelical Christian religion.⁵⁶ Published in 1921, historian Carter G. Woodson’s *The History of the Negro Church* focuses on denominations and free black ministers during the nineteenth century and deliberated little about the lives of enslaved people.⁵⁷ During the middle of the twentieth century, even as

⁵⁵ Some scholars border on glorifying the cultural, intellectual, and religious world that enslavers created with little attention to the ways in which gender ideals and enslaved people shaped it. See Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *Slavery in White and Black: Class and Race in the Southern Slaveholders’ New World Order* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholder’s Worldview* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005). For a more convincing portraits of white southerners’ worldview, see Michael O’Brien, *Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Michael O’Brien, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

⁵⁶ Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 125.

⁵⁷ Carter G. Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church* (Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publishers, 1921).

historical studies centered the experiences of African Americans, some scholars dismissed religion among enslaved people. According to historian Kenneth Stampp, the African foundations of enslaved people's beliefs amounted to mere superstitions. Historian Eugene D. Genovese and sociologist Orlando Patterson both discount enslaved people's religion, likely due to its failure to produce a mass, large scale uprising across the antebellum south. While Genovese asserts that religion "softened the slaves by drawing the hatred from their souls," Patterson views religion as "an opiate for the masses, a device used by the master class as an agent of social control."⁵⁸

Until the late 1960s, scholarly interest in the African roots of enslaved people's cultures and societies in the United States and the wider Atlantic World remained relegated to anthropology and sociology. In 1941, anthropologist Melville Herskovits first argued in opposition to sociologist E. Franklin Frazier's contention that enslavement had stripped African Americans of cultural expressions in religion, language, and the arts. Viewing Africa as a generalized and single cultural area, a common theme in mid-twentieth-century scholarship, Herskovits faced criticism from scholars who argued that his work "provided little understanding of the distinctive black cultures that formed in the Americas."⁵⁹ In 1976, scholars Sidney W.

⁵⁸ Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 163-164; Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 73-74.

⁵⁹ Judith A. Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 2-3; Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941). For more on E. Franklin Frazier's arguments, see E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1963); Frazier, *The Free Negro Family: A Study of Family Origins before the Civil War* (Nashville: Fisk University Press, 1932). See also C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Church since Frazier* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974).

Mintz and Richard Price attacked Herskovits's concept of the African cultural unity, and proposed a creolization model to understand how Africans from different societies constructed new identities based on cultural interactions, distinct institutions, religious beliefs, and kinship roles.⁶⁰

During the 1970s and 1980s, however, more studies took Du Bois's ideas about enslaved people's religion into serious consideration. Historian Sterling Stuckey finds that enslaved people, "aware of the limits of the religion of whites," created a new religion that melded Christianity with values that originated from the practices of multiple African ethnic groups.⁶¹ Scholar Albert J. Raboteau distinguishes between the "visible institutions" of independent black churches and the "invisible institution" of enslaved people's folk practices, which evolved from the blending of African cultures and Christian denominations.⁶² While Raboteau is correct to emphasize the blending of multiple traditions, his stark dichotomy between "visibility" and "invisibility" ignores the ways in which enslaved people's practices played out in multiple

⁶⁰ Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976), 9, 87.

⁶¹ Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 33, 91.

⁶² Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). For other interpretations on the blending of Christianity and African practices, see Curtis J. Evans, *The Burden of Black Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Margaret Washington Creel, *"A Peculiar People": Slave Religion and Community-Culture Among the Gullahs* (New York: New York University Press, 1988); Mechal Sobel, *Trabelin' On: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); Olli Alho, *The Religion of the Slaves: A Study of the Religious Tradition and Behavior of Plantation Slaves in the United States, 1830-1865* (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1976). For work on Islam among enslaved people, see Sylviane A. Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); Sylvia R. Frey and Betty Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

spaces. Enslaved people brought cultural assumptions and practices into the walls of white churches. In response, white enslavers banned black preachers and monitored the behavior of enslaved people. Enslaved people also conducted Africanized under the noses of their white enslavers. As a result, white enslavers closely monitored the movements of enslaved people, and often reappropriated the cultural knowledge they gleaned from their observations.

To complicate Raboteau's thesis, this project uses a concept of "Black sacred space" to demonstrate that churches and brush harbors, for example, were not mutually exclusive settings for enslaved people's religious and spiritual expressions. Scholar Noel Erskine writes that "church became the celebration of Black sacred space in which there was a continuous interaction between the world of ancestors and the physical world." By worshipping, Erskine argues, enslaved people "create[d] sacred space to listen to the promptings of spirit and to experience the awakening of a new consciousness of freedom, love, and the courage to hope in the face of excruciating suffering."⁶³ In their creation of Black sacred space and through the practice of rituals, enslaved people "were able to affirm self and create a world over against the world proffered by the master for their families."⁶⁴ To understand the lives of enslaved people within Black sacred spaces, this project builds upon the work of historians who have interpreted music, folklore, language, and healing as constitutive of enslaved people's religious lives in both

⁶³ Noel Leo Erskine, *Plantation Church: How African American Religion Was Born in Caribbean Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1-2.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 28; See also Renee K. Harrison, *Enslaved Women and the Art of Resistance in Antebellum America* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009); Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1975); Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of Afro-American People* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973).

the walls of churches and the setting of brush arbors. For example, scholar Lawrence Levine considers how enslaved people used expressive culture and oral traditions to articulate their identities as both human and spiritual beings. The words of spiritual songs and the lessons in stories gave enslaved people senses of pride, self-worth, and social cohesion.⁶⁵ Historian Michael Gomez finds that “people of African descent were carefully selecting elements of various cultures, both African and European, issuing combinations of creativity and innovation.”⁶⁶ As Sharla M. Fett argues, healing practices constituted a contested spiritual domain for enslaved women. Enslaved communities connected individuals’ health to broader community relationships, emphasized collective affliction and healing, linked ancestors and living descendants, and centralized healing authority in elders and divine revelation. When enslaved people blended West and West Central African spirituality with their own version of Christianity, they critiqued slaveholders’ versions of Christianity and ideas about medical care.⁶⁷ By focusing on the blending of enslaved people’s religious and spiritual expressions in settings

⁶⁵ Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

⁶⁶ Michael A. Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 10.

⁶⁷ Sharla M. Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 5-6, 9-11. For other work in the vein of Gomez and Fett, see Katrina Dyonne Thompson, *Ring Shout, Wheel About: The Racial Politics of Music and Dance in North American Slavery* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014); Katrina Hazzard-Donald, *Mojo Workin’: The Old African American Hoodoo System* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013); Vincent Brown, *The Reaper’s Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); Paul Christopher Johnson, *Diaspora Conversions: Black Carib Religion and the Recovery of Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Stephanie Y. Mitchem, *African American Folk Healing* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); Yvonne P. Chireau, *Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Frey and Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion*.

associated with either enslavers' beliefs or African folk traditions, the project moves beyond debates that consider the extent of enslaved people's devotion to Christianity to consider more radical alternatives.⁶⁸

A focus on North Mississippi, in addition to parts of northwestern Alabama and southwestern Tennessee, situates this project in a region caught at the crossroads of the Mississippi Delta and Appalachia.⁶⁹ Echoing Susan O'Donovan in her study of Southwest Georgia, my goal "lies less in coming to know a place" than in understanding how the socio-cultural order of a place "infused much larger processes with distinctive and localized dimensions." As Charles Joyner keenly observes, "no history, properly understood, is of merely local significance."⁷⁰ Indeed, local studies like this project make statements about specific regions, while also illuminating broader historical processes in slavery, Indian Removal, colonialism, and the development of religious institutions and ideas. For North Mississippi in

⁶⁸ For examples of scholars who evaluate the extent of Christian conversion among enslaved people and the development of black churches, see Daniel L. Fountain, *Slavery, Civil War, and Salvation: African American Slaves and Christianity, 1830-1870* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010); Milton C. Sernett, *Black Religion and American Evangelicalism: White Protestants, Plantation Missions, and the Flowering of Negro Christianity, 1787-1865* (Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. and The American Theological Library Association, 1975); Religious studies scholar Sylvester A. Johnson's recent work situates African American religion in a wider colonial context over a period of 500 years, but he pays little attention to enslaved people during the nineteenth century, preferring to focus on the Age of Revolutions, colonization, free black people, and abolition. See Sylvester A. Johnson, *African American Religions, 1500-2000: Colonialism, Democracy, and Freedom* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁶⁹ I define North Mississippi to include the present-day counties of Alcorn, Benton, Calhoun, Chickasaw, Clay, DeSoto, Grenada, Itawamba, Lafayette, Lee, Lowndes, Marshall, Monroe, Montgomery, Oktibbeha, Panola, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Tate, Tishomingo, Union, Webster, and Yalobusha.

⁷⁰ Susan Eva O'Donovan, *Becoming Free in the Cotton South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 9; Charles Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984).

particular, patterns of settlement mattered. During the last decade, historians of Native America and slavery have taken a spatial turn in their work to highlight racialized and gendered power dynamics and to demonstrate the overlapping, circumstantial, and contingent meanings multiple groups of people ascribed to specific spaces in terms of cultural expression, social interaction, and economic activity.⁷¹ Located in land stolen via treaty from the Chickasaw Indians, east of the profitable Delta and Natchez areas, and southwest of the Appalachian Mountains, North Mississippi represented a region that could be made anew in the eyes of settlers.

This project relies upon ethnographic accounts, oral histories, government documents, census data, church and mission records, personal diaries and journals, and other public records. In particular, interviews with formerly enslaved people conducted by the Federal Writers' Project in the Works Progress Administration (WPA) of the New Deal provide detailed insight into not only African American life, but also the lives of Chickasaws and white settlers in North Mississippi. Federal agents conducted WPA interviews during the backdrop of the 1930s, which present historians with several well-documented methodological difficulties.⁷² White men's and women's diaries, journals, and personal family papers reflect subjective views of race, gender,

⁷¹ See Cynthia Cumfer, *Separate Peoples, One Land: The Minds of Cherokees, Blacks, and Whites on the Tennessee Frontier* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 4; Hudson, *Creek Paths and Federal Roads*, 2-3, 174; Stephanie M.H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 1.6-10, 12, 17-18, 20. See also Anthony E. Kaye, *Joining Places: Slave Neighborhoods in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 10-12.

⁷² See Helene Lecaudey, "Behind the Mask: Ex-slave Women and Interracial Sexual Relations," in *Discovering the Women in Slavery: Emancipating Perspectives on the American Past*, ed. Patricia Morton (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 273-274; Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 15.

and notions of African American sexuality, but the WPA interviews remain the best source for evaluating the perspectives of formerly enslaved people. Because the interviews occurred several decades after emancipation in the 1860s, most respondents had been young children during their experience of enslavement and were elderly at the time of the interview. Length of time and accuracy of memory pose serious questions about the reliability of the interviews. As with any interview, historians must interrogate the objectivity of the interviewer. During questioning, the interviewers could signal emotional cues for specific types of responses and length of answers. The race and gender of the interviewer could influence respondents, particularly concerning miscegenation as agents conducted interviews in a highly conflicted racial environment. Beyond the racial struggles and questions of African American citizenship during the 1930s, federal agents conducted the interviews under the economic distress of the Great Depression. State repression forced homeless and hungry southern African Americans to rely upon southern white politicians for their livelihoods. Historians must read the interviews with an awareness of African Americans' trust and distrust of federal bureaucrats.⁷³

While oral histories present methodological problems, that WPA narratives remain less problematic than using sources like plantation records dictated by white enslavers and informed by racist ideas about enslavement and African American women. Public records create greater gaps in source material. Historian Victoria E. Bynum notes public records contain patriarchal undertones that obscure white and black women's "unruliness." For instance, enslaved women possessed nearly no access to the court system to address their own grievances. So, even with

⁷³ Stephanie J. Shaw, "Using the WPA Ex-Slave Narratives to Study the Impact of the Great Depression," *Journal of Southern History* 69 (August 2003): 623-658.

the paucity of existing public records, the appearance of enslaved women in public records provides greater meaning to the extent of resistance.⁷⁴

The few archival records historians can access to document the lives of marginalized peoples reflect certain patterns and suggest a collective understanding of oppression. Edward E. Baptist argues that formerly enslaved people understood enslavement as a shared experience rooted in loss and separation, and the repetition of narrative elements in WPA interviews denotes a collective memory, or a “vernacular history.” Although WPA interviews occurred many decades after Emancipation, narrative repetition in the interviews as a body of literature attests to the depth of the scars of enslavement. Former bondspeople “encoded a critique of slavery, whiteness, power, and white history that contradicts academic historians’ assessment of these interviews as inherently limited.”⁷⁵

Ethnographic sources that recorded Native American life, likewise, pose questions about reliability that historians must interrogate. Until the 1970s with the advent of ethnohistory, historians had few tools to uncover and interpret the mutual interactions between Native Americans, European Americans, and enslaved Africans. James Axtell blends anthropological and historical methods, concepts, and materials to highlight the process of Native American-

⁷⁴ Deborah Gray White, *Ar’n’t I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1985), 192; Victoria E. Bynum, *Unruly Women: The Politics of Social & Sexual Control in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 10.

⁷⁵ Edward E. Baptist, “‘Stol’ and Fetched Here’: Enslaved Migration, Ex-slave Narratives, and Vernacular History,” in *New Studies in the History of American Slavery*, eds. Edward E. Baptist and Stephanie M.H. Camp (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 247-248, 251. For a more psychological analysis of slavery, see Nell Irvin Painter, “Soul Murder and Slavery: Toward a Fully Loaded Cost Accounting,” in *Southern History across the Color Line* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 15-39.

European interactions—the “story of a complex series of successive and overlapping frontiers—on a “topographical map” of North America, marked by natural features instead of state and national lines. With often biased written sources like missionary accounts originally intended for wide audiences, Axtell filters the interpretations of European colonists and relies upon the oral memories of native descendants to demonstrate the adaptability and flexibility of native culture upon contact. An ethnohistorical perspective forces scholars to filter ideas about race, slavery, and religion through Native Americans’ pervasive questions about preserving community autonomy and why it might have been useful to adopt a certain spiritual affiliation, beliefs, or expression.⁷⁶

In addition to Jodi Byrd’s arguments about cacophony and relational inquiry and Axtell’s ethnohistorical framework, this project draws from scholars of black feminism and American religion to ground the experiences of and dynamics among African Americans, European Americans, and Native Americans. Since the 1970s, scholars have made special efforts to understand the experiences of oppressed peoples whose historical marginalization reverberates in archival silences. This study will remain sensitive to those concerns. Terminology like “dissemblance,” “agency,” and “history from below” often fill scholarly analyses of women, poor white people, African Americans, and Native Americans.

The archival invisibility of black women stems from the historical circumstances of enslavement. To counter the way that “[academic] norms remain wedded to notions of Black and female inferiority,” according to scholar Patricia Hill Collins, historians must interrogate

⁷⁶ James Axtell, *Natives and Newcomers: The Cultural Origins of North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 12; James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), xi, 14-15.

black women as subjects for study within a “vibrant, both/and, scholar/activist tradition.”⁷⁷

Scholars must act with an awareness of the silences formed in archival records. Historian Darlene Clark Hine offers that rape and the threat of rape spurred the development of a “culture of dissemblance” or “cult of secrecy” among African American women that created the appearance of openness and disclosure but actually shielded the truth of their inner lives from oppressors.⁷⁸ Historian Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, likewise, calls for more attention to the “double jeopardy” of black womanhood. Because racism obscured class differences and gender relations in black communities, historians need more sustained intersectional analysis to recover black women from obscurity in African American history, women’s history, and U.S. history.⁷⁹ Higginbotham calls for historians to move beyond the “metalanguage of race” that conceals black women’s experiences. She challenges scholars to define and demonstrate the performance of class, gender, and race; remain cognizant of race’s power to conceal its effects on other social constructions and power relations; and understand race as a discourse for liberation and oppression yet also exchange and contestation. Blending the work of black intellectuals, white feminist scholars, and other theorists as well as recognizing race as “an unstable, shifting, and strategic reconstruction” enables historians to cover new ground through centering African-American women.⁸⁰ Historian Elsa Barkley Brown suggests that historians turn to African

⁷⁷ Patricia Hill Collins, “The Politics of Black Feminist Thought,” in *Black Women’s Intellectual Traditions: Speaking Their Minds*, Kristin Waters and Carol B. Conaway, eds. (Lebanon: University of Vermont Press, 2007), 411-412.

⁷⁸ Darlene Clark Hine, “Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West,” *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society* 14 (Summer 1989): 912-915

⁷⁹ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, “Beyond the Sound of Silence: Afro-American Women in History,” *Gender and History* 1 (Spring 1989): 52, 50, 63.

⁸⁰ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, “African American Women’s History and the

American culture and “gumbo ya ya,” or “multiple rhythms being played simultaneously,” as a metaphor for understanding the connectedness of women’s varied historical experiences.⁸¹

Historian Michele Mitchell calls for scholars to reassert the significance of gender analysis in reconceptualizing black men’s and women’s relationships within households, work, organizations, and public spaces.⁸² While heeding the calls of the aforementioned scholars in mining archives more intently with attention to black women, this project affirms the call of Walter Johnson to step away from a heavy reliance on the term “agency.” By continually deploying the term “agency,” historians reproduce white supremacist assumptions about African Americans’ control of their own destinies and mask African American history to the point of abstraction.⁸³

This study also expands the theoretical dimensions of “religion” by using denominational and local church records and theological arguments, combined with the sources of social and cultural historians, including personal diaries and journals, letters, government documents, oral interviews, literature, census data, and newspapers. Influenced by theorist Clifford Geertz, historian John B. Boles argues that religion served as a “model of and for reality; it explains the perceived world and prescribes the right behavior.” Historians Kevin M. Schultz and Paul Harvey suggest that historians should “draw more from religious studies” to expand “their own

Metalanguage of Race,” *Signs* 17 (Winter 1992): 252-253, 274; See also Elsa Barkley Brown, “Womanist Consciousness: Maggie Lena Walker and the Independent Order of Saint Luke,” *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society* 14 (Spring 1989): 610-613.

⁸¹ Elsa Barkley Brown, “‘What Has Happened Here’: The Politics of Difference in Women’s History and Feminist Politics,” *Feminist Studies* 18 (Summer 1992): 297-300, 303, 307.

⁸² Michele Mitchell, “Silences Broken, Silences Kept: Gender and Sexuality in African-American History,” *Gender and History* 11 (November 1999): 434, 439-440.

⁸³ Walter Johnson, “On Agency,” *Journal of Social History* 37 (2003): 115, 118; Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, 15.

too-easy deployment of contested terms such as ‘religion.’” They cite the imprecision with which Americans have identified with institutionalized religion over decades. Historian Jon Butler notes that scholars “too often view religion as a fixed embodiment of premodern culture and ‘tradition’” through which “creative interchanges between religion and modern culture bear the stigma of compromise, summarized in the fateful term ‘secularization.’” Using African American denominational newspapers, WPA narratives, letters, autobiographies, and early recordings of black musical culture and oral expression, historian John Giggie expands the analytical definition of “religion” and connects African American religious expression to capitalism and citizenship. Scholar Tisa Wenger employs religion as an analytical framework to understand its evolution according to historical circumstance as well as the ways in which people understood its use as a cultural concept and a political response to contemporary conditions.⁸⁴ Historian Charles Reagan Wilson’s notion of a “spirit,” likewise, moves beyond the analytical constriction associated with “religion.” As tradition, theology, expression, and institution, religion functioned in cultural, political, and social contexts across time, space, and groups of people. The democratic tenor of American evangelical Protestantism after the Second Great Awakening “provided peculiar resources for an active spirit life among individual believers,”

⁸⁴ John B. Boles, “Evangelical Protestantism in the Old South: From Religious Dissent to Cultural Dominance,” in *Religion in the Old South*, edited by Charles Reagan Wilson (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1985), 20; Kevin M. Schultz and Paul Harvey, “Everywhere and Nowhere: Recent Trends in American Religious History and Historiography,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78 (March 2010): 153; Jon Butler, “Jack-in-the-Box Faith: The Religion Problem in Modern American History,” *Journal of American History* 90 (March 2004): 1373; John M. Giggie, *After Redemption: Jim Crow and the Transformation of African American Religion in the Delta, 1875-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Tisa Wenger, *We Have a Religion: The 1920s Pueblo Indian Dance Controversy and American Religious Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 10-14.

such as “direct access to the divine” outside of the sanctuary without the intervention of formal institutions, doctrines, and rituals. The creolization of African practices and European Christianity also left a legacy of an “active spirit world” carried from enslavement into the twentieth century through a “vivid vernacular tradition” that encompassed visionary experiences, spiritual journeys, struggles between spirits, communal worship, ring shout, and voodoo. People held the power to evoke such retentions in various spaces including church buildings, camps, plantations, and homes, and also within multiple contexts like family life, labor, migration, and politics. Southerners constructed and evoked a “spirit” in several contexts through the nineteenth and twentieth century, but they also “broke the spirit.” Organized religion and elite theology could condone oppressive forces such as Indian Removal, slavery, secession, and segregation.⁸⁵

This study will evaluate religious life in North Mississippi and the historical changes that disrupted communities, challenged the worldview of individuals and groups, and created public or private spaces to resist or condone oppression. Scholar Richard J. Callahan, Jr. calls attention to an awareness that “religion [is] something *made*, something *produced* and *reworked* by human beings in particular contexts.” Scholars must account for the “*work* of religion” by “examining both the possibilities and the limitations that particular religious and cultural resources provided and how people worked with them in producing and reproducing selves, worlds, communities, and material conditions.” Historian Ken Fones-Wolf points to the broad sociopolitical meanings and everyday applications that working people attached to their spiritual beliefs as a future direction for study.⁸⁶ The confluence of traditions in the rural South reveals the often

⁸⁵ Wilson, *Flashes of a Southern Spirit*, 3, 4, 8-11, 13, 218-219.

⁸⁶ Richard J. Callahan, Jr., “The Work of Class in Southern Religion,” *Journal of*

contradictory and oppositional nature of religion, especially in the context of Indian Removal and racial slavery.

Theological conceptions of African American religion remain wedded to common experiences of violence and oppression. Religious studies scholar Gayraud S. Wilmore sees black radicalism—“a homegrown, race-conscious unsystematic attack on the roots of misery in black American life”—as the binding force of black religion in the United States. The struggle for freedom and a militant heritage defined black religion, so it always differed from white religion. Black religion provided not only “sheer survival” for black people, but also “strategies of elevation—from ‘make do’ to ‘must do more.’” Through the metaphor of the lynching tree as the cross, theologian James H. Cone argues that the need to justify white supremacy through religion allowed “churches, seminaries, and theological academies [to separate] Christian identity from the horrendous violence committed against black people.” White people could then detach their Christian identities from “feeling the need to oppose slavery, segregation, and lynching as a contradiction of the gospel for America.”⁸⁷ The merging of race and religion made interior experiences of oppression invisible to many white people, while religious expressions could and did remain visible.

The first chapter centers the court case of Elizabeth “Betsy” Love Allen, an elite

Southern Religion 13 (2011): <http://jsr.fsu.edu/issues/vol13/callahan.html>; Ken Fones-Wolf, “Embedding Class among the Troops Who Study Southern Religion,” *Journal of Southern Religion* 13 (2011): <http://jsr.fsu.edu/issues/vol13/fones-wolf.html>.

⁸⁷ James H. Cone, “Black Theology and Black Liberation,” in *Black Theology: A Documentary History, Volume 1, 1966-1979*, eds. James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), 107; Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*, xiii, ix, 168, 227; James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011), 159.

Chickasaw woman, who drew upon indigenous customs to defend her ownership of enslaved people and took advantage of mission education to perpetuate the institution of race-based slavery. Her life provides a lens into the federal government's civilization plan, Presbyterian missions established among Chickasaws, and mission education. Between 1819 and the early 1840s, faced with increasing pressure to "civilize," Chickasaws bought into a race-based system of chattel slavery, wherein they were free property holders, to assert their right to recognition separate from the unfreedom associated with black people. Changes related to property and enslavement enveloped the Chickasaws during the early nineteenth century and transformed households and understandings of race. In the establishment of mission schools, religious denominations' goals of gaining financial footing and an audience to achieve their spiritual mission intersected with the federal government's aims of "civilizing" and expanding westward. By participating in the federal government's "civilizing" projects and by attending missions and mission schools, elite Chickasaw enslavers capitalized on a chance to "civilize" on their own terms and bolstered the continued practice of race-based slaveholding through European American education. The judicial system, meanwhile, effectively reinforced a color line that associated blackness with enslavement and whiteness with holding property.

The second chapter charts a new sociocultural order that appeared in North Mississippi within the context of Chickasaws' forced removal. It argues that the emergence of a black-white color line alongside of missionaries' involvement in land sales extended a matrix of white supremacy that would characterize the region for generations. State-level and federal-level legal changes attempted to erase the presence of Chickasaws in their homeland. While the 1830 passage of a Mississippi law abolished the Chickasaws as a political body and transformed tribal

identity into a racial identity, the Treaty of Pontotoc Creek in 1832 arranged for forced removal at the same time that it affirmed the institution of race-based slavery. Local circumstances, including the intensified encroachment of European Americans into Chickasaw lands and the increased prevalence of alcohol, widened a moral and social gulf between those who identified as Indians and European Americans. Legal proceedings that involved hereditary chief Tishomingo reflected the destabilizing effects of European Americans' intrusions on Chickasaw society and highlighted European Americans' hostility toward the Chickasaws during the 1830s.

To defend their status as free people separate from European Americans and African-descended enslaved people, elite Chickasaws, in their 1834 renegotiation of the Treaty of Pontotoc, attempted to protect slaveholding wealth and tied human property to land allotments. Throughout the process of forced removal, elite Chickasaws affirmed their status as enslavers by accepting and receiving federal reimbursements for the use of enslaved labor. An 1830s chancery court case involving Eli Locklier further demonstrates how Chickasaws' incorporation of outsiders became more precarious and intersected with the expansion of slavery and the hardening of racial lines. Within the context of legal proceedings related to land once allotted to Locklier's wife, increased European American incursions and desires for land necessitated the drawing of more concrete social boundaries. A confluence of legal and personal relationships forged between elite Chickasaws and European Americans—missionaries, land speculators, and land buyers, all often one in the same—extended from the Atlantic Coast to North Mississippi.

The third chapter argues that white settlers entrenched a biracial color line in their new society based on religious ideas about order and embodied in the slavery-centered household in an attempt to undercut the southern confluence's possibilities for exchange and expression at the

intersection of white, black, and Indian cultures. The household, along with married women's property rights upheld by Mississippi courts in Chickasaw woman Betsy Love's case and later enacted in legislation, served an imperialistic agenda of organizing society around white supremacy. Drawing from Calvinistic ideas that emphasized the primacy of order, North Mississippi's white inhabitants interpreted their responsibility as one to create a divinely sanctioned civilization that rested upon white supremacy and black subjugation. In the eyes of white enslavers, subversion or resistance to the order that they created constituted an affront to God. This transformed the maintenance of racial lines into a moral imperative and created a cultural foundation for white supremacy in the absence and erasure of Chickasaws. In the process of building a new society in North Mississippi after Chickasaw Removal, white settlers built physical structures, including homes, schools, and churches, that reflected their slavery-centered world. They also envisioned the household, with specific roles for fathers, mothers, children, and the enslaved, as an ideal model for their private and public lives. White North Mississippians imbued religious meaning into the region's physical and social structures and believed that they had a duty to cultivate the same values in their children. They desired a hierarchical society based on race and gender, and found justification in biblical ideas about order. Not mere expressions of individual faith, religious beliefs materialized within the ordered antebellum household as white enslavers attempted to entrench a racial color line. Calvinistic Presbyterians especially saw the world in terms of order versus disorder and often viewed white supremacy as the proper avenue to achieve an ordered society. Not every white settler in North Mississippi articulated a Calvinistic belief system, but Calvinistic ideas influenced the ways in which many white settlers thought about place, their surroundings, and education. No matter

how hard North Mississippians attempted to impose order on their new society, disorder lurked beneath the surface and threatened to upend the integrity of the household.

The fourth chapter reconstructs the life of Bombazelle, a fugitive enslaved woman whose life crossed the boundaries that many white Mississippians sought to establish. Though scant documentation survives to account for Bombazelle's experiences, the chapter considers multiple interpretations of her life across five stages that span from birth through her recapture and sale by Ulysses McAllister. Surviving documents indicate that Bombazelle held a multifaceted and seemingly contradictory self-identity, perhaps constructed for her own benefit, and also possessed the knowledge to navigate white spaces with agility. The chapter considers Bombazelle's lineage and contextualizes possible circumstances of her early childhood. Though Bombazelle claimed Chickasaw descent, she may have also been conceived in a sexual encounter between a white man and a black enslaved woman. The chapter further examines the re-settlement of North Mississippi through the eyes of an enslaved woman. Bombazelle may have witnessed enslaved arrivants as they entered the region, and the dynamics of migration and sale would have altered family and community relationships. The chapter continues through Bombazelle's childhood and into her early adulthood. Based on documentation of Bombazelle's skill as a dressmaker and her literacy, the chapter examines the life and labors of an enslaved woman in North Mississippi, including the day-to-day and spatial restrictions that she may have known. Then, the chapter covers Bombazelle's escape from Ulysses McAllister and her transformation to a woman governing an enslaving household. Finally, the chapter concludes with Bombazelle's capture and sale at the hand of McAllister.

Chapter four's argument lies as much in its methodology as its conclusions about

Bombazelle, who embodied every aspect of the southern confluence with her mixed ancestry and whose literacy, skills, and knowledge placed her at the intersection of white, black, and Indian societies and cultures. Her story reflects larger tensions and conflicts in Mississippi after Indian Removal, as white settlers became landowners and lawmakers invested in enforcing a racial hierarchy that people like Bombazelle threatened. Yet, at the same time, Bombazelle illuminates the possibilities—and limitations—that enslaved women faced in North Mississippi. The institution of slavery rested on enslaved women's cooperation with a color line that enslavers sought to entrench and maintain through force.

The fifth chapter concentrates on the 1840s through the 1860s, as white enslavers increasingly restricted enslaved people's religious and spiritual expressions and molded Christianity to reinforce white supremacy through a biracial color line. Tension between a moral duty to provide enslaved people with religious instruction and the need to monitor and restrict religious activities due to their subversive potential resulted in stricter laws, a pass system, segregation within churches, and mandatory white supervision. In contrast to white enslavers' religious understanding of household order and hierarchy, enslaved people conceived of a religious world that encompassed a larger world, physical and spiritual, unchained from the shackles of bondage. Enslaved people's religious perceptions critiqued the white household and, therefore, shook the ordered foundation that white enslavers sought to impose on their lives. Though enslaved people developed semi-autonomous religious expressions, they never completely overcame the surveillance and censorship of white enslavers. When enslaved people engaged in isolated incidents of rebellion throughout North Mississippi as the 1850s drew to a close, they revealed the unstable nature of white enslavers' society.

The project concludes by considering the long term ramifications of the racially stratified and religious society created in the southern confluence between the 1810s and 1860s. The structures that served as the foundation of antebellum society in North Mississippi resonated among elite white women who memorialized Betsy Love, the focus of chapter one, during the twentieth century. In 1933, white women excavated Love's remains and declared her a martyr for white women's property rights. Within the context of the 1930s, white women's excavation and commemoration of Love's remains demonstrated their influence over public memory and a modern, gendered articulation of the right to control representations of history. Love's enslaving practices helped to define antebellum society, but also laid important groundwork for women's civic culture in Mississippi.

CHAPTER I:
THE MAKING OF A SOUTHERN CONFLUENCE:
GENDER, RACE, AND RELIGION AMONG CHICKASAW, ENSLAVED, AND WHITE
PEOPLE IN NORTH MISSISSIPPI, 1810s-1830s

Writing for the Smithsonian Institution during the 1860s, Presbyterian minister Samuel A. Agnew described Indian mounds in North Mississippi as burial places that also held artifacts: “Human bones were found in one near J.M. Simpson’s. A gentleman not far from here used the earth of a mound for making brick. He found, to use the expression of another, ‘a heap of coals and a piece of isinglass.’ In the mound near Sullivan’s, ashes were found.”¹ For the Chickasaw people, mounds, which originated during earlier Mississippian chiefdoms, expressed and symbolized interrelated ideas about “the underworld, birth, fertility, death, burial, the placation of spirits, emergence, purification, and supernatural protection.” Some Chickasaws had believed that the Mississippi “was the center of the earth,” so the mounds symbolized “the navel of a man in the center of his body.”² After the physical removal of the Chickasaw people during the 1830s and 1840s, the making of bricks out of mound remnants effectively reconceptualized the cultural

¹ Samuel A. Agnew, “Mounds in Mississippi,” in *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution Showing the Operations, Expenditures and Condition of the Institution for the Year 1867*, Senate, 40th Congress, 2d Session, Mis. Doc., No. 86 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1868), 405.

² Vernon James Knight, Jr., “Symbolism of Mississippian Mounds,” in *Powhatan’s Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast*, edited by Gregory A. Waselkov, Peter H. Wood, and Tom Hatley (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006 [1989]), 425, 423. See also Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Houghton, Inc., 1957), 36-47.

and social landscape of North Mississippi. Antebellum settlers cut into the body of the earth and reconstructed its constituent parts to lay the foundation for North Mississippi as a biracial, slave society. As scholar Thomas S. Hines argues in reference to author William Faulkner's use of Mississippian mounds in his stories, the "mounds appear as both subject and backdrop, as hauntingly mute but resonant monuments of, and to, their dispossessed builders."³ This chapter takes the Chickasaw people out of the backdrop and brings them to the forefront.

Agnew reported to the Smithsonian at a time when Indian "relics," including human bones, were becoming part of growing social scientific fields and as Americans grappled with the Civil War's death toll. Since at the least the 1830s, naturalists had collected human skulls to advance the study of "racial science." Two years after Confederate defeat, Agnew's observations of centuries- or decades-old human bones may have offered a way to cope with more immediate trauma and impose order on a landscape in upheaval.⁴ Yet, for Native Americans, "ancestral bones retained spiritual significance and power." As Chickasaw Nation Governor Overton James wrote to Patricia Galloway of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History during the 1980s regarding the treatment of Chickasaw bones, "Our dead were treated with the greatest respect and dignity. The funeral ceremonies were very sacred and much of the deceased person's wealth was buried with him... to make his next life happy and prosperous. When a Chickasaw's grave is disturbed, the spirit cannot rest throughout eternity."⁵

³ Thomas S. Hines, *William Faulkner and the Tangible Past: The Architecture of Yoknapatawpha* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 23.

⁴ See Ann Fabian, *The Skull Collectors: Race, Science, and America's Unburied Dead* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 12-17, 166-172.

⁵ Richard Green, "The Claim on Our Past," *Journal of Chickasaw History* 1 (Winter 1994): 16 (first quote), 19 (second quote).

The graves that Agnew recorded left footprints on a landscape that had been forcibly abandoned.

Place names, as well as the archaeological evidence that Samuel Agnew recorded for the Smithsonian Institution, stood as perverse yet enduring tributes to the land's aboriginal inhabitants and a testament to the relationships forged within the context of race-based slavery. The bones held different meanings for different peoples, but they also signified a shift in the moral geography of North Mississippi. As historian James Taylor Carson argues, the landscape existed as a "moral space" that reflected and incubated the values of the people who inhabited it in the Native South. "More than the place of contact," landscape signifies a "space of contest" that "carries the competing cultural perceptions and economic and social relations of both native and nonnative societies."⁶ Between the 1810s and the 1840s, this geographic space saw the convergence of three groups—African Americans, Native Americans, and European Americans—within the sociocultural milieu of the federal government's "civilizing" efforts, mission schools, racial slavery, and Indian Removal. Faced with increasing pressure to "civilize," Chickasaws bought into a race-based system of chattel slavery, wherein they were free property holders, to assert their right to recognition separate from the unfreedom associated with black people.⁷ A land that had belonged to the Chickasaws became a permanent home to

⁶ James Taylor Carson, "Ethnogeography and the Native American Past," *Ethnohistory* 49 (Fall 2002): 769, 783.

⁷ See Christina Snyder, *Great Crossings: Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in the Age of Jackson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 5, 17; Arica L. Coleman, *That the Blood Stay Pure: African Americans, Native Americans, and the Predicament of Race and Identity in Virginia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); Barbara Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters: Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the Native American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Angela Pulley Hudson, *Creek Paths and Federal Roads: Indians, Settlers, and Slaves and the Making of the American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Tiya Miles, *The House on Diamond Hill: A*

African Americans and European Americans by the late 1830s. Historian Tiya Miles writes that Indian Removal represented “more than the relocation of bodies and possessions,” but instead saw “the tearing of the flesh of the people from the flesh of the land, a rupture of soul and spirit.”⁸ Even though the Chickasaws had been forcibly removed almost entirely by the 1850s, their presence still resonated among the African Americans and European Americans who inhabited their homeland.

This chapter builds on recent scholarship to argue that between the late 1810s and the early 1840s, interactions among African Americans, European Americans, and Native Americans formed a southern confluence.⁹ As a geographic marker and a sociocultural process, the southern confluence provides a lens into place and agency, however limited. The southern confluence places the convergence of the three groups at a specific meeting point, North Mississippi. Chickasaw slaveholding, west to east European American colonizing patterns,

Cherokee Plantation Story (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Celia E. Naylor, *African Cherokees in Indian Territory: From Chattel to Citizens* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Fay A. Yarbrough, *Race and the Cherokee Nation: Sovereignty in the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Miles, *Ties that Bind*; Claudio Saunt, *Black, White, and Indian: Race and the Unmaking of an American Family* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). For more on Chickasaws and missions, see Otis W. Pickett, “T.C. Stuart and the Monroe Mission among the Chickasaw in Mississippi, 1819-1834,” *Native South* 8 (2015): 63-88; Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters*, 54-55, 57-58, 60, 69.

⁸ Tiya Miles, *Ties that Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 157.

⁹ The southern confluence is variation of settler colonialism. Some settler colonial theorists, however, tend to de-emphasize the agency and complicity of indigenous peoples in transforming settler colonies as well as the role of cultural exchange. For an overview of settler colonialism, see Mikal Brotnov Eckstrom and Margaret D. Jacobs, “Teaching American History as Settler Colonialism,” in *Why You Can’t Teach United States History without American Indians*, edited by Susan Sleeper-Smith, Juliana Barr, Jean M. O’Brien, Nancy Shoemaker, and Scott Manning Stevens (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 261-265.

Presbyterian influences, and the short life of slavery as an institution all marked North Mississippi as a place. The southern confluence demonstrates how cultural exchange co-existed with a racial hierarchy, and how agency was expressed within the confines of white supremacy. In recent decades, scholars have portrayed Native American history as one of convergence with other cultures and societies, especially during the nineteenth century.¹⁰ Instead of treating identity as static and by examining colonizing and colonized voices in relation to one another, this chapter reveals how Chickasaws maneuvered among Southeastern Indian, African American, and European American societies and cultures.¹¹

¹⁰ For examples related to the Native South and its connections to both African America and European America, see Kendra Taira Field, *Growing Up with the Country: Family, Race, and Nation after the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); Natalie R. Inman, *Brothers and Friends: Kinship in Early America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017); Dawn Peterson, *Indians in the Family: Adoption and the Politics of Antebellum Expansion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017); Snyder, *Great Crossings*; Mikaëla M. Adams, *Who Belongs?: Race, Resources, and Tribal Citizenship in the Native South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Angela Pulley Hudson, *Real Native Genius: How an Ex-Slave and a White Mormon Became Famous Indians* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Honor Sachs, *Home Rule: Households, Manhood, and National Expansion on the Eighteenth-Century Kentucky Frontier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015); Coleman, *That the Blood Stay Pure*; Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters*; Hudson, *Creek Paths and Federal Roads*; Miles, *The House on Diamond Hill*; Naylor, *African Cherokees in Indian Territory*; Gary Zellar, *African Creeks: Estelyste and the Creek Nation* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007); Yarbrough, *Race and the Cherokee Nation*; Tiya Miles and Sharon P. Holland, eds., *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Andrew K. Frank, *Creeks and Southerners: Biculturalism on the Early American Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005); Miles, *Ties that Bind*; Saunt, *Black, White, and Indian*; James F. Brooks, ed., *Confounding the Color Line: The Indian-Black Experience in North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002); Jack D. Forbes, *Africans and Native Americans: The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Charles M. Hudson, ed., *Red, White, and Black: Symposium on Indians in the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1971).

¹¹ Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xiii, xvi-xvii, 20, 26-27. In U.S.

Within the sociocultural milieu of the federal government's "civilizing" efforts, mission schools, and slaveholding, Chickasaws and European Americans bolstered the practice of race-based slaveholding to protect wealth. As a pragmatic survival strategy, elite Chickasaws participated in the construction of a biracial South to preserve an interest in slaveholding before Removal. While Removal forced most Chickasaws to leave North Mississippi by the mid 1840s, the color lines that their enslaving practices helped to draw ultimately reinforced associations of blackness with enslavement and whiteness with property and marked the physical and social landscapes of their homeland for generations. At the same time, for enslaved people, mission spaces provided a level of inspiration, offered intimate knowledge of European American and Chickasaw communities, and helped to strengthen communal bonds and kinship.

This chapter uses the court case of Elizabeth "Betsy" Love Allen, an elite Chickasaw woman, as a lens into the federal government's civilization plan, Presbyterian missions established among Chickasaws, and mission education. Changes related to property and slaveholding enveloped the Chickasaws during the early nineteenth century, and transformed households and understandings of race. In the establishment of mission schools, religious denominations' goals of gaining financial footing and an audience to achieve their spiritual mission intersected with the federal government's aims of "civilizing" and expanding westward. By participating in the federal government's "civilizing" projects and by attending missions and

historiography more generally, scholars of African American women's historical experiences pioneered relational perspectives as they pertain to issues of race and gender. Most notably, see Michelle Mitchell, "Silences Broken, Silences Kept: Gender and Sexuality in African-American History," *Gender and History* (November 1999): 433-444; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," *Signs* 17 (Winter 1992): 251-274.

mission schools, elite Chickasaw slaveholders capitalized on a chance to “civilize” on their own terms and bolstered the continued practice of race-based slaveholding through Euro-American education. The judicial system, meanwhile, effectively reinforced a color line that associated blackness with enslavement and whiteness with holding property.

Love drew upon indigenous customs to defend slaveholding and took advantage of mission education to perpetuate the institution of race-based slavery. Aside from work that situates Love within a legal context or the longer trajectory of women’s property rights, her case has received little scholarly attention.¹² Because native women left few words to document their lives in the historical record, as historian Clara Sue Kidwell explains, scholars “must attempt to recreate the cultural context of their actions and to move beyond the myths that have been woven around their lives.”¹³ Other historians have demonstrated how the transmission of property

¹² Woody Holton, “Equality as Unintended Consequence: The Contracts Clause and the Married Women’s Property Acts,” *Journal of Southern History* 81 (May 2015): 313-340; James Taylor Carson, “Choctaw and Chickasaw Women, 1690-1834,” in *Mississippi Women: Their Histories, Their Lives—Volume 2*, edited by Elizabeth Anne Payne, Martha H. Swain, and Marjorie Julian Spruill (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 18-19; See also Robert Gilmer, “Chickasaws, Tribal Laws, and the Mississippi Married Women’s Property Act of 1839,” *Journal of Mississippi History* 68 (Summer 2006): 131-148; LeAnne Howe, “Betsy Love and the Mississippi Married Women’s Property Act of 1839,” *Mississippi History Now: An Online Publication of the Mississippi Historical Society* (September 2005): <http://mshistory.k12.ms.us/articles/6/betsy-love-and-the-mississippi-married-womens-property-act-of->; Megan Benson, “*Fisher v. Allen*: The Southern Origins of the Married Women’s Property Acts,” *Journal of Southern Legal History* 6 (1998): 97-122; Carole Shammas, “Re-Assessing the Married Women’s Property Acts,” *Journal of Women’s History* 6 (Spring 1994): 9-30.

¹³ Clara Sue Kidwell, “Indian Women as Cultural Mediators,” *Ethnohistory* 39 (Spring 1992): 98. Along with Kidwell, a number of other historians, most notably Theda Perdue, pioneered the study of Native American women. See Sandra Slater and Fay A. Yarbrough, eds., *Gender and Sexuality in Indigenous North America, 1400-1850* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2011); Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007);

through wills and deeds of gift provide a “window” into white women’s values and how they “made economic decisions according to their own standards of propriety and justice.”¹⁴ Using court records, federal agency documents, mission correspondence, church publications, personal papers, and ethnography, the present work accounts for elite slaveholding Native women who adopted European American understandings of property.

Within the context of “civilizing” and through her status as a slaveholding woman, whiteness amounted to a property interest for Betsy Love because it conveyed personhood to her and recognized her enmeshment in elite networks. By possessing the cultural practices of white Americans, one possessed a form of whiteness as property. As historian Andrew Frank surmises, even though historical documents for pre-Removal Southeastern Indian societies reflect European American preoccupations with family lineage and race, the racial assumptions contained therein provide a pretext for the connections among European Americans, African Americans, and Native Americans. Indeed, those racial assumptions forged the possibility of such linkages, especially for natives and black people who acted as interpreters and made mission schools into realities.¹⁵

The law, in effect, collapsed the boundary between Indian and white to protect chattel

Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Sarah H. Hill, *Weaving New Worlds: Southeastern Cherokee Women and Their Basketry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

¹⁴ Suzanne Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1984), xix, 116.

¹⁵ See Frank, *Creeks and Southerners*, 9; Miles, *Ties that Bind*, 83; Ariela Gross, *What Blood Won't Tell: A History of Race on Trial in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 12; Saunt, *Black, White, and Indian*, 4.

slavery for Chickasaw women enslavers.¹⁶ The increasing rigidity of racial boundaries, and the legal solidification of chattel slavery within the state of Mississippi, went hand-in-hand with the law's valorization, valuation, and protection of whiteness. "To be successful in the Old South," as historian Kathryn E. Holland Braund asserts, "an Indian had to become a white person; those who refused to do so were either removed, exterminated, or enslaved."¹⁷ As society rested on racial subordination, according to legal scholar Cheryl Harris, the privileging and privilege of white Americans over all others "became an expectation" and whiteness "became the quintessential property for personhood."¹⁸ Though most legal cases that involved Native Americans' possession of property "could be safely ignored... contingent on the race of the possessor," some like Betsy Love's, that demonstrated "particular forms of possession—those that were characteristic of white settlement" gained legitimation and recognition. For Love, possession of whiteness amounted to the acquisition of slaves, an understanding of a racial hierarchy that degraded blackness, and the ability to navigate the European American legal system. While Love acted within the Chickasaw matrilineal system, her understanding of European American norms meant that she comprehended the legal advantages that whiteness could secure even as she acted as a Chickasaw woman.¹⁹

Betsy Love's life and property claims reflect the making of a southern confluence,

¹⁶ See also Gregory Ablavsky, "Making Indians 'White': The Judicial Abolition of Native Slavery in Revolutionary Virginia and its Racial Legacy," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 159 (2011): 1457-1530.

¹⁷ Kathryn E. Holland Braund, "The Creek Indians, Blacks, and Slavery," *Journal of Southern History* 57 (November 1991): 636.

¹⁸ Cheryl Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106 (June 1993): 1728, 1730.

¹⁹ For an extended discussion of these issues, see Harris, "Whiteness as Property," 1721-1725.

including the ways in which Chickasaws interacted with enslaved people as well as how relationships between European American colonizers and Chickasaw leaders provided a legal and sociocultural foundation for the creation of plantations and the rise of a slave-based white settler society. Love's story demonstrates how and when the "Old South" emerged from an "older South." Alongside of slavery's expansion, the forced removal of the Chickasaws signified a transformation in the region's moral landscape. Imbued with white supremacy filtered through Calvinistic religious doctrine, the society that emerged grew directly out of the Chickasaws' interactions with missionaries and their other European American connections.

By the 1820s and 1830s, in contrast to earlier periods, rapid political changes, including the federal government's "civilizing" and removal efforts, forced Chickasaws to increasingly emphasize their relationship to race-based slaveholding. Ethnohistorians have shown that earlier slaveholding practices typically involved temporary servitude or the incorporation or execution of war captives. Before contact with Europeans, Southeastern Indians practiced slavery as an integral component of warfare. By the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, to gain regional power and bolster their population during the rise of a commercial slave trade, Chickasaws enslaved their neighbors in the Lower Mississippi Valley and sold slaves to Europeans. After the late eighteenth century, many Chickasaws, like other Southeastern Indians, embraced Euro-American racial ideologies regarding black inferiority and viewed enslaved status as heritable and permanent, a sharp break with past practices.²⁰ With their adoption of race-based

²⁰ See Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters*, 4-5, 32; Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard

slaveholding, Chickasaws reconceptualized gender roles and tied wealth and labor to the exploitation of African men's and women's bodies.²¹ Historians estimate that by the end of the 1830s, around 250 out of 4,000 Chickasaws owned slaves, while enslaved people represented almost twenty percent of the combined population of Chickasaws and slaves. In comparison, among neighboring Choctaws, enslaved people comprised three percent of the population.²² More than any other state and all of the northern states combined, Mississippi held the largest population of Native Americans, totaling 24,000, including Chickasaws and Choctaws.²³ During the same period, Love and her wider kin network counted themselves among the most prominent of enslaving Chickasaws.

As an elite slaveholding Chickasaw woman, Betsy Love entered the legal system in response to her husband James Allen's multiple unpaid debts. First, in November 1829, Alexander Malcom sued James Allen for his failure to pay a contract executed in October 1784.

University Press, 2010), 58-63, 66-67, 73; Robbie Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw: The European Invasion and the Transformation of the Mississippian World, 1540-1715* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 226-227, 236-237; James R. Atkinson, *Splendid Land, Splendid People: The Chickasaw Indians to Removal* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 25, 28-29; Alan Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 14-15, 129-132, 170-171, 296-297; Daniel H. Usner, Jr., *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Arrell M. Gibson, *The Chickasaws* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 41, 65, 142, 150; Braund, "The Creek Indians, Blacks, and Slavery," 601-636.

²¹ Claudio Saunt, Barbara Krauthamer, Tiya Miles, Celia E. Naylor, and Circe Sturm, "Rethinking Race and Culture in the Early South," *Ethnohistory* 53 (Spring 2006): 400, 402-403; Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters*, 4.

²² Wendy St. Jean, *Remaining Chickasaw in Indian Territory, 1830s-1907* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011), 43; Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters*, 2-3; Atkinson, *Splendid Land, Splendid People*, 24; Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 210.

²³ Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 127.

Malcom would have received the title to 1,000 acres of land on the southern side of the Tennessee River in exchange for 5,000 pounds of North Carolina currency. Allen took Malcom's money, but never transferred the land title. Because the state of Mississippi did not extend its laws over the Chickasaw Nation until 1830, Malcom could not sue Allen, whose residence in Chickasaw Territory granted him immunity from state law. Second, James Allen failed to pay his attorney John Fisher for services in Malcom's suit. Fisher initiated his own lawsuit against Allen.²⁴ When Allen failed to appear before the Circuit Court of Monroe County to answer a lawsuit in May 1831, the court ordered him to pay John Fisher \$208.08 in damages in addition to court costs. To settle the debt, sheriff John Dexter seized a young enslaved boy, Toney, to sell at public auction, but Love had already deeded eight-year-old Toney in 1829 as a gift to her daughter, Susan Allen.²⁵

The young Susan's brother, George Allen, sued Fisher to reclaim Toney as slave property. Based on Chickasaw custom, Allen argued that Toney was the property of Betsy Love,

²⁴ Court Records, *Fisher v. Allen*, Monroe County, MS Court Journal. Transcripts of these court records are available in Small Manuscripts, 1994, Box 2, Folder 11, Archives and Special Collections, J.D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi, Oxford, Mississippi. See *Fisher v. Allen*, in *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the High Court of Errors and Appeals of the State of Mississippi, In Two Volumes, Vol. II*, edited by Volney E. Howard (Philadelphia: T.K. and P.G. Collins, 1839), 613. See also Gilmer, "Chickasaws, Tribal Laws, and the Mississippi Married Women's Property Act of 1839," 132-133; James Taylor Carson, "States Rights and Indian Removal in Mississippi, 1817-1835," *Journal of Mississippi History* 57 (1995): 36; Don Martini, *Chickasaw Empire: The Story of the Colbert Family* (Ripley, MS: n.p., 1986), 57.

²⁵ *Fisher v. Allen*, Monroe County, MS, Court Journal. Available in Small Manuscripts, 1994, Box 2, Folder 11, Archives and Special Collections, J.D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi, Oxford, Mississippi; Deed of Gift from Betsy Love to Sally Allen and Others, Deed Book #2, Pontotoc County, Mississippi, 14 November 1829, 196-197. Available in Small Manuscripts, 1994, Box 2, Folder 11, Archives and Special Collections, J.D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi, Oxford, Mississippi.

not her husband, and therefore could not be used to settle his debts. In 1837, the justices' ruling in the Mississippi High Court of Errors and Appeals, the state supreme court, hinged on two questions: first, over Allen's entitlement to Love's property via marriage, and second, the validity of Love's deed of gift to her daughter in light of Allen's debts.²⁶ In answering the first question, the Mississippi court recognized Love's ownership of property prior to 1830. To answer the second question, because Betsy Love retained independent use of her property before 1830, the court upheld her deed of gift to the Love-Allen children.

While the case's particularities concerned one Chickasaw kin network, its circumstances provide a lens into larger transformations among the Chickasaw people during the early to mid-nineteenth century. Betsy Love's case demonstrates evolving Chickasaw interpretations of incorporating European- and African-descended outsiders, marriage and the accumulation of wealth, the connection between property and race, and women's changing social and economic power. These transformations intersected with the Chickasaws' shifting relationship with the federal government and the state government. The presence of Presbyterian missions and missionaries, in particular, reflected the aims of the federal government, yet also aided Chickasaws like Love in bolstering the practice of race-based slavery.

Betsy Love's marriage to James Allen reflected a longer history of intermarriage between

²⁶ *Fisher v. Allen*, 3 Miss. 611; 1837 Miss.; 2 Howard 612. Chief Justice William L. Sharkey championed property rights in Mississippi in the form of race-based slavery. In an 1846 case, Sharkey would rule that "color is prima facie evidence of servitude. It is prima facie evidence of property in someone." Sharkey quoted in Meredith Lang, *Defender of the Faith: The High Court of Mississippi, 1817-1875* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1977), 49. Scholar Megan Benson further interrogates the motives of Sharkey and Smith from a legal history perspective. Benson, "*Fisher v. Allen: The Southern Origins of the Married Women's Property Acts*," 97-122.

Chickasaws and Europeans. During a mid-eighteenth century battle with the French, for example, Hlikukhto hosh, a young Chickasaw warrior whose name meant “the hummingbird,” captured Nancy, a five-year-old French girl. According to later accounts, Hlikukhto hosh, “captivated by [Nancy’s] wonderful beauty,” decided that he would eventually make her his wife. From Nancy’s childhood to acceptable marrying age, Hlikukhto hosh “trained and educated her in strict accordance with the most approved Chickasaw style of etiquette.”²⁷ According to linguist and ethnographer John R. Swanton, Chickasaw children “were usually affianced in childhood.”²⁸ Known among the Chickasaws as “French Nancy,” she eventually married Hlikukhto hosh in a ceremony “performed in accordance to Chickasaw custom and usage” and reared a family. By the time Presbyterian missionary Thomas C. Stuart entered the Chickasaw Nation in 1821, French Nancy was ninety-one years old. According to Stuart, French Nancy “retained her European features... but in every other respect was Chickasaw,” and “respected, honored, and loved by the entire Chickasaw Nation, and regarded as a living monument of their victory over their inveterate enemies, the French.” Upon her death, French Nancy was buried at the Monroe mission station.²⁹ During the American Revolution, Thomas Love, a British loyalist, found refuge among the Chickasaws in North Mississippi, and married a Chickasaw woman, Sally Colbert, the sister of Chickasaw chiefs.³⁰ Chickasaws related to

²⁷ H.B. Cushman, *History of the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Natchez Indians*, edited, with a foreword by Angie Debo (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962 [1899]), 375.

²⁸ John R. Swanton, *Chickasaw Society and Religion* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006 [1928]), 53.

²⁹ Cushman, *History of the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Natchez Indians*, 375.

³⁰ By the 1740s, intermarriage between European traders and Chickasaw women was not unusual. For specific instances of intermarriage among Europeans and Chickasaws, see Martini, *Chickasaw Empire*, 5.

outsiders, especially European or Euro-American men, within native categories, so they integrated Thomas Love and his ten children with Sally Colbert, including Betsy Love, into matrilineal kinship lines.³¹ Around 1798, Betsy Love herself married James Allen, a European-descended North Carolinian.³²

By the early nineteenth century, marriages between Southeastern Indians and European Americans suited federal officials' goal of conquering western North American lands. In a February 1803 letter to General Superintendent of Indian Affairs Benjamin Hawkins, U.S. President Thomas Jefferson argued that "the ultimate point of rest & happiness" Native Americans would be "to let our settlements and theirs meet and blend together, to intermix, and become one people." From Jefferson's perspective, "the natural progress of things will of course bring on" the incorporation of Native Americans "as citizens of the U.S." and it would suit the federal government "to promote [rather] than retard it." The notion of "identif[y]ing with us" would be "better for them," continued Jefferson, as Native Americans would be "preserved in the occupation of their lands, than be exposed to the many casualties which may endanger them while a separate people."³³ Benjamin Rush, a Philadelphia physician, furthermore argued that children of mixed ancestry would exceed the enlightenment of their parents: "The mulatto has

³¹ Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters*, 5, 30; Theda Perdue, "Race and Culture: Writing the Ethnohistory of the Early South," *Ethnohistory* 51 (Fall 2004): 713-715; Nancy Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 96, 133. See also Theda Perdue, *"Mixed Blood" Indians: Racial Construction in the Early South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003).

³² Howe, "Betsy Love and the Mississippi Married Women's Property Act of 1839."

³³ "From Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Hawkins, 18 February 1803," *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 39, 13 November 1802–3 March 1803, ed. Barbara B. Oberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 546–549.

been remarked, in all countries, to exceed, in sagacity, his white and black parent. The same remark has been made of the offspring of the European, and the North American Indian.”³⁴ After conquering western lands, according to such early nineteenth-century racial theorists, European American society could incorporate Native Americans and in some cases, the mixture of both groups would exceed the potential of one alone.³⁵

Chickasaws of mixed ancestry, such as the Colbert family, from which Betsy Love descended, gained leadership positions within the matrix of established tribal leadership. Scottish trader John Logan Colbert entered Chickasaw lands as early as 1729 and married three Chickasaw women. By the late eighteenth century, the Chickasaw people had elevated Colbert’s six sons, William, George, Levi, Samuel, Joseph, and Pittman, to leadership positions.³⁶ George Colbert proved himself as a warrior during the American Revolution and a campaign against the northwestern Indian alliance in 1791. As a result, Colbert’s “prominence in his moiety [the Tchuckafalayah moiety] and in the [Chickasaw] nation rose.”³⁷ By the early nineteenth century, the status and wealth of mixed ancestry Euro-Chickasaws like the Colbert family gave them a decided advantage over so-called “full-blood” leaders.³⁸

Prominent Euro-Chickasaw leaders, including the Colbert sons, pursued a strategic

³⁴ Quoted in Perdue, “*Mixed-Blood*” *Indians*, 86.

³⁵ See also Bruce Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 28-29.

³⁶ Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 58.

³⁷ Perdue, “*Mixed-Blood*” *Indians*, 46.

³⁸ As historian Theda Perdue has noted, the language of “blood” is rooted in the era of Indian Removal. Contemporaries used this language to privilege whiteness over Indianness, and scholars continued to employ it into the early twenty-first century. See Theda Perdue, “Race and Culture: Writing the Ethnohistory of the Early South,” *Ethnohistory* 51 (Fall 2004): 702, 719.

relationship with the United States government after the American Revolution in the hope that it would offer advantages in later negotiations. As an example of how prominent Chickasaws saw benefits to maintaining ties with the U.S., Tecumseh, accompanied by his brother, Tenskawatawa, the Prophet, visited the Chickasaw Nation and its national council in 1811 to persuade the Chickasaws to join his Indian Confederacy.³⁹ Leading Chickasaw men, however, refused to allow Tecumseh to speak to the tribe. According to historian Joel W. Martin, unlike the Muskogees (Creeks), the Chickasaws, along with the Choctaws and Cherokees, “rebuffed Tecumseh and did not join the resistance movement” because they “deeply believed that they could adapt and survive whatever changes came their way.”⁴⁰ B.C. Burney, a younger Chickasaw man who had “met several old men of our tribe,” remarked that Tecumseh’s overtures for the Chickasaws to participate “in a general war against the whites was treated with such coldness by our Chief that he only remained with them for a few hours.”⁴¹ Another account of Tecumseh’s visit from J.N. Walton, the descendant of a white settler, recalled that William McGillivray and William Colbert ordered Tecumseh “to desist & leave the Nation.” Tecumseh, for his part, according to Walton, “left in disgust, visiting the Cherokees & Seminoles.”⁴² According to M.J. Stuart, the daughter of Presbyterian missionary Thomas C. Stuart, recollecting an account from Malcom McGee, either Tecumseh or his brother “told the people, that when

³⁹ Author James R. Atkinson notes that Tenskawatawa “possibly” accompanied Tecumseh on his visit to the Chickasaws. See Atkinson, *Splendid Land, Splendid People*, 211.

⁴⁰ Joel W. Martin, *Sacred Revolt: The Muskogees’ Struggle for a New World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 173. For an extended discussion of the failure of a pan-Indian Confederation to develop among Southeastern Indians, see Martin, *Sacred Revolt*, 118-120.

⁴¹ B.C. Burney to Lyman C. Draper, December 17, 1881, Lyman Draper Manuscript Collection, microfilm, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, vol. 10, series U.

⁴² J.N. Walton to Lyman Draper, November 26, 1881, Lyman Draper Manuscript Collection, microfilm, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, vol. 10, series U.

they reached home, Tecumseh would stamp three times upon the ground, which would cause the Earth to tremble, by which they might know that he was at home. As it was, in 1811, the year of prevalence of earthquakes in the Mississippi Valley [the New Madrid Earthquake], he could make such an assertion with some certainty of its proving true.” Furthermore, according to Stuart, “it was their boast, that the Chickasaws had never shed a drop of English blood. The French were their hereditary foes.”⁴³ On one hand, conflicts among Southeastern Indian tribes that originated in the mid-eighteenth century fostered political divisions and further undermined efforts to establish an Indian confederation. On the other hand, Chickasaw leaders desired a mutually advantageous relationship with the U.S. government. For its part, the U.S. government had long opposed Southeastern Indians’ efforts to create an Indian confederation that would create a system of land tenure to resist land cessions during the early nineteenth century.

In addition to cultivating political influence among the Chickasaws and with the U.S. government, the Colberts amassed great affluence in the region. They drew wealth from the intersection of agriculture and racial slavery with the operation of ferries, inns, and taverns in the region surrounding the Natchez Trace, a trading route that ran through the Chickasaw homeland and connected Natchez, Mississippi to Nashville, Tennessee. During the late eighteenth century, Levi and George Colbert lived in the Chickasaw Old Fields, but around 1800 “abandoned the traditional villages and opened a ferry on the Tennessee River at the mouth of Bear Creek.”⁴⁴ After the construction of the Natchez Trace, the Colberts moved the ferry to a more eastward

⁴³ Mrs. M.J. Stewart to Lyman Draper, November 6, 1882, Lyman Draper Manuscript Collection, microfilm, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, vol. 10, series U.

⁴⁴ Jack D. Elliott, Jr. and Mary Ann Wells, *Cotton Gin Port: A Frontier Settlement on the Upper Tombigbee* (Jackson: Mississippi Historical Society, 2003), 56. The Colberts had numerous homes.

location that became known as Colbert's Ferry and operated an inn and several taverns with their brother James.⁴⁵ In 1814, Levi Colbert built a permanent residence in what became known as Cotton Gin Port. This would allow Colbert to "take advantage of the trade that was anticipated with the opening of the Gaines Trace," the route that connected the Tennessee River and Cotton Gin Port on the upper Tombigbee River and that served as a boundary between the United States and Chickasaw territory starting in 1816.⁴⁶ Levi Colbert especially benefitted from the region's trade, which included cotton and livestock, and raised hogs, sheep, horses, and cattle.⁴⁷

According to one traveler, "He has at this place a large well cultivated farm, about 30 or 40 likely slaves and a white overseer to superintend them—a good stock of cattle and hogs... He keeps a Public house in a large frame building & affords very tolerable accommodations; & as many travellers on their road to and from N. Orleans, Natchez, &c, call on him, he through that medium obtains an ample market for his superfluous produce."⁴⁸ Early nineteenth century commerce gave elite Chickasaws access to lucrative markets throughout the region that depended on their local knowledge as well as their possession of the land and enslaved Africans.

As racial slavery, plantation agriculture, and commercial networks solidified among Chickasaws during the early nineteenth century, changes in labor regimes transformed social dynamics and led to deepening class distinctions. Charting class distinctions among Southeastern Indians collides with European Americans' understanding of race and blood, an attribute that overwhelms historical documents. For example, federal Indian agents such as John

⁴⁵ Elliott and Wells, *Cotton Gin Port*, 56; Perdue, "Mixed-Blood" Indians, 63; Rothman, *Slave Country*, 58.

⁴⁶ Elliott and Wells, *Cotton Gin Port*, 41, 56-57.

⁴⁷ Elliott and Wells, *Cotton Gin Port*, 79.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Rothman, *Slave Country*, 58.

L. Allen often conflated “blood” with class distinctions and labor among the Chickasaws. In an 1830 report, Allen commented on agriculture among the Chickasaws, and noted that knowledge of the mechanical arts was “generally confined to the white men that have identified themselves with the Indians... towit—House Carpenter, wheelright, Mill rights, Blacksmiths &c.” At the same time, Allen noted that “all the arts necessary for farming use, Stocking plows, helving axes, does making slides, Truck wheels, draw bars, &c” had been “confined to the Common Indians and Slaves.”⁴⁹ Such distinctions did not set the Chickasaws apart from other Southeastern Indians, including the Cherokees, Creeks, and Choctaws. Wealth distribution, in fact, resembled patterns throughout the wider United States, and hinged not on race, but on land- and slave-based wealth.⁵⁰

During the early nineteenth century, more Chickasaws, including women like Betsy Love, saw slaveholding as a path to power and understood that the generational property transfers secured personal wealth in enslaved bodies and labors.⁵¹ As historian Suzanne Lesock notes, an ethic of “personalism” governed how white women made decisions about deeding and willing property as they tended to “respond to the particular needs and merits of individuals.”⁵² In a similar fashion, Chickasaw women especially knew they would need to protect their heirs in addition to distributing their property in inventive ways as the U.S. government chipped away at

⁴⁹ Quoted in Grant Foreman, *The Five Civilized Tribes* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1934), 98; John L. Allen to Indian Commissioner, February 7, 1830, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881: Chickasaw Agency, 1824-1870, National Archives Microfilm Publications, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., M234, roll 136; *The Arkansas Advocate*, June 23, 1830.

⁵⁰ Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 103.

⁵¹ Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters*, 30-34.

⁵² Lesock, *The Free Women of Petersburg*, xix, 142.

the power—in the forms of territories and possessions—of Southeastern Indian nations.⁵³ As Chickasaws grappled with the prospect of forced removal and the sale of their homelands, they understood that enslaved people represented a form of permanent and moveable property. The ability to lay claim to communal land was increasingly precarious.⁵⁴ When land sales took place in the Chickasaw homeland, individual Chickasaws “paid large prices” for enslaved property.⁵⁵ Unlike English and American laws, Chickasaw customs dictated that husbands acquired no right to their wives’ property at marriage. Love and Allen resided on the Love family’s land, and Love retained claims to property, which included Toney, the son of enslaved people she had inherited from her parents, most likely her mother Sally Colbert.⁵⁶ According to the court, the legitimacy of the Love-Allen marriage under state law, as well as Love’s ownership of property prior to 1830, granted Allen no right to the separate property of his wife. Married men and women entered into contracts and debts as individuals, while married women retained separate rights to use and acquire property.⁵⁷ The case, therefore, underscored the intersection of generational and matrilineal understandings of property accumulation.

Love’s deed of gift to her children constituted an affirmative statement of her identity as a slaveholding Chickasaw woman that reflected a pragmatic adaptation within the confines of

⁵³ As Lebsack notes, white women “often wanted it conveyed on more protective terms than the ordinary course of probate law would permit.” See Lebsack, *The Free Women of Petersburg*, 136.

⁵⁴ See Miles, *Ties that Bind*, 39.

⁵⁵ *Chickasaw Freedmen*, 55th Cong., 1st sess., 1897, S. Doc. 157, serial 3563, 29.

⁵⁶ Phillip Carroll Morgan and Judy Goforth Parker, *Dynamic Chickasaw Women* (Ada, OK: Chickasaw Press, 2011), 13; Gilmer, “Chickasaws, Tribal Laws, and the Mississippi Married Women’s Property Act of 1839,” 132; Howe, “Betsy Love and the Mississippi Married Women’s Property Act of 1839.”

⁵⁷ *Fisher v. Allen*, 3 Miss. 611; 1837 Miss.; 2 Howard 615. See also Howe, “Betsy Love and the Mississippi Married Women’s Property Act of 1839.”

Chickasaw inheritance customs. In 1829, Love deeded separate slave property, twenty-five enslaved people, to ten of her children.⁵⁸ Love, moreover, deeded slaves to her children by age. Love's older children received older slaves and slaves who may have been their children, while Love's younger children received younger slaves. For example, Love deeded to her oldest daughter Lizzie, age twenty-six in 1829, two forty-five-year-old enslaved people, George and Rachel, and deeded to her oldest son Alexander, age thirty-one, two enslaved men, Callus and John, each in their late teens. Love's youngest daughters, Lucy, Susan, and Tennessee, each no older than eleven, received enslaved children age ten and younger.⁵⁹

Betsy Love's decision to allocate her slave property to her children by age demonstrated not only her insight into the system of inherited slavery, but also her intuition about Chickasaw women's changing power in the 1820s. Since the late eighteenth century, economic changes had altered Chickasaw women's traditional roles. Powerful male chiefs, including Love's male family members, centralized political power and entrusted their female kin to run slaveowning households.⁶⁰ When Chickasaw women lost political authority through their diminished capacity to participate in the marketplace, "personal influence" became central to defending their status in Chickasaw society.⁶¹ Through her role as a mother and the female kin of Chickasaw elites, Love understood her position in ensuring the orderly generational transfer of wealth to her children.

⁵⁸ Deed of Gift from Betsy Love to Sally Allen and Others, 196-197; See also Helen Tunncliff Catterall, ed., *Judicial Cases concerning American Slavery and the Negro, Volume III*, (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1926-1937), 286.

⁵⁹ Deed of Gift from Betsy Love to Sally Allen and Others, 196-197

⁶⁰ Carson, "Choctaw and Chickasaw Women, 1690-1834," 18; Hubert H. McAlexander, "The Saga of a Mixed-Blood Chickasaw Dynasty," *Journal of Mississippi History* 49 (November 1987): 289-290; Guy B. Braden, "The Colberts and the Chickasaw Nation," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 17 (September 1958): 236.

⁶¹ Carson, "Choctaw and Chickasaw Women, 1690-1834," 18.

Intertwined with slaveholding, Love's claim to power entailed not a mere adaptation to changing realities, but an assertion that Chickasaw women could and would exploit black men and women to fill a vacuum that altered economic circumstances had left empty.

Love's deed of gift and the maintenance of slaveholding wealth further depended on the Allen children's knowledge of the slaveholding world, which cannot be separated from the federal government's efforts to "civilize" Southeastern Indian tribes. To that end, the U.S. government passed the Civilization Fund Act of 1819, which provided \$10,000 annually for Indian schools, placed federal funds in the hands of religious denominations and benevolent societies that had previously established or desired to establish schools among Native Americans.⁶² The law espoused the secular purpose of "preventing" Native Americans' "decline," but religious organizations took the lead in meeting the federal government's goals.⁶³

According to U.S. Secretary of War John C. Calhoun, Indians

must be brought gradually under our authority and laws, or they will insensibly waste away in vice and misery. It is impossible, with their customs, that they should exist as independent communities in the midst of civilized society. They are not, in fact, an independent people, (I speak of those surrounded by our population,) nor ought they to be so considered. They should be taken under our guardianship; and our opinion, and not theirs, ought to prevail, in measures intended for their civilization and happiness.⁶⁴

As historian Christina Snyder argues, the federal government's civilization policy proved "janus-faced" as people of color, including Native Americans, faced "heightened standards" to become

⁶² Braden, "The Colberts and the Chickasaw Nation," 248.

⁶³ Clara Sue Kidwell, *Choctaws and Missionaries in Mississippi, 1818-1918* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 35.

⁶⁴ *American State Papers: Documents, Legislative and Executive, of the Congress of the United States, from the First Session of the Fourteenth to the Second Session of the Nineteenth Congress, Inclusive: Commencing December 4, 1815 and Ending March 3, 1827, Volume 2* (Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1834), 201

citizens, though Indians were not always interested in citizenship.⁶⁵

The U.S. government's civilization policy married federal power to the institutional structure of churches to assimilate Native Americans into European American society. Historian Lori J. Dagggar's study of the civilization policy in Ohio Country characterizes a layered state-driven "mission complex" that linked mission work to colonization, economic development, networks of market and capital, and cross-cultural negotiation amid the U.S.'s westward expansion.⁶⁶ According to historian Clara Sue Kidwell, furthermore, Protestant missionaries "were... ready to serve as agents of federal Indian policy" as "Christianity, government policies, and civilization went hand in hand on the American frontier."⁶⁷ Indeed, as historian Adam Rothman argues, "the civilizing of the cotton frontier had a spiritual dimension" that would fulfill a "providential sense of American destiny."⁶⁸ U.S. Superintendent of Indian Trade Thomas L. McKenney instructed missionaries to

Invite their attention to agriculture and the arts, and help them, for they are helpless. Our object is not to keep these Indians hunters eternally. We want to make citizens out of them, and they must be first anchored to the soil, else they will be flaying about whilst there is any room for them in the wilderness or an animal to be trapped.⁶⁹

Committee on Indian Affairs chairman Henry Southard, likewise, argued in 1818 that by "put[ting] into the hands of [Indian] children the primer and the hoe," they would "naturally, in time, take hold of the plough." Though not explicitly, Southard associated Euro-American

⁶⁵ Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 12.

⁶⁶ Lori J. Dagggar, "The Mission Complex: Economic Development, 'Civilization,' and Empire in the Early Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 36 (Fall 2016): 467-491.

⁶⁷ Kidwell, *Choctaws and Missionaries*, 35.

⁶⁸ Rothman, *Slave Country*, 62, 37.

⁶⁹ McKenney quoted in Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984, 1986), 54.

education and land cultivation, “the primer and the hoe,” with the adoption of large-scale agriculture and slavery, “the plough.” The “Bible [would] be their book,” and Indian children would “grow up in habits of morality and industry [and]... leave the chase to those whose minds are less cultivated, and become useful members of society.”⁷⁰ McKenney’s and Southard’s words articulated an economic and cultural agenda that tied Southeastern Indians to agriculture, religion, and slaveholding.

Religion, in particular, as a form of “civilizing” provided a way to overturn the “frontier.”⁷¹ Beginning in the late eighteenth century, Euro Americans associated the frontier with impiety and sinfulness. After the War of 1812, the federal government preferred a policy of obtaining Indian lands that did not involve military conquest. Missionary publications characterized the civilizing process as a work of “great national importance” and as the only alternative to an “exterminating policy.” Indians had “partaken of our vices, more than our virtues,” and consequently “must be civilized or exterminated; no other alternative exists.” The Civilization Act of 1819 “seem[s] the most likely to obtain the desired result” of bringing Indians “within the pale of civilization.”⁷² Protestants, especially Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians, “considered the Gospel indispensable to the civilizing process” and sought new congregations in newly acquired territories.⁷³ Instead of engaging in military battles, federal officials enlisted the help of missionaries, or what scholar George E. Tinker calls a “conquest of

⁷⁰ *American State Papers: Indian Affairs, Volume 2*, 151. See also Percy L. Rainwater, “Indian Missions and Missionaries,” *Journal of Mississippi History* 28 (1966): 30-31.

⁷¹ See Snyder, *Great Crossings*, 10.

⁷² “Indian Civilization: Report of the Committee of Congress on Indian Affairs,” *The Missionary Herald* 20, no. 4 (May 1824): 151.

⁷³ Rothman, *Slave Country*, 62.

conversion.” For contemporaries, “this meant conversion to what they assumed [was] a superior culture and set of values and societal structures every bit as much as it meant conversion to the gospel of Jesus Christ.”⁷⁴ At the same time, as participants in the conquest of conversion, missionaries accepted notions of Euro American superiority and ideas that Protestant values provided the proper blueprint for Native societies. Although Presbyterians were not evangelicals, taming the frontier held a special appeal that mimicked the evangelical features of Baptists and Methodists.

The intertwining of the civilization policy and the construction of missions amounted less to a cohort of self-made religious men intent on taming a “frontier” by building social structures. The process more often meant enacting federal policy on Indian lands by using centralized organizations like large missionary groups to impose order on preexisting societies and on fertile physical landscapes.⁷⁵ Missions themselves not only reinforced local economic and political hierarchies that had arisen with the advent of racial slavery and included those that distinguished the Colberts and Loves, but they also served as the colonizing arm of the federal government to make Indian-inhabited regions, particularly in the Southeast, more fit for slavery.

Systematic attempts to establish missions among the Chickasaws first commenced in the late eighteenth century, but saw little success. In 1799, the New York Missionary Society sent Joseph Bullen and his son to the Chickasaw nation where they would establish a mission to teach

⁷⁴ George E. Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), viii.

⁷⁵ Historian Jonathan J. Den Hartog characterizes this as a “federalization,” rather than a “democratization” of American Christianity after the turn of the nineteenth century. See Jonathan J. Den Hartog, *Patriotism and Piety: Federalist Politics and Religious Struggle in the New American Nation* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015).

English and facilitate worship. Chickasaws found little use for the mission, though it captured most attention from enslaved people living in the area.⁷⁶ After four years, Bullen left the Chickasaw nation for Jefferson County, Mississippi Territory, where he set up a small farm and started the area's first Presbyterian church. Methodists also attempted to establish a mission among the Chickasaws. In 1821, Alex Deavers arrived in the Chickasaw nation and remained until they forcibly removed to Indian Territory. Although Deavers never enjoyed the success of 1820s Presbyterian missionaries, his family ingratiated themselves among Natives living in the region. One Deavers son married a Chickasaw woman, while another son married a Choctaw woman.⁷⁷

The establishment of permanent missions among the Chickasaws first saw success in 1820 and 1821. Cumberland Presbyterians, led by Robert Bell, established the first long-term mission boarding school, Charity Hall, among the Chickasaws in 1820, near Cotton Gin Port.⁷⁸ Opened at the home of Levi Colbert, the school eventually relocated about a mile and a half away to a "complex [that] consisted of a log classroom, rooms for students, outbuildings, and a mission farm."⁷⁹ In 1823, John C. Smith and his wife arrived at Charity Hall, where missionaries "built a tanyard, cleared and fenced a farm, erected a blacksmith shop, and established a saddler's shop." Bell's wife, Grizelle, meanwhile, oversaw cooking, washing, and girls'

⁷⁶ Rothman, *Slave Country*, 63-64.

⁷⁷ Cushman, *History of the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Natchez Indians*, 361.

⁷⁸ Carolyn Thomas Foreman, "Charity Hall: An Early Chickasaw School," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 11 (September 1933): 912. Foreman attributes inspiration for the name "Charity Hall" to "Indian Charity School" established by Eleazer Wheelock in Lebanon, Connecticut in 1754.

⁷⁹ Amanda L. Paige, Fuller L. Bumpers, and Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., *Chickasaw Removal* (Ada: Chickasaw Press, 2010), 8.

teaching. She “employed two assistants to cook and wash for the boarders at the school,” while “several women were hired to help her teach the girls at the school to spin and weave.”⁸⁰ Other white women at Charity Hall typically had small families or “their families or children were boarded for them for their attention to sewing, cooking, and sometimes a small additional remuneration were allowed them.”⁸¹ The second long-term mission, Monroe, which the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia established in 1821 and named after President James Monroe, began near the Tombigbee River in northeastern Mississippi under the leadership of Thomas C. Stuart.⁸² When Stuart arrived in the nation, Chickasaw leaders invited him to attend a “great

⁸⁰ Elliott and Wells, *Cotton Gin Port*, 68-69.

⁸¹ Foreman, “Charity Hall,” 922; Precarious financial circumstances surrounded the operation of Charity Hall and ultimately hastened its decline by the early 1830s. First, the Elk Presbytery missionary board provided increasingly dwindling funds to Charity Hall throughout the 1820s, allocating \$1,000 in 1824, \$272 in 1826, and \$142 in 1830 as well as nothing in other years. Second, students held responsibility for boarding and tuition, which they sometimes paid in cattle, pigs, or raw cotton. The school’s curriculum required students to work without pay, and Bell’s contention that Charity Hall’s “considerable” farm could support the school and staff proved untenable. Third, the U.S. government provided comparatively fewer and less reliable funds for Charity Hall. According to Grizelle Bell’s 1823 diary entry, “the United States government had appropriated the sum of four hundred dollars for this institution this year for payment of the tuition of poor children” and that “five hundred dollars had been sent us last year, of which we never before heard.” Charity Hall officially closed in 1832, like the other Chickasaw Presbyterian schools. Grizelle Bell’s diary quoted in Elliott and Wells, *Cotton Gin Port*, 69; See also Paige, Bumpers, and Littlefield, *Chickasaw Removal*, 16.

⁸² While attempts to establish a mission among the Chickasaws met with failure, Presbyterians achieved some success in the 1820s with the construction of Monroe Mission. In 1827, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), an interdenominational organization of Congregationalists and Presbyterians, assumed responsibility for the operations of Monroe Mission. See Paige, Bumpers, and Littlefield, Jr., *Chickasaw Removal*, 6-16; Atkinson, *Splendid Land, Splendid People*, 219-220; Robert Milton Winter, *Shadow of a Mighty Rock: A Social and Cultural History of Presbyterianism in Marshall County, Mississippi* (Franklin: Providence House Publishers, 1997), 18-39; Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 110-116, 133-137, 157; Walter Brownlow Posey, *Frontier Mission: A History of Religion West of the Southern Appalachians to 1861* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1966); Ernest Trice Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South, Volume 1: 1607-1861*

national ballplay in the immediate neighborhood,” where he “met and conferred with the principal men.” The Chickasaws’ General Council granted Stuart formal permission to establish a mission, and they chose a location about eleven miles south of present-day Pontotoc, Mississippi.⁸³

Other missionaries followed Stuart to Monroe. One of Monroe’s most prominent mission leaders, Hugh Wilson, arrived in 1822 with his wife Ethalinda and his sister Prudence. Upon reaching Monroe via the Natchez Trace, the Wilson family “found Mr. [Thomas C.] Stuart and his helpers, busily clearing forests, and building needed huts on land donated by one of the Chickasaw chiefs, William Colbert.” The physical location of Monroe Mission, like that of Charity Hall, was strategic: “At Monroe the Natchez Trace was intersected by other trails, which made the Monroe Station, named for President Monroe, the most accessible and centrally located place within the Chickasaw domains.”⁸⁴ Over the next few years, other missionaries, including William C. Blair, James Holmes, and their families, would join Stuart and the Wilsons.

In the establishment of mission schools, religious denominations’ goals of gaining financial footing and an audience to achieve their spiritual mission intersected with the federal

(Richmond: John Knox Press, 1963), 199-200. Several historians argue that missions in the Chickasaw Nation in Mississippi achieved most success among enslaved people rather than Chickasaw people. Some enslaved people even secured their freedom through their work in the mission. See Pickett, “T.C. Stuart and the Monroe Mission among the Chickasaw in Mississippi, 1819-1834,” 63-88; Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters*, 54-55, 57-58, 60, 69; Kidwell, *Choctaws and Missionaries*, 24.

⁸³ Clipping: J.W. Fraser, “Rev. T.C. Stuart, Biographical Sketch, *The Observer* (Louisville, KY) for the *Christian Observer*, 1883 in Lyman Draper Manuscript Collection, microfilm, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, vol. 10, series U.

⁸⁴ T.M. Cunningham, *Hugh Wilson: A Pioneer Saint, Missionary to the Chickasaw Indians and Pioneer Minister in Texas, with A Genealogy of the Wilson Family including 422 Descendants of Rev. Lewis Feuilleteau Wilson, I* (Dallas: Wilkinson Printing Co., 1938), 24.

government's aims of "civilizing" and expanding westward. The civilizing project entailed an expansion of the cotton economy and the advancement of plantation slavery into the western regions of the continent, a notion that contemporary European American observers would have understood within the matrix of Protestant Christianity: "If the Christian mind glorified Abel the husbandman over Cain the hunter, then Christian values could transform the Indians in ways consistent with the aims of the government and the expansion of American society."⁸⁵

Presbyterian missionaries acted as colonizing partners of the United States government. While missionaries espoused a spiritual purpose, their mission amounted to, above all, a colonial project that, at minimum, intended to sever sociocultural ties among the Chickasaws and alienate them from their homeland.⁸⁶

The Calvinistic beliefs of the Presbyterian missionaries amounted to a blueprint for society in North Mississippi—with or without the Chickasaws—that often contradicted Chickasaw cosmologies and ideas about the spiritual world.⁸⁷ Many Presbyterians believed that God's hand through the creation of religious institutions with an educational mission, not just human ingenuity alone, could progress society. Missionaries associated with Chickasaw missions, including James Holmes, received educations at theological seminaries like Princeton,

⁸⁵ Kidwell, *Choctaws and Missionaries*, 26.

⁸⁶ See Miles, *Ties that Bind*; Mary Elizabeth Young, *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks: Indian Allotments in Alabama and Mississippi, 1830-1860* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961).

⁸⁷ Historian Clara Sue Kidwell frames neighboring Choctaws' relationship to Calvinistic missionaries in a similar fashion. See Kidwell, *Choctaws and Missionaries*, 26-28. Anthropologist Christopher C. Fennell defines a "cosmology" as the way in which "a group understands the workings of the world, nature, and the cosmos." Cosmologies "encompass what we think of as religion, physics, and philosophy in a comprehensive framework." See Christopher C. Fennell, *Crossroads and Cosmologies: Diasporas and Ethnogenesis in the New World* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), 1.

where they were taught about the inerrancy of the Bible. In general, Presbyterians believed in human dependence on a benevolent, just, and holy God rooted in the doctrines of total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance. Humans, in a state of total depravity, carried an “absolute dependence upon God for aid in salvation.” According to the doctrine of unconditional election, when God created the world, he knew each person—the elect—who would be predestined to receive an opportunity for conversion in his or her lifetime. For missionaries among the Chickasaws, mission activities facilitated the conversion process. As historian John B. Boles explains, “God had to activate the faith, but in some way he did this through the message of the Bible as preached by ministers.” Anxiety over the state of one’s soul portended the possibility of salvation. Conversion constituted a regeneration from the state of total depravity, and therefore, an ability to accept God’s irresistible grace. Sin might tempt an individual who received salvation, but he or she would persevere in righteousness through “preaching, good works, hope, and virtuous living” and then receive a heavenly reward in the afterlife.⁸⁸

In contrast to Presbyterians’ Calvinistic beliefs on dependency, Chickasaw cosmologies emphasized individual autonomy within a matrix of deities and spirits that sanctioned tribal and social organization and inhabited the supernatural and natural worlds. A supreme being, Ababinili, acted as a “composite force” that consisted of the “Four Beloved Things Above”—the Sun, Clouds, Clear Sky, and He that Lives in the Clear Sky.⁸⁹ On a personal level, Chickasaws interacted with dualistic spiritual beings that could directly intervene in fortunate and unfortunate

⁸⁸ John B. Boles, *The Great Revival: Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996 [1972]), 132, 135-136.

⁸⁹ Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 22, 9.

ways in daily life.⁹⁰ Chickasaws also kept a close watch over wizards, conjurors, doctors, and other diviners who claimed that they could harness spiritual power.⁹¹ In the afterlife, all Chickasaw spirits “will go back to Mississippi and join the spirits of those that have died there; and then all the spirits will return to the west before the world is destroyed by fire.”⁹²

With an emphasis on agriculture and European American gender roles, Presbyterian mission schools would help Chickasaws to further accentuate their relationship to race-based slaveholding in the 1820s and 1830s. Faced with increasing pressure to “civilize,” elite Chickasaws worked pragmatically to circumvent European Americans’ seizing of land and to preserve an interest in enslaving before Indian Removal. By participating in the federal government’s “civilizing” projects and by attending missions and mission schools, elite Chickasaw enslavers capitalized on a chance to “civilize” on their own terms and bolstered the continued practice of race-based enslaving through European American education.

Federal officials believed that Native Americans occupied and neglected to cultivate an overabundance of land. A reversal in Chickasaws’ dependence on hunting, though commercialized, and a lack of sufficient emphasis on organized agriculture required a

⁹⁰ In the physical world, agents of Ababinli “performed various creative and service functions useful to the Chickasaws.” Accompanying the supreme spirit, lesser deities resided in the “higher regions,” such as the Hottuk Ishtohollo who acted as “good spirits,” and in the “dark regions of the West,” such as the Hottuk Ookproose who acted as “evil spirits.” Other supernatural beings lived among the Chickasaws and interacted with them on a personal level. For example, Lofas, ten-foot-tall giants, “carried off women, beat men, and vexed the Chickasaws by driving deer away, hiding game from hunters, and causing personal disasters.” Iyaganashas, three-foot-tall little people, “trained Indian doctors, transmitting to them their special curative powers, and taught hunters how to pursue and catch deer and other game.” Witches, meanwhile, “took on various forms in nature” and instigated “personal misfortune and illness.” See Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 9-10.

⁹¹ Swanton, *Chickasaw Society and Religion*, 99.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 84.

reorientation of Chickasaw households based male leadership and female dependency.

“Indigenous dependence on hunting,” historian Adam Rothman notes “amounted to a monopoly that stunted the progress of civilization.”⁹³ Some Chickasaw leaders, thus, understood missions as vital to “securing the future existence of the tribe,” and sought “efficient measures to ensure their establishment.” Mission schools came to represent “potent symbol[s] of chiefly authority.” When Cumberland Presbyterian missionaries arrived in the Chickasaw nation to establish Charity Hall in 1820, Levi Colbert “directed them to locate near the Chickasaw agency and the Natchez Trace, sources of economic and political power and convenient to him and his family as well as to other ‘mixed blood families’ concentrated there.”⁹⁴ Six of Levi Colbert’s sons and eight of his daughters attended the school. Colbert “boarded his own children and some of his connections, which has been an enlargement to the School.” Other students boarded at the homes of white settlers, where missionaries hoped they would “much sooner acquire a knowledge of the English Language & will improve much faster in Civilization than where many of them are boarded together at one house.”⁹⁵ Some of Charity Hall’s former students completed

⁹³ Rothman, *Slave Country*, 41.

⁹⁴ Perdue, “*Mixed-Blood*” *Indians*, 55.

⁹⁵ Quoted in Foreman, “Charity Hall,” 918-919, 923; The male students at Charity Hall included Alexander Colbert (son of Levi Colbert), Charles Colbert (son of Levi Colbert), Adam Colbert (son of Levi Colbert), Daugherty Colbert (son of Levi Colbert), George Colbert, George Washington, Christopher Columbus, Robert Donnel, William Barnitt, Joseph Putnam, Shehunah Matubbee, Thomas Calhoon, Iokatubba, Ionochatubba, Samuel King, James Jefferson, James Walker, John Pettis, Robinson James, Finis Ewing, Davis James, Peter Pitchlyn, James Porter, Lemual Colbert, Commodore Colbert (son of Levi Colbert), Robert Bell, Silis Anderson, Benjamin Franklin, Rufus Perry, Isaac Newton, Wilson James, Booker James, James Farr, Adam Barnitt, James Reed, Lewis Colbert, Abijah Colbert (son of Levi Colbert), Nowattah, Silas Pitchlyn, Alexander Pitchlyn, and John Smith. The female students at Charity Hall included Charity Colbert (daughter of Levi Colbert), Philistia Colbert (daughter of Levi Colbert), Vecy Colbert, Susan Colbert, Betsey Porter, Silva Porter, Caroline Smelt, Delila Brown, Acy Colbert,

their educations among white people at other institutions, including R.M. Johnson's Choctaw Academy in Kentucky.⁹⁶ In 1824, a Chickasaw delegation visited Washington to arrange for their \$35,000 tribal annuity to be paid "towards the education and improvement of their children."⁹⁷ While the Civilization Fund's operating budget totaled \$10,000 per year, Chickasaw leaders appropriated \$5,000 from tribal funds to build more schools and \$2,500 per year for expenses in 1824.⁹⁸

Between 1821 and 1834, Monroe Mission expanded across North Mississippi and northwestern Alabama and encompassed three more mission stations with schools—Martyn, Tokshish, and Caney Creek—that often taught twenty to fifty young Chickasaw students. Martyn, established in 1825 by William C. Blair and his wife, consisted of "a farm of about 30 acres of good land, and a school." By 1827, Martyn's mission school taught twenty-four pupils.⁹⁹ In 1825, James Holmes, who had arrived at Monroe the previous year by way of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, founded Tokshish, a small school and farm, located two miles from Monroe. Holmes had entered Princeton College in 1820, but left before completing his studies. In 1823, Holmes graduated from Dickinson College, where he studied theology under George

Lucy James, Nicey Jefferson, Jane Jefferson, Margaret Burris, Dorathy Smith, Molley, Sally Pickens, Ticky Burris, Molley Ewing, Mariah Colbert (daughter of Levi Colbert), and Sytha Brown.

⁹⁶ Foreman, "Charity Hall," 918, 924. Some of these students included Daugherty Colbert (1828; son of Levi Colbert), George Colbert (1835-1838), Benjamin Franklin (1838 at age twenty), Silas Pitchlynn, and Peter Pitchlynn (became head of Choctaw Academy); See also Snyder, *Great Crossings*.

⁹⁷ "Chicksaw Mission," *Zion's Herald* 3, no. 3 (January 19, 1825): 2.

⁹⁸ Amanda J. Cobb, *Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories: The Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females, 1852-1949* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 28.

⁹⁹ Joseph Tracy, *History of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: Compiled Chiefly from the Published and Unpublished Documents of the Board, Second Edition* (New York: M.W. Dodd, 1842), 198.

Duffield. After his graduation from Dickinson, Holmes entered Princeton Theological Seminary, but sickness forced him to abandon his studies during the spring of 1824. Later that year, he migrated southward to work among the Chickasaws, a people he viewed as heathens. In January 1825, Holmes wrote that “at present these people are locked in the cold embrace of a spiritual winter, but I hail with joy the dawning of that day when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise upon them [and] by his intense brightness dissolve their icy shackles [and] cause them to bring forth fruit to meet for repentance.”¹⁰⁰ Holmes’s wife Sarah Anna Van Wagenen and Emeline H. Richmond played a large role in meeting the goals of the Tokshish mission: they both taught the school’s students, “mostly small girls.” In 1826, Hugh, Ethalinda, and Prudence Wilson established Caney Creek station as a boarding school with twenty-five students to separate Chickasaw children from the ways of their “heathen relatives.”¹⁰¹ At a school in which children went home every day, Chickasaw parents and elders countered missionaries’ influence.¹⁰²

By the end of the 1820s, missionaries reported that some Chickasaws had abandoned earlier subsistence practices and embraced education and plow-based agriculture, associated with men. Hunting had “become more precarious,” and Chickasaws’ “only alternative... [was] to turn their attention to the culture of the soil.” Missionaries equated agriculture with civilization and favorable progress and saw it as a way to “facilitate our communion [and] give us a more full opportunity of instructing them.”¹⁰³ Most Chickasaw students “remained in school until they

¹⁰⁰ Cardozier, *A Goodly Heritage*, 27-28. Holmes’s personal diary, currently in possession of his descendants, quoted in Cardozier, *A Goodly Heritage*, 31.

¹⁰¹ Tracy, *History of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, 198.

¹⁰² Ultimately Wilson allowed a half-dozen more students to enter Caney Creek than the intended twenty-five. Cunningham, *Hugh Wilson*, 29-30.

¹⁰³ “Chickasaw Indians,” *The Religious Miscellany, Containing Information Relative to*

acquired a common English education, and were at the same time instructed in the various employments of domestic life.”¹⁰⁴ Betsy Love and James Allen enrolled Susan, along with her siblings Alexander, Mississippi, and Lucy, in Monroe Mission’s school. She entered the school in October 1825 and advanced to reading and spelling in English in four syllables.¹⁰⁵ The mission provided one starting point for their education in the practices of Euro-American society.

Pragmatic Chickasaw elites understood that the educational and practical skills taught at mission schools would pave a path for their children to more adeptly and advantageously communicate with U.S. officials and Euro-American settlers.¹⁰⁶ They foresaw the next generation’s challenges in retaining wealth and property and the need for skills to conduct business. According to Stuart, at least one-third of Monroe’s Chickasaw students had “received an education sufficient to enable them to transact common business [and]... to move with some

the Church of Christ, Together with Interesting Literary, Scientific, and Political Intelligence (March 19, 1824): 133.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas C. Stuart to the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, War Department, September 11, 1832, vol. 1, folder 9, *Papers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, microfilm (Woodbridge, CT: Research Publications, Inc., 1982-85) 18.4.4, Reel 779; See also Cobb, *Listening to Our Grandmothers’ Stories*, 28.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas C. Stuart to Jeremiah Evarts, July 1, 1828, vol. 1, folder 163, *ABCFM* 18.4.8, Reel 781.

¹⁰⁶ Euro-American-style education had long been a priority for elite Chickasaws who sent their children to private schools in Florida, Tennessee, Maryland, and the District of Columbia during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. See Paige, Bumpers, and Littlefield, *Chickasaw Removal*, 8; Braden, “The Colberts and the Chickasaw Nation,” 248; Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters*, 3, 47; St. Jean, *Remaining Chickasaw in Indian Territory*, 18. Others have noted the importance of missionary education among the Chickasaws, including related members of the Colbert family. See Cobb, *Listening to Our Grandmothers’ Stories*, 30; Andrew Grant Gregory, “The Chickasaw Colbert Family, an American Dynasty Era, 1729-1907,” *Journal of Monroe County History* 6 (1980): 38-42; Braden, “The Colberts and the Chickasaw Nation,” 222-249; Foreman, “Charity Hall,” 912-926.

respectability in polite society.”¹⁰⁷ Historian Dawn Peterson argues that U.S. dispossession of Southeastern Indians should be understood as a “family story” in which natives “[infiltrated] powerful and influential spaces within an expanding U.S. empire” during the first decades of the nineteenth century. On one hand, U.S. government officials attempted to “adopt” natives into European American kinship systems. On the other hand, by placing their children, particularly sons, into white households to receive educations, Native families saw themselves not as capitulating to U.S. demands, but as providing future generations with tools to oppose American imperialism and to protect their own sovereignty. Because the white households were slaveholding households, they provided “racialized educations that increasingly supported political and economic authority in the slaveholding South.”¹⁰⁸ Among Southeastern Indians, Chickasaws were not unusual as many fathers of European American descent of native children made special arrangements for education, especially in schools that would emphasize teaching in European American culture and society.¹⁰⁹

By the 1830s, federal agents observed transformations among Chickasaw households. According to agent John L. Allen, each Chickasaw family “cultivates the earth more or less, as his thirst for gain, or his imaginary or real wants increases.” Profits from the sales of cotton and livestock were “generally applied to the purchase of necessaries and Luxuries of life,” while slaves, sugar, coffee, and other dry goods were “calculated to render them comfortable and ornament in their persons.” Allen noted that among the Chickasaws, “there has been greater

¹⁰⁷ Thomas C. Stuart to Jeremiah Evarts, July 1, 1828, vol. 1, folder 163, *ABCFM* 18.4.8, Reel 781.

¹⁰⁸ Peterson, *Indians in the Family*, 4-5.

¹⁰⁹ See Frank, *Creeks and Southerners*, 63-64.

advancement in Civilization in the last eight years than there was in twenty previous” as the “practice of the men of requiring the woman to perform all the labours of the field is much changed.” While Chickasaw “brave and honest” men mainly performed agricultural work, women “engaged in their household affairs” by spinning, weaving, making clothing, milking cows, and making butter and cheese. Women, in particular, “keep themselves decent and clean” and wear “fashions that are in use by the whites”: “It is their constant practice to appear in their best apparel at their public meetings, also when they visit the Country Villages in the white settlements.” For Allen, women’s transformed gender roles had a racial component as “the half breeds in particular are beautiful and virtuous.”¹¹⁰ Allen’s remarks regarding Chickasaw women of mixed ancestry may have carried another meaning given his marriage to Margaret Colbert, the daughter of Chickasaw chief William Colbert.

The reorientation of Chickasaw households and gender roles occurred at the intersection of the federal civilization policy and the perpetuation of race-based slavery in North Mississippi.¹¹¹ A previous generation of historians argued that “Presbyterian missionaries allied themselves with those who before 1830 regarded slavery as a necessary evil.” Newer historical scholarship, however, points to the intertwining of proslavery politics and religious ideologies, especially in South Carolina, the natal home of some Monroe missionaries. Historian Christopher Grasso contends that starting in the 1820s and through the 1850s, Presbyterians

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Foreman, *The Five Civilized Tribes*, 97-98; John L. Allen to Indian Commissioner, February 7, 1830, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881: Chickasaw Agency, 1824-1870, National Archives Microfilm Publications, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., M234, roll 136; *The Arkansas Advocate*, June 23, 1830. For a discussion of these dynamics as they related to the Cherokees, see Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, especially 126-134.

¹¹¹ Rainwater, “Indian Missions and Missionaries,” 19-20.

along with members of other Protestant denominations articulated “a public theology... that solidified... proslavery thought and white Southern identity.”¹¹² At both Charity Hall and Monroe, European American missionaries relied upon enslaved labor to varying degrees and never disavowed the institution of slavery in writing. Black men and women worked for compensation at Charity Hall in agriculture and in education. Black men farm laborers earned about ten to twelve dollars and fifty cents per month. Black women earned about five to eight dollars per month.¹¹³ Mission correspondence concerning Monroe, meanwhile, indicates that missionaries enlisted the unpaid labor of enslaved people in clearing land and in the erection of buildings while also incorporating enslaved people, especially women, into church services, prayer meetings, and revivals.¹¹⁴ Later federal census records, furthermore, show that missionary Thomas C. Stuart owned five to ten slaves in Pontotoc County, Mississippi between 1850 and 1860.¹¹⁵ Though records do not indicate the explicit condoning of slavery in mission school lessons, missionaries’ advocacy of agricultural production and tacit approval of enslaved labor for personal and mission uses suggests their compliance in the continued expansion of slavery.

Although little written evidence survives to document the life of Toney beyond Betsy Love’s deed of gift, Monroe Mission records and missionary correspondence provide insight into

¹¹² For an older interpretation, see William L. Hiemstra, “The Disruptive Effects of the Negro Slavery Controversy Upon the Presbyterian Missions Among the Choctaw and Chickasaw Indians,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 11, no. 2 (May 1949): 125, 132. For a new interpretation, see Christopher Grasso, *Skepticism and American Faith: From the Revolution to the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 395.

¹¹³ Foreman, “Charity Hall,” 922.

¹¹⁴ See also Pickett, “T.C. Stuart and the Monroe Mission among the Chickasaw in Mississippi, 1819-1834,” 63-88; Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters*, 54-55, 57-58, 60, 69.

¹¹⁵ 1850 U.S. Federal Census – Slave Schedules; 1860 U.S. Federal Census – Slave Schedules.

the lives of enslaved people in the region. As Arica Coleman points out in borrowing from W.E.B. Du Bois, by “stepping within the veil,” historians can “demonstrate that the respective threads of African American and American Indian peoples indeed intertwined.”¹¹⁶ By the early nineteenth century, Chickasaws’ enslaving practices resembled those of European Americans. Violence and subjugation defined relationships among Chickasaws and enslaved people. In 1816, for example, the U.S. agent to the Chickasaws recounted the “most cruel, barbarous, and unprovoked” murders of enslaved people. One man, enslaved by Thomas Love, father of Betsy Love, “was shot by an Indian while in his master’s yard riving boards. The only excuse for this murder is, that the Indian says he did not like Mr. Love and that he would spoil his property.”¹¹⁷

Sarah’s story highlights the lives of enslaved people, especially women, who participated in the Presbyterian missions. Born in Africa, enslaved, and then taken to the West Indies as a child, Sarah received little religious instruction until late in life due to supposed language barriers. Later sold and enslaved in New Orleans, Sarah “resided a number of years among the French.”¹¹⁸ As Sarah grew older, her health declined, and she faced sale to a slave owner, likely a Chickasaw Indian, in North Mississippi.¹¹⁹ Due to their cultural, linguistic, and geographic

¹¹⁶ Coleman, *That the Blood Stay Pure*, 11.

¹¹⁷ Quoted in Rothman, *Slave Country*, 60-61.

¹¹⁸ “Death of Sarah,” *The Missionary Herald* 24, no. 9 (September 1828): 283.

¹¹⁹ In later chapters, enslaved women’s evolving presence and visibility in religious spaces receives more detailed and sustained attention. I derive my perspectives on enslaved women’s religious and spiritual lives from Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Brenda E. Stevenson, “‘Marsa Never Sot Aunt Rebecca Down’: Enslaved Women, Religion, and Social Power in the Antebellum South,” *Journal of African American History* 90 (Autumn 2005): 347; Ula Taylor, “Women in the Documents: Thoughts on Uncovering the Personal, Political, and Profession,” *Journal of Women’s History* 20 (Spring 2008): 188, 191; Stephanie Y. Mitchem, *African American Folk Healing* (New York: New York University Press, 2007);

knowledge, enslaved people, especially women, often acted as intermediaries between European and European American travelers or missionaries and Chickasaws. British traveler Adam Hodgson, for instance, learned about Chickasaw burial customs during an encounter with a young enslaved girl at the home of a Chickasaw Indian. As the only person who could speak English in the Chickasaw home, the young enslaved girl revealed that the Chickasaw people buried the dead “in their houses.”¹²⁰ Though aimed at Chickasaws, Presbyterian missions in North Mississippi were most successful at converting enslaved people.

Sarah’s final moments revealed the confluence of Protestant Christianity and West and West Central African spiritual beliefs. Sarah regularly attended preaching at Monroe in the 1820s and officially gained admission to Monroe “on examination” in September 1826. In August 1827, however, Sarah was “removed by death” from the records of Monroe.¹²¹ A group of enslaved people assembled for a prayer meeting at Sarah’s bedside on the night of her death.

Anthony E. Kaye, *Joining Places: Slave Neighborhoods in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Stephanie M.H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Sharla M. Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Brenda E. Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 2010 [1985]); Deborah Gray White, *Ar’n’t I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999 [1985]).

¹²⁰ Adam Hodgson, *Letters from North America Written During a Tour in the United States and Canada: Volume I* (London: Hurst, Robinson, and Co. and A. Constable and Co. Edinburgh, 1824), 256.

¹²¹ E.T. Winston, “Father” Stuart and the Monroe Mission (Meridian, MS: Press of Tell Farmer, 1927), 28-29; “Death of Sarah,” *The Missionary Herald*, 283; Sarah Tuttle, *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions* (Boston: Massachusetts Sabbath School Union, 1831), 14-15.

According to Stuart, Sarah was “unusually happy: her soul appeared filled to overflowing with divine love.” In the middle of the prayer meeting, Sarah requested and joined the group in singing her favorite hymn. While the enslaved people sang, Sarah “rose from the bed on which she was sitting, went round and shook hands affectionately with all in the room, returned and laid herself down.” Before singing had concluded, Sarah quietly died. Astonished, the enslaved people first believed that Sarah had fainted and attempted to revive her. The circumstances of Sarah’s death apparently “made a deep impression” on the enslaved people who surrounded her.¹²² Communal spiritual experiences, like the singing during Sarah’s death, could transcend the boundaries of forced labor by collapsing boundaries between the physical and metaphysical. Some scholars have argued that adaptations of West and West Central African beliefs and practices under the template of Protestant Christianity may have facilitated communication with the spiritual world, a broad matrix of the living, the deceased, and the community.¹²³

Sarah’s experiences at Monroe Mission were not unusual. While scant documentation exists to chart enslaved women’s interior motivations for attending Monroe Mission, contemporaries observed their presence and leadership. After visiting Monroe, missionary Isaac Hadden noted an unnamed enslaved woman, who professed religion and was “doing much good, not only amongst those of her own colour, but also amongst the natives.”¹²⁴ Enslaved people like

¹²² “Chickasaw Mission: Extract from the Report of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia,” *Christian Watchman* 9, no. 12 (March 21, 1828): 1; “Death of Sarah,” *The Missionary Herald*, 283; Tuttle, *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions*, 14-15.

¹²³ Scholar Stephanie Y. Mitchem locates black folk healing within African American intellectual and mystical traditions that operated in a holistic, often non-institutional cosmology and changed over time in relation to Protestant Christianity. Mitchem, *African American Folk Healing*, 6-7.

¹²⁴ “Chickasaw Nation: Extract of a Letter to the Rev. Wm. H. Barr, from Mr. Isaac

Sarah often traveled several miles to religious meetings, “after which they have returned by torchlight through foot-paths filled with mud and water.” One missionary described the prayer meetings of enslaved people as “conducted wholly by Christian *slaves* in the Chickasaw language.” At least one enslaved person could “read fluently in the Bible.”¹²⁵ Other enslaved people memorized and sang hymns.¹²⁶ On one level, enslaved people initiated religious instruction and used it as a pathway to communicate with both white settlers and Chickasaw Indians. On another level, religious experiences revealed to enslaved people the promise of salvation and entry into God’s kingdom, an eternal site beyond bondage.¹²⁷ Enslaved people sacralized their immediate surroundings to transcend confinement without physical flight.

Little to no written records survive to document Chickasaws’ sale of enslaved people to white colonizers, but it is likely that those enslaved by Chickasaws formed bonds with the enslaved people who arrived with white colonizers. J. Lane wrote to U.S. House Representative for Alabama C.C. Clay about white colonizers bringing enslaved people to Chickasaw lands. According to Lane, “I am informed and believe several persons sending their negroes into the Chickasaw Country and putting them in with persons that reside [*sic*] there to make and cultivate farms and others are also settling on the Lands.” If the federal government did not step in soon to “avoid the unpleasant consequences that are sure to take place by permitting white men to settle or put their negroes among the Indians,” northern Alabama would find itself “in the same

Hadden,” *The Pittsburgh Recorder, Containing Religious Literary and Political Information* 2, no. 40 (October 29, 1823): 628.

¹²⁵ Tuttle, *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions*, 9-11.

¹²⁶ Walter Brownlow Posey, *The Presbyterian Church in the Old Southwest, 1778-1838* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1952), 68.

¹²⁷ Kaye, *Joining Places*, 154-155.

situation that South Alabama is with the Creeks.”¹²⁸ During their interactions with Chickasaws, African Americans initiated a “genealogy of resistance” that was at once part of a larger story of slave resistance in the South, yet was also particular to the matrix of white supremacy in this region’s specific culture. Enslaved people acted as translators, instructors, and cultural mediators, and they used missions to strengthen their own familial and communal ties. Their assertions of humanity within mission spaces provides insight into localized forms of resistance to slavery that would become equally, if not more important through the 1840s and 1850s.¹²⁹

The secular project of civilizing and the religious goal of converting often appeared as one in the same. Indeed, the concerns of the schools and the mission had “from the first been so blended that they cannot now be separated,” according to Stuart.¹³⁰ Historian Francis Paul Prucha characterizes the processes of civilizing and Christianizing as “inextricably mixed” and “difficult to tell where one activity ended and the other began.”¹³¹ In November 1830, agent John L. Allen attended a camp meeting and observed “the Sacrament taken by the Indians” and that “many of the Chickasaws profess Christianity.” White and Indian men conducted worship services “alternately... [in] English and Indian languages,” and “conducted with the utmost good order, and decorum.”¹³² Records of the Church Session at Monroe, Chickasaw Nation indicate

¹²⁸ Letter from J. Lane to C.C. Clay, December 29, 1833, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881: Chickasaw Agency, 1824-1870, National Archives Microfilm Publications, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., M234, roll 136.

¹²⁹ See Miles, *Ties that Bind*, 93-99.

¹³⁰ Thomas C. Stuart to the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, War Department, September 11, 1832, vol. 1, folder 9, *ABCFM* 18.4.4, Reel 779.

¹³¹ Prucha, *The Great Father*, 53.

¹³² Quoted in Foreman, *The Five Civilized Tribes*, 98; John L. Allen to Indian Commissioner, February 7, 1830, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881: Chickasaw Agency, 1824-1870, National Archives Microfilm Publications, National Archives

the baptisms of James B. Allen and his daughter Polly Allen, in 1828.¹³³ While not baptized, George Allen, who filed suit on his sister Susan's behalf, also caught the attention of Stuart. Described as "a prominent character in the nation," George Allen converted, an event that Stuart called "peculiarly desirable, independant [*sic*] of his own external interests."¹³⁴ Individual Chickasaws embraced the teachings of missionaries in their outward manifestations, even as many Chickasaws dismissed the religious priorities of missions and missionaries with skepticism or outright scorn.¹³⁵

Missionaries' religious goals often conflicted with Chickasaws', such as the Allen-Loves', practical aims for acquiring and funding mission education. Past historians have further mischaracterized Chickasaws' participation within missions as an indication of "success" or "failure."¹³⁶ Centering indigenous perspectives and lives instead of European American

and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., M234, roll 136; *The Arkansas Advocate*, June 23, 1830.

¹³³ Winston, "Father" Stuart and the Monroe Mission, 32-33. In his biography of Thomas C. Stuart, Presbyterian missionary to the Chickasaws, Winston included the "Record of Monroe Church Session (North Alabama Presbytery)," which spans from 1823 to 1842.

¹³⁴ Thomas C. Stuart to Jeremiah Evarts, July 1, 1828, vol. 1, folder 163, *ABCFM* 18.4.8, Reel 781.

¹³⁵ Chickasaw leaders had seen the consequences of neighboring Choctaws' interactions with missionaries, and had markedly less contact with missionaries. No missionaries followed the Chickasaws after Removal. See Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters*, 50; St. Jean, *Remaining Chickasaw in Indian Territory*, 18. For more on slaveholding Chickasaws' and other Southeastern Indians' views on missionaries' agendas, see William G. McLoughlin, "Red Indians, Black Slavery and White Racism: America's Slaveholding Indians," *American Quarterly* 26 (October 1974): 372-375.

¹³⁶ For example, historian Arrell Gibson sets forth three obstacles that impeded the success of missions to the Chickasaws. First, he argues that a conservative "full-blood" faction held on to older tribal belief systems that had declined by the 1820s and 1830s, and that they resented the missions. Second, he points to the passage of an 1829 Mississippi law that extended state jurisdiction over the Chickasaws and nullified tribal laws, which barred the traffic and consumption of whiskey. In the aftermath of the law's passage, Chickasaws engaged in "an orgy

missionaries reveals that many Chickasaws never wanted to fulfill a spiritual mission and instead intended to reap practical rewards. While Chickasaws saw the schools as practical ways to gain economic and political leverage, missionaries “were interested only in making the Chickasaws functionally literate, that is, able to read and write well enough to participate in church services, study the Bible, and be converted to Christianity.” Missionaries faced Chickasaws’ “general lack of interest in religious training” as one obstacle among others. Teacher shortages forced missionaries to adopt a “Lancastrian method of school, in which older students taught or monitored the younger ones.” Language barriers necessitated the use of enslaved interpreters and boarding students at the homes of European Americans.¹³⁷ Literacy, above all, represented Chickasaws’ controlled adaptation to a rapidly changing economic, political, and racial world without giving up important aspects of their own culture. First, literacy gave Chickasaws greater autonomy in political negotiations. Second, literacy would provide Chickasaws with a way to demonstrate their acclimation to Euro-American standards of “civilization.” They could take part in negotiations in the same language as their colonizers. Third, they could demonstrate their acquiescence to a new racial world that placed them in a liminal space between white and black.

Rapid adaptation to race-based slaveholding and its cognates in Chickasaws’ economic and sociocultural world, along with the specter of forced removal, created divisions and kindled

of intemperance... which distracted interest in things religious, desolated congregations, and made missionaries intense in their denunciation of the state of Mississippi.” Third, federal pressure to cede the Chickasaw homelands created intratribal anxiety that manifested in divisions among Chickasaws, many of whom did not turn to “the certitude of their tribal gods or Gilead’s balm offered by the Christian missionaries,” but to whiskey. See Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 134-135.

¹³⁷ Cobb, *Listening to Our Grandmothers’ Stories*, 29-31. During the early nineteenth century, Joseph Lancaster outlined this educational model, which was useful for poorer schools.

conflict within and among Chickasaw communities. Although many Chickasaws supported the Presbyterian missions as a way to preserve autonomy for future generations, other Chickasaws opposed the missions. Elite Chickasaws took advantage of Euro-American education, but it “was not widespread among rank and file Chickasaws.”¹³⁸ While historian Arrell Gibson partially attributes this opposition to “an enduring hard core of conservatives, largely among the full bloods, who determined to preserve and continue the old tribal ways” in the face of a decline in the “Chickasaw natural religious system... as a constructive force within the tribe,” his language of blood mischaracterizes conflicts among the Chickasaws as hinging on “full-bloodedness” or “mixed bloodedness.”¹³⁹ As the example of George Colbert demonstrates, conservatism among Chickasaws did not hinge upon one’s “blood.” Later accounts portray Colbert, descended from Scots and Chickasaws and supposedly the wealthiest of his brothers, as “a real conservative in sentiment.” Colbert “opposed the introduction of missionaries, education, and whisky [*sic*], among his people.” From Colbert’s perspective, the Chickasaws “had already reached the precise point of progress most favorable to virtue, contentment, and happiness, and that any innovation was an unmitigated evil.”¹⁴⁰ The language of blood, thus, obscures the complexity of Chickasaws’ responses to the colonial impositions that the missions embodied.

Chickasaws who did not support missionaries conflated the aims of the federal and state governments and the goals of the missions, and opposed the missions for multiple reasons. First,

¹³⁸ Paige, Bumpers, and Littlefield, *Chickasaw Removal*, 8.

¹³⁹ Theda Perdue discusses Gibson’s preoccupation with racial determinism in Perdue, “*Mixed-Blood*” *Indians*, 99-100; Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 134.

¹⁴⁰ “Reminiscences of the Chickasaws,” *Electra: A Belles Lettres Monthly for Young People* 2, no. 10 (February 1885): 617, in Lyman Draper Manuscript Collection, microfilm, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, vol. 10, series U.

some Chickasaws believed that missionaries had not fulfilled a promise to educate. According to European American observer Anson Gleason, during the summer of 1830, “the great outcry against the missionaries has been, that they were not teaching school, which, it was said, was their appropriate work; and that, if we kept on in this way, we should get the people all crazy and spoiled, like the Choctaws.”¹⁴¹ Second, some Chickasaws believed that the missionaries worked against the interests of their people. The missions caused violence and division within Chickasaw families. Zaishka, a widow, endured “persecutions... many and severe” from her family members due to her attendance at mission meetings. The widow’s late husband’s sons, “among her bitterest adversaries,” robbed her and drove away her cattle when she attended one mission meeting. If Zaishka “pretended to claim any thing,” her stepsons “would kill her at once.” Zaishka’s likely maternal uncle, too, threatened that “if she did not abandon the Christians, he would beat her.” Zaishka responded to her uncle “that if he beat her, she would cry and get over it; but she *would* go to hear the gospel.”¹⁴² Gleason, likewise, reported that two “aged women” who had “united with the church at one time,” suffered the abuse of “unmerciful” relatives.” One of the women “left her house and fled to Mayhew,” where she lived with her daughter, after her eldest son “entered her house, spoiled all her furniture, beat her off into the woods, and vowed her death.” The other woman had also been “threatened in like manner.”¹⁴³ As Gleason observed, “those Indians who hate missionaries, or the praying people, charge us

¹⁴¹ “Chickasaws: Extracts from a Letter of Mr. Anson Gleason, Dated at Tokshish, September 28th, 1830,” *The Missionary Herald* 26, no. 12 (December 1830): 382.

¹⁴² “Munroe. Chickasaw Nation.—Extract of a late letter from a Chickasaw missionary,” *Western Recorder* 7, no.22 (June 1, 1830): 86.

¹⁴³ “Chickasaws: Extracts from a Letter of Mr. Anson Gleason, Dated at Tokshish, September 28th, 1830,” *The Missionary Herald* 26, no. 12 (December 1830): 382.

with the villainy of selling their country.”¹⁴⁴ Upon hearing that Gleason had organized a religious meeting and “was to be at his village at a certain day,” one Chickasaw man “made much exertion to prevent any in the village from coming together.”¹⁴⁵ Missions became a political issue for Chickasaws that could supersede, though not erase, other pressing issues that might divide individuals. Many Chickasaws saw the agenda of the missions and the U.S. government as one in the same.

The intersection of the federal government’s civilizing process and the establishment of religious institutions infused Calvinistic beliefs with racialized meaning in practice. The refusal of some Chickasaws to “civilize” or reconcile their spiritual beliefs with the rigidity of Calvinistic doctrines and institutions ultimately meant that missionaries perceived many as unfit to become part of the “elect.” Many Chickasaws’ actions constituted behavior that fell outside of what missionaries would have understood as an objective divine order. The inability of Chickasaws to adequately “civilize” provided a way to cast them as “other” and justify their forced removal.

Because Love and Allen married under Chickasaw customs prior to the enforcement of an 1830 law that brought Chickasaws under state jurisdiction, the court validated the union. The onus, thus, was not on the character of property itself, but the spousal relationship that infused that property with larger meaning. In 1828, southern states commenced passing laws that

¹⁴⁴ At the same time, Gleason remarked, “the credulous surrounding whites curse us bitterly for having stood in the way of government in their efforts to get the land of the Indians sooner.” See “Chickasaws: Extracts from a Letter of Mr. Anson Gleason, Dated at Tokshish, September 28th, 1830,” *The Missionary Herald* 26, no. 12 (December 1830): 382.

¹⁴⁵ “Chickasaws: Extracts from a Letter of Mr. Anson Gleason, Dated at Tokshish, September 28th, 1830,” *The Missionary Herald* 26, no. 12 (December 1830): 382.

extended state jurisdiction over Southeastern Indian nations still located within state boundaries. Mississippi, as well as Alabama, first passed such legislation in early 1829.¹⁴⁶ The extension of state jurisdiction over Indian nations would serve two primary purposes. First, state laws would seek to “undermine the political solidarity of the tribes and prevent the chiefs from exercising their authority to prevent emigration or the cession of land.” Second, the passage of such laws would bring non-English-speaking and illiterate Indian peoples into an Anglo-American legal system, of which they faced the “burden of compliance.” On January 19, 1830 in Mississippi, state legislation abolished tribal law and effectively erased the national borders of the Chickasaws and Choctaws. More specifically, the law levied a \$1,000 fine and one year of imprisonment for any individual who claimed or exercised the titles of “chief, mingo, head man, or any post of power.”¹⁴⁷ Mississippi furthermore pledged “all the rights, privileges, immunities, and franchises... enjoyed by free white persons... in as full and ample a manner, as the same can be done by act of the General Assembly” to Indians within the state’s boundaries.¹⁴⁸ The law, in intent, subjected Chickasaws and Choctaws to taxes, jury service, participation in road building, and militia muster as well as allowed them to testify in court. Once the Chickasaws and Choctaws signed removal treaties, however, Mississippi governor Gerard Brandon suspended the execution of the laws within the boundaries of the Indian nations.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Young, *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks*, 14.

¹⁴⁷ Quoted in Young, *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks*, 15; William Harvey Mattison, “Chief Tishomingo – A Legend in His Own Time in Monroe County,” *Journal of Monroe County History* 15 (1989): 28. For full text of the law, see State of Mississippi, *Laws of the State of Mississippi: Embracing all Acts of a Public Nature from January Session, 1824, to January Session, 1838, inclusive* (Jackson: Printed for the State, 1838).

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in Young, *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks*, 16.

¹⁴⁹ Young, *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks*, 16.

In the aftermath of the 1830 law's passage, George Allen, the son of Betsy Love, appealed to U.S. Secretary of War Lewis Cass to intervene on behalf of his family. Citing a lack of assistance from Indian agent Benjamin Reynolds and a lack of protection under Mississippi state law and from Monroe County authorities, Allen pleaded that "the General Government is my last chance. If I fail there I am seriously injured." Allen surmised that his "part white & part Indian" identity left him unable to "get justice anywhere" for his "difficulties... chargeable much to our chiefs and much to designing white men." Having faced threats from "some of the full Blood Indians," including "an attempt killed [*sic*] my cattle & drove them off over me off my farm [*sic*]," Allen blamed Chickasaw chiefs. Asking Cass to redress the situation whether through the federal, state, or tribal government, Allen related that "I wish to proceed legally and obtain my right more than all this a few of our head men have underhandily [*sic*] sold our Country and given us no chance who are dispose to stay I cannot sanction the treaty I am determined to stay in my present country all those matters of fact which I alledge [*sic*]."¹⁵⁰ Allen's fraught relationship with Chickasaw chiefs dated back to at least the 1820s, when he accused them of selling out the Chickasaw people to the U.S. government. In 1826, Walter Bunch, a European American resident of Chickasaw Bluffs, Tennessee, related a meeting held at the home of James Allen, the father of George Allen: "[James Allen] remarked, that his son, George Allen, would kill the first chief that proposed to sell any of their lands, and that he [James Allen] though[t] it right that he should do so." Himself present at the meeting, George

¹⁵⁰ Letter from George G. Allen to Lewis Cass, January 13, 1833, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881: Chickasaw Agency, 1824-1870, National Archives Microfilm Publications, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., M234, roll 136.

Allen “did not contradict what the old man his father said, but seemed willing that the impression should go out as his father had spoken.”¹⁵¹

At the same time, white colonizers’ encroachment on Chickasaw lands and a lack of support from tribal, state, or federal authorities also left Allen’s property vulnerable to stealing. Allen related that Hiram Deen, from Arkansas Territory, entered Chickasaw lands in 1828 “without any colour [*sic*] of claim and took of my property one waggon [*sic*] one yoke of steers pots corn even two crops of corn & garden vegetables also some cord wood off the Bank of Mississippi River to my damage about one thousand dollars he also continues trespasses on my place by cutting cord wood and appears to be disposed to further injure me.” Another white man, W. Lundy, also sold Allen’s steer to a butcher in Memphis, but the Indian agent refused to redress the situation.¹⁵²

The new state laws, most importantly, abolished the Chickasaw people as a nation. “Chickasaw,” thus, no longer denoted a legal or political identity and came to represent a racial identity. Chickasaws came to occupy intermediary positions, though Southeastern Indian identity became racialized to the extent that it would serve slaveholding and its further westward expansion.¹⁵³ Mississippi legislators intended for the 1830 law to assert state as opposed to federal authority in an effort to separate Indians from their homelands. By blaming the forced

¹⁵¹ *American State Papers: Documents, Legislative and Executive, of the Congress of the United States, from the First Session of the Fourteenth to the Second Session of the Nineteenth Congress, Inclusive: Commencing December 4, 1815 and Ending March 3, 1827, Volume 2* (Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1834), 723

¹⁵² Letter from George G. Allen to Lewis Cass, January 13, 1833, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881: Chickasaw Agency, 1824-1870, National Archives Microfilm Publications, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., M234, roll 136.

¹⁵³ Gross, *What Blood Won't Tell*, 112-113.

removal of Chickasaws on the federal government and ignoring the roles of white settlers and the state government, white Mississippians used Indian Removal to further a states' rights agenda.¹⁵⁴

Although the presence of the Chickasaw people had been physically diminished by the end of the 1840s, their decisions and relationships had remade the social and cultural landscape of North Mississippi before Removal. As a lens, the southern confluence brings the Chickasaw people to the forefront of the sociocultural processes that defined North Mississippi as a place in the middle of the nineteenth century. Elite Chickasaw's actions would lay an important foundation for the region's development as a slave society.

The Mississippi High Court's January 1837 ruling not only guarded Betsy Love's assets from her husband's debts, but also represented a culminating moment in a process that fused economic, political, and religious interests to protect slaveholding and create an enduring foundation for white supremacy in Mississippi. At the same time, however, Love's protection of her property, and prerequisite adoption of race-based slaveholding, did little to protect her kin's

¹⁵⁴ Historian Katherine M.B. Osburn argues that white Mississippians used Choctaw accounts of dispossession and refusal to remove to bolster the Lost Cause. "For Mississippians, this tale supported the popular mythos of Indians as vanishing noble savages, which generated Christian compassion—a posture important to southern cultural identity. Pinning this sage of decline on the federal government and ignoring the role Mississippi settlers had played proved a bonus for politicians asserting states' rights as a marker of southern identity. Following the Civil War, Mississippians reinterpreted the Choctaws' refusal to remove (once seen as an impediment to progress) as representatives of regional pride and defense of homelands against invasion. Resonance with the Lost Cause fortified Mississippi politicians' determination to support Choctaw claims." See Katherine M.B. Osburn, *Choctaw Resurgence in Mississippi: Race, Class, and Nation Building in the Jim Crow South, 1830-1977* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 5. For a detailed analysis of political debates at the state-level concerning the fate of Indians living in Mississippi, see Carson, "States Rights and Indian Removal in Mississippi, 1817-1835," 26-36.

forced removal from their homeland. As historian Tiya Miles notes, although Native Southerners invested in the “American system of valuing and racializing property (accepting ‘improved land as a signifier of civilization and blackness as a signifier of enslavement),” they simultaneously invested “in a system that subordinated and excluded them.” Elite slaveholding Chickasaws like Love were “caught in a web of exploitation with those slaves, as both perpetrators and victims.”¹⁵⁵ Months after the court ruled in *Fisher v. Allen*, Betsy Love Allen died in Pontotoc, Mississippi before the rest of her family removed west of the Mississippi River. The actions of elite Chickasaws like Love continued to impact the trajectory of slavery and helped to define an enslaved and a free Mississippi. As elite Chickasaws bought into chattel slavery wherein they acted as free property holders, they asserted a right to recognition separate from European Americans and drew a distance from the unfreedom that defined blackness. *Fisher v. Allen*, furthermore, became a landmark precedent in protecting the property rights of white women. In 1839, the Mississippi legislature passed the Married Women’s Property Act, the first state law in the U.S. to protect women’s property from being used to cover the debts of their husbands.¹⁵⁶ By defining property as white and for married women in addition to men, the

¹⁵⁵ Miles, *Ties that Bind*, 83.

¹⁵⁶ For more on the Mississippi Married Women’s Property Act of 1839, as well as Married Women’s Property Acts in general, see Holton, “Equality as Unintended Consequence,” 313-340; Carson, “Choctaw and Chickasaw Women, 1690-1834,” 18-19; Gilmer, “Chickasaws, Tribal Laws, and the Mississippi Married Women’s Property Act of 1839,” 131-148; Howe, “Betsy Love and the Mississippi Married Women’s Property Act of 1839,”; Benson, “*Fisher v. Allen*: The Southern Origins of the Married Women’s Property Acts,” 97-122; Shammas, “Re-Assessing the Married Women’s Property Acts,” 9-30. See also Judith Younger, “Marital Regimes: A Story of Compromise and Demoralization together with Criticism and Suggestions for Reform,” *Cornell Law Review* 67 (1981): 45, 60-61; Comment, “Husband and Wife: Memorandum on the Mississippi Woman’s Law of 1839,” *Michigan Law Review* 42 (1944): 1110, 1117-1118; Carol Weisbrod, *Emblems of Pluralism: Cultural Differences and the State*

law further deepened the gulf between black and white. Within the context of the federal government's "civilizing" project and the establishment of missions, Love's story serves as a reminder that Chickasaws secured advantages in property and wealth and navigated a hostile political environment during the 1820s and 1830s on the backs of black men and women. Meanwhile, the missions offered enslaved people a modicum of spiritual solace. Although the missions never carved a completely autonomous space for enslaved people, they strengthened communal bonds and adapted to the confines of Protestant Christianity. The racial distinctions that defined slavery and freedom would ultimately mark the physical and social landscapes of Chickasaws' North Mississippi homeland for generations.

(Princeton University Press, 2009), 39-40; Carol Weisbrod, "Towards a History of Essential Federalism: Another Look at Owen in America," *Connecticut Law Review* 21 (Summer 1989): 979-1011; Joseph A. Custer, "The Three Waves of Married Women's Property Acts in the Nineteenth Century with a Focus on Mississippi, New York and Oregon," *Ohio Northern University Law Review* 40 (2014): 403, 404, 405, 420, 421, 436, 439.

CHAPTER II:
ETCHING A COLOR LINE: CHICKASAWS, MISSIONARIES, AND LAND DURING THE
ERA OF INDIAN REMOVAL

Indigenous to northern China and with drooping twigs that yield yellow-green “lance-shaped, narrow and finely saw-toothed” leaves, the weeping willow spread to Europe along the ancient Silk Road trading route.¹ According to a legend that circulated among European American settlers during the late nineteenth century, the weeping willow’s introduction into North America coincided with invasion of British settlers. Having supposedly received the root of the weeping willow from a “mercantile friend,” eighteenth-century British poet Alexander Pope “planted it, watched it with fostering care, and it not only became a flourishing tree, but the parent of all such willows as still grow in Great Britain.” During the American Revolution, a young British officer transported a weeping willow sprig to Boston, near where “he hoped to become the occupant of confiscated lands, and came prepared with all kinds of seeds and shrubbery, to plant for himself a terrestrial Paradise in America.” Once the young officer realized that Britain would lose the American Revolution, he met with John Parke Custis, George Washington’s stepson and aide, during negotiations for an exchange of prisoners and presented

¹ Emily Waterworth, “A Guide to a Collection of Hardwood Trees of the Northeast,” Brandeis University, <http://www.bio.brandeis.edu/fieldbio/emmae24/Salicaceae/weepingwillow.html> (accessed October 8, 2018); University of Vermont Digital Exhibits, The Center for Teaching and Learning, “Weeping Willow: Weeping Willow—Natural History,” University of Vermont, <http://badger.uvm.edu/omeka/exhibits/show/uvmtrees/weeping-willow-introduction/weeping-willow-history> (accessed October 8, 2018).

him with the weeping willow sprig. Upon returning to Virginia, Custis planted the weeping willow sprig at Mount Vernon, where it grew into a tree that “was the parent of all weeping willows in America.” Around the same time, in Philadelphia, a Chickasaw delegation, including members of the elite Colbert family and interpreter Malcom McGee, commenced negotiations with leaders from the newly-created United States. George Washington invited the Chickasaw delegation to Mount Vernon on their return to northern Mississippi. After “enjoy[ing] [Washington’s] hospitable attention for some days,” the Chickasaw delegation received two gifts, a mattock, or an agricultural hand tool used for digging, and a sprig of a weeping willow that grew at Mount Vernon. Upon the delegation’s return to northern Mississippi, McGee used the mattock to plant the weeping willow at George Colbert’s residence. According to the legend, “the original tree has long since perished, but it became the parent of all the weeping willows that flourish in the surrounding country.” The weeping willow’s branches “droop as melancholy sentinels over the graves of a people that have passed away like their ancient forests, and left no trace or monument behind.”²

The late-nineteenth-century writer, Reverend Frank Patton, portrayed North Mississippi’s weeping willows as “souvenirs, to the thoughtful, of great historical events,” and observed the weeping willow’s history as having “followed the path of civilization and Christianity,” first from the Far East, into the Middle East, then to Christian Europe, and finally to European-conquered North America. In the aftermath of the American Revolution, the planting of the weeping willow sprig at George Colbert’s residence, accordingly, amounted to a “prophe[cy] of

² Frank Patton, “Reminiscences of the Chickasaws,” *The Electra* (Louisville, KY) (January 1885): 535-536, in Lyman Draper Manuscript Collection, microfilm, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, vol. 10, series U.

the revolutionary wave that was about to roll over the home of the red man.”³ The authors predated and foreshadowed historian Frederick Jackson Turner’s more well-known “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” delivered at the American Historical Association in Chicago in 1893. Turner argued that a frontier line, moving from the East Coast to the West Coast, provided “the meeting point between savagery and civilization.” European Americans’ vanquishment and settlement of the wilderness, then, shaped an individualistic American character and formed the basis of American freedom. In Turner’s telling, Native Americans, though absent as individual actors, frustrated yet shaped the creation of a continental United States.⁴ According to both Turner and the weeping willow essayists, “civilization,” rooted in the mastering and reshaping of the landscape, emerged triumphant.

Though the weeping willows legend reflected a transformation in the peopling and the botanical composition of the physical landscape, it ultimately provided a metaphor for a sociocultural and moral transformation of the land. According to the essayists, “an invisible harp, like those hung upon the willows by the rivers of Babylon, seems to send forth a pensive voice from the pendant branches, that speaks of the vanished red man, of Washington, of the revolutionary war, of Pope, of the Orient whence ‘Westward, ho! The star of empire took its way.’”⁵ Forced removal, moreover, constituted a foregone conclusion in a longer human epoch that connected the Chickasaws to ancient and biblical figures:

The Apostle John addressed a message to the church at Smyrna [in present-day Turkey].

³ Ibid., 536.

⁴ Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” in *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1893* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), 200.

⁵ Patton, “Reminiscences of the Chickasaws,” 536.

There he labored in his old age, and it may be he taught his lessons of holiness and love beneath an ancestral tree. Smyrna claimed to be the birth-place of Homer. It may be that the Father and Prince of epic poetry first invoked the Muse, and sang of 'Achilles' Wrath' beneath a tree, which was the progenitor of the one under whose shadow, after more than twenty centuries, the genius Pope made the Iliad a household word to the Anglo-Saxon race.⁶

As historian James Taylor Carson argues, the landscape existed as a "moral space" that reflected and incubated the values of the people who inhabited it in the Native South. "More than the place of contact," landscape signifies a "space of contest" that "carries the competing cultural perceptions and economic and social relations of both native and nonnative societies."⁷ The conquering and re-peopling of the landscape, told through the weeping willow's appearance in North America and North Mississippi, characterized the forced removal of Chickasaws as an act that transcended its own time.

Drawing on court cases, land patents, genealogical materials, ethnographic accounts, federal documents, missionary records, and family papers, this chapter charts the emergence of a new sociocultural order that emerged in North Mississippi within the context of Chickasaws' forced removal. It argues that the emergence of a black-white color line alongside of missionaries' involvement in land sales extended a matrix of white supremacy that would characterize the region for generations. The chapter first examines state-level and federal-level legal changes that attempted to erase the presence of Chickasaws in their homeland. While the 1830 passage of a Mississippi law abolished the Chickasaws as a political body and transformed tribal identity into a racial identity, the Treaty of Pontotoc Creek in 1832 arranged for forced

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ James Taylor Carson, "Ethnogeography and the Native American Past," *Ethnohistory* 49 (Fall 2002): 769, 783.

removal at the same time it affirmed the institution of race-based slavery. The chapter then highlights the sociocultural transformations among the Chickasaws during the era of removal. Local circumstances, including the intensified encroachment of European Americans into Chickasaw lands and the increased prevalence of alcohol, widened a moral and social gulf between those who identified as Indians and European Americans. Legal proceedings that involved chief Tishomingo reflected the destabilizing effects of European American intrusion on Chickasaw society and highlighted European Americans' hostility toward the Chickasaws during the 1830s.

The next portion of the chapter illustrates how elite Chickasaws, in their 1834 renegotiation of the Treaty of Pontotoc, attempted to protect slaveholding wealth and tied human property to the land. By consolidating their own power and wealth, elite Chickasaws, in effect, asserted their separation from black people and carved out a space for themselves as a third race that confounded the line between slavery and freedom. Throughout the process of forced removal, elite Chickasaws affirmed their status as enslavers by accepting and receiving federal reimbursements for the use of enslaved labor. At the same time, the existence of white supremacy alongside of a desire to maintain tribal sovereignty ensured Chickasaws' separation from white southerners. In general, white Americans found the presence of a third race and the existence of sovereign tribal nations as an intolerable threat to political dominance and supposed racial supremacy. An 1830s chancery court case involving Eli Locklier further demonstrates how Chickasaws' incorporation of outsiders became more precarious and intersected with the expansion of slavery and the hardening of racial lines. Within the context of legal proceedings related to property that once belonged to Locklier and his kin, increased European American

intrusions and desires for land necessitated the drawing of more concrete social boundaries. The chapter concludes with an assessment of a confluence of legal and personal relationships forged between elite Chickasaws and European Americans—missionaries, land speculators, and land buyers, all often one in the same—extended from the Atlantic Coast to North Mississippi.

Unlike other scholarship that concentrates on the legal and political ideologies that surrounded Indian Removal or that follows exiled tribes into Indian Territory, this chapter remains in place, or the Chickasaws' North Mississippi homeland.⁸ Within a matrix of white supremacy, Indians' personal relationships with European Americans provides a window into how remnants of indigenous societies continued to order and structure the establishment of settler societies. Contests over forced removal and land speculation accentuate and reveal the ties between missions and the accumulation of landed property among European American colonizers. The confluence of Chickasaws' desire to retain a sense of identity, missionaries' vision for the future, and land speculators' search for profit set the stage for a reimagining of the landscape, which would be ordered at the intersection of Calvinistic theology and white

⁸ For examples of scholars who emphasize the legal and political dimensions of forced removal among Southeastern Indians, see Tim Alan Garrison, *The Legal Ideology of Removal: The Southern Judiciary and the Sovereignty of Native American Nations* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002); Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 189-207. For examples of scholars who emphasize institutional dimensions of forced removal among Chickasaws, see Amanda L. Paige, Fuller L. Bumpers, and Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., *Chickasaw Removal* (Ada: Chickasaw Press, 2010); James R. Atkinson, *Splendid Land, Splendid People: The Chickasaw Indians to Removal* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 180-235; Monte Lewis Ross, "Chickasaw Removal: Betrayal of the Beloved Warriors, 1794-1844," (Ph.D diss., North Texas State University, 1981); Arrell M. Gibson, *The Chickasaws* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 138-178; Mary Elizabeth Young, *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks: Indian Allotments in Alabama and Mississippi, 1830-1860* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961); Muriel Wright, "Notes on Events Leading to the Chickasaw Treaties of Franklin and Pontotoc, 1830-1832," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 34 (Winter 1956-1957): 465-483.

supremacy. The relationships between European American colonizers, including missionaries and land speculators, and Chickasaw leaders would provide the reordering of the landscape with a social foundation. As an analytical tool and an alternative to scholarship on settler colonialism, the notion of a “southern confluence” allows for a focus on personal relationships rather than institutional structures. Interpersonal connections forged in the context of Indian Removal propped a matrix of white supremacy that connected individuals in the Deep South to the Eastern Seaboard.⁹ Focusing on personal relationships and a “southern confluence” provides insight into empire’s and white supremacy’s perpetuation on day-to-day bases, rather than institutional structures.¹⁰ Out of this southern confluence emerged a black-white color line that would define the region for several generations.

During the 1830s, legal changes at both the state and the federal levels represented a two-

⁹ Scholars of settler colonialism tend to focus on the nature of institutionalized imperial dimensions of Indian Removal at the local, state, and national levels. The southern confluence is variation of settler colonialism. Some settler colonial theorists, however, tend to de-emphasize the agency and complicity of indigenous peoples in transforming settler colonies as well as the role of cultural exchange. My critiques of settler colonialism, detailed in chapter one, are informed by the literary analysis of Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011). See also Jodi A. Byrd, “A Return to the South,” *American Quarterly* 66 (September 2014): 609-620. For an overview of settler colonialism, see Mikal Brotnov Eckstrom and Margaret D. Jacobs, “Teaching American History as Settler Colonialism,” in *Why You Can’t Teach United States History without American Indians*, edited by Susan Sleeper-Smith, Juliana Barr, Jean M. O’Brien, Nancy Shoemaker, and Scott Manning Stevens (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 261-265.

¹⁰ For examples of settler colonial studies that focus on institutional structures, see Lori J. Dagg, “The Mission Complex: Economic Development, ‘Civilization,’ and Empire in the Early Republic,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 36 (Fall 2016): 467-491; Laurel Clark Shire, *The Threshold of Manifest Destiny: Gender and National Expansion of Florida* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Margaret D. Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

pronged attempt to erase the presence of Chickasaws in their homeland. At the state level, an 1830 Mississippi law, as detailed in chapter one, brought Chickasaws and Choctaws under state jurisdiction by abolishing tribal law and erasing their national borders. It also subjected people who resided within the boundaries of those former nations to the same laws as European American citizens. Tribal affiliation, in effect, came to denote an Indian racial identity rather than a political identity in Mississippi. Whiteness and blackness, or freedom and slavery, became the only possibilities under state law to the exclusion of Indianness.¹¹

At the federal level, authorities pushed harder for the forced removal of the Chickasaws. The passage of the Indian Removal Act of 1830 meant that the U.S. government would need to negotiate removal treaties with Southeastern Indian nations. For Chickasaws, the Treaty of Franklin would have ceded their lands east of the Mississippi River and forced relocation to “a country, West of the territory of Arkansas [sic].”¹² Chickasaws understood themselves as part of the lands that they inhabited, and had positioned themselves as hosts to European American settlers.¹³ During negotiations over the Treaty of Franklin in August 1830 and in response to a

¹¹ For full text of the law, see State of Mississippi, *Laws of the State of Mississippi: Embracing all Acts of a Public Nature from January Session, 1824, to January Session, 1838, inclusive* (Jackson: Printed for the State, 1838). Historian James Taylor Carson interprets the 1830 Mississippi law through the lens of states’ rights. See James Taylor Carson, “States Rights and Indian Removal in Mississippi, 1817-1835,” *Journal of Mississippi History* 57 (1995): 36; See also Young, *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks*, 14-16; William Harvey Mattison, “Chief Tishomingo – A Legend in His Own Time in Monroe County,” *Journal of Monroe County History* 15 (1989): 28.

¹² “Treaty With the Chickasaw: 1830, Unratified,” *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*, Lillian Goldman Law Library, Yale Law School, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/nt008.asp (accessed September 7, 2016).

¹³ Communication Studies scholar Jason Edward Black argues that Chickasaws’ and other Southeastern Indians’ rhetoric reveals that they understood the land as a moral inheritance from their ancestors. See Jason Edward Black, *American Indians and the Rhetoric of Removal and*

statement from U.S. president Andrew Jackson that urged Chickasaws to forcibly remove west of the Mississippi, Chickasaw leaders admonished their “white brothers” for thinking that “from necessity, if we wish to preserve ourselves as a nation... seek a home in the unknown regions of the west.” Chickasaws’ “fire side has been sought for by our white brothers. They saw it, we saw them approach, with timidity.” As “the first to build fires, upon the land we now occupy,” Chickasaws met white settlers, “took them into our wigwams, warmed them, fed them and treated them like brothers.”¹⁴ Chickasaw chiefs agreed to forced removal with the Treaty of Franklin, but the U.S. Senate failed to ratify the document and Chickasaws discovered land west of the Mississippi River to be unsatisfactory.

By 1832, Chickasaws found themselves at a greater impasse with the U.S. government in negotiating for forced removal, and ultimately agreed to the Treaty of Pontotoc Creek, which “provided for the sale of Chickasaw Indian lands in Northeast Mississippi for cash.”¹⁵ In the background, according to historian Arrell Gibson, the federal agent Benjamin Reynolds, “ostensibly committed to protecting and promoting tribal interests, performed more like a bureaucratic expediter.”¹⁶ Commissioner John Coffee, furthermore, withheld Chickasaws’ tribal

Allotment (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015), 66-69.

¹⁴ John McLish to John H. Eaton, August 26, 1830, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881: Chickasaw Agency, 1824-1870, National Archives Microfilm Publications, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., M234, roll 136.

¹⁵ Cecil L. Summers, *The Trial of Chief Tishomingo, the Last Great War Chief of the Chickasaw Indians: Some Historical Events of the Chickasaw Indians Era (1737-1839)*, (Iuka, Miss.: self-published, 1977), 16. See also Cecil Lamar Summers, “The Trial of Chief Tishomingo: The Last Great War Chief of the Chickasaw Indians,” *Journal of Monroe County History* 3 (1977): 19.

¹⁶ Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 175.

annuities at an October 1832 meeting until their leadership agreed to a new treaty.¹⁷

Negotiated by elite Chickasaws, many of the four major conditions of the Treaty of Pontotoc reflected an extraordinary understanding of U.S. financial systems and strategic long-term thinking.¹⁸ First, the treaty ceded the entire Chickasaw territory to the United States, with “not one acre... reserved.” The U.S. president would order a survey of the territory, and “advertise and sell it at public sale in all respects as other public lands.” Land sales would “be made as soon as the land can be surveyed.” Second, Chickasaws would “select for themselves, a country, west of the Mississippi river, and if possible to move away before the first public sale of their lands.” In the event that Chickasaws could not forcibly remove before the first public sale, “they are permitted to retain a tract of land for each family to live on until they fix upon the place of their future residence.”¹⁹ The land tracts would vary between one to four sections in size.²⁰ At the same time, however, “it is expressly agreed... that they will remove as soon as they can, and when they go, those tracts on which they resided, shall be sold as the other lands are, but all the Indian territory not now occupied by them, is to be sold, when surveyed.” Third, until the public land sales took place, “no persons are permitted to move on the ceded lands... should any presume to do so, they will be driven off.” Fourth, the Chickasaws would “receive the net

¹⁷ Jack D. Elliot, Jr. and Mary Ann Wells, *Cotton Gin Port: A Frontier Settlement on the Upper Tombigbee* (Jackson: Mississippi Historical Society, 2003), 94.

¹⁸ In particular, the Chickasaw Colberts had sought and gained economic and political influence. For more detailed treatments, see Hubert H. McAlexander, “The Saga of a Mixed-Blood Chickasaw Dynasty,” *Journal of Mississippi History* 49 (November 1987): 289-300; Guy B. Braden, “The Colberts and the Chickasaw Nation,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 17 (September 1958): 222-249.

¹⁹ “Chickasaw Treaty,” *Niles’ Weekly Register* (November 24, 1832): 205.

²⁰ Dennis East, “New York and Mississippi Land Company and the Panic of 1837,” *Journal of Mississippi History* 33(1971): 301.

proceeds arising from the sale of the lands, deducting all incidental expenses connected with the survey and sale of the same.” Three quarters of money from the public land sales would “be vested in stock at interest, by the general government, for the benefit of the Chickasaw nation, allowing them to use the interest, but never to touch the principal, reserving that as a fund for the use of the nation forever.”²¹ In effect, according to scholar Dennis East, the fund would allow individual Chickasaws “to be paid the appraised value of their improved land after removal.”²²

The Treaty of Pontotoc, most importantly, affirmed Chickasaws’ investment in the institution of slavery.²³ The fourth article of the Treaty of Pontotoc allotted land based on age, family size, and slave holding. Single men, age twenty-one, received one section. While the treaty allotted two sections to families that numbered five and fewer and three sections to families that numbered between six and ten, it gave four sections to families that numbered over ten. The treaty granted additional land allotments to Chickasaw families who owned slaves: “to families who own slaves, there shall be allowed, one section to those who own ten or upwards and such as own under ten, there shall be allowed half a section.”²⁴ With knowledge regarding U.S. economic and political institutions, elite Chickasaws negotiated and structured a treaty that provided themselves with financial benefits, even as they faced the specter of forced removal.

Within the context of political removal efforts at the state and the federal levels, local circumstances created a moral and social distance between those who identified as Indians and

²¹ “Chickasaw Treaty,” *Niles’ Weekly Register* (November 24, 1832): 205.

²² East, “New York and Mississippi Land Company and the Panic of 1837,” 301.

²³ See also Barbara Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters: Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the Native American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 39.

²⁴ “Treaty of Pontotoc,” in *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Vol. II, Treaties*, compiled and edited by Charles J. Kappler (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 357.

European Americans and served to alienate Chickasaws from their homeland. According to Presbyterian missionaries, the extension of Mississippi laws alongside the specter of federally-mandated forced removal compounded “agitation” among the Chickasaws.²⁵ The passage of Mississippi’s 1830 law had two immediate effects: an increased encroachment of European Americans into Chickasaw lands and the increased use of alcohol among the Chickasaws. As European Americans escalated their intrusion into North Mississippi, so, too, did they use alcohol as a tool to destabilize the Chickasaw people. Taken together, the political and social changes that engulfed the Chickasaw people found expression in legal proceedings that involved chief Tishomingo. Out of the tensions between European Americans who attempted to denigrate non-white people and Native Americans attempting to elevate themselves while denigrating black people, the volatile socioeconomic milieu of North Mississippi allowed social mobility for some individuals at the expense of those with less power. Because racial categories existed in flux, elite European Americans and elite Chickasaws who held land allotments and property had the ability to preserve their own relative status and power as well as secure their descendants’ futures. For landless, poor propertyless European Americans and poor Chickasaws, along with enslaved people, such possibilities most often proved beyond reach. In the changing social environment, access to land was not enough to secure power; one also needed access to human property. For Chickasaws, with forced removal on the horizon, human property acted as a mobile form of wealth.

Missionaries associated the 1830 law with conflicts over property, and foresaw Mississippi’s larger agenda of stripping the Chickasaws of their property and the forcible

²⁵ “Chickasaws,” *The Missionary Herald* 29, no. 1 (January 1833): 23.

creation of a white settler state. The encroachment of European American intruders aroused the concerns of missionaries and federal agents:

A number of Indians have just returned from a neighboring county in the white settlements, where they were cited by the civil officers. One was prosecuted by a white man, and although the Indian gained the suit, yet his expenses necessarily incurred amount to \$200. This loss is attributable to the extension of Mississippi laws. The perplexity, into which they are thrown by these novel proceedings, I think will probably induce the nation to remove, although we repeat it, they will go against their will.²⁶

In 1831, Indian subagent John L. Allen, likewise, reported to Secretary of War John H. Eaton that Chickasaw leaders George Colbert, Tishomingo, and Pistalatubbee had complained about the intrusion of settlers, including stock drivers and peddlers, and the imposition of Mississippi law as treaty violations.²⁷

Father, we are told that the laws of these states are written in more than a hundred big books we cannot read, we cannot understand them and altho we love our white brethren, we cannot see in the extention [*sic*] of state laws over us any thing but injustice and suppression... Your red children is [*sic*] now oppressed by new laws & customs executed by white officers whose words we do not understand.²⁸

During the summer of 1832, in a letter to his mother, missionary James Holmes wrote that white men, “many of whom are most abandoned” had settled among the Chickasaws. Despite their appeals to state and federal authorities for protection against white intruders, Chickasaws found “their complaints are unheaded [*sic*].” With “no quarter for redress,” Chickasaws faced harassment, including “driving away their cattle,” from “base white men who live on the boarders [*sic*].” For Holmes, in light of the U.S.’s ongoing Indian wars in Illinois, the prospect

²⁶ “Chickasaws: Extracts from a Letter of Mr. Holmes, Dated at Tokshish, Nov. 8th. 1830,” *The Missionary Herald* 27, no. 2 (February 1831): 44.

²⁷ John L. Allen to John H. Eaton, January 21, 1831, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881: Chickasaw Agency, 1824-1870, National Archives Microfilm Publications, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., M234, roll 136.

²⁸ Paige, Bumpers, and Littlefield, *Chickasaw Removal*, 31.

of Chickasaws' forced removal west of the Mississippi River provoked worry about the possibility of wars among other Indians. He wrote that "red men will all before long be shaded by the Rocky Mountains & if I am not greatly mistaken, we shall then hear from them in rather an unwelcome manner."²⁹

Interested in engineering their own slave society, European American intruders tied their fortunes to the denigration of the Chickasaw people, and used alcohol as a way to create a moral gulf between the two groups.³⁰ North Carolinian Richard Thomas Brownrigg sought land to establish a plantation in North Mississippi.³¹ During a stop in Pontotoc in June of 1835, Brownrigg described the appearances of Chickasaws: "the Indians were nearly all with a shell or talon of goy coloured [*sic*] cloth and feathers in their heads, with goy [hunting?] shorts of red intermixed with the most [favorable?] colours [*sic*]." The Chickasaws were "of a fantastic and Gipsy [*sic*] like appearance." In Brownrigg's estimation, the Chickasaws were "perfectly harmless and good natured, are happy, having surveyed their reservation to the whites, who furnish them with money." That money, along with compensation for land, according to Brownrigg, "that would support the Nation forever."³² Although Chickasaws' adornments

²⁹ Letter from James Holmes (son, Martyn, Chickasaw Nation) to Rebecca Boden (mother, Carlisle, Pennsylvania), July 10, 1832, Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection, Holmes, James, Letter, 1832, Washington, D.C., Library of Congress.

³⁰ Historian Ira Berlin distinguishes "slave societies" from "societies with slaves." Slave societies included those in which slavery provided the primary means of labor and "the master-slave relationship provided the model for all social relations." Most members of slave societies, furthermore, "aspired to enter the slaveholding class." Societies with slaves exhibited more porous lines between enslavement and freedom, and slavery acted as one of many labor regimes. See Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 8-9.

³¹ Brownrigg and his family would ultimately settle in Lowndes County, Mississippi.

³² Diary Entry for Friday, June 5, 1835, Travel Diary of Richard T. Brownrigg, May 12,

fascinated Brownrigg, he noted that “like all other Indians they are doomed to be destroyed by whiskey.”³³ Like Brownrigg, James Holmes portrayed alcohol’s introduction as a reflection of “base white men” and “intemperance” as a permanent character flaw among Chickasaw people. Taken together, the interpretations of contemporaries like Brownrigg and Holmes failed to account for the use of alcohol as a tool of colonialism and also negate the non-adversarial relationships forged between Chickasaws and European Americans. By characterizing Chickasaws as prone to alcohol abuse and portraying it as a fundamental character flaw and not doing the same for white invaders who sold liquor, as well as drawing attention to the physical appearance of Chickasaws, contemporary European American observers drew a cultural, indeed, racial distinction within the context of Removal.

The increased use of alcohol among Chickasaws after the 1830 extension of Mississippi law resulted from the erasure of effectual tribal governance and constituted a threat to social stability, according to government agents, Presbyterian missionaries, and Chickasaws themselves. While tribal laws had prevented the “introduction of intoxicating liquors” and much alcohol had been sold illegally, the extension of state laws left Chickasaw chiefs more powerless “to suppress intemperance.”³⁴ Federal agent Benjamin Reynolds reported to Secretary of War Lewis Cass that “until now I have been able in a good degree to prevent intrusion.” The

1835-July 11, 1835, Diary, volume 1, subseries 3.3, folder 16, Brownrigg Family Papers, 1736-1986, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

³³ Diary Entry for Friday, June 5, 1835, Travel Diary of Richard T. Brownrigg, May 12, 1835-July 11, 1835, Diary, volume 1, subseries 3.3, folder 16, Brownrigg Family Papers, 1736-1986, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

³⁴ “Chickasaws,” *The Missionary Herald* 29, no. 1 (January 1833): 23.

extension of Mississippi laws over the Chickasaw nation led to “whiskey traders and pedlers [sic] with other intruders upon the Indian lands... overrunning the country to the manifest injury of the Chickasaw tribe.”³⁵ During the final three months of 1832, missionary Thomas C. Stuart reported that “more than three hundred gallons of whiskey have been brought into our neighborhood by white traders” and that “a grocery store has been erected within half a mile of the house of God.” Stuart relayed the complaints he had “heard from the thinking part of the Indians against these intruders and disturbers of the peace,” but “nothing can be done to remove them. They boast of the protection of the Mississippi laws.”³⁶

When an 1832 Monroe County state circuit court ruled that the extension of Mississippi state laws over the Indians nullified an earlier U.S. law that regulated intercourse and trade with Indians, it effectively invited more European American intruders, many also peddling alcohol, into Chickasaw lands.³⁷ Although the U.S. Marshal for Mississippi “posted notices warning white squatters to remove from the Chickasaw Nation by November 15, 1833,” none “obeyed the command [and] no steps were taken by the government to enforce the order.” European American intruders, thus, “regarded this inaction as a license to remain, with the result that many more continued to move in.”³⁸ On May 29, 1835, the register and receiver of the Pontotoc land

³⁵ Benjamin Reynolds to Lewis Cass, December 9, 1832, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881: Chickasaw Agency, 1824-1870, National Archives Microfilm Publications, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., M234, roll 136.

³⁶ “Chickasaws: Extracts from a Letter of Mr. Stewart, Dated at Tokshish, Jan. 14th, 1833,” *The Missionary Herald* 29, no. 4 (April 1833): 132.

³⁷ According to historian Grant Foreman, the Monroe County state circuit court’s ruling to nullify a federal law was “characteristic of the time.” See Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), 201.

³⁸ John L. Allen to Albert Herring, January 4, 1834, Letters Received by the Office of

office wrote that nearby, “a number of Shops have been established whither the Indians resort, and drink Spirits to an intoxication of almost unparalleled extent, presenting scenes of brutality revolting to every principle of humanity and consequences ultimately to the Indian truly appalling.” The presence of alcohol, according to the writer, portended “difficulties that will be thrown in the way of the successful prosecution of the public business.”³⁹

The intrusion of European American traders on Chickasaw lands resulted in legal proceedings that involved chief Tishomingo, who had voiced repeated complaints to federal agent John L. Allen about the settlement and commercial activities of European American intruders.⁴⁰ In 1831, Tishomingo seized the goods of John Walker and Marshall Goodman, two European American merchants who opened a store on Chickasaw lands in violation of the Treaty of 1816 and federal law.⁴¹ In compliance with the Treaty of 1816, which required that goods taken from intruders be divided in half between the United States government and the Chickasaw Nation, Tishomingo split the confiscated goods with agent John L. Allen, “who sold some to Chickasaws on credit and charged the items against the next annuity payment.”⁴² According to the Treaty of 1816,

Indian Affairs, 1824-1881: Chickasaw Agency, 1824-1870, National Archives Microfilm Publications, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., M234, roll 136.

³⁹ Quoted in Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 202.

⁴⁰ Paige, Bumpers, and Littlefield, *Chickasaw Removal*, 33; For more on the Tishomingo case, see W.A. Evans, “The Trial of Tishomingo,” *Journal of Mississippi History* 2, no. 3 (July 1940): 147; Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 199; Summers, *The Trial of Chief Tishomingo, the Last Great War Chief of the Chickasaw Indians*, 30-31.

⁴¹ Gibson, *The Chickasaws*, 174; Mattison, “Chief Tishomingo – A Legend in His Own Time in Monroe County,” 28. See Atkinson, *Splendid Land, Splendid People*, 209.

⁴² At the time Tishomingo seized the goods, Allen was away from Chickasaw territory. Tishomingo, thus, acted as subagent in Allen’s absence. Paige, Bumpers, and Littlefield, *Chickasaw Removal*, 33; Mattison, “Chief Tishomingo – A Legend in His Own Time in Monroe County,” 28.

It is agreed by the commissioners on the part of the government and the chiefs of the nation, that no more licenses shall be granted by the agent of the Chickasaws to entitle any person or persons to trade or traffic merchandise in said nation; and that any person whomsoever of the white people who shall bring goods and sell them in the nation contrary to this article shall forfeit the whole of his or her goods, one half to the nation and the other half to the government of the United States. In all cases where this article is violated and the goods are taken and seized, they shall be delivered up to the agent, who shall hear the testimony and judge accordingly.⁴³

This had not been the first time that Tishomingo found himself in such a situation. In September 1818, Tishomingo had seized the goods of a different white intruder who traded without a license. Unlike the previous instance, Tishomingo's actions in 1831 fell under the jurisdiction of Mississippi law.⁴⁴

Allen appealed to the federal government on Tishomingo's behalf. Writing to Secretary of War John H. Eaton in 1831, Allen discussed Tishomingo and the seizure of goods. Allen heard testimony of Walker, who "confessed he had violated the Law by selling goods within the limits of the Nation." In addition to dividing the seized goods in half between the federal government and the Chickasaws in accordance with the Treaty of 1816, Allen took "particular ceare [*sic*] that the amount purchased by Individuals should not exceed what would be due them at the next annuity." The sales amounted to \$150. Allen also "thought it would be best for the Govt that I should sell to the Indians, as they were willing to take them at a fair price in preference [*sic*] to puting [*sic*] the good up at Auction, where they mite [*sic*] have been sacrafized [*sic*]."⁴⁵

⁴³ Treaty of 1816 quoted in *Mingo and Allen v. Goodman*, in *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the High Court of Errors and Appeals of the State of Mississippi, In Two Volumes, Vol. II*, edited by Volney E. Howard (Philadelphia: T.K. and P.G. Collins, 1839), 553.

⁴⁴ Atkinson, *Splendid Land, Splendid People*, 209

⁴⁵ John L. Allen to John H. Eaton, January 21, 1831, Letters Received by the Office of

Under Mississippi state law and in Monroe County district court, Walker and Goodman brought charges against Tishomingo and Allen for criminal trespass. Tishomingo and Allen entered a log-constructed jail in Athens, Monroe County, in September 1832, and faced a trial after two months. Attorneys Samuel J. Gholson and Reuben Davis represented Tishomingo and Allen, while Levi Colbert, George Colbert, and James Colbert acting as sureties on their appeal bond. Invoking the Treaty of 1816's ban on illegal trade in Indian nations, Tishomingo's defense argued that he was not guilty due to Walker and Goodman's violation of the treaty. Acting as a sub-agent, Tishomingo could lawfully transmit the seized goods to Allen, the federal Indian agent. The jury, nonetheless, found Tishomingo and Allen guilty and levied a fine of \$595.09. The judge ruled that Tishomingo lacked the authority to seize or handle the goods and that no federal official could delegate his duties to another individual, including Tishomingo.⁴⁶

In response to the lower court's decision, which had allowed for the seizure of personal property to satisfy the judgment, Allen asked head of Indian Affairs Albert Herring for federal assistance in "secureing [*sic*] from sacrafice [*sic*] my personal property." According to Allen, "I am poore [*sic*] and so is Tish ho Mingo [*sic*]," and his "only alternative" would be to "forfit [*sic*] the delivery bond, and cause a delay" until the Monroe County circuit court's next term. Allen further justified his and Tishomingo's actions as "in strict conformity to our official duty" under the Treaty of 1816, with half of the goods in question sold "for the benefit of" the United States

Indian Affairs, 1824-1881: Chickasaw Agency, 1824-1870, National Archives Microfilm Publications, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., M234, roll 136.

⁴⁶ Paige, Bumpers, and Littlefield, *Chickasaw Removal*, 33; Mattison, "Chief Tishomingo – A Legend in His Own Time in Monroe County," 28.

government.⁴⁷ In an 1834 letter to Lewis Cass, James Colbert addressed his loan to Tishomingo. Colbert was “bound to pay the money and I authorissed [*sic*] by our agent Conol [*sic*] Reynolds to borrow the money and redeem Tishomingo and when he return from City washinton [*sic*] he would repayed [*sic*] to whoever I borrowed the money of.”⁴⁸

Tishomingo appealed the case, which made its way to Mississippi’s High Court of Errors and Appeals several years later, in January 1837. In *Mingo and Allen v. Goodman*, the court affirmed the decision of the Monroe circuit court. Justice Smith, who delivered the opinion of the High Court, argued that for Walker and Goodman’s actions to constitute an offense under the Treaty of 1816 that would “authorize a seizure of the merchandise” on Tishomingo’s part, “it is essential that there should be a sale of the goods so brought into the nation.”⁴⁹ In other words, “it is not only necessary that the goods should be brought and offered for sale.”⁵⁰

Especially because Tishomingo had committed similar actions prior to the 1830s, the case cast him as an immoral and swindling charlatan who reflected the degenerate and debased character and nature of the Chickasaws as a whole. While written documentation conveyed little about the thoughts of the European American intruders themselves mentioned in government documents and missionaries’ correspondence, later commenters provide insight into some

⁴⁷ John L. Allen to Elbert (Albert) Herring, September 13, 1833, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881: Chickasaw Agency, 1824-1870, National Archives Microfilm Publications, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., M234, roll 136.

⁴⁸ James Colbert to Lewis Cass, June 27, 1834, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881: Chickasaw Agency, 1824-1870, National Archives Microfilm Publications, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., M234, roll 136.

⁴⁹ *Mingo and Allen v. Goodman*, in *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the High Court of Errors and Appeals of the State of Mississippi*, 557.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 552.

European Americans' thoughts regarding Chickasaws and other Native Americans in Mississippi. European American Mississippi author and planter Joseph B. Cobb argued that enslaved people of the South were "superior" to Indians "in every sense of the word," so much that "I do not know a single negro that would countenance an exchange of situations with a Choctaw or Chickasaw Indian." According to Cobb, "the Indians of our day, besides having a full share of all the lower and degrading vices of the Southern negro, such as stealing, lying, and filthy tastes, are noted for cowardice, and craft, and meanness of every description." Lacking "a single admirable virtue, or magnanimous or noble quality of heart or mind," Chickasaw and Choctaw Indians "as a general thing... are hardly above the animals."⁵¹ Tishomingo's case, in effect, signified a lasting moral and racial distance erected between Indians and the European Americans who entered North Mississippi.

In spite of his legal trouble, Tishomingo had been allowed to leave jail to attend the negotiations for what would become the Treaty of Pontotoc Creek of 1832.⁵² Many elite Chickasaws, however, took issue with the 1832 treaty and called for a renegotiation that would allow for allotments in fee simple, or permanent reservations with options to sell.⁵³ As James R. Atkinson contends, "postnegotiation objections to the treaty were not to removal itself but rather

⁵¹ Joseph B. Cobb, *Mississippi Scenes; or Sketches of Southern and Western Life and Adventure, Humorous, Satirical, and Descriptive, including the Legend of Black Creek*, second edition (Philadelphia: A. Hart, Late Carey & Hart, 1851), 177-178.

⁵² Mattison, "Chief Tishomingo – A Legend in His Own Time in Monroe County," 28.

⁵³ For a detailed recounting of the negotiations that transpired between 1832 and 1834, see Atkinson, *Splendid Land, Splendid People*, 228-231. Dennis East's racially-deterministic analysis attributes the Colberts' view to their being "half-breed Chickasaws." See East, "New York and Mississippi Land Company and the Panic of 1837," 301.

to some of the terms of the treaty as originally signed in October 1832.”⁵⁴ In May 1834, a Chickasaw delegation visited Washington to renegotiate the 1832 treaty.⁵⁵

Reforms in the 1834 treaty afforded several advantages to the Colberts, the Loves, and the other elites who had long taken prominent economic and political roles among the Chickasaws, and who represented some of the tribe’s wealthiest enslavers. The fourth article of the 1834 Treaty consolidated elite Chickasaws’ control over the distribution and conveyance of further allotments by creating a formal liaison between Chickasaws and the U.S. government. The provision established a board of seven Indian commissioners, including King Ishtehotapa, Levi Colbert, George Colbert, Martin Colbert, Isaac Albertson, Henry Love, and Benjamin Love, to act as agents to deal with Chickasaws deemed “not capable” and who “might be imposed upon by designing persons.”⁵⁶ Two of the commissioners would have to certify “reservations hereinafter admitted” and that the party in question was “capable to manage, and to take care of his or her affairs.”⁵⁷ As a means of protection for “unsophisticated” or uneducated Chickasaws, the commissioners would then act as “agents for those who were deemed incompetent.”⁵⁸ Other important reforms included “a provision giving allotments to single women and orphan children

⁵⁴ Atkinson, *Splendid Land, Splendid People*, 230.

⁵⁵ Present for the 1834 treaty included signers John H. Eaton (U.S. Commissioner), George Colbert, Isaac Albertson, Martin Colbert, Henry Love, and Benjamin Love, and witnesses Charles F. Little (secretary to Eaton), Benjamin Reynolds (Indian agent), G.W. Long, James Standefer, Thomas S. Smith, Samuel Swartwout, William Gordon, F.W. Armstrong (agent), and John M. Millard. See “Treaty with the Chickasaw, 1834,” in *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Volume II: Treaties*, compiled and edited by Charles J. Kappler (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), 423.

⁵⁶ “Treaty with the Chickasaw, 1834,” *Indian Affairs*, 418; See also East, “New York and Mississippi Land Company and the Panic of 1837,” 301.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 419

⁵⁸ Young, *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks*, 44.

of the tribe, permission to the Chickasaw agent to sue intruders at tribal expense, and graduation of the selling price of unallotted lands in proportion to the time they had been on the market.”⁵⁹

Even as the language of blood suffused their comments and glossed over class differences related to land holdings, missionaries took note of the advantages that elite Chickasaws sought in their renegotiation of the Treaty of Pontotoc. Thomas C. Stuart reported “great division” between “Half-bloods” and “Reds” over land reservations. Stuart characterized the “Half-bloods” as “demarcating large reservations in fee simple” and the “Reds” as “refusing.” The principal chiefs, however, “confidently believe that reservations will be granted to all who wish, of every color.”⁶⁰ So-called “common Indians,” at the same time, “many of whom know nothing about the Treaty, are thrown into great consternation by the appearance of surveyors in their country and they are already meditating a retreat.”⁶¹

Though the provisions of the 1834 treaty attempted to protect non-elite Chickasaws, it also allowed for the allotment of desirable and profitable lands to elite Chickasaw enslavers. Initial allotments would “be confined, to the sections or fractional sections on which the party claiming lives, or to such as are contiguous or adjoining to the sections resided upon.” Further restrictions and conditions, however, applied to such reservations. First, “in cases where there are interferences arising, the oldest occupant or settler, shall have the preference.” Second, under circumstances in which the federal agent and three members of new board of Indian

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ T.C. Stuart to Daniel Green, October 14, 1833, vol. 1, folder 15, *Papers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, microfilm (Woodbridge, CT: Research Publications, Inc., 1982-85) 18.4.4, Reel 779. See also Young, *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks*, 43.

⁶¹ T.C. Stuart to Daniel Green, October 14, 1833, vol. 1, folder 15, *ABCFM* 18.4.4, Reel 779.

commissioners judge “the land... unfit for cultivation,” a party could “locate his claim upon other lands, which may be unappropriated, and not subject to any other claim.” In situations “where two or more persons, insist upon the entry of the same unappropriated section or fractional section, the priority of right shall be determined by lot.” If “a fractional section is taken leaving a balance greater or less than the surveyed subdivision of a section, then the deficiency shall be made up, by connecting all the deficiencies so arising.”⁶² In the end, elite Chickasaws—Levi Colbert, George Colbert, Martin Colbert, Isaac Alberton, Henry Love, Benjamin Love, King Ishtehotopa, Mintahoyea, Emmubbee, Ishtimolutka, Ahtohowoy, Pistahlahtubbee, Samuel Seeley, and William McGillivray—and their white allies—Benjamin Reynolds, William Cooper, and John Davis—received “additional special reserves.”⁶³ At the same time, more secure landed property would serve to augment and protect existing wealth in the form of enslaved bodies.

The 1834 treaty, more importantly, wrote a racial line into the Chickasaws’ relationship to the U.S. government that reflected the rooting of race-based slavery among Chickasaws, as well as the ways in which household structures had evolved since the early nineteenth century. The fifth article of the 1834 treaty affirmed the Treaty of Pontotoc’s provisions that granted reservations based on family size and slave holding. Families numbering fewer than five received two sections of land, numbering five and fewer than ten received three sections, and numbering ten or greater receive four sections. Among Chickasaw enslavers, “those who own more than ten slaves, shall be entitled to one additional section; and those owning ten and less

⁶² “Treaty with the Chickasaw, 1834,” *Indian Affairs*, 419.

⁶³ Young, *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks*, 43-44; Atkinson, *Splendid Land, Splendid People*, 231.

than ten to half a section.” The 1834 treaty granted reservations in fee, or on a permanent basis with the option to sell, and so, slaveholding, and by extension, enslavement, became permanently tied to the land. The new treaty’s language, furthermore, distinguished Indianness from enslaved status. By defining “heads of families, being Indians” as “having Indian families,” the 1834 treaty, unlike the 1832 treaty, affirmed a vision of Chickasaw slaveholding and household organization based on agriculture, gender, and racial slavery.

In the aftermath of the 1830 Mississippi law’s passage and the abolition of tribal governance, along with the signing of the 1834 treaty, forced removal further cemented the hardening of racial lines that had already begun with the adoption of race-based slavery. Elite Chickasaws asserted their identities as enslavers of African-descended peoples when they received reimbursements from the federal government for the use of enslaved labor to aid in forced removal. When the Chickasaws sent an exploratory party to search for a suitable home west of the Mississippi, the federal government reimbursed S. Colbert “for hire of servant” from October 20, 1833 to February 8, 1834, at a rate of \$15 per month.⁶⁴ P.T. Crutchfield received an \$82.00 reimbursement “for services of his negro (John) in rebrining pork at Little Rock” at the rate of \$1 per day.⁶⁵ Later that year, J. Turner received \$29.00, or \$1 per day, in exchange for the services of a “a laborer” from October 21 to November 21, 1837.⁶⁶ One “negro man” for whom Robert Coyle received \$1 per day, for cutting roads from January 10 through January 26, 1838.⁶⁷ Removal, thus, not only ruptured Chickasaws’ essential attachments to land and place, but also

⁶⁴ *Expenditures from the Chickasaw Fund*, 27th Cong., 3rd sess., 1843, H.R. Doc. 65, 49.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 65, 25.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 65, 15.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 65, 29.

signaled a shift in interpersonal connections among enslaved people and Chickasaws that further cemented the former as property and inherently tied to Chickasaw-controlled land. That rupture widened the sociocultural distance between the two groups as elite Chickasaws further defined themselves in relation to their ability to enslave.⁶⁸

The incorporation of outsiders among the Chickasaws, likewise, became a more precarious prospect as the line between slavery and freedom hardened in Mississippi after the passage of the 1830 state law and the Chickasaws' negotiation of treaties with the U.S.⁶⁹ Prior to the 1820s, Chickasaws incorporated people of African descent as well as outsiders of mixed descent into their communities and kin groups.⁷⁰ Eli Locklier's supposed racial fluidity challenged the emerging distinction between slavery and freedom by the 1830s. Locklier was the husband of the late Beckey, a Chickasaw woman, and father to at least two of her five children. The Chickasaw people recognized Locklier not as "a negro, but [as] a white man, resident in the

⁶⁸ See Tiya Miles, *Ties that Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 160-161.

⁶⁹ See Kendra Taira Field, *Growing Up with the Country: Family, Race, and Nation after the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); Arica L. Coleman, *That the Blood Stay Pure: African Americans, Native Americans, and the Predicament of Race and Identity in Virginia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); Honor Sachs, "'Freedom by a Judgment': The Legal History of an Afro-Indian Family," *Law and History Review* 30 (February 2012): 173-203; Celia E. Naylor, *African Cherokees in Indian Territory: From Chattel to Citizens* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Tiya Miles and Sharon P. Holland, eds., *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Miles, *Ties that Bind*; James F. Brooks, ed., *Confounding the Color Line: The Indian-Black Experience in North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002); Patrick Mingos, "Beneath the Underdog: Race, Religion, and the Trail of Tears," *American Indian Quarterly* 25 (Summer 2001): 453-479; Jack D. Forbes, *Africans and Native Americans: The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

⁷⁰ See Nancy Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), 96, 133.

nation.” Locklier’s identification as a white man became central to the case of *Mitchell v. Sherman*. Originating in Marshall County, the 1839 chancery court case resulted from questions over Locklier’s ability to convey his Chickasaw wife’s title to three sections of land reserved under the 1834 Chickasaw Treaty.⁷¹ Anderson C. Mitchell, who later bought the land from George W. Sherman, alleged that Sherman had “no title, or a defective title” due to Locklier’s perceived African ancestry. The chancery court ruled Mitchell’s claim of defective title insufficient because Chickasaw agents and chiefs, in their “official capacities” treated Locklier “as a white man,” who “had either been born [or] adopted” into the Chickasaw Nation. Under Mississippi law, Locklier would have gained no title to the land had the Chickasaw Nation recognized him as a black man.⁷² Whether Locklier was a mixed race or black man who passed as white to enter the Chickasaw Nation is unclear. The “civilizing” mission and the expansion of

⁷¹ The two land speculators, Wilson T. Caruthers and Richard Bolton, certified Locklier’s status as a white man in a deed dated May 27, 1836. Superior Court of Chancery reports incorrectly cite the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek as the relevant precedent for this case. It is actually the 1834 Chickasaw Treaty. See “Treaty with the Chickasaw, 1834,” in *Indian Affairs*, 418-425. For the precise locations of Beckey Locklier’s land reservations, see Bureau of Land Management, “Land Patent Search,” digital images, General Land Office Records, http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/details/patent/default.aspx?accession=MS2690__309&docClass=STA&sid=u0yp04yc.mvu#patentDetailsTabIndex=0, accessed June 1, 2016, Becky Lochlear, Sections 16, 21, 22, Township 5, Range 3, Marshall County, Mississippi, 585, January 25, 1836.

⁷² *Anderson C. Mitchell v. George W. Sherman*, in *Reports of Cases, Decided in the Superior Court of Chancery, of the State of Mississippi: Vol. 1. Containing a Series of Cases Decided Between December term 1839, and July term, 1843*, comp. by John D. Freeman (Cincinnati, OH: E. Morgan and Company, 1844), 120-127. See also Helen Tunnicliff Catterall, ed., *Judicial Cases concerning American Slavery and the Negro, Volume III: Cases from the Courts of Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1932), 288. For lower court decisions in the case, see *Anderson C. Mitchell v. George W. Sherman*, October 23, 1840, page 84, Marshall County Chancery Court Minutes, microfilm, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, reel 13871; *A.C. Mitchell v. G.W. Sherman, et al*, April 21, 1841, page 103, Marshall County Chancery Court Minutes, microfilm, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, reel 13871.

race-based slavery, both discussed in chapter one, forced Chickasaws to further distance blackness from property holding by law or treaty and associate it with enslavement in practice.

Scant documentation survives about Eli Locklier other than the instances in which his name appears in court cases and family genealogies. While his precise origins remain a historical mystery, Locklier's given name and surname may provide clues regarding his past. First, the name Eli was a Biblical name derived from a Hebrew word that meant "height" or "high" and a short form of name that meant "my God." In the Book of 1 Samuel, Eli served as a high priest of Shiloh and taught Samuel, a future prophet. During the seventeenth century, Puritans popularized the name Eli in the Americas, where it became common in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁷³ Chickasaws often carried multiple names, but surviving documentation does not refer to Eli Locklier by more than one name. Since contact and intermarriage with Europeans, Chickasaws had taken European names. Yet many Chickasaws also tended to bestow names that reflected a child's temperament, physical appearance, and other special characteristics or circumstances. In addition, Chickasaws' war names functioned in a different way than a name given in childhood. As observers James Adair and John R. Swanton have discussed, Chickasaws drew war names "from certain roots suitable to their intention and expressive of the characters of the persons, so that their names, joined together, often convey a clear and distinct idea of several—as of the time and place, where the battle was fought, of the

⁷³ Patrick Hanks and Flavia Hodges, *A Dictionary of First Names* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 99; Leslie Dunkling and William Gosling, *The Facts on File Dictionary of First Names* (New York: Facts on File Publications, 1983), 79. See also E.G. Withycombe, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Christian Names* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), 47; Charlotte M. Yonge, *History of Christian Names* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1884), lii.

number and rank of their captives, and the slain.”⁷⁴ Second, the surname Locklier originated in England, most likely as a variant of the surname “Locklear” or “Lockyer.” In the United States, the surname appeared most frequently in North Carolina.⁷⁵ Locklier’s given name in court documents likely reflect his outsider status as either a European-descended man or as an African-descended man who lived among Europeans for at least some portion of his life.

Though Chickasaws sometimes incorporated people of African descent into kinship networks, the practice became less common after the adoption of race-based slaveholding. One African-Chickasaw man, Charles Cohee, for example, moved from enslavement to freedom within the context of forced removal. Most likely fathered by Chickasaw planter James Colbert, Cohee forcibly migrated west of the Mississippi River with the Colbert family in 1837. While Cohee “did not receive annuities earmarked for Chickasaw citizens,” he likely “gained his freedom, as he was classified in the immigrant muster roll as ‘Negro’ rather than a ‘slave.’” Cohee, who “acted as an Indian, wearing his straight hair long in the manner of Chickasaw hunters,” held valuable linguistic knowledge that enabled him to serve as an interpreter.⁷⁶

Cohee’s experiences reflected an exception rather than a rule, and Eli Locklier’s position among the Chickasaws, as well as his ownership of property, intersected with the expansion of slavery and the hardening of racial lines.⁷⁷ Questions surrounding Eli Locklier’s property titles

⁷⁴ John R. Swanton, *Chickasaw Society and Religion* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006 [1928]), 15. Adair is quoted in Swanton’s analysis.

⁷⁵ Patrick Hanks, ed., *Dictionary of American Family Names: Volume Two, G-N* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 451.

⁷⁶ Wendy St. Jean, *Remaining Chickasaw in Indian Territory, 1830s to 1907* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011), 44. See also Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., *The Chickasaw Freedmen: A People without a Country* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980), 13-15.

⁷⁷ Miles, *Ties that Bind*, 83.

highlight his vulnerability as a racially ambiguous man living in a nation and state that distinguished between slavery and freedom based on European-American conceptions of race. Yet among Chickasaws, the key to recognizing Eli Locklier's property title hinged not his racial or ethnic background, but on his relationship to his wife and within the Chickasaw Nation. Membership in a matrilineal clan determined an individual's place in larger Chickasaw society. While enslaved Africans faced vulnerability due to their clanlessness when imported into Indian nations, Locklier's incorporation into his wife's kin network and the Chickasaw Nation offered a modicum of protection. Among Southeastern Indian nations, kinship ties "shaped and determined interpersonal relations and obligations as well as social and ceremonial practices."⁷⁸ Adoption into a kinship network could, therefore, amount to "freedom" for people of African descent.⁷⁹ Locklier's circumstances, then, affirmed the power of kinship ties among Chickasaws. In addition to the protections that kinship could afford, Chickasaw understandings of kin merged with a broader matrix of European American legal ideologies associated with forced removal. Mississippi state laws and treaties between the Chickasaws and the U.S. government structured possibilities for family and kin, and even love, by defining racial groups. Those possibilities flowed from the ways in which the law governed the transfer of and benefits derived from property and wealth as linked to familial ties and marital unions.

Eli Locklier, furthermore, stood at the intersection of changing Chickasaw gender ideologies and rules that governed the inheritance of enslaved status by the early nineteenth

⁷⁸ Miles, *Ties that Bind*, 50; For how this process functioned in Creek society, see Kathryn E. Holland Braund, "The Creek Indians, Blacks, and Slavery," *Journal of Southern History* 57 (November 1991): 604.

⁷⁹ Miles, *Ties that Bind*, 51.

century. As historian Barbara Krauthamer notes, Chickasaw men and women “became enmeshed in networks of commerce that reached across the southern states and linked the African Diaspora, Native America, and the Deep South.”⁸⁰ Chickasaw men, traditionally associated with hunting and war, centralized economic and political power as traders and tribal leaders. Meanwhile, Chickasaw women, who had long taken leading roles in horticulture, began to spin and weave cloth and exercised personal influence on principal men.⁸¹ The consolidation of Chickasaw men’s authority may have given Locklier knowledge of the outside world, a way to act out his position among kin, and a means to strategize his relationship with European Americans. Second, as a racially-ambiguous man, from the perspective of European Americans, Locklier’s relationship with his Chickasaw wife Beckey held significant implications for the inheritance of slave status. Children born to Locklier and his Chickasaw wife would have been incorporated into the matrilineal kin network and, thus, protected from enslaved status that followed a child through his or her mother.⁸² Given the nature of inherited slave status, enslaved Africans living among the Chickasaws may not have recognized Locklier in the same way that European Americans classified him as a “negro.” His children’s free status, along with a

⁸⁰ Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters*, 28; See also Swanton, *Chickasaw Society and Religion*, 68-70; Miles, *Ties that Bind*, 54-55.

⁸¹ See James Taylor Carson, “Choctaw and Chickasaw Women, 1690-1834,” in *Mississippi Women: Their Histories, Their Lives—Volume 2*, edited by Elizabeth Anne Payne, Martha H. Swain, and Marjorie Julian Spruill (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 12-18.

⁸² Historian Kathryn E. Holland Braund discusses this occurrence among the “racially-mixed offspring borne by Creek women [and who] suffered no discrimination in Creek social organization. Rather, the individual was born a member of the mother’s clan. Thus the child of a Creek woman was always a Creek regardless of the race or nationality of the father. And there were no limits to the possible combinations.” See Braund, “The Creek Indians, Blacks, and Slavery,” 615.

potential lack of recognition among enslaved Africans, may have offered Locklier an aura of protection from enslavement in an environment of shifting definitions of race.⁸³ Beckey Locklier herself possibly understood that she would need to protect not only her children's futures, but also that of her husband Eli by allowing him to inherit her land sections. Their spousal compact rested not only on a legal understanding of marriage, but also the socially-determined roles of an insider wife and an outsider husband incorporated among a Chickasaw kin group. Marital "love," thus, rested not on freedom, but embeddedness within a sociocultural network.⁸⁴

By denying or erasing the complexity of Locklier's background and his relationship to the land, the Mississippi court affirmed a legal racial line and alienated Locklier from the meaning land held for him and his kin. Though Locklier and his children forcibly removed from the geographic Chickasaw homeland in Mississippi for Indian Territory in 1837, later records indicate that he retained a Chickasaw identity. At some point after the death of Beckey Locklier, Eli Locklier married Nancy Gamble, born in Pigeon Roost, Mississippi in 1803 and half Chickasaw. In 1890s court records related to the Dawes Commission, Gamble's niece, Sarah Palmer indicated she had "always understood that I was a Chickasaw Indian, have always asserted my citizenship as much." Palmer's mother, also Gamble's sister, Mary Moseby "spoke the Chickasaw language well": "We were all recognized as Indians in the Indian country and lived with them as members of the tribe."⁸⁵ In the end, the court recognized Chickasaws'

⁸³ See Miles, *Ties that Bind*, 63, 65.

⁸⁴ For more on notions of "love" in the context of slavery within the wider Atlantic world, see Bianca Premo, "As if She Were My Own: Love and Law in the Slave Society of Eighteenth-Century Peru," in *Sexuality and Slavery: Reclaiming Intimate Histories in the Americas*, Daina Ramey Berry and Leslie M. Harris, eds. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2018), 79.

⁸⁵ *The Chickasaw Nation, Appellant v. Sarah Palmer, et al*, Transcript of Record,

practice of incorporating white European American outsiders, but negated the possibility that Locklier may have placed greatest weight on Chickasaw identity as an essential aspect of his personhood. The court's interpretation and classification of racial difference underwrote a broader economic and political agenda of facilitating orderly land transfers. Under different circumstances, the court could have interpreted Locklier as black, enslaved, a free person of color, or Chickasaw.⁸⁶

The state of affairs that surrounded Eli Locklier's appearance in the Mississippi chancery court case connected elite Chickasaws to land speculators, traders, and missionaries. A confluence of legal and personal relationships forged between and among Chickasaws, especially the elite Colberts, and European Americans, specifically the Walton-Miller family, extended from the East Coast to North Mississippi, and demonstrates the intertwining of racial slavery, economic agendas, and religious aims. The relationship between missionaries and land speculators, often one in the same, helped to solidify the region as a place suitable only for white Americans who possessed financial capital and could draw upon social connections that sprawled New England, the Atlantic Coast, and the Deep South. The sway that land speculators, including those related to missionaries, held in their associations with Chickasaws and their financial power over the land effectively meant that they controlled the region. Within the context of a system of imperialism and evolving slavery-based capitalism, a local and regional network of elites sought immediate, tangible benefits. The insertion of missionaries in this

Supreme Court of the United States, Appeal from the United States Court in the Indian Territory, filed October 28, 1898 (17,103), 24-25. See also Nova A. Lemons, *Pioneers of Chickasaw Nation, Indian Territory* (Miami, OK: Timbercreek, Ltd., 1991), 351-352.

⁸⁶ For a discussion of such possibilities, see Miles, *Ties that Bind*, 143.

analysis emphasizes personal relationships, and therefore, localized power dynamics, instead of questions over the systemic nature of cotton capitalism or land tenure. The matrix of white supremacy that emerged would tint the region for generations.

Since the early nineteenth century, European Americans, including squatters and merchants, had sought to establish permanent economic operations on Chickasaw lands. At the same time, and to varying degrees, the federal government attempted to protect the Chickasaw people under the Intrusion Act of 1807. This left poor European Americans with limited opportunities to purchase land.⁸⁷ For example, in 1826, Seth Norton endeavored to establish a store in Hamilton, Monroe County, Mississippi, and enlisted the assistance of a Nashville, Tennessee firm, Sharpe and Bartleson in his efforts. In response to Norton, one of the firm's associates, P.K. Bartleson "look[ed] forward to a permanent business in [his] country," and further "expect[ed] [Norton] to finish the house in such a manner as to prevent the necessity of any alterations or improvement within doors for some time."⁸⁸ Although Norton's attempts showed initial promise, Bartleson rescinded his offer. According to Bartleson, circumstances had "changed very decidedly with us, as far as respects removing to your town, and we are obliged wholly to give it up." Bartleson instead offered to "send [Norton] a tenant for [his] store in the person of Mr. Green, who will shortly arrive in Hamilton in order to see your country and

⁸⁷ Charles C. Bolton, *Poor Whites of the Antebellum South: Tenants and Laborers in Central North Carolina and Northeast Mississippi* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 73-74.

⁸⁸ Letter from P.K. Bartleson of Sharpe and Bartleson, Nashville, Tennessee, to Seth Norton, at Hamilton, Monroe County, Mississippi, April 17, 1826, Folder 3, James Perrin Quarles, Jr. Memorial Collection, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

judge for himself.”⁸⁹ Though Norton proved unsuccessful in establishing his store, his example demonstrates the ways in which permanent settlement in the area was limited to those who had financial capital and social connections. Historian Charles Bolton argues that “the nature of land acquisition and distribution in the Old Southwest” constituted “the major obstacle to landownership faced by landless emigrants.”⁹⁰ Financial benefactors and resources, thus, dictated the fate of individuals in North Mississippi and, more broadly, the Old Southwest.

The signing of the Treaty of Pontotoc in 1832 encouraged many landless European Americans to enter the Chickasaw Nation, though specific circumstances in the region favored land traders and speculators. During the summer and fall of 1834, land traders and speculators descended upon the Chickasaw homeland en masse. According to scholar Dennis East,

limited capital and inability to secure full outright title to the allotments forced these traders to adopt such temporary measures as advancing ‘earnest’ money and ‘store accounts’ to the Indians in return for bonds or claims obligating the Indian to convey title to the trader after the acreage was surveyed, located, and approved by the Indian commissioners.⁹¹

Land traders ultimately held a first option to buy the Indian lands once they obtained a final certification. As a result, land speculation companies “align[ed] themselves with the [land] traders and employ[ed] them as middlemen in negotiating with the tribesmen.”⁹² Although the federal government intended to make the disposal of Chickasaws through public sale an “orderly, fair process,” land speculators had already bought most of the desirable land in 1835 before it

⁸⁹ Letter from P.K. Bartleson of Sharpe and Bartleson, April 30, 1826, Folder 3.

⁹⁰ Bolton, *Poor Whites of the Antebellum South*, 70-72.

⁹¹ East, “New York and Mississippi Land Company and the Panic of 1837,” 302.

⁹² *Ibid.*

went to public sale the following year.⁹³ The opening of Chickasaw lands, totaling 6,718,586.27 acres, to white settlers created a land boom in Mississippi between 1835 and 1837 and lured investors eager to profit from cotton cultivation.⁹⁴

Investment from northern land speculation companies facilitated the rapid presale of Chickasaw lands and occurred at the detriment of European American squatters. Five companies, including the New York and Mississippi Land Company; the American Land Company; the Boston and New York Chickasaw Land Company; the Boston and Mississippi Cotton Land Company; and the New York, Mississippi, and Arkansas Company, “acquired over 750,000 acres of land from Chickasaw allotments or about one-third of the total land reserved to the Chickasaws.” Northern money also bankrolled smaller land speculators, some based in the southern U.S.⁹⁵ Even after the Panic of 1837 “crippled” smaller land speculation operations such as the Pontotoc and Holly Springs Company, “the large organizations survived the crisis intact” and dictated the region’s land sales and distribution through the 1850s.⁹⁶ Even though many areas in the U.S. deferred to preemption rights that would allow European American squatters

⁹³ Bolton, *Poor Whites of the Antebellum South*, 74.

⁹⁴ East, “New York and Mississippi Land Company and the Panic of 1837,” 300, 302; See also James W. Silver, Land Speculation Profits in the Chickasaw Cession,” *Journal of Southern History* 10 (February 1944): 84-92.

⁹⁵ Bolton, *Poor Whites of the Antebellum South*, 75-76.

⁹⁶ Bolton, *Poor Whites of the Antebellum South*, 78. For more on land speculation after the 1790s, especially during the 1830s and particularly in the Old Southwest, see Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015), 108, 173, 218; Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 37-40; Joshua D. Rothman, *Flush Times and Fever Dreams: A Story of Capitalism and Slavery in the Age of Jackson* (Athens: University of Georgia Press), 21-28; Gene Dattel, *Cotton and Race in the Making of America: The Human Costs of Economic Power* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009), 44-45; Rothman, *Slave Country*, 168-171.

the first right of refusal upon the public sale of land, “no such privileges were allowed in the lands of the Chickasaw cession.” And, by the mid-1840s, after Congress’s passage of the Preemption Act of 1841, “no public land remained in northeast Mississippi for squatters to preempt.”⁹⁷

As the survey of Chickasaw lands hastened European Americans’ intrusion during the 1830s, the Chickasaws pled with the federal government for protection. In 1835, James Colbert (Ton-e-pia) wrote to Secretary of War Lewis Cass, “The white men are cheating [our red children] out of their lands and they do not [know] what they are to git for it nothing can save us but your parental care.” Colbert continued, “Instruct the agent to reject all of those fraudulent contracts for if he sanctions them our leading men will perhaps do the same.”⁹⁸ According to Colbert, the federal government had neglected to uphold treaty obligations to protect non-elite Chickasaws from unscrupulous land speculators aligned with Chickasaw interpreters:

A host of speculators are going over the country and have hired all the half breeds to interpret for them and give them five or ten dollars for each contract they make; they use every stratagem they can devise and practice every imposition on their ignorance; these half breeds tell them the agent says you must sell and they believe every thing the agent tells them must be done and there is not one out of a hundred that has sold knows what they are to receive for their lands nor when nor who has purchased; they have signed deed most of them blank ones and receive from five to ten dollars in advance.⁹⁹

The Surveyor General “has with his Company purchased seven or eight hundred sections and have advanced them from ten to twenty dollars; five hundred dollars is about the average price

⁹⁷ Bolton, *Poor Whites of the Antebellum South*, 73-74.

⁹⁸ James Colbert to Lewis Cass, June 5, 1835, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881: Chickasaw Agency, 1824-1870, National Archives Microfilm Publications, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., M234, roll 136.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

agreed on per section and some of them worth ten times as much.”¹⁰⁰ In general, speculators bought land sections directly from Chickasaws and other traders. For example, speculators bought land plots that totaled 640 acres “for as little as \$450—most of this amount traded in overvalued liquor or other goods.”¹⁰¹ Speculators then resold the land to wealthy European American planters before others had an opportunity to buy. In 1836 alone, speculators sold over three million acres of land located throughout the state of Mississippi.¹⁰²

The combination of well-connected land speculators and wealthy buyers made the dispossessed Chickasaw homeland a place open only to those with enough financial capital to afford it. As historian Charles C. Bolton argues, “The presence of slavery and slaveholders made the public lands of the Old Southwest potentially more valuable than government land on other frontiers” in the U.S.¹⁰³ Historian Adam Rothman, likewise, posits that the sale of public lands “facilitated the spread of the plantation system in the Deep South just as a burgeoning cotton economy increased the value of the land and the profits to be earned from slave labor.”¹⁰⁴ In June of 1835, Richard Thomas Brownrigg, a wealthy white North Carolinian, “arrived at Cotton Gin Port... a small placed on the Tombigbee” and described the surrounding landscape. After crossing “the low grounds, we ascended the hill and immediately a New Country presented itself, such as I had never seen, and was at a loss to form any opinion.” Brownrigg observed “trees of

¹⁰⁰ James Colbert to Lewis Cass, June 5, 1835, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881: Chickasaw Agency, 1824-1870, National Archives Microfilm Publications, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., M234, roll 136.

¹⁰¹ Bolton, *Poor Whites of the Antebellum South*, 75.

¹⁰² East, “New York and Mississippi Land Company and the Panic of 1837,” 300, 302.

¹⁰³ Bolton, *Poor Whites of the Antebellum South*, 75.

¹⁰⁴ Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 45.

good size, no undergrowth,” “a rich growth of crops the land rolling [*sic*],” and a “well trimmed grove.” After traveling nine miles, Brownrigg and his party “came to the first prairie which was about a one mile in length.” Remarking on farmed prairie land as he trekked another fifty miles, Brownrigg noted a neighborhood “presenting a most beautiful appearance with a cluster of trees on the tops of the hills for the Groves are equally as rolling as the woods.” The earthen landscape, in particular, gave Brownrigg pause: “the soil deep black some places... limestone rock and various marine shell, intermixed with the rock and such places appear to be almost barren... [some places] appear much richer than others... the woods appear drier and I think the country is all rich but very badly watered.” After journeying twenty-five miles from Cotton Gin Port, Brownrigg saw that “the country becomes more broken.”¹⁰⁵ Potential buyers like Brownrigg observed the benefits of purchasing land in the North Mississippi landscape, a setting they viewed as not only bearing a pleasing aesthetic, but also offering the potential for profit through slave-based agricultural development.

Existing relationships with European American colonizers may have afforded advantages to elite Chickasaws as they sought to protect their wealth. The commercial and social ties between European American families and Chickasaw leaders, particularly the Walton-Millers and the Colberts, provided a sociocultural foundation for the continued maintenance of a slave society premised on white supremacy. Along with Presbyterian missionaries, prominent Chickasaw chief Levi Colbert had cultivated close relationships with European American

¹⁰⁵ Diary Entry for Thursday, June 4, 1835, Travel Diary of Richard T. Brownrigg, May 12, 1835-July 11, 1835, Diary, volume 1, subseries 3.3, folder 16, Brownrigg Family Papers, 1736-1986, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

merchants and builders, including Jesse Walton. According to Jesse Walton's son, Josiah, who had served as Levi Colbert's secretary, Colbert was "shrew[d] and influential among his tribe, in fact his words or advice was the law among them."¹⁰⁶ Colbert along with his three Chickasaw brothers not only owned many slaves, but he also shared ownership of Colbert's Ferry, located at the crossing of the Natchez Trace and the Tennessee River. By 1819, Walton had become acquainted with Colbert, moved to Cotton Gin Port, and completed a mill and other building projects for Colbert.¹⁰⁷ As the Walton family's relationship with the Chickasaw Colberts solidified, they further prospered, gained social influence, and acquired access to desirable land in North Mississippi.

As Presbyterian missions to Chickasaws faded after the Treaty of Pontotoc in 1832, missionaries and their relatives with links to the Walton family enriched themselves through land sales. Just as the weeping willow's appearance portended the arrival of Christian "civilization" in North Mississippi, forced removal had "deeply religious roots," according to historian Clara Sue Kidwell. She points to "the conflict of savage hunter and settled farmer, the disorder of wildness to be overcome by the order of God's law. The hunter, who roamed vast tracts of land and whose efforts produced little, must give way to the farmer, who ordered the land by farming and made it most productive."¹⁰⁸ This way of organizing the earthly world would have converged with economic aims that set the stage for a reimagining of the landscape, ordered at

¹⁰⁶ J.N. Walton Letter to Lyman C. Draper, June 25, 1882, in Lyman Draper Manuscript Collection, microfilm, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, vol. 10, series U.

¹⁰⁷ W.B. Wilkes Letter to Lyman C. Draper, November 11, 1881, in Lyman Draper Manuscript Collection, microfilm, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, vol. 10, series U.

¹⁰⁸ Clara Sue Kidwell, *Choctaws and Missionaries in Mississippi, 1818-1918* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 20.

the intersection of Calvinistic theology and white supremacy.

The Walton family's story demonstrates the intertwining of Presbyterian missions and missionaries with land trade and speculation. Jesse Walton and John Bell, a ferry operator at Cotton Gin Port and the son of Presbyterian missionary Robert Bell, bought the outstanding stock of Cotton Gin Land Company and became owners of all unpurchased land lots in the immediate area. Though Walton died in 1830, his daughters married prosperous area merchants and land speculators.¹⁰⁹ Two husbands of the Walton sisters, Robert Gordon and Stephen Daggett, signed the Treaty of Pontotoc Creek as witnesses in 1832.¹¹⁰ Gordon and Daggett would eventually accumulate substantial land holdings and sell several hundred thousand acres of land to East Coast investors.¹¹¹ Two companies, the Chickasaw Land Company and Gordon and Bell, dealt with significant Chickasaw land speculation. The former, comprised of white southern businessmen and politicians, first purchased land allotments in June 1834.¹¹² More importantly, the latter, led by Bell and Gordon held a direct connection to Presbyterian missionaries. Foremost, Bell had expressed early support and encouragement of Chickasaws' forced removal and was later appointed surveyor-general of the Chickasaw cession, which gave him "unique access to information on the location of desirable lands." Gordon, an attorney and merchant,

¹⁰⁹ Bob F. Thompson, "The Waltons of Cotton Gin Port," Folder 3, Box 16, Miller (Hugh Reid and Susan Walton) Family Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH), Jackson, Mississippi.; Jesse Walton Letter to Susan Grey Walton, February 19, 1838, Folder 4, Box 16, Miller (Hugh Reid and Susan Walton) Family Papers, MDAH.

¹¹⁰ "Treaty with the Chickasaw, 1832," in *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Volume II: Treaties*, compiled and edited by Charles J. Kappler (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), 356-362.

¹¹¹ Thompson, "The Waltons of Cotton Gin Port," Folder 3, Box 16, Miller (Hugh Reid and Susan Walton) Family Papers, MDAH.

¹¹² East, "New York and Mississippi Land Company and the Panic of 1837," 302.

rendered services to the Chickasaws, for which he was rewarded a section of land after the 1834 treaty. As land agents, Gordon and Bell hired elite Chickasaws of mixed ancestry as interpreters as well as “opened a store account for their Indian clients, and proceeded to acquire, at an average price of less than ten dollars a section, claims to more than six hundred 640-acre sections of land.” In November 1834, Gordon and Bell “enlarged their potential operating capital to \$150,000 by going into partnership with a group of Natchez businessmen. Ten months later, the partnership sold out their claims to 310,371 acres of land to Henry Anderson and Edward Orne.”¹¹³

Land sale profits provided further capital to invest in enslaved property. For his part, Gordon bought 640 acres of land in Pontotoc that once belonged to Molly Colbert Gunn, the sister of Levi Colbert and the cousin of Betsy Love, at public auction in 1835.¹¹⁴ Gordon built one of the most extravagant plantation homes, named Lochinvar, in North Mississippi, where he owned over 100 slaves by 1850.¹¹⁵ Gordon, furthermore, “had about a dozen hands under the control of [Robert] Handly,” who married a daughter of missionary Bell.¹¹⁶

The Walton and Colbert families found their fates intertwined with European Americans emigrants arriving from Abbeville, South Carolina. Levi Colbert had long been acquainted with Thomas C. Stuart, the Abbeville native who led Monroe Mission during the 1820s and early

¹¹³ Young, *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks*, 116-117.

¹¹⁴ Gordon bought the land in his son James Gordon’s name. Pontotoc County Chancery Clerk, Book of Deeds, 1836.

¹¹⁵ For Lochinvar’s architectural detail, see Mary Wallace Crocker, *Historical Architecture in Mississippi* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1973), 143; 1850 U.S. Federal Census – Slave Schedules.

¹¹⁶ W.B. Wilkes, *Pioneer Times in Monroe County: From a Series of Letters Published in The Aberdeen Weekly 1877 and 1878* (Aberdeen: Mother Monroe Publishing Company, 1979), 3.

1830s. The arrival of Hugh Reid Miller's family from Abbeville gave the Stuarts congenial neighbors. The Stuarts welcomed the new settlers to Pontotoc with open arms. Miller's brother Robert had no garden at his new Pontotoc home, but "[had] some flowers set out in the yard that I got from Mrs. Stuart."¹¹⁷ The Miller family commenced clearing land for their new home and came into regular contact with the Chickasaw people. Miller family correspondence suggests that some of the land they occupied once belonged to Chickasaw people still living in the area. As the Miller family cleared the land, they found that "the Indians are [here] to see us dayly [*sic*] begging for corn and I expect to slick some of them if they don't keep to their own side of their plantation."¹¹⁸

Working in the land office, Edward Fontaine's 1836 description of a scene in Pontotoc offers an image of the town that the Millers and others likely encountered in North Mississippi, a physical and sociocultural landscape amid transformation. He compared the scene in Pontotoc to "a Methodist Camp ground" with "a collection of rude ill constructed huts, with the exception of a few neat little framed painted dwellings... tenanted by a collection of people from every State, and from many foreign countries." Among Pontotoc's people and their built environment "is centered perhaps more shrewdness and intelligence than can be found in any other congregation of the same size." At the conclusion of land sales, and "as soon as... the money of these [Indians] is expended the glory of Pontotock will fade, and its wild novelty vanish—and it will

¹¹⁷ Robert A. Miller Letter to Margaret Ann Miller, May 21, 1837, Folder 4, Box 16, Miller Family Papers, MDAH.

¹¹⁸ Robert A. Miller Letter to Ebenezer E. Miller, March 12, 1837, Folder 3, Box 16, Miller Family Papers, MDAH.

appear but as the other respectable inland towns of our country.”¹¹⁹ As Chickasaws ceded their North Mississippi lands in the 1830s, burgeoning towns in Pontotoc County, as well as in Marshall County and Monroe County in particular, would transform into commercial centers for new European American settlers.

The Miller and Walton families united with the marriage of Hugh Reid Miller and Susan Gray Walton in 1839. The Walton family’s rising prominence, in some ways thanks to Levi Colbert, boded well for Miller’s career. Trained at South Carolina College as a disciple of John C. Calhoun, Miller became an attorney in Pontotoc in 1835 and gained importance for dealing in real estate, land titles, and debt collection. Miller’s family connections, law practice, and political ambitions eventually brought him into contact with other prominent Mississippi states’ rights advocates. Together, the Miller family owned over 112 slaves by 1850 and 137 slaves by 1860.¹²⁰ In 1861, Hugh Reid Miller defended the institution of slavery and counted himself as one of the fifteen signers of Mississippi’s Ordinance of Secession from the United States.¹²¹

Despite signing removal treaties in 1832 and 1834 and the increasing presence of European Americans, most Chickasaws remained in Mississippi until after the signing of the Treaty of Doaksville of 1837 because they were “supposed to have the right to remain in their

¹¹⁹ Fontaine, quoted in Atkinson, *Splendid Land, Splendid People*, 232. See also Willie D. Halsell, ed. “A Stranger Indeed in a Strange Land,” *Alabama Historical Quarterly* 30 (1968): 61, 74-75.

¹²⁰ 1850 U.S. Federal Census – Slave Schedules; 1860 U.S. Federal Census – Slave Schedules.

¹²¹ J.L. Power, *Proceedings of the Mississippi State Convention, Held January 7th to 26th, A.D. 1861. Including the Ordinances, as finally Adopted, Important Speeches, and a List of Members, Showing the Postoffice, Profession, Nativity, Politics, Age, Religious Preference, and Social Relations of Each* (Jackson: Power and Cadwallader, Book and Job Printers, 1861). <http://docsouth.unc.edu/imls/missconv/missconv.html> (Accessed September 1, 2016).

homes until suitable land had been purchased in the West.”¹²² In March 1837, newly-appointed superintendent of Chickasaw removal A.M.M. Upshaw advised the Chickasaws to “remove as soon as possible” to avoid continued deceptions of land hungry European Americans. Citing Chickasaws “who are spending all their money and making no crops,” Upshaw observed, “They get drunk and lose their money and white men make them drunk to cheat them of their property and their wives and children are suffering for something to eat.” If the Chickasaws left their homeland sooner, then “they may have time to build houses before winter to keep the cold from their wives and children.”¹²³ The chiefs of the Chickasaw nation’s four districts agreed that Upshaw would designate a meeting point and the tribe would begin their forced removal on June 7, 1837.¹²⁴ Chickasaws had “purchased a suitable tract of land in the western part of the new territory held by the Choctaws.” During the same year, in 1837, tribal rolls indicated that 4,914 Chickasaws along with 1,156 enslaved black people lived in Mississippi. The next year, in 1838, 500 Chickasaws forcibly moved west of the Mississippi River.¹²⁵

As late as the 1850s, small parties of Chickasaws continued to leave North Mississippi.¹²⁶ Some poor, orphaned, and widowed Chickasaws involuntarily continued to reside in the region as European Americans attempted to confiscate property. Mary Gamble Moseby, the sister of Eli Locklier’s second wife Nancy Gamble remained until 1844, for example, possibly due to her

¹²² Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976), 461.

¹²³ Quoted in Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 204.

¹²⁴ Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 204.

¹²⁵ Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 461.

¹²⁶ Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 461.

status as a widowed Chickasaw woman.¹²⁷ “In some cases,” widowed and propertied Chickasaw women “had court-appointed administrators of estates, whose apparent object was to keep the Chickasaws there until the property was gone.” Orphaned Chickasaw children often “had guardians who controlled their property” and left them penniless.¹²⁸ Elite Chickasaws, such as the kin of Betsy Love, remained in North Mississippi until the mid 1840s. George Allen, Love’s son, arrived in the West in 1847.¹²⁹ In early 1850, the last recorded party of Chickasaw removals included Isham Matubby and an enslaved person, Untahcunneubby, and Ebenezer Pitchlynn.¹³⁰

The Treaty of Pontotoc of 1832 doomed Presbyterian missions to Chickasaws in northern Mississippi, northwestern Alabama, and southwestern Tennessee, but many of the same missionaries continued to work in the region. In 1832, both James Holmes and Hugh Wilson left for Tipton County, Tennessee. After forced removal, no Presbyterians accompanied the Chickasaws to their new home, unlike the forced removals of other Southeastern Indians. Perhaps missionaries’ financial interests had always intertwined with religious goals. None of the Presbyterian missionaries spoke the Chickasaw language. They had relied upon enslaved people and other Chickasaws as interpreters. Contemporaries, furthermore, believed that the Chickasaws would join with the Choctaws. In effect, such a union would allow Presbyterian missionaries to the Choctaws to also attend to the Chickasaws.¹³¹

Although no Presbyterian missionaries accompanied Chickasaws on their forced removal

¹²⁷ Lemons, *Pioneers of Chickasaw Nation, Indian Territory*, 351-352.

¹²⁸ Paige, Bumpers, Littlefield, *Chickasaw Removal*, 160.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹³¹ T.M. Cunningham, *Hugh Wilson: A Pioneer Saint, Missionary to the Chickasaw Indians and Pioneer Minister in Texas, with A Genealogy of the Wilson Family including 422 Descendants of Rev. Lewis Feuilleteau Wilson, I* (Dallas: Wilkinson Printing Co., 1938), 40-41.

to Indian Territory, Thomas C. Stuart remained in contact with Chickasaws and the missions had a lasting impact. According to an 1883 account, Stuart visited the Chickasaws in Indian Territory, where he attended the meeting of the first Chickasaw legislature and the inauguration of the first Chickasaw governor: “all the Senators, and some members of the House, were former pupils at Monroe—the Governor certainly was.”¹³² Long after forced removal, mission education had continued to shape leadership in Chickasaw Nation. Even as he remained in North Mississippi, Stuart continued to engage in mission work that combined education with religious ideals. After the Civil War and before provisions had been made for the education of freedpeople, Stuart, “feeling that a new missionary field was opened before him... established a Sabbath school among [freedpeople] where quite a number learned to read, and were supplied with copies of the Scripture, donated for that purpose by the American Bible Society.”¹³³

The forced removal of Chickasaws solidified an existing biracial line that would mark the physical and social landscape of their homeland for generations of white and black people in freedom and enslavement. George Ward, for example, “was born on the Ledbetter plantation... the son of a Negro mother and a Chickasaw Indian” and remained enslaved until Emancipation.¹³⁴ Among people like Ward, the creation of a biracial Mississippi meant that

¹³² Clipping: J.W. Fraser, “Rev. T.C. Stuart, Biographical Sketch, *The Observer* (Louisville, KY) for the *Christian Observer*, 1883 in Lyman Draper Manuscript Collection, microfilm, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, vol. 10, series U.

¹³³ Clipping: J.W. Fraser, “Rev. T.C. Stuart, Biographical Sketch, *The Observer* (Louisville, KY) for the *Christian Observer*, 1883 in Lyman Draper Manuscript Collection, microfilm, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, vol. 10, series U.

¹³⁴ George Ward, George P. Rawick, ed. *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*, supplemental ser. 1 (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1972-79), 10 (1): 2175. As historian Fay A. Yarbrough notes, Works Progress Administration (WPA) interviews of the formerly enslaved provide rich accounts of relationships between African American women and

children born out of relationships between Chickasaw men and black women faced fewer, if any, options to cross color lines in the same manner as Eli Locklier. For African-descended forced arrivants, hardened racial categories left few with the ambiguity to cross the color line into freedom. This also meant that European-descended settlers in the region could connect their ancestry to the designation of “white” and their freedom to their whiteness. Out of this context, Reverend Frank Patton reminded readers in his legend that the weeping willow had, “followed the path of civilization and Christianity” and in a “revolutionary wave... roll[ed] over the home of the red man” in North Mississippi.¹³⁵

Native American men. See Fay A. Yarbrough, “Power, Perception, and Interracial Sex: Former Slaves Recall a Multiracial South,” *Journal of Southern History* 71 (August 2005): 559-588.

¹³⁵ Patton, “Reminiscences of the Chickasaws,” *The Electra* (January 1885): 536.

CHAPTER III:
CREATING WHITE SOCIETY IN NORTH MISSISSIPPI: HOUSEHOLDS, RELIGION,
AND RACE, 1830s-1850s

In November 1840, Henry Craft of Holly Springs, Mississippi, wrote to his sister Martha, “Holly Springs is a right pretty place. Mississippi is a fine country.” He continued, “I think you are opposed to the thought of moving to Miss[issippi]—It is however a more civilized place than you imagine... you may be better pleased than you think, for I like it very well.”¹ According to another resident of the town, John T. Finley, in a letter to James D. Davidson, the population’s wealth and intelligence alongside land “well-adapted to the cultivation of cotton, corn, [and] oats” foretold the advantages of settlement in Holly Springs.² An antebellum writer found himself in Aberdeen, Mississippi, about ninety-five miles southeast of Holly Springs. Not expecting to find “a large or a very elegant town,” he wrote, “The handsomest town of its size in the South, and amid a population as intelligent, refined and ‘fashionable’ as in any you can name.” The antebellum observer related that he had “never seen a town that has a more pleasing aspect to the eye, or where so much attention is given to the beauty of dwellings, the cultivation of flowers and the beautifying of the *home*.” The aesthetic qualities of Aberdeen reflected the fruits of the white population’s economic and political success. Aberdeen’s “daily advance in

¹ Letter from Henry Craft and Elizabeth Craft to Martha Craft, November 23, 1840, Craft/Fort Family Letters, Department of Archives and Special Collections, J.D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi.

² Letter from John T. Finley to James D. Davidson, February 23, 1837, Craft/Fort Family Letters.

wealth and importance” was mirrored in its homes “furnished with as much costly elegance as any in New Orleans.” Drawing further comparisons to cultural centers located in the South, the observer noted, “a Mobile furniture merchant told me that the richest furniture he sold was bought by the people of Aberdeen” and that the private carriages of Aberdeen’s families rivaled and surpassed those he had seen in Adams County, home to many of the wealthiest Mississippians. Beyond the aesthetically-pleasing accoutrements of Aberdeen, the observer found “more than usual literary taste, and a liberality and hospitality among the citizens that must always render Aberdeen an agreeable place to strangers, as well as a desirable residence.”³

The establishment of Holly Springs and Aberdeen reflected larger historical processes that occurred in the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century that included Indian Removal and the expansion of slavery and cotton cultivation. The Treaty of Pontotoc in 1832 and the renegotiated treaty in 1834 ceded Chickasaw lands east of the Mississippi River and opened low-priced land in northern Mississippi to white settlers. Many of North Mississippi’s earliest inhabitants included attorneys, land speculators, and merchants who capitalized on the cultivation of cotton with the use of enslaved labor. Profits from cotton cultivation allowed North Mississippi’s elite white residents to accumulate wealth, build homes, and create educational and religious institutions.

This chapter argues that white settlers entrenched a biracial color line in their new society

³ “Aberdeen,” *Monroe Democrat*, May 21, 1851. Historian James C. Cobb observes that planters in the Mississippi Delta cultivated an “aristocratic leisure class” during the antebellum years, and styled themselves as cultured, educated, and well-mannered people comparable to members of the English gentry class. See James C. Cobb, *The Most Southern Place on Earth: The Mississippi Delta and the Roots of Regional Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 16.

based on religious ideas about order and embodied in the slavery-centered household in an attempt to undercut the southern confluence's possibilities for exchange and expression at the intersection of white, black, and Indian cultures. The household, along with married women's property rights upheld by Mississippi courts in Chickasaw woman Betsy Love's case and later enacted in legislation, served an imperialistic agenda of organizing society around white supremacy.⁴ Drawing from Calvinistic ideas that emphasized the primacy of order, North Mississippi's white inhabitants interpreted their responsibility as one to create a divinely sanctioned civilization that rested upon white supremacy and black subjugation. In the eyes of white enslavers, subversion or resistance to the order that they created constituted an affront to God. This transformed the maintenance of racial lines into a moral imperative and created a cultural foundation for white supremacy in the absence and erasure of Chickasaws. In the process of building a new society in North Mississippi after Chickasaw removal, white settlers built physical structures, including homes, schools, and churches, that reflected their slavery-centered world. They also envisioned the household, with specific roles for fathers, mothers, children, and the enslaved, as an ideal model for their private and public lives. White North Mississippians imbued religious meaning into the region's physical and social structures and believed that they had a duty to cultivate the same values in their children.

This chapter builds upon and reconsiders other historians who have pointed to the antebellum household as a unit of historical analysis and to the ways in which religion informed social organization and discourse in the Old South. By situating the household as a localized

⁴ See Laurel Clark Shire, "Sentimental Racism and Sympathetic Paternalism: Feeling Like a Jacksonian," *Journal of the Early Republic* 39 (Spring 2019): 111-122.

unit within the history of capitalism, this chapter revises conventional thinking about the economic activities of southern white women and builds upon the recent work of historian Walter Johnson.⁵ It demonstrates that the viability of the household, in the end, rested on white women's willingness and ability to uphold its basic foundations within a capitalist world economy, in which the white southern enslavers and their property were fully ingratiated.⁶ To manage their households, white southern women used the capitalistic tools they learned in schools, often backed by religious institutions, and often cloaked their economic activities in a spiritual language. Securing and maintaining wealth depended on family connections, and tied women to the family's financial prosperity.

Scholarship on religion in the Old South demonstrates how religious ideas shaped familial relationships and informed concepts of race and gender that played out in the antebellum

⁵ Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013). For more on the antebellum household, see Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Cynthia A. Kerner, *Beyond the Household: Women's Place in the Early South, 1700-1835* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Joan E. Cashin, *A Family Venture: Men and Women on the Southern Frontier* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

⁶ See Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015); Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2014); Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013); Robin Blackburn, *The American Crucible: Slavery, Emancipation, and Human Rights* (New York: Verso, 2011); Gene Dattel, *Cotton and Race in the Making of America: The Human Costs of Economic Power* (Lanham: Ivan R. Dee, 2009).

household.⁷ This chapter concentrates less on denominational differences, and instead looks at how Calvinistic ideas shaped the culture and society of North Mississippi.⁸ White settlers in North Mississippi desired a hierarchical society based on race and gender, and found justification in Biblical ideas about order. Not mere expressions of individual faith, religious beliefs materialized within the ordered antebellum household as white enslavers pondered their financial fortunes and gendered roles in society, and attempted to entrench a racial color line. Calvinistic Presbyterians especially saw the world in terms of order versus disorder, and often viewed white supremacy as the proper avenue to achieve an ordered society. Not every white settler in North Mississippi articulated a Calvinistic belief system, but Calvinistic ideas influenced the ways in

⁷ See Charles F. Irons, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity: White and Black Evangelicals in Colonial and Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Janet Duitsman Cornelius, *Slave Missions and the Black Church in the Antebellum South* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999); Mitchell Snay, *Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997 [1993]); Randy J. Sparks, *On Jordan's Stormy Banks: Evangelicalism in Mississippi, 1773-1876* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994); Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

⁸ For other interpretations of religion in the Old South, see Luke E. Harlow, *Religion, Race, and the Making of Confederate Kentucky, 1830-1880* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Charity R. Carney, *Ministers and Masters: Methodism, Manhood, and Honor in the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011); Jeffrey Williams, *Religion and Violence in Early American Methodism: Taking the Kingdom by Force* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); Monica Najar, *Evangelizing the South: A Social History of Church and State in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); John Patrick Daly, *When Slavery Was Called Freedom: Evangelicalism, Proslavery, and the Causes of the Civil War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2002); Beth Barton Schweiger, *The Gospel Working Up: Progress and the Pulpit in Nineteenth-Century Virginia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Kenneth Moore Startup, *The Root of All Evil: The Protestant Clergy and the Economic Mind of the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997); David T. Bailey, *Shadow on the Church: Southwestern Evangelical Religion and the Issue of Slavery, 1783-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); Anne C. Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1980)

which many white settlers thought about place, their surroundings, and education.⁹

Using census data, white enslavers' personal papers, local newspaper reports, church records, and the narratives of formerly enslaved people, this chapter begins by demonstrating the ways in which North Mississippi functioned as a slave society compared to the Mississippi Delta and Natchez. It then proceeds to discuss the nature of religious life in North Mississippi along with biblical justifications for white supremacy and racial slavery. Religious institutions gave North Mississippi's slave society a cultural and intellectual legitimacy, which found expression in built environments, including enslavers' homes and landed property. Within these built environments, white settlers organized their societies around the household. By imagining ideals of gentility and domesticity, elite white North Mississippians structured their society based on Calvinistic understandings of order and used familial metaphors to articulate their vision of a hierarchical society based on slavery and to mask the system's violence and brutality. No matter how hard North Mississippians attempted to impose order on their new society, disorder lurked beneath the surface and threatened to upend the integrity of the household.

From the 1830s through the early 1860s, communities in North Mississippi existed as "slave societies," which historian Ira Berlin defines as those in which "slavery stood at the center

⁹ Some scholars border on glorifying the cultural, intellectual, and religious world that enslavers created with little attention to the ways in which gender ideals and enslaved people shaped it. See Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *Slavery in White and Black: Class and Race in the Southern Slaveholders' New World Order* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholder's Worldview* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005). For a more convincing portraits of white southerners' worldview, see Michael O'Brien, *Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Michael O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

of economic production, and the master-slave relationship provided the model for all social relations: husband and wife, parent and child, employer and employee. From the most intimate connections between men and women to the most public ones between ruler and ruled, all relationships mimicked those of slavery.” Slaveholders further “elaborated the ideology of subordination, generally finding the sources of their own domination in some rule of nature or law of God,” and most often in terms of race.¹⁰ Enslavers, in short, represented a ruling, propertied elite without competition.

Climate, land, and the possibility of profit attracted white settlers to North Mississippi. While Mississippi’s Delta region had proven profitable during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, white people often viewed the area as uninhabitable for themselves. Because of fertile soil and close proximity to the Mississippi River, settlers found the Delta more suitable for cotton’s long growing season.¹¹ The Delta region’s soil composition benefitted from millennia of flooding when the Mississippi River deposited fertile organic material, and the area’s humid subtropical climate enriched the vegetation. At the same time, however, as historian James C. Cobb argues, humid weather, the constant danger of flooding, and the incubation of diseases like malaria, cholera, typhoid fever, and dysentery all threatened the livelihoods of white Delta planters during the early nineteenth century. Because of the Delta’s volatile climate, many planters hired overseers to manage their operations and earned their wealth through absentee ownership.¹² North Mississippi’s appeal, instead, lay in the ability of

¹⁰ Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 9-10.

¹¹ J Moore, *Agriculture in Ante-bellum Mississippi*, ix, xi.

¹² Cobb, *The Most Southern Place on Earth*, 4-5, 11-14, 24.

white settlers to both live and make money near their homes. Historians of the antebellum period often subsume the narrative of slavery and its cognates in North Mississippi into their examinations of the Mississippi Delta and the Natchez area.¹³ Exceptionally imbalanced demographics in Delta counties and Natchez have come to represent the standard interpretation of slavery in Mississippi.

In comparison to the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta, North Mississippi “stood in marked contrast” with less absentee ownership and smaller land and slaveholdings among white settlers.¹⁴ As sociologist Marilyn M. Thomas-Houston points out in her study of Lafayette County, Mississippi, small slaveholdings may have inhibited the ability of African Americans to “develop an autonomous way of life, as an African American cultural community,” an observation that suggests a considerable degree of interaction between white and black people. Enslaved people averaged around 44% percent of Lafayette County’s total population during the three decades before the Civil War. The majority of white enslavers held between two and fifteen enslaved people, while only five white enslavers owned between one hundred and two hundred enslaved people. Thomas-Houston concludes that “the culture of social relations between slave and slaveholder, Blacks and Whites, was more intimate in Oxford/Lafayette County than in other areas that managed larger or more plantations and where the majority of the population was Black,” though this fact does not preclude the existence of a coercive racial

¹³ Many scholars tend to obscure the importance of slavery in northern Mississippi with their disproportionate focus on the roles of the Mississippi Delta and the Natchez District in developing the Cotton Kingdom. See Anthony E. Kaye, *Joining Places: Slave Neighborhoods in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Moore, *The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest*.

¹⁴ Nancy D. Bercau, *Gendered Freedoms: Race, Rights, and the Politics of Household in the Delta, 1861-1875* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 8, 10-11.

system that governed daily interactions.¹⁵ The ratio of enslaved people to white people in Marshall County, likewise, remained relatively evenly divided in 1850 and 1860 and better reflected the state's total population statistics. In many counties along the Mississippi River, enslaved people overwhelmingly outnumbered white people. For instance, enslaved people in Adams County represented approximately 77% in 1850 and 71% in 1860. Enslaved people in Washington County represented 93% in 1850. Figures for 1860 are unknown. By contrast, enslaved people represented 52% of the total population in Marshall County in 1850, and 61% in 1860. Throughout the entire state of Mississippi, enslaved people represented 51% of the total population in 1850, and 55% in 1860.¹⁶

In general, the difference in land and the more even division of enslaved black and free white populations in North Mississippi counties did not necessarily make them less profitable than Delta counties or Natchez. For example, by 1850, Marshall County possessed the largest cash value of farms in the state of Mississippi, totaling \$3,362,798, with enslaved people representing about 52% percent of the total population. At the same time, farms in Washington County, located in the Delta, valued at \$3,296,875, with enslaved people representing over 93% of the total population.¹⁷

On an individual level, for non-elite white Americans, slave ownership forged a path to influence, status, and wealth. Hoping to enter the planter class, many of North Mississippi's

¹⁵ Marilyn M. Thomas-Houston, *"Stony the Road" to Change: Black Mississippians and the Culture of Social Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 30, 136.

¹⁶ *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*, M432, Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860*, M653, Records of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

early white settlers, who largely hailed from Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia, benefited from cheap land. During the land rush that followed the Chickasaw cession, Hugh Craft, for example, became a land agent based in Holly Springs and made tremendous profits.¹⁸ Craft had accumulated \$10,400 of real estate by 1850 and \$55,000 by 1860, as well as a personal estate valued at \$12,000 in 1860, in addition to his wife's personal estate value of \$7,500. Craft's children became land agents, lawyers, or retail merchants. Martha Craft, the oldest daughter of Hugh and Mary Craft, married James Fort, an attorney from Milledgeville, Georgia, in 1845. Fort joined his father-in-law Hugh Craft as a land agent in Mississippi, and had permanently moved his family to Holly Springs by 1848.¹⁹

Not every white family who settled in North Mississippi entered the planter class, but they still participated in the larger system of slavery. Middling enslavers with small farms sometimes rose to the planter classes through marriage or their own ambition and business acumen, and they played important roles in the early settlement of North Mississippi by supplying larger plantations with food and sometimes growing cotton. Throughout the U.S.

¹⁸ Born in Maryland around 1800, Hugh Craft worked as a dry goods merchant with the Milledgeville, Georgia-based firm Craft and Fort. He made frequent buying trips between New York and Georgia. After marrying in 1820, Craft and Mary Elizabeth Pitts of Connecticut had at least nine children: Edwin Curtis (b. 1820; d. 1823), Elizabeth (b. & d. 1822), Henry (b. 1822), Martha (b. 1826), Caroline S. (b. 1833), Addison (b. 1835), Heber (b. 1837), Stella (b. 1839), and Helen (b. 1847). See Finding Aid for Craft-Fort Family Papers, 1820-1878, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, <http://opac2.mdah.state.ms.us/manuscripts/z1782.html> (accessed December 18, 2018).

¹⁹ Henry Craft became a lawyer and a land agent with his father. Addison Craft also became a land agent. Heber Craft owned a bookstore in Holly Springs. Helen Craft married W. A. Anderson, a headmaster of Chalmers Institute in Holly Springs and later at the Holly Springs Public School that was built in 1879. See Finding Aid for Craft-Fort Family Papers, 1820-1878, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, <http://opac2.mdah.state.ms.us/manuscripts/z1782.html> (accessed December 18, 2018).

more generally, small farmers produced near one-third of all cotton with around forty percent of all enslaved people.²⁰ In Lafayette County, for example, middling enslavers owned between one and nineteen slaves, and comprised about eighty-seven percent of all enslavers. Usually younger than larger enslavers, middling enslavers often aspired to join the planter class. Lucindy Hall Shaw, a woman enslaved in Lafayette County, recalled how her final owners Reuben Hall and his wife Sarah Humphries aspired to the status of the planter class: “dey didn’t have but 4 slaves an’ were consider’d ‘strainers’ – dey tried to be rich an’ class demselves wid de rich white folks.”²¹ Poor, landless white people, meanwhile, held a significant position in the economic and political landscape of North Mississippi. According to historian Charles C. Bolton, they threatened white enslavers’ ideal of white independence and black dependence. In the end, however, poor white people failed to form cohesive political alliances among themselves and with enslaved people due to white supremacy, a lack of education and mobility, and the strength of ties rooted in kin and religion.²²

Many of the white settlers who entered North Mississippi used their financial resources to build religious institutions. According to historian George M. Marsden, American Protestants assumed that their version of Christianity formed the “only basis for a healthy civilization.”²³ The Second Great Awakening during the early nineteenth century strengthened Baptist,

²⁰ Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 165.

²¹ Lucindy Hall Shaw, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 10S, edited by George P. Rawick (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1972-79), 1925.

²² Charles C. Bolton, *Poor Whites of the Antebellum South: Tenants and Laborers in Central North Carolina and Northeast Mississippi* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 8-10.

²³ George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, new ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 12.

Methodist, and Presbyterian denominations.²⁴ Evangelicalism, with its roots in Enlightenment and Common Sense philosophy and its scientific approach to morality and reality, appealed to many Americans. Evangelicals, especially Methodists and many Baptists, believed that an all-knowing and benevolent Creator governed the universe through a rational system of laws; the bible, as the highest source of authority, revealed moral law; all people, as moral agents capable of free choice, had the capacity to know Godly truth, understand the bible, and directly know the world; and people were born sinners, but with an intellect that suffered only “slight astigmatism.” In general, the Second Great Awakening introduced emotional intensity, an individual and a personal commitment to God, and a standard of holy living, or piety into American religious life.²⁵

Unlike denominations that relied upon emotionalism and stressed the practical experience of Christian faith like the Methodists, Calvinists, including many Presbyterians, placed importance on order, intellect, correct doctrine, education, and cognition in faith. In contrast to Common Sense philosophy, strict Calvinism incorporated notions of depravity and determinism, and reflected a belief that all humans were born sinful and blinded by the fall from innocence. During the nineteenth century in the “New School,” Jonathan Edwards provided the model for Calvinist denominations like the Congregationalists and the Presbyterians, and “combined educational and doctrinal emphases with intense emotion.”²⁶ Calvinists, including many Presbyterians, believed that God’s hand through the creation of religious institutions with an

²⁴ John B. Boles, “Evangelical Protestantism in the Old South: From Religious Dissent to Cultural Dominance,” in *Religion in the Old South*, ed. Charles Reagan Wilson (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1985), 24.

²⁵ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 14-16.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 14, 16, 44-45.

educational mission, not just human ingenuity alone, could progress society.²⁷

During the Second Great Awakening, Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians built successful religious institutions throughout older and newer southern states. Historian John B. Boles sees the blending of Calvinism with Arminianism, along with associated denominational particularities, as “epicycles rotating around a circumference containing the general belief in the role of Providence, repentance, and prayer.”²⁸ While Baptists rejected the notion of a formally-educated and salaried clergy, Methodists employed circuit preachers who traveled the countryside and preached “on a regular schedule at specified locations.” Unlike Baptists and Methodists, Presbyterians relied upon a long tradition of ministers with formal educations, which made expansion in the South more difficult and ultimately less fruitful in comparison to Baptists and Methodists. Social gatherings provided the mechanism for the spread of Baptist and Methodist churches. To gain converts during the decades after the Great Revival, Methodists relied upon emotional camp meetings, which Baptists and Presbyterians often characterized as “too emotional.”²⁹

By the 1830s, southern Protestants centered their beliefs on individual salvation and the “spiritual purity of the individual congregation—maintained through strict church discipline.” Because individual converts shared strong bonds with their own local congregations, churches gained moral authority as arbiters of and spaces for discipline and piety. Converts stressed an overarching concern for the morality of their individual congregations, which meant a rejection

²⁷ John B. Boles, *The Great Revival: Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996 [1972]), 132, 135-136.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, xvi.

²⁹ Boles, “Evangelical Protestantism in the Old South,” 16-17, 25.

of worldliness. Instead of reforming society as a whole, many southern Protestants emphasized the individual conversion of the sinners in their midst. Contrary to northern revivalism which stressed “social perfectionism,” southern Protestantism, regardless of denomination, took a local and individualistic approach to reforming sin, the overall cause for social problems.³⁰

To facilitate expansion during the 1830s through the late 1850s, proslavery white southerners in Protestant denominations turned to the Bible to justify racial slavery and white supremacy. The biblical story of Ham in Genesis provided one of the most widespread and engrained religious justifications for racial slavery by the antebellum era. For supporters of the Hamitic myth, Noah represented the first planter patriarch, while his sons stood for the different races of America, with Ham as black, Japheth as white, and Shem as red. Noah cursed the black children of Ham into slavery, and prophesied the movement of white people into the tents of “red people,” or Native Americans.³¹ While the story of Ham provided white southerners with a scriptural justification for equating blackness with enslavement, it also accepted and resolved the conflict between the biblical version of a single human creation and the existence of different racial “species.”

The Hamitic myth reinforced the institution of slavery as a substitute for death and resolved the contradiction between enslaved people’s humanity and their existence in perpetual servitude. White Americans’ proslavery interpretations of Genesis, therefore, reinforced order.³²

³⁰ Ibid., 27-29.

³¹ Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Honor and Slavery: Lies, Duels, Noses, Masks, Dressing as a Woman, Gifts, Strangers, Humanitarianism, Death, Slave Rebellions, the Proslavery Argument, Baseball, Hunting, and Gambling in the Old South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 110-111.

³² Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah’s Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery*

Proslavery Christians could always use the Ham story in place of other Biblical texts, according to religious studies scholar Stephen R. Haynes. They “considered Ham’s negritude to be as self-evident—as given—as Noah’s identity as the first planter patriarch or the Bible’s applicability to American society.”³³ The application of Genesis to African enslavement, furthermore, finds roots in centuries of racial stereotyping, scriptural interpretation, and servitude dating back to the medieval period. Within the context of transatlantic and American slavery, religious studies scholars have yet to pinpoint an exact date for when European-descended peoples linked Genesis to racial enslavement. A racial understanding of Genesis had, however, become more culturally engrained among white Americans by the antebellum era, even though it had originated during Europeans’ exploration of the Western Hemisphere and capture of African peoples during the seventeenth century.³⁴

(New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 8-10. In his discussion of the proslavery tropes of honor and order, religious scholar Stephen R. Haynes builds on the work of historians Bertram Wyatt-Brown and John W. Blassingame. On one hand, because American proslavery arguments hinged on the debasement of enslaved black people and the embodiment of Ham in the dishonorable condition of enslaved black people, readings of Genesis 9 would be understood in the contexts of honor, dishonor, and social death. On the other hand, Blassingame’s two conflicting stereotypes of enslaved people embodied in “harmless Sambo” and “savage Nat” existed in the antebellum mind with a passion for order, which found justification in Genesis 9’s dichotomous discussion of the “mischievous Ham” and the “rebellious Nimrod.” See John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979 [1972]) and Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007 [1982]).

³³ Haynes, *Noah’s Curse*, 8-12.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 11. For more on the Hamitic myth’s origins, see Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550, 1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), especially 17-20. Some scholars deny the Hamitic myth’s importance to proslavery arguments. For example, historian Eugene D. Genovese argues against the pivotal role of Ham’s curse in American proslavery thought, and contends that many Americans defended enslavement as divinely-ordained but did not use the Hamitic myth as a justification for racial enslavement. In his argument that the racial components of the Hamitic myth had become

Antebellum defenses of slavery often began in churches, invoked notions of Christian morality, and always placed enslaved people at the lowest rung of the social hierarchy, but varied in approach.³⁵ Some proslavery thinkers found a divine sanction for a black and white color line. In a review of Josiah Priest's *Bible Defence of Slavery*, a writer commented that the "most conclusive argument" showed a "marked distinction, mental, moral, and physical, between the negro and the white race;--and that this distinction has always been in favor of the latter." In comparison to "white nations," the "tribes, hordes, and nations of aboriginal blacks," no matter the level of civilization by white standards, "in a civilized or savage state," escaped "absolute mental and practical degradation."³⁶ Priest's tract and the review, in effect, portrayed enslavement in the United States as a more civilized existence for African-descended peoples.

Other proslavery writers argued that the divine nature of racial slavery superseded other philosophical questions about its legal and political legitimacy. In 1845, humorist and Methodist minister Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, who later served as president of the University of Mississippi in Oxford from 1849 to 1856, wrote that while white northerners "believe[d] slavery sinful," white southerners "believe[d] it innocent." To settle the two perspectives, according to Longstreet, "the only arbiter... is the Bible" with "honest arguments deduced from the word of God," not "wire-drawn arguments from the laws of nature." Longstreet scorned white northerners' invocation of the Declaration of Independence, "throwing up a breastwork out of the

culturally ingrained, Haynes complicates yet does not fully overturn Genovese's assertion. See Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974 [1972]).

³⁵ Randy J. Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi for the Mississippi Historical Society, 2001), 75-77, 122-123.

³⁶ "Bible Defence of Slavery," *Monroe Democrat*, January, 7, 1852.

long-forsaken rubbish of the Social Contract,” and “bewildering... pursuers in the mazes of metaphysical subtlety” as arguments against the institution of slavery. If white northerners showed white southerners evidence of the Bible’s condemnation of slavery, “the most violent of us will yield readily.”³⁷ Longstreet’s argument, like those of other proslavery white southerners, was self-serving: slavery was a superior and divinely-ordained economic and social institution that deserved the protection of the U.S. government.³⁸

Some white Mississippians linked sectional controversies between slave and free states to slavery as a divine institution. In an 1851 letter to his nephew James McCutchen, Robert Bell, a former Presbyterian missionary to the Chickasaws during the 1820s and 1830s, wrote that the political controversy over “the aggression of the General Government on Southern Rights” had led him to “notice the scriptural authority for Slavery more closely than I ever did before.” Bell argued that God “established [and] confirmed” the institution of slavery “under the Theocratical Government of the Israelites under the Old Testament.” In the New Testament, neither Jesus Christ nor his apostles had “amended” Old Testament justifications for slavery. From Bell’s perspective, the “oppressive laws by which they [enslaved people] are governed, and the improper treatment they may receive contrary to the spirit of the Gospel” constituted “the moral evil attending the case of Slavery.” Satan, “knowing that his time is short,” according to Bell, was “doing all the mischief he can, by raising contention [and] strife in both Church and State”

³⁷ Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, *Letters on the Epistle of Paul to Philemon, or the Connection of Apostolic Christianity with Slavery* (Charleston: B. Jenkins, 1845), 7. See also John Donald Wade, *Augustus Baldwin Longstreet: A Study in the Development of Culture in the South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1969), 282.

³⁸ Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labor: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 173.

until “the prophecy contained in the first verses of the twentieth chapter of the Revelations are fulfilled.” Before the prophecy’s fulfillment, however, people would see an “increased exertion, (or death struggle) on the part of the devil and his agents in the Church [and] State, against that Almighty Energy, and submissive concurrence of the instrumentality of the Church through, or by which this Glorious event will be accomplished.”³⁹ For Bell, the problem with slavery lay not with the nature of the institution itself, but with the brutal treatment of enslaved people. The conflict between free states and slave states amounted to little more than an intervention from Satan.

Other proslavery Mississippians advocated a utilitarian position on the institution of slavery. One editorial remarked that southern white people had to “evince more of the ‘sheer devotion’ to slavery if they mean successfully to defend it against hostile influences.” To preserve the institution of slavery and “equality under this Government,” white southerners would need to “quit borrowing and adopting the opinions of anti-slavery communities.” They would have to defend slavery as the “greatest good of the greatest number”: “Facts are abundant to show that the separate existence of the black race does not conduce to so great a good.” Unlike free states, the “greatest good of the greatest number” for free populations of black people in slave states had not been “attained in as high a degree.”⁴⁰ The utilitarian approach to proslavery argumentation reflected a commitment to white supremacy and provided a veneer of white equality in spite of class differences.

Religious white North Mississippians may have encountered proslavery arguments in the

³⁹ Letter from Robert Bell to James McCutchen, May 14, 1851, Box 3, McCutchen Family Papers, 1818-1958, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

⁴⁰ “Southern Slavery,” *Monroe Democrat*, April 9, 1851.

churches they built during the 1840s and 1850s. As cultural and social centers, North Mississippi churches housed schools and hosted annual revivals, usually held in August after the laying of crops. Church services served as major weekly events with singing and preaching on Sundays. During the week, many preachers taught in schools and became known for producing literary work.⁴¹ According to the 1850 census, Monroe County boasted a total of twenty recorded churches, including eleven Methodist, seven Baptist, and two Presbyterian churches. During the 1850s, Monroe County saw the establishment of a Christian Church, an Episcopal Church, and a Missionary Baptist Church, as well as three Primitive Baptist, three Methodist, two Presbyterian, and two Baptist churches.⁴² During the antebellum era, most Monroe County churchgoers were Methodists, followed by Missionary Baptists, while Primitive Baptists, Free Will Baptists, and Presbyterians numbered less than two hundred, with even fewer attendants at Christian and Episcopal churches. Methodist churches had the closest proximity to Monroe County inhabitants, with churches within at least four miles of every person. Most white people of the business, planter, and professional classes claimed Methodist membership. For Monroe County in particular, the presence of Methodist Bishop Robert Paine after 1846 and the holding of the Methodist annual conference in 1848 provided Methodism with great sway among residents.⁴³ In Marshall County, residents participated in a vibrant religious culture, with fifty-six churches standing by 1860, including Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Episcopal,

⁴¹ Charles Granville Hamilton, "Monroe County Churches to 1876," *Journal of Monroe County History* 3 (1977): 45.

⁴² *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*, M432; Hamilton, "Monroe County Churches to 1876," 41, 47-48.

⁴³ Hamilton, "Monroe County Churches to 1876," 42, 44.

Presbyterian Cumberland, Union, and Roman Catholic churches.⁴⁴

The arrangement of distinctive built environments in North Mississippi reflected the order that enslavers sought to impose on the landscape. The arrangement and character of buildings, overall, provided a visual reference for antebellum order, efficiency, and hierarchy throughout North Mississippi. In Holly Springs, cottages with white-painted surfaces and green blinds “delight[ed] the eye in every direction” and flower gardens gave an “additional charm to the sentiment of the home.” Domestic life showed “encouraging signs” of advancement, with people paying greater attention to “the minor arts of living, keeping better houses, and having far more sensible modes of cooking” along with possessing “more books and periodicals than formerly.” The ordering of the landscape, therefore, promoted “marked progress” among white settlers both inside and outside of dwellings.⁴⁵

Cheap land from the Chickasaw cession offered what white settlers saw as a blank canvas on which they could create new fortunes. Some antebellum homes embodied the religious ideals of the families who inhabited them. Hugh Craft built a large house for his family in Holly Springs in 1851. By antebellum standards and despite their ownership of slaves, the Craft home reflected little of the grandiosity of homes associated with the cotton boom. Present-day local

⁴⁴ *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860*, M653. One Marshall County newspaper published an article that compared slaveholding in Christian denominations: “By calculations based upon the United States census and statistic of religious bodies, it is estimated that the Methodist in the United States own 219,563 slaves; Presbyterians (old and new school) 77,000; Baptist 115,000; Campbellites 101,000; Episcopalians 88,000; other Protestants 50,000—making a total of 650,563 slaves owned by ministers and members of Protestant churches in the United States. At \$400 for each slave, this makes a property fund of \$570,225,200 owned by the American Protestant church.” See “Slaves Owned By Christians,” *Mississippi Palladium*, September 26, 1851.

⁴⁵ “Improvements of the South,” *Marshall Democrat*, December 8, 1855.

observers attribute Hugh Craft's comparative modesty to his Presbyterian background. Family letters suggest Hugh Craft's austere worldview and a lifestyle that ran against pretension and flamboyance. In a letter to Elizabeth Craft, C. Lewis related that "if you & Mr. Craft was only here & a good Presbyterian preacher we would be satisfied. Say to Mr. Craft [that] Mr. Marks [a Presbyterian] will not do for Holly Springs." Members of one church in Macon, Georgia had "dancing parties at their houses—what is this world coming to?" Lewis's openness about religious practices suggests the Craft family's comfort with the Presbyterian humility and simplicity.⁴⁶

Order and control visualized a landscape of bondage that Mississippi state law increasingly articulated and upheld during the 1840s and 1850s, while the arrangement, dimensions, and structure of enslaved people's houses advanced the prerogatives of enslavers. In 1842, the Mississippi legislature passed a statute that required slaveholders to enlist an overseer or other white patroller to monitor enslaved people if they were more than a mile from the residence.⁴⁷ After the 1830s, enslavers increased the size of enslaved people's dwellings to improve quality, mitigate overcrowding, and create a healthier environment. Constructed out of rough-hewn logs or sturdy bricks with plaster on the inside, enslaved people's houses often measured between sixteen and eighteen feet long and fourteen to sixteen feet wide with rectangular rooms.⁴⁸ Efficiency most often characterized the proximity of enslaved people's houses in relation to the big house.

⁴⁶ Letter from C. Lewis to Elizabeth Craft, February 18, 1845, Craft/Fort Family Letters.

⁴⁷ Kaye, *Joining Places*, 149-150.

⁴⁸ Michael Strutt, "Slave Housing in Antebellum Tennessee," in *Cabin, Quarter, Plantation: Architecture and Landscapes of North American Slavery*, ed. Clifton Ellis and Rebecca Ginsburg (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 229.

Within a sociolegal context of order and control, enslavers adapted old building types, developed new forms of architecture, and arranged the landscape for the purpose of employing architecture to subjugate human chattel.⁴⁹ Born in Virginia, Robert Burrell Alexander initially settled near Columbia, Tennessee, but severe tornadoes discouraged his endeavors. Alexander decided to try his fortune in North Mississippi and moved with his father John E. Alexander to what became Marshall County. In 1836, Alexander purchased Happy Hill Plantation. Like many other early settlers, Alexander built a double-log cabin around which he constructed the rest of his thirteen-room house. According to a later account, “the house crown[ed] a hill that command[ed] a view of Holly Springs a mile away as the crow flies.” Alexander planted gardens, orchards, and nut bearing trees, dammed a spring, and constructed a fish pond in the forest: “Grape arbors and seats around the banks added to the comfort and pleasure of family and visitors.”⁵⁰ Happy Hill’s layout consisted of a large assembly of buildings, including the main house, kitchen, smoke house, stables, ice house, cotton gin, mule barn, and slave quarters. The slave quarters “occupied quite a space... properly distant from the house.”⁵¹

While some enslavers like Alexander tried to conceal or mask enslaved people’s houses, out of sight from the big house, other enslavers positioned enslaved people’s houses in groups within sight of the big house or a white overseer for easier surveillance. The arrangement of slave houses on landscapes, including towns, small farms, and plantations, followed no

⁴⁹ Clifton Ellis and Rebecca Ginsburg, “Introduction,” in *Cabin, Quarter, Plantation*, 3, 6.

⁵⁰ John M. Mickle, “Alexander Home One of Earliest Pioneers,” November 20, 1930, McAlexander/Marshall County Collection, Department of Archives and Special Collections, J.D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi.

⁵¹ “Scene of Hospitality,” author and date unknown, McAlexander/Marshall County Collection.

overarching rule. Some enslavers sought close proximity to enslaved domestics and built homes close to the Big House, often within twenty to one hundred feet. Within enslavers' homes, the existence of enslaved people's spaces attests to the nature of antebellum race relations. As anthropologist John Michael Vlach has argued, urban slaveholders sometimes desired greater access to enslaved domestics and housed enslaved people in their homes.⁵² One editorial observed that instead of "rude, misshapen piles of logs, without any reference either to safety or security," buildings began to reflect "neatness and utility." Along with fenced and cleared fields, the landscape boasted fewer "miserable eye sores of dead trees" that "spoil[ed] the impression of the best plantations."⁵³ As enslavers "grew more confident in their control of the landscape," according to historic preservationist Michael Strutt, "they saw less need to arrange slave housing with security in mind" and kept "bondspople close and available for work at any hour."⁵⁴

Enslaved people understood built environments differently than white enslavers and engaged in illicit activities often "under the very noses of white owners, police, and other authorities."⁵⁵ Former Marshall County bonded man George Washington Albright understood that enslavers "aimed to keep us in darkness" about "what was going on outside our plantations."⁵⁶ Slave patrollers exacted the orders of enslavers through their right to whip enslaved people and to search quarters for disorderly conduct and unlawful assembly. Belle Caruthers, a formerly enslaved woman from Marshall County, recollected that patrollers

⁵² Strutt, "Slave Housing in Antebellum Tennessee," 226, 229; See John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

⁵³ "Improvements of the South," *Marshall Democrat*, December 8, 1855.

⁵⁴ Strutt, "Slave Housing in Antebellum Tennessee," 228.

⁵⁵ Ellis and Ginsburg, "Introduction," 6.

⁵⁶ George Washington Albright, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 06S, 8.

“marched about the country and whenever they found a nigger belonging to one man on another man’s plantation, they punished him hard.”⁵⁷ The inability of enslavers to fully control the movements of enslaved people within controlled environments points to the fundamental instability of the society they tried to impose on the landscape.

Within built environments, white enslavers created households organized to govern and enact the slave society they sought to create in North Mississippi. White southerners articulated their worldview through the discourse of family, and believed in a Protestant Christian society represented through the perfected family. The image of the family symbolized ideal notions of love and intimacy as well as hierarchy within the household. Familial bonds and hierarchical arrangements in the household affirmed, institutionalized, and sacralized domestic dependencies, obligations, and expectations.⁵⁸

Familial metaphors pointed to the power of white male enslavers as household heads at the top of a social hierarchy that positioned them as masters over women, children, and enslaved people. White Southerners elevated the household to paramount importance and imbued it with moral and religious legitimacy in books, pamphlets, and speeches.⁵⁹ As models of southern gentility, white fathers oversaw the household as one conforming to Protestant ideals of order. Despite the father’s position of authority, the household’s operation depended on the fulfillment and reciprocation of obligations to other family members. White North Mississippians believed that they lived in a society prone to disorder, so a hierarchy built upon immovable rules, expectations, and obligations mitigated conflict and reflected the perfection of Christian society.

⁵⁷ Belle G.M. Caruthers, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 07S, 364.

⁵⁸ McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 136, 171-172.

⁵⁹ Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 98-99, 101.

The household, in effect, needed constant management and policing. At the same time, family and household structure formed the locus of antebellum morality and socialization, and provided the apparatus through which white children learned to operate within the structures of the church and the state. Elite white North Mississippi families attempted to rear pious sons and daughters who would, in turn, teach their own children how to build and manage a household and a society based on a hierarchy ordained by religion. The family model, thus, attached religious rhetoric to social hierarchy and economic imperatives.

Household heads who failed to properly police their own behavior or the actions of their dependents often experienced church discipline. To mitigate the effects of disorder, churches in North Mississippi monitored and governed the private lives of their congregants. Methodist churches in Monroe County required a probationary year-long disciplinary period for new members.⁶⁰ New Hope Primitive Baptist Church in Monroe County regularly tried its members on charges of drunkenness, fighting, lying, and fiddling but almost always allowed them to return upon admission of guilt and acknowledgement of sin. An emphasis on honesty and morality extended to congregants' business affairs. In one trial, New Hope found two members guilty of wetting cotton before shipment to Mobile to make the product weigh more.⁶¹ Despite the ideal of a father's mastery over his own household, religious institutions intervened when fathers appeared to waver from their duties.

The head of the household held the ultimate responsibility for the salvation of the other

⁶⁰ Hamilton, "Monroe County Churches to 1876," 42.

⁶¹ New Hope Primitive Baptist Church governed its members with the "Abstract of Principles and Rules of Decorum," which set forth guidelines for morality and church attendance. Fairybelle Tubb Hathcock, "New Hope Primitive Baptist Church," *Journal of Monroe County History* 2 (1975-1976): 43.

household members' souls.⁶² Hope Hull Lenoir gave religious and spiritual advice to his son William Thomas Lenoir and daughter-in-law Mary Elizabeth Blanchard of Monroe County. While his children had been "planning for the body," Hope Hull Lenoir concerned himself with their salvation: "Are you striving to make your calling and election?... Do you desire above all things to have the Love of dwelling in you ask in faith that your Joy may be full?" Lenoir needed assurance that he would see his children in the afterlife: "Do not forget My Dear Son the promise made to your Mother in the Hour of Death to meet her in Heaven." With strong Christian faith, Hope Hull Lenoir hoped his children would "ask that you may receive, seek that you may find, knock, and the door of Mercy will be opening to you." Hope Hull Lenoir concluded with a blessing: "May God bless you with all the graces of his Holy Spirit guide by his council and save you in Heaven is the continual prayer of your father."⁶³ The Lenoir family understood the household as a divine institution that sacralized earthly social obligations and prepared dependents for a Christian afterlife.

Many elite white southern men drew upon centuries-old notions of Anglo respectability and aristocratic cavaliers to articulate ideals of gentility that emphasized honor and piety.⁶⁴ After the 1830s, white southern men who possessed Christian gentility involved themselves in performing both formal and informal good works, including charity, as well as kindness toward Southerners of lower social classes, strangers, and less-than-well-liked folk. Pious southern

⁶² Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 101.

⁶³ Letter from H.H. Lenoir to Son and Daughter, May 15, 1856, Folder 1, Box 1, Lenoir Plantation Records, Special Collections Department, Mississippi State University Libraries, Starkville, Mississippi.

⁶⁴ See James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 9-33.

gentlemen constantly prayed for their acquaintances, family, and friends and resigned themselves to God's will. Without a worldview that hinged upon the performance of honor and piety, according to many in the upper ranks of southern society, white southern men possessed neither the character nor the reputation of gentility.⁶⁵ White southern men, in effect, drew upon an imagined past of aristocracy to provide structure in their new home and impose order on new social relations. As a rhetorical tool, notions of gentility amounted to a facade over the brutalities and violence of slavery.

The relationship between white fathers and sons provided the vessel to transmit the ideals of southern gentility. Advising his "dear child" Blanchard Lenoir, in Hot Springs, Arkansas, William Thomas Lenoir believed the Bible would "teach [him] [his] duty to [his] Maker and to [his] fellow man." Blanchard Lenoir's behavior necessitated "moral courage you can bring to bear to avoid the whirl pool of sin and folly by [which] you are surrounded." William Thomas Lenoir constantly prayed that Blanchard Lenoir's soul "be preserved blameless." With "high expectations" of his son, William Thomas Lenoir noted that God would "hold [him] accountable in the great day of accts—when the human family will be called to stand in his presence to [*sic*] each one, the sward of his acts [*sic*] in this world. May you be clothed with the garment of Righteousness in that day."⁶⁶ Relationships between fathers and sons reinforced honor and piety, two ideals that Lenoir urged his son to perform in his daily life.

In addition to performing honorable and pious acts, gentility among white enslavers encompassed an assertion of mastery and managerial benevolence and reflected southern white

⁶⁵ Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 99-108.

⁶⁶ Letter from W.T. Lenoir to Blanchard Lenoir, May 26, 1858, Folder 2, Box 1, Lenoir Plantation Records.

ideals about reputation and status through the accumulation of wealth.⁶⁷ At the same time, these ideals acted as a cover for the brutalities of the institution of slavery. James T. Finley of Marshall County sold and hired enslaved people and wrote to his father that “bad fortune seldom comes single, is an old saying, and with us and your Negroes, it proves a true one at this time.” After having hired out Frank and Jordan, two enslaved men, to a planter outside of Holly Springs, Finley observed that “they seemed to go cheerfully.” Frank and Jordan, however, ran away after four days. The man who hired the two “spent a good deal of time in hunting about town and the neighborhood,” and Finley joined in searching as far as Memphis. After four weeks and the offer of reward for capture, Finley received an offer of about \$1,600 in promissory notes for Frank and Jordan from a speculator who “trad[ed] in any and every thing.” When Finley engaged in a serious discussion about the possibility of selling Frank and Jordan, the speculator backed out. Two other men then offered \$700 with “in hand Tennessee money... \$1,400 in all.” After speaking with others around the community, Finley learned that the speculators had conducted similar deals: “We learn[ed] they got them by bribing several negroes who succeed[ed] in getting them are being harbored by other negroes and probably white persons too.” Although Finley understood that he had been deceived, he also realized that Frank “had become notorious for his rascality” and would not have commanded an otherwise better price. “Several negroes were sold the other day for Union Bank Paper (which is not as good as Tennessee Paper by 5-10 percent) from \$600 to \$840,” but “I believe that Frank would not have brought simply \$600” and “several said they would not give [up to \$300] for [hiring Frank].”

⁶⁷ Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 103.

Since the decline of cotton in 1837, Finley noted that “negroes have fallen [in price] very much” and worried about investing money in land.⁶⁸ Finley’s letter to his father demonstrated his reasoning of financial choices and his ability to replicate his family’s status in the next generation.⁶⁹

To protect their reputations, enslavers demonstrated their expertise in the market and articulated an “imagined necessity” for enslaved labor by choosing enslaved people who would yield the greatest financial gain through labor or reproduction or further sale.⁷⁰ Finley often saw varying degrees of success in the domestic slave trade and encountered trouble in selling an enslaved family that included Simon, Ibbey, and Billy. According to Finley, “Simon was not considered saleable” and “Ibbey’s barrenness was a standing objection to her.” In fifty attempts to sell the family, each of which “always met frowns,” Finley refused an offer of \$1,128.⁷¹ Despite the best interests of his estate to procure money, Finley could not “sell the negroes for cash.” Unable to attract “an offer in cash for the whole [enslaved] family nor indeed separately for the whole,” Finley received only one cash offer, which totaled \$500, from a Methodist preacher for Simon. The preacher thought that “Simon would suit him from the character of gave of him.” Yet in an effort to procure the \$500, Finley “lied devilishly,” an act for “which I hope to be pardoned,” and claimed that he “was not then aware [Simon] was so great a rascal.” Although Finley “hardly [thought] Simon could be rated at \$500 in the sale,” he “preferred

⁶⁸ Letter from John T. Finley to Father, February 8, 1840, Folder 1, Box 19, Finley-Davidson Letters, McAlexander/Marshall County Collection.

⁶⁹ Johnson, *Soul by Soul*, 82-84

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 81-88.

⁷¹ Letter from John T. Finley to James D. Davidson, February 4, 1845, Folder 1, Box 19, Finley-Davidson Letters, McAlexander/Marshall County Collection.

letting [James D. Davidson] know more about the character of the men and their situation” to “enable or be some guide” in pricing enslaved people in Virginia, where Davidson might find better negotiating terms.⁷² Such situations with economic stakes like trading enslaved families and lying to ministers exposed gentility as a mere performance of elite status.

White southern enslavers legitimated their authority through familial language and domestic metaphors, but they just as often used violence to maintain order. According to historian Ira Berlin, annual Christmas gifting served as an elaboration of a “paternal ideal” among enslavers.⁷³ Robert Burrell Alexander, for example, furnished Christmas flour for enslaved people on Happy Hills Plantation: “I left for my plantation after sunset and staid all night, gave my negroes their flour for Christmas next morning.”⁷⁴ During the holiday, enslaved people often tended to their allotments. Alexander recounted in his account book that he “set the negroes to clean up their land and taking Christmas.”⁷⁵ As assaults against slavery grew stronger towards the middle of the nineteenth century, paternalistic metaphors grew increasingly important, even as enslavers continued to engage in gratuitous violence against enslaved people. Although Alexander gifted Christmas flour, he also recorded the regular whippings he performed on Happy Hills Plantation. On July 18, 1860, for example, Alexander “went [to his] plantations and found every thing in trouble” and whipped and strapped four enslaved men, Grant, Tivo,

⁷² Letter from John T. Finley to James D. Davidson, March 31, 1845, Folder 1, Box 19, Finley-Davidson Letters, McAlexander/Marshall County Collection.

⁷³ Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 204.

⁷⁴ Alexander Account Book, December 22, 1860, Folder 3, Box 8, McAlexander/Marshall County Collection.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, January 30, 1861.

Billy, and Scott.⁷⁶ Generosity and violence often co-existed among white enslavers like Alexander.

White men and women occupied different yet complementary roles according to religious and domestic dictates. For instance, husbands made possible their wives' duties in domestic spaces through the exercise of restrained authority, love, protection, and household governance. Mothers symbolized morality, epitomized in the domestic ideal.⁷⁷ Mary Lenoir of Monroe County, for example, advised her son William Smith Lenoir, Sr. to pray often: "I hope my dear child you do not forget to look to your Heavenly Father to take you in his keeping... Do not be ashamed of him and he has declared he will not be ashamed of you. I have given you to the Lord. Oh that you may walk in the way of holiness." She advised W.S. Lenoir to get a Bible and read it during the day as "it is the best of books." Mary Lenoir's "constant prayer" would help William. Having heard from an instructor that W.S. Lenoir had been "a good boy," Mary Lenoir advised her son to "continue to merit his approbation," and "be polite to all with whom you [meet]" and "make no friends of bad boys" as "birds of a feather flock together."⁷⁸ As arbiters of mental discipline and moral improvement, southern women like Mary Lenoir gained strength and superiority.

Women's souls were to be as ordered as the households and environments around them. For Emma Frances Finley, the presence of vice and "worldly cares" reflected disorder within an individual's soul, or his or her "Soul House." The Finley family, including Emma Finley's

⁷⁶ Ibid, July 18, 1860.

⁷⁷ Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 112-113, 121.

⁷⁸ Letter from M.L. to W.S. Lenoir, November 11, 1858, Folder 2, Box 1, Lenoir Plantation Records.

parents, John Tate Finley, a Whig politician and the Marshall County Representative to the Mississippi legislature, and his wife Mary Jane Greenlee Finley, both from Virginia, lived at Woodland plantation, located northeast of Holly Springs, while Mary Jane Finley's sister Martha Trimble Greenlee Davis lived with her husband at nearby Strawberry Plains plantation. In her Sunday, October 24, 1858 diary entry, Finley wrote that "unfavorable" weather prevented her family's attendance at Holly Springs's First Presbyterian Church. Although "holy readings and quiet conversation" would "keep the day holy," Finley remarked that "there will come to the thoughts much that is forbidden." Only with "strength from the Omnipotent" could an individual "prevent the entrance of worldly cares [and] pleasures." Within one's "Soul House," one was "found too often occupying those rooms which afford only earthly pleasures—low, back rooms which we fix up, gorgeously decorate, and try to enjoy." The rooms that "furnish the real happiness are closed, or but seldom entered, [and] are covered with dust [and] cobwebs [that] our neglectful hands have allowed to gather." Few individuals possessed a "fair, still, house, well kept, which gentle thoughts had swept, and holy prayers kept clean." An unclean "Soul House" required the presence of God, or "the Purifier" and "the Refiner," to "come [and] strip each room... wash off the stains [and] clear the atmosphere [and] let in bright sunshine." For an individual to make his or her "mansion... one of the beauty [and] love [and] joy [and] praise... fit for Him who is to reign Lord of the mansion of the soul forever," he or she would need to destroy "much we have held dear" as "it could not withstand the Refiner's fire."⁷⁹ To Finley, external order depended on the policing of her internal conflict.

⁷⁹ Robert Milton Winter, ed., *Our Pen is Time: The Diary of Emma Finley* (Lafayette: Berryhill Press, 1999), 33.

Women's fashions conformed to expectations of order and thrift. Both white men and white women "feared that too much indulgence in the life of cosmopolitan fashion could endanger things they valued more than a new dress." White women possessed little access to ready-made clothing, and white men preferred to confine white women to domestic spaces in which they could contribute to the independence of the household economy through activities like sewing.⁸⁰ When white women avoided the expensive indulgences of fashion, they also applied to their lives the religious notions of female obligation within the household's hierarchy and humility in their outward appearance. One editorial reflected the notion that education would teach white women how to contribute to the household's economic independence and advised that every woman become her own dressmaker: "She should be instructed in the anatomy and physiology of her system, and be perfectly able to give a correct outline of a classical figure and its appropriate dress, on the black board." After learning her own measurements, women should "be instructed to cut her own dresses in a simple and elegant manner, and adapt them to her figure so that not the least pressure should exist on any part of her person." The inability to dress according to the climate demands of northeastern Mississippi had been "one of the principal causes of early decay in our country women."⁸¹ Clothing reflected Christian ideals more than practicality.

Due to early nineteenth-century assumptions that conflated affectionate and emotional behavior with femininity, many white Southerners believed that white women occupied the most

⁸⁰ Ted Ownby, *American Dreams in Mississippi: Consumers, Poverty, and Culture, 1830-1998* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 25-30.

⁸¹ "Every Woman Her Own Dressmaker," *Monroe Democrat*, May 8, 1850.

pious spaces in the antebellum social hierarchy.⁸² As one Monroe County editorial stated about the role of women in domestic spaces, “I have heard many women complaining of their husbands’ neglect of the home. A spoonful of honey will keep more bees in the hive than will ten of vinegar.”⁸³ During the antebellum period, the spread of religious institutions altered notions of the white family and gender roles among many white Southerners, even as religious ideals failed markedly to change individuals’ behavior.⁸⁴ One Monroe County editorial satirized the gender roles of white men and women. According to the writer, on one hand, men represented

a marvelous and matchless model of mechanism; a mutable mass of mirth and misanthropy; merry midst mourning, mourning midst mirth. Man mars his mundane mission by mixing in monstrous mummeries, mindless of the meek monitions of his mighty master, madly misprising his mild and moderate mandates mid the manifold manifestations of the multiplied mercies meted out by his maker. Muse, then, misguiding mortals, on the magnitude of thy misdemeanors; mind not the meretricious machinations of malevolent ministers, but merit the mead of a merciful Messiah.

On the other hand, women were those

who whilome, was weak, was wrought upon by the wheedling words of the wily one, since when the world weeps o’er its wickedness. Wanting woman, the world were a waste, and we wending our weary way through its wilderness, would wait out wailings to the winds and the waves. Woman, without thy winsome ways, wealth were worthless, a Will o’the Wisp. The witchery waving of the wizard’s wand; witness thy weariless watchings o’er the wounded, and through weal or woe. Wanton waddlers on the wane, writhing under wrinkles, may wage thee warfare, but the wise welcome and worship thee.⁸⁵

The continual reassertion of the white Southerners’ domestic ideal mirrored the insecurity of the antebellum social hierarchy and its shaky foundations in the institution of slavery. Although

⁸² Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 112-113.

⁸³ *Monroe Democrat*, February 19, 1851.

⁸⁴ Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 97, 118.

⁸⁵ “Man and Woman,” *Monroe Democrat*, March 12, 1851.

many white Southerners attempted to naturalize gender roles through the domestic ideal, constant reminders about proper behavior suggested the imminence of debauchery or wickedness, possibly through the close proximity of disorderly forces like enslaved people on plantations and within homes.

Elite white North Mississippi families encouraged the education of their children and understood that schooling provided an important means of solidifying marital choices and maintaining wealth accumulated via the enslavement of black people.⁸⁶ Letters exchanged between family members articulated expectations about morality and social class, but also demonstrated affection. The Craft family of Holly Springs recognized the importance of education. In a letter to his sister Martha Craft, Henry Craft wrote “if you come out here you and I can set up a male and female school. Pa thinks you would make a good school mistress.”⁸⁷ Many white Southerners understood that education spurred intellectual development: “The infancy of mind, like the infancy of body, is a state of dependent weakness.” Early education would make individuals “capable of independent action” and secure “a necessary passport to respectability.” With encouragement to cultivate their intellectual capacities, individuals also fulfilled a moral duty: “Between intelligence and virtue, there exists a most happy congeniality—handmaids and helpmates, they act in unison, each enhancing the power of the other and together conferring the richest blessings on all with whom they dwell.”⁸⁸ One observer

⁸⁶ For more on relationships between elite parents and children, see Jane Turner Censer, *North Carolina Planters and Their Children, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984).

⁸⁷ Letter from Henry Craft and Elizabeth Craft to Martha Craft, November 23, 1840, Craft/Fort Family Letters.

⁸⁸ “Influence of Education,” *Mississippi Palladium*, December 26, 1851.

argued that “mental perfection should be the great aim of life,” a feat accomplished through contemplation of “perfect objects” in both the “material and Spiritual universe.” In “surround[ing] [them]selves with the best objects, amiable feelings, pleasant words, and good offices,” individuals perfected their minds, through which thoughts became “the chisels which carve the statuary of [their] souls.”⁸⁹ Education would, in effect, use intellectual development to regenerate and lift the soul from depravity.

From the perspective of many white Mississippians, the establishment of educational institutions served not only moral purposes and perfected the mind but also represented the fulfillment of America’s constitutional promises. Education served as “the chief support of our American constitution, and its exalted privileges.”⁹⁰ Schools stood “like little mental towers,” which would cultivate a “common mind” and “ennoble mankind.” To further fulfill education’s promises for the future, schools “must be multiplied by the hundreds and by thousands.” The writer advised “the American patriot” to “educate your boys; educate your girls.”⁹¹ According to scholar Robin Blackburn, the United States Constitution “entrenched the rights of slave-holders” and “made no promises to slaves.”⁹² Because the Constitution gave enslaved people no protections, their education and intellectual capacities stood in opposition to the legal privileges of white enslavers, as well as their relationship to the federal government.

Competitive markets and enslaved labor made possible the construction of esteemed educational institutions. During the 1820s and 1830s, as Protestant denominations expanded

⁸⁹ “Perfection of the Mind,” *Marshall Democrat*, December 15, 1855.

⁹⁰ “Education,” *Marshall County Republican and Free Trade Advocate*, September 15, 1838.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Blackburn, *The American Crucible*, 139, 168.

across the Old Southwest, religious white Southerners, particularly Presbyterians, established institutions that allowed them to differentiate themselves from other religious bodies and enhance and secure social power. Religious white Southerners established schools where students could receive a basic education in ancient languages, English grammar, and mathematics to strengthen bonds among ministers, professionalize leadership, and educate children. By the 1840s, according to historian Donald G. Mathews, religious denominations controlled most precollege education in the South.⁹³ Aberdeen Male Academy reflected the goal of teaching children ancient languages, English, and mathematics, and sought to instill young boys with “thorough, finished and practical” instruction to meet the “demands of enlightened public sentiment.” A school of “high character” could not be established when

the patronage of the community is bestowed upon individuals, who without a knowledge of their own language, undertake to ‘*teach cheap*’ and by their *ignorance and awkwardness*, beget in the child a dislike for school, and mar his prospects for *thorough scholarship* by a *defective primary education*.

The school would govern students through “*individual influence and gentle remonstrance*, the only discipline that will make your children *men* and not *slaves*.”⁹⁴ By 1850, Marshall County, for example, had developed a reputation as a regional center for education and boasted thirteen public schools, three colleges, and two academies. Holly Springs Select School, located a short distance west of the courthouse near the residence of proprietor and professor Rev. C. Parish, started in 1843 as “eminently a Classical and Mathematical School” for young men “conducted on strictly Christian and liberal principles.” Limited to a select number of students and governed in a “uniform, firm, and parental” fashion, the boarding school endeavored to “accommodate

⁹³ Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, xvii, 82, 87, 89.

⁹⁴ “Aberdeen Male Academy,” *Monroe Democrat*, May 22, 1850.

those who wish to obtain a thorough knowledge of the Languages in connection with the various English studies,” the “best and only sure way to impart to the pupil a thorough and liberal education.”⁹⁵ Under the charge of Henry C. Thweatt, Marshall Male Academy accommodated forty to fifty students, and gave particular attention to languages, including English, Latin, Greek, and French.⁹⁶

During their sons’ schooling years, fathers influenced their sons’ lives with their concern over their sons’ behavior, character, and weaknesses. William Smith Lenoir’s time at Greene Springs School showed how the relationship between fathers and sons reflected the values of religious white southern families. According to William Thomas Lenoir, his son had to remain mindful of how his actions would be judged by a higher power: “Do not my son forget the obligations [*sic*] to your best friend, recollect, night—and day the all seeing eye is upon you, notes your every act and thought—and in the end, you be judged.” By observing the golden rule, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” William Smith Lenoir could “be at all times prepassed to stand the test” and “guard will your words and temper, do not let these betray you into acts that your conscience will not approve.” Religious obedience was “the hearts desire of your father,” and in turn, William S. Lenoir would receive blessings from God.⁹⁷ Fathers understood the responsibility of rearing children in proper behavior and in accordance to religious directives.

Many white southern families spread messages infused with religious rhetoric to

⁹⁵ “Holly Springs, Select School,” *The Guard*, January 3, 1843.

⁹⁶ “Marshall Male Academy,” *The Guard*, January 3, 1843.

⁹⁷ Letter from W.T. Lenoir to William S. Lenoir, January 22, 1859, Folder 2, Box 1, Lenoir Plantation Records.

members located away from home. The divinely-inspired model of the orderly family remained intact across long distances and geographic spaces. In an 1858 letter, William Thomas Lenoir prayed for his son Blanchard's "deliverance from the temptations by which you are surrounded," and that "our Heavenly Father preserve you blameless in the heart." If Blanchard Lenoir found that "evils benefit you in the end," his father wished that "God bless the means to your speedy recovery." William Thomas Lenoir advised his son to remember that God "holds your destiny in his hands, and imparts life to you from day to day," and to "pray to him that with life He may give you health and pray in faith... he is able and will hear your petitions." Books would "be a lamp to your path and a light to your past," and reading the Bible "will make you wise unto salvation, by washing you your duty, first to your maker and then to yourself and fellow man."⁹⁸ For Lenoir, education provided for a well-ordered life and a godly existence.

Fathers feared that school life would threaten the southern social order's patriarchal authority, and expected their sons to keep them abreast of college life. In the model of the perfected Christian family, white fathers expected their sons to grow into mirror images of themselves. With long periods of time, often up to two years, spent away from their families, sons developed non-familial relationships and witnessed how other fathers treated their sons. Antebellum fathers feared that new influences and separation would ultimately subvert fatherly authority and cause social disorder.⁹⁹ When fathers communicated with their sons abroad, they

⁹⁸ Letter from W.T. Lenoir to Blanchard Lenoir, June 28, 1858, Folder 2, Box 1, Lenoir Plantation Records.

⁹⁹ Jon L. Wakelyn, "Antebellum College Life and the Relations between Fathers and Sons," in *The Web of Southern Social Relations: Women, Family, and Education*, ed. Walter J. Fraser, Jr., R. Frank Saunders, Jr., and Jon L. Wakelyn (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1985), 107-122.

communicated on behalf of the family. For instance, William Thomas Lenoir's correspondence relayed messages to Blanchard Lenoir from his mother, which showed the pious role of the mother in the reinforcement of plantation patriarchy. Blanchard Lenoir's mother remembered "her eldest son with all of a mother's affection and prays daily that she may not be disappointed in the shapes she entertains of you, and she sends her love; a mother's love; with it a mother's blessing."¹⁰⁰

Women's education in North Mississippi served to uphold household order, but also perpetuated the institution of slavery. While white women may not have considered themselves masters in the same ways as white men, their ideological and religious commitments reveal that they saw education as a way to transmit ideas about domesticity and household order—key ingredients in managing slaves. Just as Presbyterian mission schools taught the "business" of slavery to Chickasaw men and women during the 1820s and 1830s, schools affiliated with churches linked religious ideas to an antebellum social order predicated on racial slavery.

Education provided white women with a means to learn the intricacies of household management as activate participants in the maintenance of a slavery based society. Historians argue that education offered white daughters instruction that emphasized their racial and class status, but often characterize southern white women's schooling as a means to reinforce subordination to white men. "Plantation mistresses," according to historian Catherine Clinton, lived through a "virtual revolution in female education" during the early and mid nineteenth

¹⁰⁰ Letter from W.T. Lenoir to Blanchard Lenoir, May 26, 1858, Folder 2, Box 1, Lenoir Plantation Records.

century, but it served to restrict southern white women to domestic and family obligations.¹⁰¹ In her analysis of household relations between white and black southern women, historian Elizabeth Fox-Genovese argues that the South “lagged far behind the North” and lacked a widespread commitment to white women’s education.¹⁰² Faith, in fact, opened women to possibilities for education, though some historians have claimed that white southern women’s participation in religious institutions during the early to mid nineteenth century limited their ability to move beyond a private, insular domestic sphere, especially when compared to white northern women.¹⁰³ Historian Christie Anne Farnham, however, asserts the rigor of white southern women’s education in comparison to white southern men’s, and points to a more pronounced commitment to white women’s education in the South versus the North. According to Farnham, “the South evidenced the greatest interest in female colleges of any region of the nation.”¹⁰⁴ While Farnham argues that white southern women used education to solidify their status as ladies and their commitment to marriage and family, white southern women’s educations offered a way for them to learn mastery in their own right. By tying white southern women’s education to religious institutions, this contention also extends the recent arguments of Stephanie Jones-Rogers, who highlights white woman enslavers’ active participation in the economics of

¹⁰¹ Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman’s World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 125.

¹⁰² Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 46.

¹⁰³ See Jean E. Friedman, *The Enclosed Garden: Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress*, 95-96; Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1970), 7-8, 10-13.

¹⁰⁴ Christie Anne Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle: Higher Education and Student Socialization in the Antebellum South* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 2.

slavery.¹⁰⁵ The religious foundations of white women's schools, combined with their own mastery in the household, reflected a non-static world in which white women enslavers powered an essential element in a capitalistic world economy. Although patriarchy may have limited possibilities of white women beyond the household and held them responsible for family well-being, white women enslavers defied the docile, mild-mannered, constricted characterization of earlier histories.

When elite white daughters left households to receive educations, they confronted an academic reinforcement of the domestic ideal. The curriculum of southern schools for white women emphasized the liberal arts and etiquette. Located in a "fine, agreeable and healthy neighborhood" about eighty miles south of Holly Springs, Waterford Female Academy allowed boarding to female students "at good private houses at very moderate prices." Waterford offered "all the branches of the solid and useful English education" including subjects like "Spelling, Reading, Writing, English Grammar, Geography, Arithmetic, History, Natural Philosophy, Chimestry, Rhetoric, Astronomy, and Botany—Painting and needle work."¹⁰⁶

The parents of educated white southern women never intended for their daughters to work outside of domestic spaces, but they understood that education would allow their daughters to gain skills in household management. Educators in white women's schools played an important role in maintaining gender roles within households. "Called upon to educate, particularly, (although not exclusively,) for the female circle," white women's teacher should

¹⁰⁵ See Stephanie E. Jones-Rogers, *They Were Her Property: White Women as Slave Owners in the American South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).

¹⁰⁶ "Waterford Female Academy," *Marshall County Republican and Free Trade Advocate*, September 15, 1838.

“represent family in its most attractive and proper form.” One writer advocated the use of both male and female educators, as “God has thus ordained it in the family—why should it not be proper elsewhere?”¹⁰⁷ The education of elite white southern women represented a “romanticization of white domination in a slave society.” As “mostly northern male and female faculty attempted to duplicate in the South the education available in the North,” they had “competing agendas.” Faculty members typically consisted of both male ministers and northern white females. While male ministers instructed white women on benevolence and piety within the domestic sphere, female teachers attempted to substitute southern standards of sociability, leisure, and fashion with “morally superior” northern “sobriety, frugality, and work ethic.” Unlike white Northerners who feared that women’s college education would “become the means for mounting an attack on the sex segregation of the professions,” elite white southerners viewed the classical education of white women as emblematic of gentility.¹⁰⁸

Enslavers and ministers linked the education of white women to order in domestic spaces. Religious ideas rooted in the Second Great Awakening overlapped with the ideology of republicanism, which challenged old assumptions about women after the American Revolution. Republican womanhood idealized marriage as the most important familial relationship, with men and women as “conjugal equals” and women as “guardians of male virtue.” Women’s fulfillment of their responsibilities of republican wives and mothers would reform society. Because religious white Southerners held firm to notions of feminized virtue, white southern women used republican ideology to create a larger social and public space through education and

¹⁰⁷ “Female Education,” *Monroe Democrat*, February 19, 1851.

¹⁰⁸ Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle*, 2-4.

literacy.¹⁰⁹ For white women who could afford to attend school, education would provide instruction on the proper management of the home, which included the allocation and observation of the time and work of enslaved people. Women enslavers defined themselves by their consumption of luxury goods like imported furniture and clothing. The presence and work of enslaved women had allowed white women to live extravagantly.¹¹⁰ Wealthy white Southerners possessed the ability and mobility to buy luxury goods sold in cities like Memphis, Mobile, and New Orleans, which communicated the limited availability of cosmopolitanism “only to elites.” The ownership of luxury goods gave wealthy white Mississippians the ability to display wealth and hospitality, as well as their capacity to travel and buy merchandise for private pleasures. The accoutrements of elaborate homes expressed the leadership and “permanence” of elite white Mississippians, and contrasted with the small wooden houses of lower class white people and enslaved people that suggested “impermanence.”¹¹¹ Suggestions of permanence and impermanence highlighted the correlation between bodily and social mobility and the ability to construct and control physical spaces.

Impious women posed a fundamental threat to social order, and education provided a channel through which white Southerners could restore order. One editorial bemoaned the “real moral pest” of an impious woman: “Her principles will be impressed upon her children much more certainly and deeply than those of the father, on which account, her influence for good or

¹⁰⁹ Randy J. Sparks, “The Good Sisters: White Protestant Women and Institution Building in Antebellum Mississippi,” in *Mississippi Women: Their Histories, Their Lives—Volume 2*, eds. Elizabeth Anne Payne, Martha H. Swain, and Marjorie Julian Spruill (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2010), 47-48.

¹¹⁰ Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, 77.

¹¹¹ Ownby, *American Dreams in Mississippi*, 33, 36, 38.

evil is unmeasurable.” The writer suggested that women’s education should contain greater substance, and that “every girl in the land should be well instructed in female work, and all the branches taught in a good common school.” Above all, women’s education should emphasize “sincere piety, true morality, a cheerful pure heart, self-regard, and a high respect for her calling” in all walks of her life. Women would benefit from courses in

Biblical History; Christian morals; History—that of our own country particularly; Geography; Science of Health; the most important and useful part of Botany; at least so much of Natural Philosophy as will enable them to judge correctly and intelligently of the usual phenomena of nature, Ladies fine work, drawings, vocal and instrumental music, foreign languages may be taught too; but if they be taught as superficially as frequent instances would indicate that they are, they had better not be taught at all.¹¹²

The patterns in women’s education emphasized courses that linked white women’s roles in domestic spaces to a social hierarchy with religious foundations.

White southern women best fulfilled the domestic ideal when they paired themselves with white southern men who embodied gentility. Advice columns instructed white southern women to avoid marriage with profane men who gambled, drank heavily, broke promises, neglected business, and chased women. The “depravity of his heart [would] corrupt your children,” and “you [could] never trust him.” Dishonest men knew no difference between right and wrong, and were “deplorable... the less you have to do with [them] the better.” When a man “had no regard for himself,” he would “never have any for his wife.” Moreover, a man who ran “after all the girls in the country” possessed “wavering” affections and could “never be permanent.”¹¹³

When white men enslavers spent time away from their plantations, they often delegated

¹¹² “Female Education,” *Monroe Democrat*, February 19, 1851.

¹¹³ “Rules for Ladies,” *Monroe Democrat*, February 26, 1851.

responsibility to white women enslavers. Although white men enslavers nominally placed white women enslavers in charge of plantations, southern white women almost always had a male overseer, friend, or relative on hand to maintain order. Many white Southerners assumed that white southern women lacked a capacity for mastery. Plantation management, furthermore, depended on maintaining the political power of white men who belonged to the planter class. The domination of white men enslavers, therefore, formed the basis of white women enslavers' roles as wives, daughters, sisters, and mothers.¹¹⁴

White women enslavers' use of white men as proxies for authority in plantation management undermined their own claims to power within the household and, in effect, admitted subservience to the white men's authority. Inadequate management of domestic spaces highlighted enslaved people's resistance and challenges to authority within those spaces.¹¹⁵ In 1858, William Thomas Lenoir gave his wife Mary proxy as the master of the household in his absence and advised her on the management of enslaved people: "Do try and get the negroes to be careful about fire. It would be a trouble piece of business to get the houses burned."¹¹⁶ Lenoir's concern about arson reflected white insecurity about slave uprisings and contemporary racial views that equated blackness with disorder. White women enslavers, like white men enslavers, viewed violence as central to maintaining order within the household. Through their ordinary and casual depictions of quotidian abuse, many archival records highlight the regularity

¹¹⁴ Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 30, 203-206.

¹¹⁵ Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, 52.

¹¹⁶ Letter from Willie to Mary, November 29, 1858, Folder 2, Box 1, Lenoir Plantation Records.

of domination.¹¹⁷

The orderly functioning of the cotton economy allowed white women to protect the ideal of domesticity. The success of white women enslavers as managers of domestic spaces provided the standard of progress for civilization. Harriet Pegues, a white temperance advocate from a prominent Holly Springs family, recounted in her diary a strange occurrence that awoke her at one in the morning on Tuesday, January 15, 1849. Pegues heard “a noise resembling the dragging of a heavy piece of furniture across the floor, below stairs [that] seemed to be in the back piazza and to follow the whole length of one room and stop at the foot of the stair case” and a “low moan immediately after.” Within ten minutes, she “again heard the same heavy noise and another groan succeeding it.” Pegues and her niece arose to investigate the noise and “trembling with fright lighted the candle and awoke a servant girl who was sleeping in the same room.” The enslaved woman accompanied the two women to the door, which Pegues “made the [enslaved woman] unlock.” While Pegues held a candle, the enslaved woman looked down the stairs “as quick as she could” and reported that she “saw the figure of some person draped in white sitting near the foot of the steps.”¹¹⁸ Notions of domesticity characterized southern white womanhood and obscured conflicts within the space of the household, so the enslaved woman’s obedience to Pegues demonstrated both a protection of the physical body and demonstrated a successful enactment of the domestic metaphor.

Many white enslavers saw enslaved people as part of their households and families, united even in death. Some white enslavers may have envisioned a heaven segregated by race,

¹¹⁷ Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, 45.

¹¹⁸ Harriet Pegues Diary, January 16, 1849, McAlexander/Marshall County Collection.

while others refused to part with their enslaved people in the afterlife.¹¹⁹ Perhaps enslavers even saw themselves as controlling enslaved people from beyond the grave. Betty Curlett, a woman enslaved in Chickasaw County, recalled how her enslaver Daniel Johnson “wanted all our niggers buried on our place.” Johnson even told Curlett’s husband Jim to notify him of her death, so that he could “help bring her back and bury her in the old graveyard.” When Curlett’s father died, Johnson had a hearse transport his remains to the graveyard. “He was buried by mama and nearly all the Johnson, Moore, and Reed (or Reid) niggers buried there.”¹²⁰ Enslavers like Daniel Johnson saw enslavement as sanctioned by the divine and reflected in family structure. For Johnson, familial hierarchy applied to enslaved people in their daily lives, and bondage constituted a condition that extended into death and the afterlife. Anderson Williams of Chickasaw County remembered the overt religious tone of his punishment for running away. Williams’s white enslaver “got his hymn book, set down, put me ‘cross his knees an’ as he’d sing de hymns, he’d whup me to de tune o’ ‘em.” After the enslaver ceased his beating, Williams “didn’ set down for a week an’ I ain’t never seed no more niggers runnin’ away neither!”¹²¹ Despite visions of households transcending the boundary between heaven and the earth, white enslavers could justify their control over and harsh treatment of enslaved people as God’s will in practice by harnessing biblical scripture to racial slavery.

Enslaved people’s religious education would fulfill part of the biblical justification for slavery and reinforce household order. In advice manuals, court records, newspapers, and

¹¹⁹ Mia Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind: African-American Ideas about White People, 1830-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 179-181.

¹²⁰ Betty Curlett, *Arkansas Narratives*, Volume 08B, 72.

¹²¹ Anderson Williams, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 10S, 2297.

plantation journals, white Southerners debated the utility of religious education among enslaved people. White Southerners' version of Protestant Christianity legitimized black racial inferiority and excluded enslaved people from ideals of domesticity and gentility. Scholar Dwight N. Hopkins argues that the language of Euro-American Christianity and culture defined whiteness in the Americas. After the institution of slavery entrenched white Southerners' domination over black people, white people recognized "Christian shame over black subordination" and decided to convert enslaved people to Christianity. White control over political and economic structures and day-to-day activities established "normative techniques of being" for enslaved people, which became ritualized in mainstream religious beliefs.¹²²

Amid a burgeoning abolitionist movement and intensifying regional denominational conflict during and after the 1830s, the religious instruction of enslaved people stirred controversy and created insecurity among white enslavers. For proslavery Mississippians bent on spreading Protestant religious doctrine, control over enslaved people's religious instruction presented a challenge. Enslavers believed that education, particularly religious instruction, would encourage insurrection among enslaved people and undermine white authority. Yet at the same time, enslavers employed religious instruction to spread religious institutions and to prove slavery's existence as a divinely-sanctioned hierarchical institution with positive, mutual benefits for both black and white people.¹²³ White southern enslavers hoped that religious instruction would make enslaved people better and happier servants, as well as spur the evolution of black

¹²² Dwight N. Hopkins, *Down, Up, and Over: Slave Religion and Black Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 52-54.

¹²³ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004 [1978]), 158-159.

sensory development.¹²⁴ Enslavers embraced the religious instruction of bondspeople only after southern clergy assured its compatibility with slavery.¹²⁵

Southern clergy convinced enslavers that religious instruction was a moral duty and should not be feared. By emphasizing the themes of obedience, morality, humility, and the promise of heavenly reward, the religious instruction of enslaved people could fulfill enslavers' need to control behavior rather than salvation.¹²⁶ Plantation missionaries attempted to instill within enslavers the ideal that they had a moral obligation to enslaved people, in the hope that "Christianity would regularize and pacify relations between slaves and masters." Ideally, religion would influence the entirety of the enslaver's relationship to enslaved people, including both physical treatment and spiritual well-being. To fulfill the Biblically-sanctioned relationship between enslavers and enslaved people, missionaries encouraged white men and women to read sermons to enslaved people, include enslaved people in family prayers, and teach enslaved people in Sabbath schools.¹²⁷

Around the 1830s, the slave religious instruction began to change in Mississippi. Because Mississippi state law prohibited teaching enslaved people the ability to read and write, enslaved people received oral religious instruction.¹²⁸ The Mississippi statute banned literacy among enslaved people and allowed for thirty-nine lashes to an enslaved person who learned to

¹²⁴ Mark M. Smith, *How Race is Made: Slavery, Segregation, and the Senses* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 22.

¹²⁵ Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind*, 125.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 164-165.

¹²⁸ Sparks, *On Jordan's Stormy Banks*, 97.

read or write.¹²⁹ White enslavers' ability to read the bible and communicate their interpretations of its messages through writing gave them control over religious discourse. According to one agricultural journal, planters' instruction of enslaved people about "the truths of the Bible" did not necessitate teaching them to read. The entry read,

We well recollect hearing a negro preacher, a slave, many years ago, who went through all the usual clerical exercises with considerable cleverness—giving out his hymns, line by line—announcing his text, and directing his audience to chapter and verse—all this, too, without using any book, and without being able to read if he had had one.¹³⁰

One minister had "been astonished to find planters of high moral pretensions, and even professors of our Holy Christianity, who keep their blacks shut out almost entirely from the privileges of the Gospel." In viewing enslaved people as humans "descended from the same ancestry as ourselves and tending to the same 'bourne from whence no traveler returns,'" the minister thought that enslavers had a responsibility to save the souls of their enslaved people to "promote [their] welfare and happiness."¹³¹

In the view of some religious white enslavers, black enslaved preachers blunted white people's efforts to institute religious education among enslaved people. At the same time, white enslavers believed that a lack of religious instruction had enabled enslaved people to embrace ignorance and superstition. White missionaries would have to overcome the power of black preachers, whose "influence is such an obstacle in the way of the missionary that he can accomplish but little unless his preaching is in unison with the theology of his sage old Doctor of

¹²⁹ Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 18.

¹³⁰ James O. Breeden, ed. *Advice among Masters: The Ideal in Slave Management in the Old South* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 225-226.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 229-231.

Divinity.” One minister described enslaved preachers as “oracles” of the plantation: “on almost every large plantation of Negroes there is one among them who holds a kind of magical sway over the minds and opinions of the rest.” Black preachers represented “the most consummate villain and hypocrite on the premises.” The white minister found the paradox of the black preacher in enslaved people’s continual “immoral” actions. One enslaver complained, “He steals his master’s pigs and is still an object commanding the peculiar regard of Heaven, and why may not his disciples?” To combat superstitious and false religious influences, enslavers had to properly educate enslaved people in the “true doctrines and precepts of Christianity.”¹³²

Among both enslavers and enslaved people, the process of conversion to Protestant Christianity often occurred at camp meetings held in natural settings, particularly among Methodists, and “missionaries filled their reports with descriptions of the outpouring of the spirit.”¹³³ William Thomas Lenoir described religious conversions, and mentioned a “protracted meeting going on at our meeting house” that “promis[ed] to be a good hour.” During the conversions, “five sick souls” would hopefully be given the “bread of life” and have “their hearts risen be gratified and the Sun of Righteousness depale the gloom which surround[ed]” them. Lenoir viewed the “seeking of religion” as the “noblest employment” of the “converted man or woman.” Without religion, no one could “see God and live.” In regard to a meeting “still in progress,” William Thomas Lenoir mentioned four conversions, with another still in progress. On the previous night, Blanchard Lenoir’s brother James and cousin Whitman had been converted on “the mourners bench”: “My soul’s desire is that they may obtain the Pearl of great

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Cornelius, *Slave Missions and the Black Church in the Antebellum South*, 34, 66.

price.”¹³⁴

By structuring their world around the household and ideas about order, white North Mississippians attempted to stabilize a society built on white supremacy at the southern confluence’s intersection of white, black, and Indian cultures. Viewing enslaved people as part of the household and extending the household metaphor into other parts of life was an attempt to institute a hierarchy based on race and gender. From the 1830s through the late 1850s, profits from slave-based agriculture had allowed North Mississippi’s white residents to accumulate wealth, build homes, and create educational institutions. They boasted of the “improvements” the cotton economy’s fortunes made to their lives and attributed their “advancement” to better education. One editorial observed that the “plantation economy and management seem to be much more thoroughly studied than formerly” and that “agriculture, both as a matter of taste and science, is evidently engaging a good deal of thoughtful interest.” With a “spirit of enquiry,” people held “much more of a disposition to make experiments in agriculture, and to apply the principles of chemistry to the cultivation of the soil.”¹³⁵ Within many dwellings, “the cheerful sound of the piano, guitar, or harp is heard.” The “increased interest in taste,” defined as the “culture of the beautiful in the midst of God’s works, and the discipline of the soul to the divine harmonies of the universe,” had forced people to realize the importance of education: “The advancement we are now enjoying, is largely attributable to the influence which educated young manhood and womanhood are beginning to exert.”¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Letter from W.T. Lenoir to Blanchard Lenoir, May 26, 1858, Folder 2, Box 1, Lenoir Plantation Records.

¹³⁵ “Improvements of the South,” *Marshall Democrat*, December 8, 1855.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

Yet, no matter how much white North Mississippians attempted to order their world, disorder lurked beneath the surface during the antebellum period. In 1857, an alleged abolitionist named Snyder fell victim to a public whipping in Oxford.¹³⁷ One account called Snyder's treatment a "lynching." Arrested, charged, and tried for "organizing an insurrection among the negroes in the neighborhood of Abbeyville," Snyder met an angry mob that forced him to "strip himself" and "acknowledge the crime he was charged with." After arguing his innocence, Snyder was left "naked for nearly an hour" and then "carried back to jail." The jailor freed Snyder, who was again met by an angry mob made up of individuals who scattered and hid to watch his movements out of town. The crowd found Snyder at a fence, where he was again told to strip naked. As Snyder proceeded to strip, his shirt "was caught and fastened around his neck with the sleeves for a blindfold":

A rope was then put about his neck to frighten him, but it had not its desired effect. He was allowed to stand in that position about fifteen minutes, when he was carried to the bottom of a hollow nearest where they were, and tied around a tree. He was told what was their intention: to lynch him until he told something. The lashing commenced by two, who used strap fastened to sticks about ten inches long. After he had taken one hundred and sixty-seven lashes, he began to know something about it, but not enough to satisfy the lynchers; so they commenced again with two other lynchers, and when the number had reached two hundred and thirty-eight lashes, he told the whole tale, which was this: He was to raise a company of some dozen blacks, who were to be furnished with arms (knives and pistols) by him... and go to the houses of some of the wealthiest families, and get their money by frightening them. If they failed in this way, they were to kill the men and take it, when they were to get on the cars for Memphis, and then up the river to Indiana. They were to take two white ladies with them, for wives. (He implicated another man, who was then in Indiana.) There was no testimony against him, except his confession and that of the blacks. So he was shipped on the cars yesterday morning for the Junction, where he was to start for his home in Indiana. I have learned to-day that he was taken from the car at Holly Springs, and confined in jail.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ "Lunch [*sic*] Law," *The Liberator*, October 30, 1857.

¹³⁸ "Lynching an Abolitionist in Mississippi," *The National Era*, October 8, 1857.

While slavery-based agriculture had allowed many white North Mississippians to enjoy financial fortunes and boast of cultural and social achievements, the specter of insurrection threatened the integrity of the household system, and thus, undermined white supremacy and obstructed the slave economy. This instability effectively rendered North Mississippi more than the “right pretty place” that Henry Craft had described in 1840.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Letter from Henry Craft and Elizabeth Craft to Martha Craft, November 23, 1840, Craft/Fort Family Letters.

CHAPTER IV:
AN UNSTABLE COLOR LINE: BLACK, WHITE, AND INDIAN IN NORTH MISSISSIPPI,
1830s-1850s

In the winter of 1852, amid falling snow and sleet and howling winds, a young woman approached merchant John McCord's store in Calhoun County, Mississippi. "Tall and well formed, with a handsome figure and soft, appealing eyes," the woman, "age[d] about 22 years," had "long, dark and wavy" hair and "her skin was a soft yellow—not quite as dark as the Indian." With "animated [features]," her "countenance sparkled with every change of expression," and "her step, quick and elastic; voice, soft and musical; her language, pure and faultless English."¹

The woman entered the store, where McCord, along with Spring and Brushy Creek residents Bob Brown and Sid Brantley, had gathered around a stove. Brantley "asked the woman how it happened that she was caught out in the storm, and where she was going in all this bad weather." The young woman responded:

I am part Indian and I am making my way to the Indian Nation, where my tribe, the Chickasaws, went in 1836. I was then a small girl living with my grandmother. My mother, a Chickasaw died when I was a baby. My father, a white man, went with the tribe. My grandmother, being very old, was left with me. After grandmother died, I was taken by a nice family of whites, who gave me a home, taught me the art of dressmaking and educated me. But I could not forget my brothers and sisters in the Indian Nation and at last resolved at every hazard, to make my way to them. I have no money or friends

¹ D.L. Stevens, "Yellow Rose of Scoona," *The Sunflower Tocsin* (Indianola, Miss.), January 12, 1928. The story was reprinted from D.L. Stevens, "The Yellow Rose of Schoona," *Calhoun Monitor* (Pittsboro, Miss.), 1903.

that I can call upon for assistance, so I am trying to make my way afoot.²

After hearing the story, Brantley invited the young woman to his home to wait out the storm with his family. On the way to the Brantley family's home, the young woman introduced herself as "Bombazelle McAllister."

Bombazelle took a room with Brantley's oldest daughter, Sissy, and remained in the family's home the following day. Upon learning of Bombazelle's skill as a dressmaker, Sissy shared a "nice new dress pattern she was preparing to make up." Bombazelle then "examined the goods with great care and suggested how it should be designed," took Sissy's measurements, and "assisted in making the dress." The dress's "attractive design" and "gracious fit" enchanted the Brantley family.³

The snow storm ended, but Bombazelle remained in the community. Once other residents heard the news that "a marvelous designer and dressmaker" was lodging with the Brantleys, "the blushing lassies in all the region gathered 'round to have Bombazelle cut and fashion their dresses." Bombazelle "moved from home to home as her services were requested, and at night, occupied rooms and beds with the young ladies of the community." Well-paid for her craft, Bombazelle "was ready and willing to give the young ladies instructions in cutting materials and in dressmaking."⁴

Bombazelle's purported background as a Chickasaw woman, with "her color rather dark," enchanted community members, especially men who named her "the Yellow Rose of Schoona," a reference to her complexion and the nearby creek, a tributary of the Yalobusha

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

River.⁵ In particular, the merchant John McCord “fell desperately in love” with Bombazelle and “won her heart.” McCord occupied a position of relative prominence in Calhoun County, with his store and “a good house, servants and quite a number of Negro slaves.” The couple eventually married at the Brantley home.⁶

By the following spring, in 1853, Bombazelle had settled in McCord’s home in the Banner community. She had a “trusted servant” named Old Sylvia along with a “flock of boys and girls, to attend to her every want.” Bombazelle developed a reputation as a “firm mistress” who “ran the house with energy and ability.” At the same time, Bombazelle continued to advise community women on their dresses.⁷

One afternoon that spring, a traveler, Ulysses McAllister, arrived in Banner on horseback, and entered the saddle shop of J. Brown, where he met Bob Brown. McAllister inquired about a missing woman who fit Bombazelle’s description. With night approaching, McAllister “asked if there was a house of entertainment in town.” Brown sent McAllister to the home of Mr. Arnold: “He made his business known to Mr. Arnold, and said he had traced the woman to Banner—and that she was his Negro house servant and seamstress—and that she had run away from the family home at Aberdeen, Miss. [*sic*].” Arnold told McAllister about Bombazelle’s appearance in the community and her marriage to John McCord. He responded, “That’s my Negro. She is almost white in appearance and is very smart.”⁸

McAllister had exposed Bombazelle as a fugitive enslaved woman and shocked the

⁵ “Schoona” has several spellings, including Scoona, Schooner, Skuna, and Scuna. This chapter will use “Schoona.”

⁶ D.L. Stevens, “Yellow Rose of Scoona.”

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

Banner community and her husband John McCord. The revelation left men who had marveled at Bombazelle's physical appearance "crestfallen," and women who had been in awe of her dressmaking skills "dumbfounded." Most of all, white residents found "the idea of having so cordially entertained this servant in their homes... humiliating." For his part, McCord "secreted [Bombazelle] in a cabin on Schoona [creek]" as he attempted to make sense of the situation. McAllister, meanwhile, discovered the marriage certificate issued for John McCord and Bombazelle McAllister. He decided to file a suit against McCord "for marrying a Negro, contrary to the laws of the State of Mississippi."⁹

Friends intervened on McCord's behalf by attempting to persuade McAllister to suspend his lawsuit. Brantley "assured [McAllister] that it was a fraud practiced on McCord, and McCord truly believed that [Bombazelle] was part Indian, but had never dreamed that she was a runaway slave—and that she would be... returned to McAllister." The following morning, Bombazelle left McCord and returned to McAllister, and the two departed for Aberdeen.¹⁰ As punishment for her escape, McAllister sold Bombazelle, and used the money to buy himself a new house in the town of Aberdeen "on the northeast corner of Commerce and Franklin Streets."¹¹

Bombazelle's story re-emerged at the turn of the twentieth century in a local newspaper account. Perhaps white writers conjured Bombazelle's image due to her ability to navigate a racial color line, which undercut the very foundation of the slavery-based society that white

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ W.A. Evans, *Mother Monroe: A Series of Historical Sketches of Monroe County* (Aberdeen: Mother Monroe Publishing Company, 1979), 70; John Rodabough, "Slavery, Part IV, Port of Aberdeen," *Aberdeen Examiner*, April 29, 1971.

Mississippians sought to create during and after the era of Indian Removal. As legal scholar Joseph A. Custer has written with regard to Justice William Sharkey's decisions on the Mississippi High Court of Errors and Appeals, slavery comprised "a part of the essence, structure, and culture of Mississippi."¹² Despite the passage of Mississippi's 1830 law and the forced removal of Chickasaws, Bombazelle's plight reflected the permeability of racial lines. "The fugitive, exciting word from white political sources, telling of arguments and debates over the operation of the institution of slavery," writes historian Vincent Harding, "continued to seep into the life of the Southern black community, hinting, suggesting, revealing the basic tensions which lurked deep in the larger white society."¹³ Bombazelle's story may have served as a parable on the dangers of miscegenation during the Jim Crow era, which was why white Mississippians re-narrated her life in newspapers and genealogical accounts during the twentieth century.

Some observers may dismiss the story as the product of Jim Crow racial panic, but extant, scattered contemporary records, including census records and an advertisement for a fugitive enslaved woman, document those involved with Bombazelle and point to larger truths that surrounded her life. The institution of slavery too often rendered enslaved people nameless and, therefore, without histories. A 1922 fire destroyed Calhoun County court records that would have documented Bombazelle's marriage to John McCord, but Mississippi State and Territorial Census records from 1837 list a "John P. McCord," who owned eight enslaved

¹² Joseph A. Custer, "The Three Waves of Married Women's Property Acts in the Nineteenth Century with a Focus on Mississippi, New York and Oregon," *Ohio Northern University Law Review* 40 (2014): 405.

¹³ Vincent Harding, *There Is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1981), 74.

people, including two men and six women, as well as sixty acres of land.¹⁴ Five years later, in 1842 and 1843, “John Patterson McCord” bought several hundred acres of Chickasaw cession land located in Pontotoc County and what became Calhoun County between 1842 and 1843.¹⁵ By 1850, “Jno. P. McCord,” age forty-six and born in South Carolina, lived in Yalobusha County with his wife Malinda and children Joseph, Robert, John, Mary, and James, none of whom appear in Bombazelle’s story. McCord reported \$800 in “value of real estate owned.”¹⁶ In the 1850 slave schedule, “J.P. Cord” of Yalobusha County reported owning nine black enslaved people, including five men, ranging from age five to age sixty, and four women, ranging from age two to age fifty-four.¹⁷

Bombazelle’s enslaver followed a path in census records similar to the man who would become her husband in Calhoun County. Born in South Carolina in either 1807 or 1808, Ulysses McAllister migrated from Greene County, Alabama in 1841, and bought 160 acres of Chickasaw Cession land in Monroe County through the General Land Office of the United States located in Pontotoc, Mississippi.¹⁸ In 1850, McAllister still lived in Monroe County with his wife Sarah

¹⁴ Mississippi State and Territorial Censuses, 1792-1866, microfilm V229, roll 2.

¹⁵ “McCord, John P.,” Bureau of Land Management, “Land Patent Search,” digital images, General Land Office Records, <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/results/default.aspx?searchCriteria=type=patent|st=MS|cty=|ln=mccord|fn=john|lo=11|sp=true|sw=true|sadv=false>, accessed January 15, 2019.

¹⁶ *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*, M432, roll 382, page 390A, Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; Part of Yalobusha County became part of Calhoun County in 1852.

¹⁷ 1850 U.S. Federal Census – Slave Schedules, *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*, M432, roll 390, Record Group 29, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁸ “McAllister, Ulysses,” Bureau of Land Management, “Land Patent Search,” digital images, General Land Office Records, https://glorerecords.blm.gov/details/patent/default.aspx?accession=MS2930__056&docClass=STA&sid=oynbwpgg.p0k, accessed January 15, 2019.

Frances and two children, John and Mary. At that time, McAllister's employment of an overseer, Thomas E. Gibson, suggests ownership of a substantial number of enslaved people.¹⁹ Slave schedules from 1850 indicate that McAllister owned fourteen enslaved people, all listed as black, and including nine men, ranging from age two to age thirty-three, and five women, ranging from age five to age thirty-eight.²⁰ By 1860, McAllister held real estate that totaled \$36,000, while his personal estate valued at \$39,700.²¹ His wealth in enslaved property had increased since the previous census from fourteen to forty-five enslaved individuals. In 1860, McAllister owned twenty-four men, ranging from age one to age forty-five, and twenty-one women, ranging from age one to age fifty. Unlike in the 1850 slave schedule, McAllister's slaveholding included six "mulatto" enslaved people along with thirty-nine black enslaved people.²² Because the 1850 slave schedule does not indicate McAllister's ownership of "mulatto" enslaved people, unlike the 1860 slave schedule, it is likely that he purchased Bombazelle and other mixed race enslaved people after the recording of the 1850 census.

Bombazelle never appears in government documents by name, but she does emerge as "Mary Ann Paine," the subject of an 1852 fugitive slave advertisement that McAllister placed in regional newspapers. The advertisement, like others during slavery, described Mary Ann Paine's physical characteristics and distinctive traits in specific detail. As literary scholar Saidiya

¹⁹ *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*, M432, roll 378, page 73B.

²⁰ 1850 U.S. Federal Census – Slave Schedules, *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*, M432, roll 387.

²¹ *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860*, M653, roll 587, page 478, Records of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

²² 1860 U.S. Federal Census – Slave Schedules, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860*, M653, roll 601, Record Group 29, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; Instead of using the term "mulatto," I will use the term "mixed race" when not referring specifically to census designations.

Hartman observes, enslavement “stripped [an enslaved person’s] history to bare facts and precious details,” and “slipperiness and elusiveness [characterize] slavery’s archive.”²³

McAllister’s ad that featured Bombazelle, who “generally calls herself Mary Ann Paine,” offered a fifty dollar reward for her return from out of state and a twenty five dollar reward from within the state. A “light mulatto woman, of small size, and about 23 years old,” with “long, black straight hair,” Bombazelle “ran away, or [was] stolen” from Aberdeen, Mississippi, wearing “either a white dress, or a brown calico one with white spots or figures, and took with her a red handkerchief, and a red or pink sun-bonnet.” Beyond physical characteristics, the ad emphasized Bombazelle’s intelligence, particularly her abilities to “read print” and “converse well.”²⁴

By focusing on Bombazelle, this chapter provides a methodology for reconstructing the experiences of an individual enslaved woman whose life crossed many of the boundaries that white Mississippians attempted to establish. Though scant documentation survives to account for Bombazelle’s life, this chapter recovers her experiences, from birth until her sale at the hand of McAllister. As historian Marisa J. Fuentes argues, “The violent systems and structures of white

²³ Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2007), 11, 17.

²⁴ The fugitive slave advertisement that featured Bombazelle was reproduced in Harriet Beecher Stowe, *A Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin; Presenting the Original Facts and Documents Upon which the Story is Founded. Together with Corroborative Statements Verifying the Truth of the Work* (London: Sampson Low, Son, and Co., 1853), 432. The reproduction cites the *Southern Standard* (Columbus, Miss.), October 16, 1852 as first running the advertisement, with it also appearing in the *Memphis (Weekly) Appeal*, October 6, 1853. The specific issue of *Southern Standard* is in doubt because the Library of Congress’s records do not indicate that another library currently holds the particular issue of the *Memphis (Weekly) Appeal*. A transcription of the fugitive slave advertisement also appears in McAllister Family (Aberdeen), Folder 35, Box 9, John E. Rodabough Papers, Manuscripts Division, Special Collections Department, Mississippi State University Libraries. For more on *A Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and the veracity of Stowe’s evidence, see Manisha Sinha, *The Slave’s Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 440-442, 451.

supremacy produced devastating images of enslaved female personhood, and... these pervade the archive and govern what can be known about them.”²⁵ Methodologically, this chapter is inspired by Fuentes’s reconstruction of Jane, an enslaved woman in late-eighteenth-century Bridgetown, Barbados. Fuentes reassembles details about Jane’s life, starting with a runaway advertisement—the only surviving written record that documents her—and then by imagining Jane’s sensory experience of the urban environment during her flight.²⁶ Other recent works have used a scarce source base to account for the lives of individual enslaved women or transformative events among enslaved people in the United States and the wider Atlantic World during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but none examines the possibility of an enslaved woman’s indigenous ancestry after Indian Removal.²⁷

Bombazelle’s story clarifies as much or as a little about her interior life as the archive will reveal. Located in oral histories, slave narratives, plantation records, newspapers, government documents, and mission records, the lives of other enslaved women who lived in North Mississippi between the 1830s and the 1850s substantiate, though do not replace,

²⁵ Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 13-45.

²⁷ For the lives of individual enslaved women, see Erica Armstrong Dunbar, *Never Caught: The Washingtons’ Relentless Pursuit of Their Runaway Slave, Ona Judge* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017); Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*; Jessica Millward, *Finding Charity’s Folk: Enslaved and Free Black Women in Maryland* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015). For recent scholarship that hones in on transformative events in the lives of enslaved people, see Anne C. Bailey, *The Weeping Time: Memory and the Largest Slave Auction in American History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Daina Ramey Berry, *The Price for their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved, from Womb to Grave, in the Building of a Nation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2017); Sasha Turner, *Contested Bodies: Pregnancy, Childrearing, and Slavery in Jamaica* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).

Bombazelle's possible experiences.²⁸ Oral histories, including those recorded by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) during the 1930s and those conducted by interviewers for the North Mississippi Women's History Project during the 2000s, outline rich contours and meaningful patterns in enslaved women's lives. Some historians continue to outright dismiss the use of WPA narratives, even as scholars have mined them for over five decades and produced pathbreaking observations.²⁹ Using such sources to broaden Bombazelle's life reveals not only

²⁸ Unless otherwise noted, all interviews and narratives of enslaved people, formerly enslaved people, and the descendants of formerly enslaved people deal specifically with North Mississippi. I define North Mississippi to include the present-day counties of Alcorn, Benton, Calhoun, Chickasaw, Clay, DeSoto, Grenada, Itawamba, Lafayette, Lee, Lowndes, Marshall, Monroe, Montgomery, Oktibbeha, Panola, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Tate, Tishomingo, Union, Webster, and Yalobusha.

²⁹ For more context on the WPA narratives, see Stephanie J. Shaw, "Using the WPA Ex-Slave Narratives to Study the Impact of the Great Depression," *Journal of Southern History* 69 (August 2003): 623-658. Among the first works to use the WPA narratives included Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Paul D. Escott, *Slavery Remembered: A Record of Twentieth-Century Slave Narratives* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979); Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage, 1972); George P. Rawick, *From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1972). For examples of more recent uses of the WPA narratives alongside of other sources to great effect, see Stephanie E. Jones-Rogers, *They Were Her Property: White Women as Slave Owners in the American South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019); Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2014); Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013); Heather Andrea Williams, *Help Me to Find My People: The African American Search for Family Lost in Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Stephanie M.H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Mia Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind: African-American Ideas about White People, 1830-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Michael A. Gomez,

her story, but also the lives of enslaved people, especially women, who lived in antebellum Mississippi.

This chapter's argument lies as much in its methodology as its conclusions about Bombazelle, who embodied every aspect of the southern confluence with her mixed ancestry and whose literacy, skills, and knowledge placed her at the intersection of white, black, and Indian societies and cultures. Her story reflects larger tensions and conflicts in Mississippi after Indian Removal, as white settlers became landowners and lawmakers invested in enforcing a racial hierarchy that people like Bombazelle threatened. Yet, at the same time, Bombazelle illuminates the possibilities—and limitations—that enslaved women faced in North Mississippi. The institution of slavery rested on enslaved women's cooperation with a color line that enslavers sought to entrench and maintain through force.

In the southern confluence, black Indians like Bombazelle held a three-ness, or a triple connection to Americanness, Africanness, and Indianness.³⁰ While other historians have recognized the contradictory aspects of black Indian life in Indian Territory, by remaining in place, this story demonstrates additional angles of alienation.³¹ Black Indians had native ancestry that could have entitled them to tribal privileges if they descended from matrilineal

Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

³⁰ This concept is derived from W.E.B. Du Bois's concept of a "two-ness" that reflected African Americans' "contested connection... to 'Americanness' and to the United States itself." See W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999 [1903]), 11.

³¹ For examples of historians who have invoked Du Bois to explain the experiences of black Indians, see Barbara Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters: Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the Native American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 153; Celia E. Naylor, *African Cherokees in Indian Territory: From Chattel to Citizens* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 203-204..

lines. While Bombazelle told Calhoun County residents that her mother was a Chickasaw woman who had died, it is possible that Bombazelle understood Chickasaws' ideas about matrilineality and used that knowledge to her advantage in her escape from Ulysses McAllister. Black Indians like Bombazelle may have retained knowledge of Chickasaw customs, regardless of their access to tribal recognition. The institution of slavery tore asunder black Indians' ties to their Chickasaw relatives. By denying black Indians' identities as both Chickasaw and African, natives affirmed their status as enslavers as well as their degradation of blackness. Black Indians experienced alienation not just from native societies, but also from white societies due to their enslavement. They had to navigate white societies with attention to racial boundaries. Within both Indian and white nations, black Indians faced the ever-present threat of sale, regardless of connections to kin.

This chapter will proceed by considering multiple interpretations of Bombazelle's life across five stages that span from birth through her recapture and sale by Ulysses McAllister. Surviving documents indicate that Bombazelle held a multifaceted and seemingly contradictory self-identity, perhaps constructed for her own benefit, and also possessed the knowledge to navigate white spaces with agility. First, the chapter will consider Bombazelle's lineage and contextualize possible circumstances of her early childhood. Though Bombazelle claimed Chickasaw descent, she may have also been conceived in a sexual encounter between a white man and a black enslaved woman. Second, the chapter will examine the re-settlement of North Mississippi through the eyes of an enslaved woman. Bombazelle may have witnessed enslaved arrivants as they entered the region, and the dynamics of migration and sale would have altered family and community relationships. Next, the chapter will continue through Bombazelle's

childhood and into her early adulthood. Based on documentation of Bombazelle's skill as a dressmaker and her literacy, the chapter examines the life and labors of an enslaved woman in North Mississippi, including the day-to-day and spatial restrictions that she may have known. Then, the chapter covers Bombazelle's escape from Ulysses McAllister and her transformation to a woman governing an enslaving household. Finally, the chapter concludes with Bombazelle's capture and sale at the hand of McAllister.

In considering Bombazelle's lineage, she could have descended from Chickasaws, yet she also could have been born from a sexual relationship between a black enslaved woman and a white man. Bombazelle's alleged Chickasaw descent makes it possible that she interacted with the enslaved women associated with Monroe Mission at a young age. Monroe Mission could have served as a place where Bombazelle interacted with other people enslaved by Chickasaws. She might have gained knowledge of Chickasaw and white kinship and social organization. While Presbyterian missions aimed to "civilize" the Chickasaw people, they appealed most to enslaved people who sought educational opportunities and a chance to interact with others. By 1831, about two-thirds of membership at Presbyterian mission churches in North Mississippi were "of African descent; these mostly understand English; and on that account are more accessible than the Chickasaws." According to Cornelia Pelham, writing under the pseudonym Sarah Tuttle, "The black people manifest the most ardent desire for religious instruction and often travel a great many miles to obtain it. Sometimes they will walk ten miles for the sake of attending one evening meeting, after which they have returned by torchlight through foot-paths

filled with mud and water.”³² Pelham further reported that “a black man who belonged to the mission church, opened his little cabin for prayer, on the evening of every Wednesday, which was usually attended by about half a dozen colored persons.”³³ Attendance increased, “till more than fifty assembled at once, many of whom were full Indians.” The meetings “were conducted wholly by Christian *slaves* in the Chickasaw language.”³⁴

Enslaved women played prominent leadership roles at Monroe Mission, and thereby gained practical knowledge and access to kinship networks. Dinah, the first black woman admitted to Monroe Mission, acted as Thomas C. Stuart’s most important interpreter as he preached to Chickasaws, and she used the opportunity to see her family.³⁵ Dinah’s linguistic dexterity in both Chickasaw and English likely stemmed from her enslavement by James Gunn, a British man married to a Chickasaw woman.³⁶ Records of the church session at Monroe indicate that four of Dinah’s children—Chloe, William, Lucy, and Patsy—gained admission and received baptism in 1823.³⁷ Laney, Dinah’s daughter with Chickasaw James Holmes Colbert, gained admission to Monroe in 1827. Laney’s children—Elay, John Gattis, Louisa, and Kunnodeyi

³² Sarah Tuttle, *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions* (Boston: Massachusetts Sabbath School Union, 1831), 9-10. See also Walter Brownlow Posey, *The Presbyterian Church in the Old Southwest, 1778-1838* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1952), 68.

³³ Tuttle, *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions*, 10.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

³⁵ T.C. Stuart, “Letter II, Pontotoc (Miss.), June 24, 1861,” in *History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina*, by George Howe (Columbia: W.J. Duffie, 1883), 433; For more on Dinah, see Otis W. Pickett, “T.C. Stuart and the Monroe Mission among the Chickasaw in Mississippi, 1819-1834,” *Native South* 8 (2015): 74.

³⁶ Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters*, 57.

³⁷ E.T. Winston, “*Father*” *Stuart and the Monroe Mission* (Meridian, MS: Press of Tell Farmer, 1927), 26-27. In his biography of Thomas C. Stuart, Presbyterian missionary to the Chickasaws, Winston included the “Record of Monroe Church Session (North Alabama Presbytery),” which spans from 1823 to 1842.

Bankston—each joined the mission between 1827 and 1832.³⁸ Dinah’s children with Colbert would have made him their owner, unlike Dinah and her other children owned by Gunn. One missionary “met Dinah going to church. I had no need to ask her how she felt:--she appeared so overcome with wonder and admiration, at what the Lord was doing in our midst, that she could neither eat nor sleep.”³⁹ The missionary perhaps confused Dinah’s outward expressions of religious zeal with delight that she would see her Colbert children at church.⁴⁰

The presence of black Indians in North Mississippi after Indian Removal served as a testament to the legacy of Southeastern Indians’ slaveholding practices. The movement and migration associated with Indians’ forced removal and white Americans’ westward settlement brought the descendants of Choctaws, Creeks, and Cherokees into the Chickasaw homeland of North Mississippi. Like Bombazelle, other enslaved people claimed descent from Southeastern Indian groups. In WPA interviews conducted during the 1930s, former bonded people recalled a “multi-racial South.”⁴¹ Rebecca Brown Hill of Chickasaw County recalled her maternal grandfather, “a white Choctaw Indian” named John Abbot, who “sold Harriett, my grandma, and kept mama and her brother.” Abbot later “married a white woman and had a white family.” The death of Hill’s uncle left her mother to “wait on that white family,” who “cut her hair off.” Hill’s mother “hated that” because “she loved her long straight black hair.”⁴² Former bondsman

³⁸ Winston, “*Father*” *Stuart and the Monroe Mission*, 28, 35, 39.

³⁹ “Interesting from the Chickasaw Mission,” *The Religious Intelligencer* 12, no. 40 (March 1, 1828): 628.

⁴⁰ Conversations with Nakia D. Parker, a colleague from University of Texas at Austin, first brought the connection between Dinah and Laney to my attention.

⁴¹ See Fay A. Yarbrough, “Power, Perception, and Interracial Sex: Former Slaves Recall a Multiracial South,” *Journal of Southern History* 71 (August 2005): 559-588.

⁴² Rebecca Brown Hill, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*, first series,

George Greene, born in Aberdeen, Mississippi, recalled his grandmother Louisa, who had “long straight and black (hair)” and “was one of these kinder mixed with Indian.”⁴³ Though born in Aberdeen after emancipation, John G. Hawkins reported that his enslaved grandmother “was dark but had some Indian blood in her. I believe they said it was part Choctaw Indian.”⁴⁴

Aberdeen resident Anna Baker, born and reared near Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and later, Columbus, Mississippi, recalled the relationship between her maternal grandfather, “a full blooded Injun,” likely Cherokee or Creek, and her maternal grandmother, “a full blooded African.” Baker’s grandfather agreed to be enslaved to remain with her grandmother. The white man who enslaved Baker’s grandmother said, “If you want to stay wid her I’ll give you a home if you’ll work for me lak de Niggers do.” After a white overseer’s attempt at discipline met with retaliation from Baker’s Indian grandfather, according to Baker, “white folks learnt dat if dey started to whip a Injun dey’d better kill him right den or else he might git dem.”⁴⁵

In more recent oral histories conducted during the 2000s, descendants of formerly enslaved people made special note of their grandparents’ Native American ancestry. Macy Ferrell’s paternal grandfather Nathan Vizor never remembered his parents or siblings, but he was told that he was part Indian. Taken from Alabama to Mississippi when a white woman enslaver

Arkansas Narratives, Volume 09A, edited by George P. Rawick (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1972-79), 267.

⁴³ George Greene, *The American Slave*, first series, Arkansas Narratives, Volume 09A, 105.

⁴⁴ John G. Hawkins, *The American Slave*, first series, Arkansas Narratives, Volume 09A, 202.

⁴⁵ Anna Baker, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 6, 92, 99-100. See also Laura L. Lovett, “‘African and Cherokee by Choice’: Race and Resistance under Legalized Segregation,” in *Confounding the Color Line: The Indian-Black Experience in North America*, edited by James F. Brooks (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 195-196.

married Mr. Vizor from Lafayette County, he held memories from only age eight or nine.⁴⁶

Ferrell's paternal aunts also "look almost just like Indians too": "You know, Indians used to come through, you know, traveling. And I remember my aunt Florence, she had this long black hair, down here. And they would look at her, and see, they knew. And they would say, 'I see my blood in you.'" According to Ferrell, "as a whole, black peoples got some of every blood in them."⁴⁷

McAllister's identification of Bombazelle as "mulatto" in his fugitive advertisement reflected the ever-present threat of sexual exploitation for all enslaved women, including Bombazelle's mother. Bombazelle's biological father could have been a white man and her mother, a black woman. During the antebellum years, according to historian Darlene Clark Hine, sexual coercion spurred the development of a "culture of dissemblance" among black women. In their attitudes and behavior, black women "created the appearance of openness and disclosure but actually shielded the truth of their inner lives and selves from their oppressors." Protection from racial animosity, class tensions, domestic violence, and economic variations involved a "self-imposed invisibility" through which "ordinary Black women [could] accrue the psychic space and harness the resources needed to hold their own in the often one-sided and mismatched resistance struggle." Society's pattern of ignoring marginalized groups enabled subordinate black women to "perfect the art of dissemblance," which created space for negative

⁴⁶ Transcript, Macy Ferrell, interviewed by Elizabeth Anne Payne, December 21, 2005, North Mississippi Women's History Project Collection, Archives and Special Collections, J.D. Williams Library, The University of Mississippi.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

images, stereotypes, and untruths about them.⁴⁸

During the colonial period through the antebellum period, enslaved women's reproductive capacity and childbearing potential defined their own economic value and perpetuated the institution of slavery. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, Europeans used observations in travel narratives of African women's ability for easy birth and breastfeeding to naturalize and rationalize African women's ability to easily perform hard labor and reproduce in the Americas. According to theorist Hortense J. Spillers, the theft of male and female enslaved bodies rendered them "ungendered" and abstracted into "'account' as quantities." The conditions of the Middle Passage robbed enslaved women of motherhood. Because masters "possessed" the bodies of enslaved women along with their reproductive capacities, an enslaved woman's offspring could not "belong" to her. Enslavement replaced kinship ties with property relations, which made racial slavery "an economic and social agent whose virtue lies in being outside the kinship system." The system of slavery, in effect, opened "enslaved young to social ambiguity and chaos" with the "ambiguity of his/her fatherhood" and the "destructive loss of the

⁴⁸ Darlene Clark Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West," *Signs* 14 (Summer 1989): 912-915. On silences in African American women's history, see Michele Mitchell, "Silences Broken, Silences Kept: Gender and Sexuality in African-American History," *Gender & History* 11 (November 1999): especially 434, 439-440; Elsa Barkley Brown, "'What Has Happened Here': The Politics of Difference in Women's History and Feminist Politics," *Feminist Studies* 18 (Summer 1992): especially 298-299, 300; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," *Signs* 17 (Winter 1992): especially 252-253, 274; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "Beyond the Sound of Silence: Afro-American Women in History," *Gender and History* 1 (Spring 1989): especially 52, 50, 63. For more on interracial sexual relationships during the antebellum period, see Joshua D. Rothman, *Notorious in the Neighborhood: Sex and Families across the Color Line in Virginia, 1787-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Martha Hodes, *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the 19th-Century South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

natural mother.”⁴⁹ Enslavers created an economic and moral environment that naturalized and rationalized the appropriation of enslaved women’s children and childbearing potential. When surveying slave property, slave owners supplemented its current value with the value of a woman’s reproductive potential, with little regard to her behavior or feelings. Women became the means for naturalizing slave status.⁵⁰ According to Polly Turner Cancer of Lafayette County, “Ole Marster wudn’t let de wimmen do no heavy liftin’ coz he wanted dem de have big fine babies; he always sed, ‘I don’t want no runts.’ When we picked cotton he always made de men tote de sacks. One time a little nigger started to courtin’ me an’ marster tole him to git coz he didn’t want no runts on his place.”⁵¹ The Second Middle Passage necessitated a self-reproducing enslaved population, and earlier rationalizations of controlling and stereotyping African-descended women continued through the antebellum period. Embodying both productive and reproductive potential, black women’s bodies amounted to vessels by which enslavers augmented the wealth of their own families and white communities.

The sexual exploitation of enslaved women was further culturally rooted in the stereotypes of the “mammy” and the “jezebel.” Inspiring the trust of whites and usually receiving better treatment and access to household goods, mammies occupied a “sexless and loyal” image to white slaveholders. Jezebels, however, characterized sexually-charged and seductive black women who sometimes reaped material rewards from white men. The Jezebel

⁴⁹ Hortense J. Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” in *The Black Feminist Reader*, Joy James and T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, eds. (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 73, 77.

⁵⁰ Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women*, 2, 7, 92-93, 105.

⁵¹ Polly Turner Cancer, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 07S, 336.

stereotype, thus, rationalized sexual relations between black women and white men. The coercive nature of sexual relationships between enslaved women and white men reinforced stereotypes of seductive black women, which “made all black women vulnerable to sexual exploitation.”⁵²

Enslaved people and their descendants rarely discussed relationships between enslaved women and enslavers as sexual coercion, but they made white parentage and descent apparent in testimony. In an attempt to conceal the paternity of their enslaved offspring, some white men enslavers had “their slave children’s hair shaved off, so that people need not notice that they favor them,” according to Martha Bentley Gowens, a formerly enslaved woman who reported seeing “cases of this kind close by me in Mississippi.”⁵³ Macy Ferrell’s paternal grandmother Sally Ward and her sister Lizzie were born out of a sexual relationship between their enslaved mother, who “was real black,” and Mr. Ward, her enslaver. Ferrell recounted that her oldest aunt, as a child, asked “is that little black woman my grandmother?” In response, the mother of Ferrell’s aunt replied “don’t ever say that again.” Ferrell speculated that her grandmother “didn’t want [Ferrell’s aunt] to realize just what, how they come here. How they come about.”⁵⁴ Generations of the family described the relationship between Ferrell’s great-grandmother and Ward: “Anytime you hear them saying, ‘I’m a blood Ward,’ that meant that the slave owner was

⁵² Victoria E. Bynum, *Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 5, 9-11, 28, 32-33, 39.

⁵³ Benjamin Drew, “Interviews with Refugees in Canada: Mrs. Henry Gowens,” in *Steal Away: Stories of the Runaway Slaves*, edited by Abraham Chapman (New York: Praeger, 1971), 140-141. For the narrative of Martha Gowens’s husband, see Henry Goings, *Rambles of a Runaway from Southern Slavery*, edited by Calvin Schermerhorn, Michael Plunkett, and Edward Gaynor (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012).

⁵⁴ Transcript, Macy Ferrell, interviewed by Elizabeth Anne Payne, December 21, 2005, North Mississippi Women’s History Project Collection.

their father. And the rest, they would say, was bought.”⁵⁵

White men enslavers routinely engaged in non-consensual sexual relationships with black enslaved women, and those relationships often became public knowledge. For example, in 1852, Elizabeth Campbell asked the Lowndes County chancery court for a divorce from her husband Leonard Campbell of Aberdeen, as well as guardianship of their child and alimony. Campbell charged her husband with committing acts of adultery “with one Sarah a slave belonging to Mrs. Sparkman” and “with one Henrietta a slave belonging to Mrs. Goodman.”⁵⁶ Martha Bentley Gowens, enslaved in Mississippi, reported having “known many owners to have two or three colored women for wives, and when they got a white wife, keep all.” If an enslaved woman “would not comply,” she “would be whipped, or else sold to the lowest, meanest fellow he would find.”⁵⁷

Freedom did not protect black women from the sexual desires of white men enslavers. Martha Bentley Gowens’s father, her white enslaver, kidnapped her mother, a black woman who had run to freedom from the eastern shore of Maryland. Initially, the white woman enslaver of Gowens’s mother had promised her freedom: “My mother’s mistress promised my mother’s mother (who was at the time free) that on her death she would set my mother free.” When the white woman enslaver died, she left Gowens’s mother “to wait on her niece until the niece died,

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Petition of Elizabeth Campbell and John Pierce, Jr. to the Chancery Court of Lowndes, County, Mississippi, 1 October 1852, in Records of the Chancery Court, Minutes 1845/-1853/5, *Elizabeth Campbell and John Pierce Jr. v. Leonard Campbell*, pages 517-521, Billups-Garth Archives, Lowndes County Public Library, Columbus, Mississippi. PAR #21085221. Transcript in Loren Schweninger, ed., *The Southern Debate over Slavery: Volume 2, Petitions to Southern County Courts, 1775-1867* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 290-292.

⁵⁷ Drew, “Interviews with Refugees in Canada: Mrs. Henry Gowens,” 140-141.

she being very low,” and left a promise to free Gowens’s mother in her will. Within two to three weeks, the niece died, and her white relatives discussed selling Gowens’s mother to slave traders “because they had got so little work out of her.” After learning of the possible sale, the family of Gowens’s mother ran away into New Jersey. Gowens’s father and enslaver “bought them running, and kidnapped my mother and her cousin’s family,” even as understood their situation and “that they were entitled to their freedom.”⁵⁸ For a time, Gowens’s father, and the enslaved people whom he had kidnapped, went to Georgia, and later migrated to Mississippi. Gowen’s mother gave birth to her and a sister who died at a young age before the 1850s.

As an enslaver who fathered numerous children with his enslaved property, Gowens’s father “liberated all the children he had by my [enslaved] mother, and one other slave woman,” except for one daughter, Minerva, “whom he had educated and put to the milliner’s trade.” After Minerva had learned to make hats, Gowens’s father “went to the place where she was, with money to establish her in business.” When her enslaver father arrived, “he found [Minerva] had two children by a white man,” a circumstance that “so enraged him.” Gowens’s father returned Minerva and her two children to his farm, where she would work in the fields. According to Gowens’s father, it was “there... she was to die.” The white father of Minerva’s two children soon arrived on the farm, and “offered two thousand dollars for the woman and the children, as he wished to marry her.” Gowens’s father refused the initial offer, so the white man countered with another offer of three thousand dollars, along with five other enslaved adults. After refusing the second offer, Gowens’s father threatened that if the white man “ever set foot on the farm again, [Gowens’s father] would blow [the white man’s] brains out.” Gowens speculated

⁵⁸ Ibid., 139-140.

that Minerva and her children remained enslaved because the white wife of Gowens's father "never was disposed to sell" and "would rather keep them and punish them, on account of [Gowens's father] having so many wives."⁵⁹

During her childhood, Bombazelle could have been present during the high point of Chickasaws' forced removal, and she might have witnessed the entrance of white settlers and enslaved people from the eastern seaboard. In the 1830s, the opening of cheap land and the resultant cotton boom saw the entrance of large numbers of enslaved people into the southwestern frontier. East-west settlement patterns and proximity to markets in Memphis and New Orleans placed migrants to North Mississippi at a crossroads of fast-paced economic development and white upward mobility in the most profitable slave state. Compared to eastern seaboard communities established for generations, enslaved people in Mississippi had shallow roots as they cleared land after the 1830s Chickasaw Cession. Unlike the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta, the Hill Country "stood in marked contrast" with lower rates of absentee ownership and smaller land and slaveholdings among white settlers.⁶⁰

Enslaved people entered the Old Southwest, including North Mississippi, by navigating what historians call the "Second Middle Passage," or the fraught and forced dislocation westward from the Eastern Seaboard. According to historian Ira Berlin, the realities of the Second Middle Passage "shredded the planters' paternalist pretenses in the eyes of black people and prodded slaves and free people of color to create a host of oppositional ideologies and institutions that better accounted for the realities of endless deportations, expulsions, and flights

⁵⁹ Ibid., 139.

⁶⁰ Nancy D. Bercaw, *Gendered Freedoms: Race, Rights, and the Politics of Household in the Delta, 1861-1875* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 8, 10-11.

that continually remade their world.”⁶¹ By the 1820s, around 150,000 enslaved people forcibly migrated to the Old Southwest per decade. They arrived either accompanied by enslaving white families and communities or via the overland domestic slave trade, which emerged as a replacement for the Atlantic slave trade, outlawed in 1808.⁶² Enslavers from the East sold their enslaved workforces for a number of reasons, including to downsize their holdings and as a method of punishment. According to historian Manisha Sinha, the Second Middle Passage, nonetheless, “mirrored the abuses of the African slave trade.”⁶³

As a woman already enslaved in North Mississippi, Bombazelle may have witnessed scenes such as the caravan of “covered wagons, ox wagons” that arrived from South Carolina with Mattie Bruce’s maternal grandmother Hannah Pegues. Journeying for six months, the wagons carried seven pregnant women, according to Bruce: “I remember hearing my mother’s mother said there was seven babies born on the road.” In North Mississippi, Tom Pegues would enslave Hannah.⁶⁴ Macy Ferrell’s maternal great-grandmother Louise and aunt Harriet, likewise,

⁶¹ Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 18.

⁶² From the ratification of Mississippi’s first state constitution in 1817 and through the 1840s, in reaction to fears about enslaved people’s “temperament,” legislators had passed often short-lived measures to regulate the slave trade and to tax the purchase of enslaved people, though white settlers could enter the state with their existing enslaved property. See Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 53-54, 306; Lacy Ford, “Reconsidering the Internal Slave Trade: Paternalism, Markets, and the Character of the Old South,” in *The Chattel Principle: Internal Slave Trades in the Americas*, edited by Walter Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 157-159; Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-bellum South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), 253, 255.

⁶³ Manisha Sinha, “Eugene D. Genovese: The Mind of a Marxist Conservative,” *Radical History Review* 88 (Winter 2004): 17.

⁶⁴ Transcript, Mattie Bruce, interviewed by Elizabeth Anne Payne and Lennette Ivy, April 1, 2006, North Mississippi Women’s History Project Collection, Archives and Special

migrated from South Carolina to North Mississippi. According to Ferrell, the sisters, purchased by Pegues in South Carolina, “rode mules barebacked and barefooted... to Lafayette County.”⁶⁵ The trauma of enslavement haunted the lives and minds of former bonded people and lingered in family stories like those from Bruce and Ferrell. As historian Edward E. Baptist observes, formerly enslaved people understood their experiences as a commonly held set of images and metaphors. In their own daily experiences and interactions after emancipation, formerly enslaved people constructed a “vernacular history” through which they identified their shared histories and constructed their identities.⁶⁶ They understood enslavement as a shared experience rooted in loss and separation, and the repetition of narrative elements in oral histories denotes a collective memory. Although oral histories occurred many decades after emancipation, narrative repetition in the interviews as a body of literature attests to the depth of enslavement’s scars.⁶⁷

Bombazelle’s experiences as the descendant of one free, white or Chickasaw, and one enslaved person likely revealed the realities that enslaved people faced when recreating family ties with each sale and each migration. In addition to the name “Bombazelle,” surviving sources indicate that she also referred to herself as “Mary Ann Paine.” It is possible that a nearby Paine family enslaved Bombazelle before her sale to Ulysses McAllister. Two Paine households, headed by Robert Paine and Sterling Paine, resided in Monroe County in 1850.⁶⁸ Robert Paine enslaved fifty-two people, all listed as “black,” and Sterling Paine enslaved eight people, with six

Collections, J.D. Williams Library, The University of Mississippi.

⁶⁵ Transcript, Macy Ferrell, interviewed by Elizabeth Anne Payne, December 21, 2005, North Mississippi Women’s History Project Collection.

⁶⁶ Baptist, “‘Stol’ and Fetched Here’,” 245-246.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 247-248, 251.

⁶⁸ *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*, M432, roll 378, page 94A.

listed as “black” and two listed as “mulatto.” Sterling Paine listed both mixed race enslaved people as “female,” ages twenty-three and two.⁶⁹ The older of the two mixed race enslaved women would have been close in age to Bombazelle, alias Mary Ann Paine, who reported to be around age twenty-two in 1852. In the federal slave census taken at the beginning of the following decade in 1860, Sterling Paine’s record lists neither mixed-race enslaved woman.⁷⁰ Although no federal census records list the names of enslaved people, a reasonable explanation might point to Bombazelle’s enslavement under a different enslaver than McAllister in 1850, whether or not his name was Sterling Paine.

Regardless of Bombazelle’s origins prior to her enslavement under McAllister, the reality of sale and the constant in-migration of enslaved people from the eastern seaboard would have necessitated a continuous forging and renegotiation of kinship ties. Enslavers often separated families at the “moment of sale,” as individual enslaved people sold for higher prices. While some enslavers refused to separate enslaved families, such decisions most often depended on their financial interests as opposed to the stability of enslaved families.⁷¹ Former enslaved woman Lizzie Johnson’s mother and grandmother “never seen none of [their] folks after they was sold” to Holly Springs.⁷² Placed at auction at age twelve, formerly enslaved woman Mattie Dillworth of Lafayette County recalled that “dey put my sister on de block the same day dey did

⁶⁹ 1850 U.S. Federal Census – Slave Schedules, *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*, M432, roll 387.

⁷⁰ 1860 U.S. Federal Census – Slave Schedules, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860*, M653, roll 601

⁷¹ Johnson, *Soul by Soul*, 16, 22-23.

⁷² Lizzie Johnson, *The American Slave*, first series, Arkansas Narratives, Volume 09B, 102.

me, an' day sol' her in anudder direction, up de country, an' I aint never seen her to dis day."⁷³ According to former bondsman George Washington Albright, born enslaved in Holly Springs, "It's said today that the slaveowners did not separate families, but actually a plantation owner thought no more of selling a man away from his wife, or a mother away from her children, than of sending a cow or a horse out of the state."⁷⁴ The sale, gift, or division of estates often separated spouses and orphaned children. Historian Walter Johnson estimates that during the decades preceding the Civil War, out of two-thirds of a million interstate slave sales, about twenty-five percent destroyed a first marriage, and fifty percent decimated a nuclear family.⁷⁵ Temporary and permanent separation denied spouses the opportunity to live together, share responsibility for childrearing, and engage in a sexual relationship. Because slave traders and buyers often grouped new mothers with their children during sale as part of a bargain, nursing babies saw the best chance of remaining with their mothers.

Despite the painful loss of separation during sale in the domestic slave trade, enslaved people created new families, accentuated community bonds, and maintained emotional ties to missing relatives. Enslaved families exhibited great adaptive potential and resiliency through the creation of an extended kinship network based on community obligations. Because separation, sale, and labor divisions destabilized the nuclear enslaved family, enslaved people did not always idealize or imitate the monogamy and patrilocality of white nuclear families. Many black people saw kinship as an array of flexible and negotiable social relationships among people unrelated

⁷³ Mattie Dillworth, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 07S, 612.

⁷⁴ George Washington Albright, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 06S, 8.

⁷⁵ Johnson, *Soul by Soul*, 19.

through blood or marriage. Matrilocality, single parenthood, abroad marriages, multi-generational households, single- and mixed-gender dwellings, in addition to monogamous marriages and nuclear households, all represented common enslaved family experiences. Grandparents, other relatives, or non-kin often “adopted” newcomers and assumed the responsibility for childrearing and provided nurture, education, socialization, material support, and recreation when possible. Some enslaved people forged kinship ties through shared interests in resources like animals, clothing, food, furniture, and money. Customs like naming children for absent relatives enabled enslaved people to maintain emotional ties to their families.⁷⁶

Bombazelle’s life and labors as an enslaved woman highlight the day-to-day and spatial restrictions that she and others may have known. After they arrived in North Mississippi, enslaved people, young and old, male and female, labored in a variety of settings that depended on the financial aims of white enslavers. The work routines of enslaved people, especially women, may provide insight into Bombazelle’s daily life, the nature of her enslavers’ operation,

⁷⁶ For more on matrilocality, enslaved people’s marriages, and the extended families of enslaved people, see Tera W. Hunter, *Bound in Wedlock: Slave and Free Black Marriage in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017); Williams, *Help Me to Find My People*, 10-12, 32; Damian Alan Pargas, *The Quarters and the Fields: Slave Families in the Non-Cotton South* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010); Anthony E. Kaye, *Joining Places: Slave Neighborhoods in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 7, 54-55; Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 44-45; Emily West, *Chains of Love: Slave Couples in Antebellum South Carolina* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 3, 11, 73; Dylan C. Penningroth, *The Claims of Kinfolk: African American Property and Community in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 86, 89-91; Marie Jenkins Schwartz, *Born in Bondage: Growing Up Enslaved in the American South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 13-14; Brenda E. Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), xii, 160-161, 324-326; Ann Patton Malone, *Sweet Chariot: Slave Family and Household Structure in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 3-360.

and her relationship with McAllister's overseer Thomas E. Gibson. In the 1850 federal census, Ulysses McAllister listed himself as a "planter" with about \$3,400 "value of real estate owned."⁷⁷ Lands opened by the Chickasaw cession first drew McAllister to North Mississippi. The cultivation of short-staple cotton in the region may have allowed him to profit from the land, but it also demanded innovations in production to maximize yields. Scholars often associate cotton cultivation with a gang labor system that required a continuous, lock-step, sunrise-to-sunset work pace and discipline, which left enslaved people with little free time. Such a labor regime, however, became "obsolete" in Mississippi because of its "dangerous vulnerab[ility] to organized passive resistance by the slaves."⁷⁸ After the 1840s, slaveholders designed a new means of managing enslaved labor that "subverted attempts at group slowdowns by assigning tasks carefully calibrated to the capacities of groups or even individual slaves."⁷⁹

Cotton represented North Mississippi's most important crop, but agriculture in the region also encompassed livestock, corn, peas, and wheat, each to varying degrees of success.⁸⁰

According to former bondsman John Majors of Lafayette County, "We lives over near whar Joe Davis plantation was. Dis was de place his daddy had dey slaves an' raised everything from fruit

⁷⁷ *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*, M432, roll 378, page 73B.

⁷⁸ Gavin Wright, *Slavery and American Economic Development* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 95-96; John Hebron Moore, *The Emergence of Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest: Mississippi, 1770-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 78-80, 95-98; Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 132

⁷⁹ Wright, *Slavery and American Economic Development*, 96; See also Philip Morgan, "Task and Gang Systems: The Organization of Labor on New World Plantations," in *Work and Labor in Early America*, edited by Stephen Innes (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 199; Peter Coclanis, "How the Low Country was Taken to Task," in *Slavery, Secession, and Southern History*, edited by Robert Louis Paquette and Louis A. Ferleger (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 61-62.

⁸⁰ John Hebron Moore, *Agriculture in Ante-bellum Mississippi*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2010 [1958]), 115-130.

to cotton an' corn, but de bigges' thing was de cotton.”⁸¹ Livestock breeding and corn and pea cultivation were present during the antebellum period, but never gained great traction among planters and farmers in terms of wealth accumulation. Wheat, however, “had become a crop of some consequence on many farms and plantations of North Mississippi” by 1839.⁸²

From childhood, enslaved people like Bombazelle would have labored to meet the demands of enslavers' work regimes and financial bottom lines. Enslavers interfered in children's lives through disciplinary action, parental displacement, and forced labor. Historian Wilma King observes that enslaved children's “experiences with separations, terror, misery, and despair reduced them to children without childhoods.”⁸³ Younger enslaved children, especially girls, worked in the homes of enslavers. In Marshall County, Emma Johnson remembered being “taken in the big house to live when I was two years old. Later on I waited on Old Miss, nursed and cleaned up. When I got big enough, I helped to wash and cook. I worked in the field too, hoeing and picking cotton.”⁸⁴ According to former bondswoman Lucindy Hall Shaw of Lafayette County,

When I wuz a chile I had to sleep in de house wid de white folks on de kitchen flo' on one quilt an' kivver wid de udder one.' I ust to sot on de po'ch an' cry; 'spose I wuz cryin' 'cause I didn't hav' no mudder; dey ust to beat me lak I wuz a dog; de white folks'd beat me an' de cullored foks 'ud beat de same az de white foks.⁸⁵

⁸¹ John Majors, *The American Slave*, second supplemental series, Texas Narratives, Volume 07T, 2551.

⁸² Moore, *Agriculture in Ante-bellum Mississippi*, 130.

⁸³ Wilma King, *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011 [1995]), xxii.

⁸⁴ Emma Johnson, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 08S, 1153.

⁸⁵ Lucindy Hall Shaw, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 10S, 1925.

Although laws granted enslavers the ability to shape and supervise the conditions under which children grew to adulthood under bondage, enslavers largely proved unwilling to assume responsibility for the childrearing of slaves. Enslaved parents encouraged enslavers to provide resources that would ensure the health, safety, and survival of their children, yet also understood that such a bargain posed a challenge to their parental duties. Enslavers wished to perpetuate the asymmetry of the enslaver-enslaved relationship that would deny children a sense of self, but enslaved parents wanted to expose children to examples and lessons of fortitude within an extended kinship network that encompassed family and community.⁸⁶

With age, enslaved children's responsibilities increased. Into early adulthood, Bombazelle may have experienced or witnessed a variety of working conditions among enslaved people. Formerly enslaved woman Frances Fluker of Marshall County recounted that "at night we was all tired and went to bed 'cause we had to be up by daybreak—children and all. They said it caused children's j'intns to be stiff sleeping up in the day. All old folks could tell you that."⁸⁷ Abe Kelley, a formerly enslaved man from Marshall County, remembered a similar schedule: "We had to git up at 3 A.M. in the morning, then we carried our breakfast to the field... When we was working far from the house, we carried our dinner too, but if we was close by, they blowed the horn."⁸⁸ As Fluker and Kelley revealed, a rigid dawn-to-dusk work routine was not unheard of in North Mississippi, but it depended on the priorities of individual enslavers.

⁸⁶ For more on the lives of enslaved children, see King, *Stolen Childhood*; Schwartz, *Born in Bondage*, especially 3, 9, 18, 208,

⁸⁷ Frances Fluker, *The American Slave*, first series, Arkansas Narratives, Volume 08B, 319.

⁸⁸ Abe Kelley, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 08S, 1266.

In addition to delegating work responsibility by age, enslaver assigned tasks based on gender. Aside from field labor, enslaved men could work as butlers, coachmen, or blacksmiths. Former bondsman John Majors's father had been his enslaver's "body servant" in Lafayette County. From the age of nine, Majors himself helped his father as "de house boy. I run de errands, like going to de post office for de mail, an' waitin' on de Master wen my pappy was busy wid other things."⁸⁹ Duties that required movement and travel, such as those that Majors described, often gave enslaved men the opportunity to learn the geography of areas beyond their immediate confinement.

Enslaved women's work, by contrast, allowed for less mobility than that of enslaved men and most often took place in both the homes and fields of enslavers. The separation of enslaved men's and enslaved women's work, according to historian Deborah Gray White, "generated female cooperation and interdependence."⁹⁰ This gendered division of labor also tied younger generations of enslaved people to an older generation of enslaved women. Josephine Coxe of Marshall County indicated that "us little chillum was took care of by the Drop Shot Gang. They was the women that was too old or was sick and couldn't work in the field."⁹¹ Unable to perform more arduous tasks, older enslaved women often took care of children, raised poultry, milked cows, or churned butter.

⁸⁹ John Majors, *The American Slave*, second supplemental series, Texas Narratives, Volume 07T, 2551.

⁹⁰ Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999 [1985]), 124; For more on gendered divisions of agricultural labor among enslaved people, see Daina Ramey Berry, *Swing the Sickle for the Harvest is Ripe: Gender and Slavery in Antebellum Georgia* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 13-34.

⁹¹ Josephine Coxe, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 07S, 525.

As they aged out of childhood, enslaved women found themselves working in fields as well as performing domestic tasks. Bombazelle's skill as a dressmaker suggests that she spent a great deal of her time in bondage confined to her enslavers' home, possibly spinning and weaving cloth or sewing, but she may have gained familiarity with other domestic tasks and field work.⁹² In the broader South, enslaved women, especially field workers, often worked longer hours and held responsibility for more work, "a combination actually of skilled, manual, domestic, and sexual labor—that continued well into the night and during time that male slaves traditionally had 'off.'"⁹³ Rebecca Woods, enslaved as a field hand in Lafayette County, recalled how she

toted water to de han' in de fiel'; dats what de chillun had to do befo' dey got big nuf to work in de fiel's; when hit cum time fer de chillums to wuk, dey ole folks wu'd giv' dem a short handle how an' learn dem how to chop out cotton, an' den we wu'd have us short sacks in de fall when cotton pickin' time cum' we didn't hev' to wuk hard, but wid so many mouths to feed in de quarter us hed to do sumthin' to make our sumpthin' to eat.⁹⁴

In the homes of their enslavers, enslaved women often cooked, watched children, cleaned, washed clothes, sewed, and acted as midwives or nurses. In Byhalia, Belle Caruthers, for example, "worked in the house, waited on my mistress, fanned her when she slept and nursed the baby."⁹⁵ According to Polly Turner Cancer, who had been afflicted with "de rumatism" while enslaved in Lafayette County recalled that "ole Miss kep me in de house to wait on her; she tended to de garden an' when she wanted sumbody to wurk in de garden she's ask Marster fur

⁹² For more on enslaved women's non-agricultural labor, see Berry, *Swing the Sickle for the Harvest is Ripe*, 35-51.

⁹³ Brenda E. Stevenson, *What is Slavery?* (Malden: Polity Press, 2015), 133.

⁹⁴ Rebecca Woods, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 10S, 2392.

⁹⁵ Belle G.M. Caruthers, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 07S, 364.

sum han's an' she'd always say, "I wants Poll.""⁹⁶ In July or August, after enslaved men had laid crops, "de women wud card an' spin de cloth; dey had to reel four cuts ov cloth a day; de grannies wud spin de warp; I'se filled many a shuttle on quills." Cancer also recalled enslaved women who nursed "fur de nigger chillums sams az de whites."⁹⁷ According to former enslaved woman Callie Gray of Marshall County, after the year's harvest, each enslaved person had his or her own task:

Some plaited corn-shuch mule collars, and split rails and mended fences and bottomed chairs and lots of other things. Two women sewed all the time after Miss Liza cut out the clothes, and they sewed with they fingers 'cause they warn't no sewing machines. They spun the thread and dyed and wove it too. They dyed it with walnuts and shumake and oak bark, and copperas wus put in the dye too.⁹⁸

All efforts of enslaved women to care for themselves, their families, and their community maintained enslavers' workforces, enhanced productivity, and contributed to the welfare of other enslaved people.⁹⁹

Enslaved women, thus, dealt with a double burden of coerced labor and familial obligations—work that encompassed the entirety of everyday life. According to historian Jacqueline Jones, the multiple duties of enslaved women most often occurred on smaller slaveholdings, like many of those established in North Mississippi.¹⁰⁰ Census records suggest that Bombazelle resided on a small slaveholding farm, possibly with the Paine family, before her sale to McAllister. Women like Lucindy Hall Shaw of Lafayette County had full-time fieldwork

⁹⁶ Polly Turner Cancer, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 07S, 336.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Callie Gray, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 08S, 860.

⁹⁹ Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, 10-13.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 14-29.

alongside part-time work weaving cloth at night and nursing. According to Shaw, “I had to work mighty hard; I had to plow in de fiel’s in de day an’ den at nite when I wuz so tired I cu’dn’t hardly stan’ I had to spin my cut of cotton befo’ I cu’d go to sleep; we had to card, spin, an’ reel at nite; I wish I had a dollar fur evry yard ov cloth I has loomed thru dat ole slay.” Shaw also recalled her domestic responsibilities for her master: “I used to nuss de chillums, an’ I wu’ud ride in de stage coach an’ tote de baby; when dey wuz travellin’.”¹⁰¹

Bombazelle’s knowledge of enslaved people’s labor and work routines likely meant that she understood the intricacies of enslavers’ authority and ability to wield power. Her enslaver, Ulysses McAllister, employed a white overseer, Thomas E. Gibson, in 1850. By employing white male overseers, white enslavers, as historian Ira Berlin argues, created and expanded control: “The plantation did not just happen; it had to be made to happen.”¹⁰² During the 1840s and 1850s, white enslavers consolidated their authority and commanded a disciplined work schedule through overseers, who supervised enslaved people’s labor and daily lives.

While an individual overseer’s demeanor varied, his duties followed the general pattern outlined in the Flinn family’s Green Valley Plantation record book. Originally from North Carolina, the Flinn family settled in North Mississippi, close to Memphis, Tennessee, and listed duties for white overseers and their treatment of enslaved people in 1840. Foremost, the Flinns charged their overseers with keeping an eye towards profits and minimizing financial losses. The overseer “must do everything that is required of him, provided it is directly connected with the planting or other pecuniary interest of the employer at Green Valley Plantation.” Though not

¹⁰¹ Lucindy Hall Shaw, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 10S, 1925.

¹⁰² Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 175.

expected to work in the field alongside of enslaved people, the overseer “must always be with the hand, when not otherwise engaged in the employers’ business.” “A good crop,” meant that the overseer “[took] into consideration everything, hands, breeding women, children, mules, stock provisions, farming utensils of all sorts and keeping up land.” At the bottom line, the overseer’s “object... must be, not to make a given number of bags of cotton, but as many as can be made without losing as much or nearly as much... as is gained in cotton.” In regard to an overseer’s relationship with enslaved people, the Flinns “charged [him] to take care of the slaves, to obey all instructions relative to them,” as well as “to house them fed.” Each morning, “by daylight,” the overseer had to “visit the negro houses,” and then “to count them all at least once.” Once per week, the overseer had to “visit every negro house after horn blow at night.” The Flinns discouraged the frequent physical abuse of enslaved people as it related to the productivity of Green Valley’s operation because “a good manager who is with the hand as much as he should be can encourage them with very little punishment.” For example, enslaved people “must be flogged as seldom as possible yet always when necessary.” The Green Valley Plantation record book further clarified that “no unusual punishment must be resorted to without the employers’ approbation.”¹⁰³

While enslavers’ rules, like those for Green Valley Plantation, appeared to erect strict parameters for the behavior of overseers in written form, the words of enslaved people portrayed a different reality in practice. In all probability, given McAllister’s employment of Gibson, Bombazelle recognized the threat that an overseer posed to her ability to both evade work and

¹⁰³ Green Valley Plantation Record Book, 1840, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

escape Monroe County. According to Solomon Northrup, a free black man who spent twelve years as a slave in Louisiana after being kidnapped in Washington, D.C., “The requisite qualifications in an overseer are utter heartlessness, brutality, and cruelty. It is his business to produce large crops, and if that is accomplished, no matter what amount of suffering it may have cost.”¹⁰⁴ Former bondsman John Majors of Lafayette County recounted that “de field hands would git up by daylight an’ be in de fields by de time de sun was up, de house maids would be up an’ cleanin’ de house by daylight an’ de overseer of de plantation would be on de watch for de run-a-way nigger, everything going on jes dis way.”¹⁰⁵ Responsible for order, productivity, and managing enslaved people, white overseers stood as intermediaries between enslavers and enslaved people and used the lash to enforce their own authority.¹⁰⁶

Enslaved people often described overseers as “white trash,” a euphemism used to degrade character, temperament, and reputation. According to former bondsman Aaron Jones of Holly Springs, the overseer characterized “death and gaul, and that wasn't all.” Mean overseers were “common white trash.” On a day when Jones had to work in the field, the overseer “punished the niggers for disobedience and for fighting mongst themselves, by whipping them. Sometimes they were locked in the gin house or some other farm house.”¹⁰⁷ Belle Caruthers of Marshall County, likewise described the overseer as “nothing, just common white trash.” If enslaved

¹⁰⁴ Solomon Northrup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northrup, a Citizen of New-York, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841, and Rescued in 1853* (Auburn: Derby and Miller, 1853), 224.

¹⁰⁵ John Majors, *The American Slave*, second supplemental series, Texas Narratives, Volume 07T, 2551.

¹⁰⁶ Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 178.

¹⁰⁷ Aaron Jones, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 10S, 1185.

people “didn’t get to the field by daylight,” then the overseer “would beat them. But he didn’t put them in jail because he wanted them to work.”¹⁰⁸ Despite descriptions of overseers as “white trash,” historian Keri Leigh Merritt finds that most overseers identified not as poor white people but as yeoman or middling white southerners.¹⁰⁹

In their actions, enslavers made clear the acceptable boundaries of overseers’ behavior in particular situations. Some enslavers stepped in to prevent overseers’ from exacting punishments against enslaved people. Polly Turner Cancer, who had been enslaved in Lafayette County, recalled that “‘all overseers iz mean; I’d run off an’ hide in de thickets, an’ de snakes wud run me out; we went to ole Marster an’ tol’ him how mean dat overseer was to us an’ he turnt him off.’”¹¹⁰ On Happy Hills Plantation in Marshall County, however, white enslaver Robert Burrell Alexander took care of a “brush” between Amos, an enslaved man, and Praply, an overseer. “Amos had given him impudence and I thought he ought to be paddled and I told Praply to warm him good, so I told him and left and went to where the negroes were at work.”¹¹¹ Some enslavers preferred to enact punishments themselves. Lizzie Fant Brown of Marshall County detailed how “Marse Jeemes [James Fant] sho wipped me one day”:

He lowed for me to lock up the crib and the hen house and, child like, I forgot the hen house. When he come in and ask me if I ahd locked the hen house, I told him that I had. But he knowed better. He said ‘Well, give me the key.’ And I didn’t even have the key, so I rambled around sly-like, till I found it. Then, with my hand, this here very hand, I

¹⁰⁸ Belle G.M. Caruthers, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 07S, 364.

¹⁰⁹ Keri Leigh Merritt, *Masterless Men: Poor Whites and Slavery in the Antebellum South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 84.

¹¹⁰ Polly Turner Cancer, *The American Slave*, Volume 07S, 336.

¹¹¹ Alexander Account Book, April 15, 1861, Folder 8.4, McAlexander/Marshall County Collection, Archives and Special Collections, J.D. Williams Library, The University of Mississippi.

handed the key to him. Well, he just turned me up and he blistered me.¹¹²

On a small farm in Lafayette County, Lucindy Hall Shaw witnessed the apathy of white woman enslaver Sarah Humphries Hall to the murder of an enslaved woman:

One day Miss Sara wuz settin' on de po'ch sewin' an' I wuz settin' on de steps; dere wez a 'oman had done sumthin', I don't know whut; but de white overseer coched her an' tied her to a pos' an' whipped her 'till she drapped; I sed: 'Oh, Lord, Mist Sara dat overseer done kilt dat 'oman; dey ontied her an' she wuz de'd; dey jus' called an' dug her grave rite dar; I sez grave, but hit wuzn't nuthin' but a hole in de groun'; he tok de shovel an' jus' rolled her in, an' den he shoveled in sumthin' dat I tho't I saw move; I tol' Mist Sara, but she 'tend lak she didn't see nuthin'; she w'udn't tell me den but she tol' me afterwards, dat da overseer whipped her so hard she birfed a baby.¹¹³

As Shaw's story demonstrates, white woman enslavers often enlisted overseers as proxies to retaliate against enslaved women. White woman enslavers, offers historian Thavolia Glymph, held the power of being "indifferent" to the cruelties of enslaved women's punishments.¹¹⁴

White overseers, sometimes with the aid of black slave drivers, exacted violence against enslaved women, seemingly without the knowledge of enslavers. Clara C. Young of Monroe County recalled a white overseer and black slave driver's murder-by-whipping of her seventeen-year-old cousin. Young suggested her cousin was pregnant, or "in de fambly way for de fust time, and couldn't work as hard as the rest." In the aftermath of Young's cousin's death, the black slave driver "tole de rest if dey said anything 'bout it to de marster he'd beat em to death, too, so ev'rbody kept quiet an de marster neber know'd."¹¹⁵

In addition to hiring overseers, enslavers in Mississippi, as a class, wielded enough

¹¹² Lizzie Fant Brown, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 06S, 255.

¹¹³ Lucindy Hall Shaw, Volume 10S, 1925.

¹¹⁴ Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, 40.

¹¹⁵ Clara C. Young, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 10S, 2402.

political power to limit the physical mobility of enslaved people and further tie their bodies and labors to the land through slave codes and the patrol system. Each of these elements would have combined to make Bombazelle's escape an unlikely proposition that she would eventually test as she ran away from McAllister's operation in Monroe County and headed towards Calhoun County. Mississippi first initiated slave codes to restrict enslaved people's movements in 1823. During the 1830s, however, abolitionism along with news of slave insurrections across the South heightened white enslavers' fears about uprisings of enslaved people as well as runaways. As historian Anthony E. Kaye argues, the state of Mississippi "defined many slave crimes in spatial terms." In other words, slave crimes involved places such as dwellings, stores, barns, stables, or gins and movement from place to place: "'carry[ing] away' someone else's property as well as trespassing, trading with the public, or transporting weapons."¹¹⁶ Passed at the state level, slave codes "sharply reduced the latitude slaves previously enjoyed and extended the deference slaves must show to their owners at all times, without question."¹¹⁷ Slave codes barred enslaved individuals from testifying against a white person, carrying firearms, leaving plantations without permission, learning how to read and write, and assembling without a white person's supervision. In 1833, Mississippi allowed county Boards of Police to appoint slave patrol leaders. An 1842 statute required slaveholders to enlist an overseer or other white patroller to monitor enslaved people if they were more than a mile from the residence.¹¹⁸ Mississippi also allowed for trying enslaved people for non-capital offenses before two justices and five

¹¹⁶ Kaye, *Joining Places*, 149.

¹¹⁷ Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 10.

¹¹⁸ Kaye, *Joining Places*, 38, 149-150.

slaveholding white men.¹¹⁹

White authorities did not always enforce slave codes to the fullest extent, but formerly enslaved people retained vivid memories of slave patrollers and the boundaries in which enslavement confined them. As Polly Turner Cancer remembered, “Ef you tried to go off de place de paterollers wud meet you in de road an’ wear you out rite dar in de road.”¹²⁰ Lizzie Fant Brown of Marshall County remembered that “the patarollers wus always hanging around at night to catch the niggers that wus visiting away from they own plantations... And of course when they told a nigger he couldn’t go away from home, that is just what he wanted to do.”¹²¹ Rebecca Woods, likewise, recalled that in Lafayette County, “Dey had paterollers at ever’ fork in de road to keep de slaves frum runnin’ away.”¹²²

In spite of the boundaries that confined enslaved people, many remembered the illicit gatherings that took place beyond the gaze of enslavers. Illicit gatherings tested the geographic boundaries and pass and curfew laws set by enslavers, and reflected enslaved people’s belief that their bodies functioned as more than agricultural tools. Through independent late-hour gatherings and parties that often included bodily enjoyment through dancing, dressing up, drinking alcohol, eating, and socializing and resulted in sleep deprivation, enslaved people undermined enslavers’ authority, hindered daily productivity, and contributed to incremental

¹¹⁹ Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution*, 210, 224-225; While branding and bodily mutilation had largely declined throughout the South by the middle of the nineteenth century, Mississippi continued to allow “burning in the hand” for non-capital felonies.

¹²⁰ Polly Turner Cancer, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 07S, 336.

¹²¹ Lizzie Fant Brown, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 06S, 255.

¹²² Rebecca Woods, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 10S, 2392.

financial loss. Aaron Jones, a formerly enslaved man from Marshall County, described one gathering:

The niggers would slip off and go to candy pullings and quiltings at the neighbors farms and if the pat-a-roller caught them they would whip them pretty bad. One time the niggers was off at a candy stew and just as the leader called out 'Promenade and Sociate', a pataroller put his head in the window and said, 'Promenade and Sociate' yourselves.' Well, the niggers tore down the chimney and part of the wall getting away --- and he didn't catch them. So then they ran around to the road where he had to pass and strung up wild grape vines so they would stumble his horse or rake him off.¹²³

As Jones's testimony demonstrated, enslaved partygoers shared in, what historian Stephanie M.H. Camp characterizes as, a "common commitment to delight in their bodies, to display their physical skill, to master their bodies through competition with others, and to express their creativity."¹²⁴ Enslaved people's illegal gatherings stole time and space from slaveholders and ignored slaveholders' bodily control—both failures to uphold their position in a hierarchical antebellum society that positioned enslavers at the top.

Before escaping McAllister in Monroe County, Bombazelle herself perhaps attended an illicit gathering of enslaved people. For enslaved women, illegal gatherings offered a chance to reclaim their femininity by through fashion. Bombazelle may have displayed her skill as a dressmaker to other enslaved people in attendance. By wearing highly ornamented clothing often made from items stolen from their masters, enslaved women claimed the products of their own labor for personal purposes, prided themselves on their outward appearances, and took pleasure in their bodies, which amounted to a rejection of masters' claims to their commercial

¹²³ Aaron Jones, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 10S, 1185.

¹²⁴ Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 90, 92, 61, 68.

value.¹²⁵

While Bombazelle's dressmaking skills allow us to imagine her attendance at an illicit gathering of enslaved people, McAllister's advertisement confirms her ability to read and write. Bombazelle's ability to read may further link her to literate black interpreters enslaved by Chickasaws during the 1820s and 1830s, or her enslaved status may have provided her with an opportunity to learn reading from a white woman enslaver. In addition to laws that restricted the physical movements of enslaved people, Mississippi also regulated enslaved people's literacy. Not by coincidence, anti-literacy laws aimed at enslaved people emerged as white Southerners' fears of abolition and slave insurrection rose in reaction to the Denmark Vesey conspiracy of 1822, the Nat Turner rebellion of 1831, and the spread of abolitionists' pamphlets.¹²⁶ An 1823 Mississippi law forbade "all meetings or assemblies of Slaves, or free negroes, or mulattoes, mixing and associating with such slaves, above the number of five, at any place of public resort, or at any meeting house or houses, in the night, or at any school or schools, for teaching them reading or writing, either in the day or night, under whatsoever pretext." The law also authorized "officers," at the direction of any county or town's justice of the peace, "to enter the house or houses where such unlawful assemblages may be [to] apprehend or disperse" the enslaved, free, or mixed-race offenders and to punish them with no more than thirty-nine lashes.¹²⁷ According to George Washington Albright, enslaved in Marshall County, the consequences of learning to

¹²⁵ Ibid., 90-92.

¹²⁶ Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 5, 13. Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), 137-138.

¹²⁷ A. Hutchinson, comp., *Code of Mississippi: Being an Analytical Compilation of the Public and General Statutes of the Territory and State, with Tabular References to the Local and Private Acts, from 1798-1848* (Jackson, Miss., 1848). Quoted in Williams, *Self-Taught*, 205.

read and write could move beyond those prescribed by the 1823 law: “if any slave learned to read or write, he was to be punished with 500 lashes on the naked back, and to have the thumb cut off above the second joint.”¹²⁸ The enforcement, or lack thereof, of statutes governing enslaved people’s ability to read and write, thus, depended on the prerogatives of individual enslavers.

Bombazelle’s initial escape from McAllister links the mission to Chickasaws at Monroe to the possibility of enslaved people’s continued literacy. Enslaved women had developed a reputation for their ability to act as interpreters among Indians and white people, and their knowledge of English continued past the Chickasaws’ forced removal. Dinah, the first black woman admitted to Monroe Mission, could speak Chickasaw and English, and acted as Thomas C. Stuart’s most important interpreter as he preached to Chickasaws. According to Stuart, “Being a native of the country, she spoke the Chickasaw language fluently; and having the confidence of the Indians, I employed her as my interpreter, for several years, in preaching the gospel to them.”¹²⁹

Dinah could not only speak in two languages, but she could also read in English. Enslaved women most often transmitted literacy to other enslaved people through their activities with churches and missions.¹³⁰ According to a white woman missionary, “Dinah was reading in her Testament not long ago, and after a pause she said, ‘O, if my heart was only as fast to the

¹²⁸ George Washington Albright, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 06S, 10.

¹²⁹ Stuart, “Letter II, Pontotoc (Miss.), June 24, 1861,” in *History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina*, 433.

¹³⁰ Calvin Schermerhorn, *Unrequited Toil: A History of United States Slavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 106.

Saviour as the print is to the book, how good it would be!’ Brother Holmes said, I hope it is faster, Dinah; for water would wash it all away. ‘O,’ said she, ‘I mean as fast it looks now in my hand.’”¹³¹ Another white woman missionary, Cornelia Pelham, writing under the pseudonym Sarah Tuttle, reported that one enslaved person could “read fluently in the Bible,” while other enslaved people could “sing hymns, which they have committed to memory from hearing them sung and recited.”¹³² Eventually, through her work as an interpreter, Dinah “saved enough money to purchase her freedom and helped her husband to purchase his.”¹³³ Dinah’s literacy and skill gave her the ability to navigate black, white, and Chickasaw spaces at once.

Bombazelle’s claim to Chickasaw descent along with her documented ability to read and write could represent the continuation of enslaved women’s literacy in religious spaces after the 1830s. At the same time, despite the passage of anti-literacy laws in southern states, some enslaved people did learn how to read and write as a skill that their enslavers found beneficial. But, as historian Janet Duitsman Cornelius writes, laws that restricted enslaved people’s literacy, as well as “extralegal actions where laws were not enforced, convinced whites and blacks to keep quiet about most literacy for slaves.”¹³⁴ Born in Huntsville, Alabama, and later sold to an enslaver in Aberdeen, Mississippi, Clara C. Young’s work in the home of Rachel Conley provided her with an opportunity to learn reading and writing: “Dey had a nigger woman to

¹³¹ “Chickasaw Mission: Extract of a Letter from a Female Missionary at Tockshish, Dated Dec. 31, 1827,” *The Religious Intelligencer* 12, no. 49 (May 3, 1828): 771.

¹³² Tuttle, *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions*, 10-11; for more on Dinah in the mission context, see Pickett, “T.C. Stuart and the Monroe Mission among the Chickasaw in Mississippi, 1819-1834,” 74.

¹³³ Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., *The Chickasaw Freedmen: A People Without a Country* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980), 8.

¹³⁴ Janet Duitsman Cornelius, *“When I Can Read My Title Clear”’: Literacy, Slavery, and Religion in the Antebellum South* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 63.

teach all de house darkies how to read en write end I larned how to sign my name en got as fur as b-a-k-e-r in de Blue Back Speller.”¹³⁵ When enslaved people learned how to read and write in the open, it was always due to an enslaver’s own motives.¹³⁶

Whether an enslaver sanctioned or punished enslaved people’s reading and writing, education defined the parameters of the enslaver-enslaved relationship. According to scholar James C. Scott, oppressed and relatively powerless people develop “hidden transcripts” to critique those holding power. While enslaved people often developed a “public transcript” that deferred to their enslavers, enslaved people’s “hidden transcript” expressed resentment, which threatened the arrangements of white people in power. Historian Heather Andrea Williams argues that “literacy constituted one of the terrains on which slaves and slave owners wage a perpetual struggle for control.”¹³⁷ As such, George Washington Albright, formerly enslaved in Marshall County, recalled that “it was only by trickery that I learned to read and write.” As white children completed their lessons in the kitchen of the plantation, Albright’s mother “picked up what information she could, and taught me. I got a primer, and I learned to read it.”¹³⁸ The literacy of enslaved people posed several dangers to white enslavers’ social and cultural control. Foremost, the ability to read and write would give enslaved people the means to mount challenges to the institution of slavery through written communication. So, when Belle

¹³⁵ Clara C. Young, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 10S, 2401.

¹³⁶ See Cornelius, *When I Can Read My Title Clear*, 105-110; Thomas L. Webber, *Deep Like the Rivers: Education in the Slave Quarter Community, 1831-1865* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978), 131-138.

¹³⁷ Williams, *Self-Taught*, 5, 13, 18, 21-24.

¹³⁸ George Washington Albright, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 06S, 8.

Caruthers's enslaver Colonel Myers of Marshall County caught her studying a Blue Back Speller "he struck me with his muddy boot."¹³⁹ Literacy could also give enslaved people an avenue through which they could articulate personal dignity—a political and social reality antithetical to the debased state of enslavement, and one that could result in physical punishment.

As white enslavers debated the utility of education for enslaved people, black abolitionists and intellectuals like David Walker and Frederick Douglass knew that literacy provided a path to emancipation, and possessed the platforms through which they could communicate their ideas to wider audiences. White enslavers feared the filtering of provocative ideas about education to enslaved people at the local level, which would result in the decay of white control over the production of knowledge and effectively weaken the racialized structures of political and social institutions. For black people, the condition of enslavement rendered a political and social reality "radically different" from that of slaveholders.¹⁴⁰ Walker's *Appeal* and Douglass's *Narrative* carried tremendous intellectual weight because literacy demonstrated that enslaved people held the capacity to operate their own institutions and justify black freedom, the antitheses of the antebellum southern social order. Education held the power to render meaningless the boundaries white people placed between themselves and black people through literacy.

Walker understood that literate enslaved people could upend the foundation of antebellum southern society. Critical of gradual emancipation and attempts to colonize black

¹³⁹ Belle G.M. Caruthers, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 07S, 364.

¹⁴⁰ James H. Cone, *Speaking the Truth: Ecumenism, Liberation, and Black Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999 [1986]), 87, 92.

people, Walker argued that enslaved people should rebel against slaveholders: “Had you not rather be killed than to be a slave to a tyrant, who takes the life of your mother, wife, and dear little children?” Walker viewed white enslavers as “unjust, jealous, unmerciful, avaricious, and blood-thirsty” tyrants who relied upon terror to “obliterate from [the minds of enslaved people] the notion of freedom.” According to Walker, education provided the key to emancipation: “I pray that the Lord may undeceive my ignorant brethren, and permit them to throw away pretensions, and seek after the substance of learning.” Educated enslaved people would, as a result, repudiate their condition of bondage, a possibility that made “tyrants quake and tremble on their sandy foundation.”¹⁴¹

The power of education provided enslaved people with another means to articulate dignity, a challenge to the enslaver-enslaved relationship. As former bondsman Frederick Douglass revealed about the path to literacy, “The moral which I gained from the dialogue was the power of truth over the conscience of even a slaveholder... a bold denunciation of slavery, and a powerful vindication of human rights.” The ability to read and write had allowed Douglass “to utter my thoughts, and to meet the arguments brought forward to sustain slavery; but while they relieved me of one difficulty, they brought on another even more painful than the one of which I was relieved.”¹⁴² Douglass’s knowledge of the Bible, furthermore, empowered him to

¹⁴¹ David Walker, *Walker’s Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America, Written in Boston, State of Massachusetts, September 28, 1829*, in *Documenting the American South*, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/walker/walker.html> (accessed September 29, 2018), 20-21, 25, 30, 37.

¹⁴² Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, edited by John W. Blassingame, John R. McKivigan, and Peter P. Hinks, textual ed. Gerald Fulkerson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 35.

run away to the North, as “Biblical knowledge through reading made him unfit to remain a slave.”¹⁴³ Enslaved people understood the conditions of their bondage, and reading paved a way for them to reimagine their relationship to enslavers. For Douglass in particular,

The more I read, the more I was led to abhor and detest my enslavers. I could regard them in no other light than a band of successful robbers, who had left their homes, and gone to Africa, and stolen us from our homes, and in a strange land reduced us to slavery. I loathed them as being the meanest as well as the most wicked of men.¹⁴⁴

Because literacy defined the parameters of the enslaver-enslaved relationship, enslaved people’s education jeopardized the institution of slavery by offering them a means to challenge it through written communication.¹⁴⁵

Literacy, could, and did, contribute to flight, or fugitivity among enslaved people in North Mississippi. Ulysses McAllister made such a link in his advertisement of Bombazelle’s disappearance. Belle Caruthers of Marshall County remembered that her mistress’s “baby had Alphabet blocks to play with and I learned my letters while she learned hers. There was a Blue Back Speller there too.” When Caruthers found “a Hymn book one day and spelled out, ‘When I Can Read My Title Clear,’” she “was so happy when I saw that I could really read, that I ran around telling all the other slaves.”¹⁴⁶ As Caruthers’s story demonstrates, enslaved people in wider communities may have known about individuals’ ability to write or read, and use that to other ends.

One individual’s ability to read and write threatened to open pathways for other enslaved

¹⁴³ Dwight N. Hopkins, *Down, Up, and Over: Slave Religion and Black Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 121.

¹⁴⁴ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 35.

¹⁴⁵ Williams, *Self-Taught*, 5, 13.

¹⁴⁶ Belle G.M. Caruthers, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 07S, 364.

people to escape bondage. In October 1838, a newspaper advertisement warned of a twenty-five year old fugitive enslaved man, Jim Kerr, in North Mississippi: “Tall and stout built” but “limp[ing] on one of his feet” with “[a] dark complexion, large eyes, and show[ing] much of the white of them, a down look, hair cover[ing] much of his forehead.” On September 10, 1838, in Natchez, Kerr ran away from his purchasers Eaton and Freeman, who speculated that “his object will probably be to get on board some steamboat, and make his way to the upcountry.” Although he would probably not reveal his owner’s name, Kerr’s ability to read and write had allowed him to create his own free passes.¹⁴⁷ Kerr had yet to be caught by the beginning of the following year.¹⁴⁸ Likewise, in an 1845 letter, John T. Finley relayed news of bondsman Simon’s attempts to run away by forging freedom papers to leave Holly Springs for Memphis to board a boat on the Mississippi River. Finley understood the immediacy of uncovering the source of Simon’s freedom papers. Simon was likely illiterate, so Finley had to “make Simon tell who wrote the paper for him [and] find out if any more have been furnished other negroes in that country.”¹⁴⁹ Because literacy enabled an unknown person to forge freedom papers, Simon’s plight highlighted the link between education and mobility, and justified the tightening of control over enslaved people in North Mississippi.

Mississippi state law defined the situations that constituted running away. An enslaved person became a “runaway” or a “fugitive” when he or she was found without a pass or the

¹⁴⁷ “Ranaway,” *Marshall County Republican and Free Trade Advocate*, October 20, 1838.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, January 5, 1839.

¹⁴⁹ Letter from John T. Finley to James D. Davidson, July 10, 1845, Folder 19.1, McAlexander/Marshall County Collection, Archives and Special Collections, J.D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi, Oxford, Mississippi.

presence of a white overseer or patroller six to eight miles from home. For enslaved people who lived far away or whose owners could not be found, justices of the peace placed him or her in jail. For example, in 1837, *The Vicksburg Register* listed an enslaved man named Raleigh, aged fifty years, measuring five feet, two inches, and wearing a “blue coat and blue cotton pants” jailed in Lafayette County.¹⁵⁰ Authorities publicized the slaves of unknown masters in newspapers as runaway slave ads, which could run for three months to a year, and listed specific physical and personality traits of individual enslaved fugitives. Unclaimed enslaved people faced sale at auction. An enslaver who appeared after such a sale could recover his investment in the slave property.¹⁵¹

During the 1840s and 1850s, “the number of advertisements for runaways rose dramatically.” At the same time, however, according to historians John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger’s analysis, “One gets the clear impression that the number of runaways for whom there was no advertisement rose even more.” Escape among enslaved people became “so common” that advertising was nearly “impossible” because of legal, transportation, jail, and reward costs.¹⁵² Runaway ads for enslaved people with owners in Lafayette County reveal that some escapees never made it out of North Mississippi before being caught. For instance, in February 1846, *The Mississippian* reported that authorities in Lowndes County jailed two enslaved men from Lafayette County. Berry, between eighteen and twenty years old, five feet and five and a half inches in height, and “dark complected,” claimed to belong to Lucy

¹⁵⁰ *The Vicksburg Register*, October 18, 1837.

¹⁵¹ Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution*, 213, 215.

¹⁵² John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 177.

Fitzgerald. Nelson, age twenty-two and measuring five feet and nine inches, and with “high, bright complexion, and long black straight hair,” said he belonged to William Pie.¹⁵³ In July 1846, the *Southern Tribune* reported that Pontotoc County authorities had jailed an enslaved man named Ephraim, age twenty, measuring five feet and six inches, and weighing about 140 to 145 pounds, with “very black, thick lips,” who said he belonged to William Collier.¹⁵⁴ In March 1852, the *Woodville Republican and Wilkinson Weekly Advertiser* printed a “register of runaways” that listed an enslaved man, Sam, “dark, 30 to 35 years, stout,” who belong to Allen Whitman.¹⁵⁵ Rewards for those who caught fugitives were modest at best—advertising and logistics were expensive and most thought that runaways would return or be caught in a short period of time. A Mississippi fugitive slave law required the payment of six dollars to an individual who found a fugitive. It also forced the person to turn the slave over to an owner, overseer, agent, or jailer.¹⁵⁶ Likewise, ferry operators and toll bridge keepers faced a twenty-five dollar fine for transporting enslaved people.¹⁵⁷

In her own escape from McAllister, Bombazelle’s light complexion and straight hair likely helped her to evade authorities as she absconded to Calhoun County. As fugitives, other enslaved people attempted to use their own racial ambiguity, but newspaper records indicate that many found little long-term success. In 1859, a man, who “appeared to be perfectly white, but who was really a negro,” appeared at Mrs. Butler’s hotel in Oxford, Mississippi, where he “applied for lodgings for himself and servant—a negro man very black.” According to one

¹⁵³ *The Mississippian* (Jackson, Miss.), February 18, 1846.

¹⁵⁴ *Southern Tribune* (Pontotoc, Miss.), July 15, 1846.

¹⁵⁵ *Woodville Republican and Wilkinson Weekly Advertiser*, March 9, 1852.

¹⁵⁶ Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 178.

¹⁵⁷ Kaye, *Joining Places*, 149.

account,

He represented himself a traveler going North, and, after eating supper with the regular guests, requested before retiring to be called up in time to leave on the 6 o'clock train next morning, which was accordingly done. The black darkey was placed in the negro car, while the white one quietly seated himself among the white folks in the passenger car. Shortly after the train was in motion, a negro train band passed through the negro car, and recognized our black passenger seated therein as an old friend. "Hello! Sum [sic]," said the band, "where you gwine?" "I'se gwine Nort. I belong to a gentleman in do odder car." "Don't believe you is; you runnin' off, Sam." Sam flatly denied this, but the other was still in doubt. He represented what had passed to the conductor, who particularly noticed the gentleman in the "odder car," and came to the conclusion that he was either an abolition emissary, or something else, that was not right. When the train reached the junction, he had them both arrested, and brought back on the return train and placed in the Holly Springs jail. The white darkey belongs to W.H. Steen, a planter of this county living near Water Valley; and the black one to John B. Steel, a planter, near Banner in this county. They went up to Holly Springs on Tuesday, and brought the runaways home. It was the intention of the white negro, by passing himself off as a white man, to conduct himself and the other negro to a free State, but his plans were frustrated as above stated.¹⁵⁸

As the story suggests, enslaved people with light skin "possessed certain advantages as runaways." They often worked in skilled positions as maids, cooks, tailors, and waiters in close proximity to white people. As a result, they closely observed the manners and habits of white society. When attempting to run away, light-skinned enslaved people like Bombazelle could emulate the behavior of white southerners and more believably pass as white people themselves.¹⁵⁹

When Bombazelle arrived in Calhoun County and married John McCord in 1852, she settled in his home and assumed an identity as an enslaver. The possibility that Bombazelle experienced most of her enslavement in the "big house" may have meant that she paid special

¹⁵⁸ "A Bold and Shrewd Push for Freedom," *The Liberator*, April 8, 1859.

¹⁵⁹ Franklin and Schwening, *Runaway Slaves*, 214-215.

attention to how white woman enslavers maintained control over enslaved labor forces.¹⁶⁰ Later stories of Bombazelle’s time in Calhoun County depict her as a “firm mistress” who “ran the house with energy and ability.” An enslaved woman named Old Sylvia acted as Bombazelle’s “trusted servant,” while a “flock of boys and girls attend[ed] to her every want.” After Ulysses McAllister exposed Bombazelle as an enslaved woman herself in 1853, Old Sylvia “was the happiest Negro in the county,” and “she and her children clapped their hands at being relieved of such a hard head mistress.”¹⁶¹ Bombazelle’s ability to pass as a white woman enslaver reveals the instability and vulnerability of the racial and gendered order that governed slavery. Her capability of managing McCord’s household and enslaved people further suggests that Bombazelle, having observed McAllister’s wife Sarah Frances, understood the inner workings of the antebellum household and the behavior of white woman enslavers.

Posing as a free woman in McCord’s home, Bombazelle undermined notions of the antebellum household as both an ideological construction and a site of enslaved people’s labor. As an ideological construct, the household existed as a marker of southern civilization based on

¹⁶⁰ For more on white women as enslavers, see Jones-Rogers, *They Were Her Property*; Laura F. Edwards, *The People and Their Peace: Legal Culture and the Transformation of Inequality in the Post-Revolutionary South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*; Kirsten E. Wood, *Masterful Women: Slaveholding Widows from the American Revolution through the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Laura F. Edwards, *Scarlett Doesn’t Live Here Anymore: Southern Women in the Civil War Era* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000); Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Suzanne Leacock, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1984); Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman’s World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982); Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1970).

¹⁶¹ “Yellow Rose of Scoona,” *The Sunflower Tocsin* (Indianola, Miss.), January 12, 1928.

race and gender that juxtaposed white women enslavers' idealized domesticity with enslaved women's perceived savagery. Characterized as "vessels of disorder and filth [that] had become central to southern pro-slavery ideology," according to historian Thavolia Glymph, enslaved women present in the household received blame for and obscured white women enslavers' inept management. The household, furthermore, depended on the labors of enslaved people to demonstrate progress and civilization. Enslaved women resented and resisted the civilizing mission within the household, and often became unreliable in their fulfillment of white women enslavers' goals and needs. This amounted to a critique of the hierarchical racial and gender ideology that underwrote white southern society, and undermined the ability of white women enslavers to conform to the ideals of domesticity.¹⁶² As a woman of African and possibly Chickasaw descent, Bombazelle's presence as a free person and her aptitude to manage a household contradicted the ideology that justified her enslavement.

The positive responses of Old Sylvia and other enslaved people to Bombazelle's exposure suggest conflict within the McCord household. While an enslaved woman, Bombazelle likely witnessed conflict in Sarah Frances McAllister's household. Even as white enslavers attributed enslaved women's lack of cooperation to backwardness, enslaved women undercut the domestic ideal as white women enslavers responded with physical and verbal abuse. Ellen Fitzgerald, whose parents had been enslaved in Aberdeen, reported the murder of her paternal grandmother with a "battling stick" at the hand of Callie Gibbs, a white woman enslaver. While washing clothes at a spring, Gibbs approached Fitzgerald's grandmother and "struck her in the small part of her back and broke it." Gibbs left Fitzgerald's grandmother, with a broken back, at

¹⁶² Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, 64-66.

the spring until “somebody went to get water and seen her there.” Once Fitzgerald’s grandmother was returned to the house, she died. Fitzgerald speculated that Gibbs “got scared to keep papa [Fitzgerald’s paternal grandfather] round then and sold him.”¹⁶³ Within households, white women enslavers like Gibbs conflated enslaved women’s behavior with disorder. This comforted white women even as it highlighted their inability to conform to a domestic ideal of controlling enslaved people.

White women enslavers also portrayed resistive enslaved women as simultaneously dangerous and harmless, which further veiled enslaved women’s defiance under the guise of domesticity and hid their own domestic ineptitude from public scrutiny. From the perspective of white enslavers, enslaved women’s challenges to authority reflected a racial defect—a lack of discipline—perceived as inherent among all African-descended people, instead of labor conflicts that undermined white authority.¹⁶⁴ In a letter to his children, Hope Hull Lenoir of Monroe County mentioned giving Sarah Lenoir an enslaved woman named Amanda, the daughter of the Lenoir family’s cook, Kizzy. During breakfast in the middle of February 1856, Sarah poured milk from a pitcher, but discovered a bitter taste. LeMay, Sarah’s husband, inspected the glass and “turned the milk slowly [and] found a deposit.” Upon further analysis of the glass, LeMay identified strychnine as the bitter-tasting substance. He attempted to force Amanda, the enslaved woman, to drink the milk. Upon Amanda’s refusal, Hope sent her to jail where she was sold. Although Amanda “insisted that she was innocent,” Hope concluded that “there was no other

¹⁶³ Ellen Fitzgerald, *The American Slave*, first series, Arkansas Narratives, Volume 08B, 303.

¹⁶⁴ Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, 67, 71.

person to do it” and “from the circumstances, I am convinced her object was to poison Sarah.”¹⁶⁵ Lenoir’s gift of Amanda, the daughter of an enslaved woman already working in the home, assumed that she would be able to fulfill a domestic mission. At the same time, the ideology of domesticity allowed the Lenoir family to cast Amanda’s insubordination and potential threat as the consequences of her perceived inferiority, filthiness, irresponsibility, and uncivilized nature.¹⁶⁶ If Amanda could not comply with the Lenoir family’s imposition and expectation of discipline, then the punishment of sale for bad behavior would restore civilized order to the Lenoir household, even when it separated Amanda from her own mother.

After Ulysses McAllister exposed Bombazelle as an enslaved woman and returned to Monroe County, he sold her and used the proceeds to pay for a new home in the town of Aberdeen.¹⁶⁷ No surviving documentation details Bombazelle’s sale, but according to historian Charles S. Sydnor, a “more or less permanent” slave market existed in Aberdeen during the antebellum period.¹⁶⁸ The domestic slave trade had perpetuated the cycle of sales, separations, and forced migrations that Bombazelle may have witnessed as a young woman during the 1830s and 1840s. But, this time, in 1853, after having fled for nearly two years and being captured, Bombazelle would be caught in the cycle herself.

Though records do not indicate Bombazelle’s market value at sale, her status as a recaptured fugitive slave may have dictated McAllister’s profit even as she attempted to retain a

¹⁶⁵ Letter from H.H. Lenoir to “My Dear Children,” March 2, 1856, Folder 1, Box 1, Lenoir Plantation Records, Special Collections, Mississippi State University Libraries, Starkville, Mississippi.

¹⁶⁶ Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, 93-95.

¹⁶⁷ Evans, *Mother Monroe*, 70.

¹⁶⁸ Charles S. Sydnor, *Slavery in Mississippi* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2013 [1933]), 150.

sense of humanity. Historian Daina Ramey Berry argues that enslaved people's experiences, from birth through death, and status as commodities encompassed multiple, overlapping values. While work potential determined the external value and negotiated prices shaped the market value of enslaved bodies, an enslaved person's self-identity and ways of coping and surviving constituted a spirit or soul value.¹⁶⁹ In a similar vein, according to historian Caitlin Rosenthal, "running away was... only one dramatic example of how behavior could drive market price."¹⁷⁰ Her status as a fugitive enslaved woman lowered Bombazelle's appraised value. Running away to freedom hindered the everyday functions of McAllister's operation, and, thus, depreciated Bombazelle's monetary value at sale. Once an enslaved person like Bombazelle understood that she could escape to freedom, she might sell for as little as half of her original market value. As historian Ira Berlin notes, planters desired "young men and women whose strength could be harnessed to turn the wilderness into plantations and whose fecundity would assure the continued viability of the slave regime."¹⁷¹ Bombazelle's ability to pass as a white or Indian free woman threatened the viability of racial slavery.

Prices reveal little about how Bombazelle may have understood herself as a commodity swept into the domestic slave trade, but the testimony of other enslaved people who experienced sale expose the sights and sounds of the auction block. Clara C. Young, a formerly enslaved woman, remembered when Andrew Conley sold her to the Ewing family in Aberdeen at age seventeen. Though Young did not remember the exact price that Ewing paid for her, she went to

¹⁶⁹ Daina Ramey Berry, *The Price for their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved, from Womb to Grave, in the Building of a Nation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2017), 6-7.

¹⁷⁰ Caitlin Rosenthal, *Accounting for Slavery: Masters and Management* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 136.

¹⁷¹ Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 169.

the auction block along with her brother, who “brung \$1400... fer big strong mens brung mo’ dan womens en gals.”¹⁷² Former bondswoman Polly Turner Cancer of Lafayette County recounted that after the death of her master, “dey put me on de block an’ sol’ me; dey stood me on a block on de porch an’ here is how dey done hit; de man had a cane in hiz han’ an’ he wud hol’ hit up an say, ‘What am I bid?’ Goin’- Goin’, Goin’; den he wud hit de side ov de house ‘Blam’ an’ say ‘Gone.’ I sol’ fur \$1500.00.”¹⁷³ According to Mattie Dillworth, another formerly enslaved woman from Lafayette County, “Dey tuk us an’ put us in what dey called ‘de trader’s yard’ what de visitors an’ de speculators c’ud see us, an’ den dey set a day fer to sell us; I was on de back po’ch when dey tol’ me to cum to de block.”¹⁷⁴ Former bondswoman Lizzie Johnson of Holly Springs remembered that some enslavers could not sell older enslaved people, and that another enslaver “would sell off his scrawny niggers” because “he wanted fine looking stock on his place.”¹⁷⁵ Bombazelle’s experience would have ultimately enveloped her in the continuous cycle of sale and forced her to reconstitute her life, just as she had done with her arrival at the homes of Ulysses McAllister and then John McCord, and then to the auction block in Aberdeen.

After her sale at the hand of McAllister, Bombazelle, or Mary Ann Paine, disappears from the historical record. In escaping Ulysses McAllister for a period of almost two years and starting a new family, Bombazelle accomplished an extraordinary feat that few other enslaved people could realize. As much as Bombazelle proved exceptional within the longer arc of the

¹⁷² Clara C. Young, *The American Slave*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 10S, 2400.

¹⁷³ Polly Turner Cancer, *The American Slave*, Volume 07S, 336.

¹⁷⁴ Mattie Dillworth, *The American Slave*, Volume 07S, 612.

¹⁷⁵ Lizzie Johnson, *The American Slave*, first series, Arkansas Narratives, Volume 09B, 102.

post-Indian Removal South, her life also reveals the limitations imposed upon enslaved people, especially women, as well as the possibilities that emerged from the unstable foundation upon which white southern enslavers rested their society. In the end, even though Bombazelle found herself caught in the cycle of sale and separation that decimated so many of the lives of enslaved people and silenced in the archive as a result, her action of running away demonstrated that she refused to cooperate with the color line that her enslavers sought to entrench.

While present-day scholars cannot know the interior thoughts of Bombazelle, a historical figure who left nothing behind herself, surviving documentation presents a compelling case of a mixed race, literate, and strategic enslaved woman who understood how to navigate the racial hierarchy that became increasingly codified in law and social values after Indian Removal. In presenting herself to white Mississippians as a woman with a white father and a Chickasaw mother, she understood that her own freedom required her to work within the confines of white supremacy. She used that sociocultural knowledge and capital to navigate white society, and in the choice between enslavement and freedom she ultimately became an enslaver, even if it caused internal conflict. Bombazelle's story demonstrates that, within the southern confluence, cultural exchange co-existed with a racial hierarchy, and people expressed agency within the confines of white supremacy.

CHAPTER V:
MAKING BLACK SACRED SPACE IN NORTH MISSISSIPPI: ENSLAVED PEOPLE'S
RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL LIVES AND WHITE SUPREMACY, 1839-1865

Formerly enslaved in Lafayette County, Mississippi, Lucindy Hall Shaw recalled hiding her religious and spiritual practices from the watchful eyes of her enslaver Reuben Hall. According to Shaw, Hall “wu’dn’t let us shout an’ pray eder.” When the Hall family had the company of guests in their home, enslaved people saw the visitors as a welcome distraction. They would “get out de big irun pot in de’ well house,” and then “roll hit out in de yard.” Once they placed the large pot, Shaw and other enslaved people had a “prar meetin’ in de big irun pot.”¹ The pots would absorb the sounds of prayer meetings and gave enslaved people a means to practice religious and spiritual beliefs despite the surveillance of enslavers and overseers. Enslaved people’s methods of concealing their illicit gatherings, more significantly, reflected a blending of Protestant Christianity with beliefs and practices that other enslaved people had passed down from West and West-Central Africa.

This chapter uses the notion of a southern confluence to place the voices of enslaved people and white enslavers within the same interpretive frame, and complicates the “invisibility” of what Albert J. Raboteau and other scholars have called the “invisible institution” of enslaved people’s religion. Fears of insurrection and a desire for greater control promoted a visible

¹ Lucindy Hall Shaw, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*, first supplemental series, Mississippi Narratives, Volume 10S, edited by George P. Rawick (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1972-79), 1925.

consolidation of power among white enslavers that concentrated on policing the daily routines, religious expressions, and healing practices in enslaved people's spiritual lives. At the same time, however, these contingencies attest to enslaved people's creative adaptations to unstable regional conditions. A focus on the religious and spiritual lives of enslaved people moves beyond historian Nell Irvin Painter's concept of "soul murder."²

During the 1840s and 1850s, white enslavers increasingly restricted enslaved people's religious and spiritual expressions and molded Christianity to reinforce white supremacy through a biracial color line. Tension between a moral duty to provide enslaved people with religious instruction and the need to monitor and restrict religious activities due to their subversive potential resulted in stricter laws, a pass system, segregation within churches, and mandatory white supervision. In contrast to white enslavers' religious understanding of household order and hierarchy, enslaved people conceived of a religious world that encompassed a larger world, physical and spiritual, unchained from the shackles of bondage. Enslaved people's religious perceptions critiqued the white household and, therefore, shook the ordered foundation that white enslavers sought to impose on their lives. Though enslaved people developed semi-autonomous religious expressions, they never completely overcame the surveillance and censorship of white enslavers. When enslaved people engaged in isolated incidents of rebellion throughout North Mississippi as the 1850s drew to a close, they revealed the unstable nature of white enslavers' society.

This chapter uses plantation diaries, church records, and Works Progress Administration

² Nell Irvin Painter, "Soul Murder and Slavery: Toward a Fully Loaded Cost Accounting," in *Southern History across the Color Line* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 16.

(WPA) interviews with formerly enslaved people to build on the work of scholars who have, since the early twentieth century, probed the nature of enslaved people's religious and spiritual lives and practices.³ Until the late 1960s, scholarly interest in the African roots of enslaved people's cultures and societies in the United States and the wider Atlantic World remained relegated to anthropology and sociology.⁴ By the 1970s and 1980s, more scholars, including took enslaved people's religion into serious consideration.⁵ Most notably, scholar Albert J. Raboteau distinguishes between the "visible institutions" of independent black churches and the "invisible institution" of enslaved people's folk practices, which evolved from the blending of African cultures and Christian denominations.⁶ While Raboteau is correct to emphasize the

³ See Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 73-74; Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 163-164; Carter G. Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church* (Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publishers, 1921); W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999 [1903]).

⁴ Judith A. Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 2-3; Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976), 9, 87; Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941). See also E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1963); Frazier, *The Free Negro Family: A Study of Family Origins before the Civil War* (Nashville: Fisk University Press, 1932). See also C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Church since Frazier* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974).

⁵ Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

⁶ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). For other interpretations on the blending of Christianity and African practices, see Curtis J. Evans, *The Burden of Black Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Margaret Washington Creel, *"A Peculiar People": Slave Religion and Community-Culture Among the Gullahs* (New York: New York University Press, 1988); Mechal Sobel, *Trabelin' On: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); Olli Alho, *The Religion of the Slaves: A Study of the Religious Tradition and Behavior of Plantation Slaves in the United States, 1830-1865*

blending of multiple traditions, his stark dichotomy between “visibility” and “invisibility” ignores the ways in which enslaved people’s practices played out in multiple spaces. Enslaved people brought cultural assumptions and practices into the walls of white churches. In response, white enslavers banned black preachers and monitored the behavior of enslaved people. Enslaved people also conducted Africanized under the noses of their white enslavers. As a result, white enslavers closely monitored the movements of enslaved people, and often reappropriated the cultural knowledge they gleaned from their observations.

To complicate Raboteau’s thesis, this chapter uses a concept of “Black sacred space” to demonstrate that churches and brush harbors, for example, were not mutually exclusive settings for enslaved people’s religious and spiritual expressions. Scholar Noel Erskine writes that “church became the celebration of Black sacred space in which there was a continuous interaction between the world of ancestors and the physical world.” By worshipping, Erskine argues, enslaved people “create[d] sacred space to listen to the promptings of spirit and to experience the awakening of a new consciousness of freedom, love, and the courage to hope in the face of excruciating suffering.”⁷ In their creation of Black sacred space and practice of rituals, enslaved people “were able to affirm self and create a world over against the world proffered by the master for their families.”⁸ To understand the lives of enslaved people within

(Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1976). For work on Islam among enslaved people, see Sylviane A. Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); Sylvia R. Frey and Betty Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

⁷ Noel Leo Erskine, *Plantation Church: How African American Religion Was Born in Caribbean Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1-2.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 28; See also Renee K. Harrison, *Enslaved Women and the Art of Resistance in*

black sacred spaces, this chapter builds upon the work of historians who have interpreted music, folklore, language, and healing as constitutive of enslaved people's religious lives in both the walls of churches and the setting of brush arbors.⁹ By focusing on the blending of enslaved people's religious and spiritual expressions in settings associated with either enslavers' beliefs or African folk traditions, the chapter moves beyond debates that consider the extent of enslaved people's devotion to Christianity to consider more radical alternatives.¹⁰

Antebellum America (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009); Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1975); Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of Afro-American People* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973).

⁹ See Sharla M. Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Michael A. Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977). For other work in the vein of Gomez and Fett, see Katrina Hazzard-Donald, *Mojo Workin': The Old African American Hoodoo System* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013); Paul Christopher Johnson, *Diaspora Conversions: Black Carib Religion and the Recovery of Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Stephanie Y. Mitchem, *African American Folk Healing* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); Yvonne P. Chireau, *Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Frey and Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion*.

¹⁰ For examples of scholars who evaluate the extent of Christian conversion among enslaved people and the development of black churches, see Daniel L. Fountain, *Slavery, Civil War, and Salvation: African American Slaves and Christianity, 1830-1870* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010); Milton C. Sernett, *Black Religion and American Evangelicalism: White Protestants, Plantation Missions, and the Flowering of Negro Christianity, 1787-1865* (Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. and The American Theological Library Association, 1975); Religious studies scholar Sylvester A. Johnson's recent work situates African American religion in a wider colonial context over a period of 500 years, but he pays little attention to enslaved people during the nineteenth century, preferring to focus on the Age of Revolutions, colonization, free black people, and abolition. See Sylvester A. Johnson, *African American Religions, 1500-2000: Colonialism, Democracy, and Freedom* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

After the Chickasaw cessions of 1832 and 1834, cheap land and the resulting cotton boom opened the Mississippi Hill Country to white settlers. Harsh frontier conditions, cotton work regimes, and market demands resulted in new work routines when enslaved people crossed the Second Middle Passage as white people settled the Deep South. At the same time, the successful conversion of enslavers to Christianity had resulted in a biblically sanctioned defense of slavery. Southern clergy largely convinced enslavers that the religious instruction of slaves was a moral duty and not to be feared. Agricultural demands for enslaved labor subjugated religious instruction to efficient business practices, lengthened work days, and seasonal rhythms.¹¹ White preachers often reinforced the edicts of enslavers. By emphasizing obedience, morality, humility, and the promise of heavenly reward, religious instruction suited the need of enslavers to control the behavior rather than the salvation of enslaved people.¹²

Enslavers saw the religious instruction of enslaved people as a “moral duty” and attempted to control enslaved people’s behavior. With emphases on obedience, morality, humility, and the promise of heavenly reward, religious instruction transformed in 1830s Mississippi, and often suited planters’ need to control enslaved people’s behavior more so than the need to secure their salvation.¹³ Because state law prohibited teaching enslaved people to read and write, enslaved people received oral religious instruction including listening to sermons and participating in prayers. Polly Turner Cancer recounted her own religious instruction as a

¹¹ Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, x-xi; Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 225; Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 177.

¹² Mia Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind: African-American Ideas about White People, 1830-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 125.

¹³ *Ibid.*

young enslaved child:

Ole Miss didn't teach me to read an' write, but she did do dis; she wud read de bible to us to tell us what de Ole Bad Man was goin' to do to us; she wu'd sho us de pictsher ov him; he had a pitch fork in hiz han' an' a long forked tail an' a club foot an' horns on hiz head; he wud be dancin' roun' pinchin' folks an' stickin' de pitch fork in dem; an den he wu'd go rite out ov de top ov de ceilin'; I sho was skeered an' I luk for him to dis day.¹⁴

In general, white clergy convinced enslavers that religious instruction constituted a moral duty to enslaved people, would pacify enslaver-enslaved relationships, and promote enslaved people's welfare.¹⁵

During the initial decade after statehood, Mississippi first passed laws to restrict the church attendance of enslaved people. In 1822, upon the suggestion of Mississippi Governor George Poindexter, the state legislature passed Poindexter's Code, which banned black preachers and enslaved people's independent religious meetings. In response, white Christians, led by Methodist minister William Winans, protested Poindexter's Code as a curtailment of enslaved people's religious privileges. Winans's charge against Poindexter's Code led to Poindexter's loss in his 1822 for Congress, as well as a revision to the code. The updated law required that church services "be conducted by a regularly ordained or licensed white minister, or attended by at least two discreet and respectable white persons, appointed by some regular church or religious society."¹⁶ Although the revised Poindexter's Code granted enslaved people limited religious autonomy, it also formalized religious spaces as institutions and gatherings always conducted under the control of white people.

¹⁴ Polly Turner Cancer, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 07S, 336.

¹⁵ Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind*, 125.

¹⁶ Randy J. Sparks, *On Jordan's Stormy Banks: Evangelicalism in Mississippi, 1773-1876* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 70.

Starting in the 1830s, laws that restricted enslaved people's movements increasingly extended to religious spaces.¹⁷ Fear of abolitionism and slave insurrection across the South heightened white enslavers' fears about uprisings of enslaved people as well as runaways. An 1830 statute prohibited enslaved people from preaching away from their homes. Slave patrol laws extended to enslaved people's church attendance. In 1833, Mississippi allowed county Boards of Police to appoint slave patrol leaders. By 1842, the Mississippi legislature required enslavers to enlist a white overseer or patroller to monitor enslaved people more than a mile from their residence. After 1857, free people faced fines of \$20 for allowing pass-less enslaved people on their premises, and enslaved people could receive up to twenty lashes for violations of the law.¹⁸ The same year, another law integrated religious services and outlawed the assembly or meeting of more than five enslaved, free black, or mixed race people.¹⁹ In general, slave patrollers enforced the authority of enslavers with their power to search quarters for disorderly, unlawfully assembled, and pass-less enslaved people and the right to whip enslaved people.²⁰

Agricultural journals reinforced Mississippi laws with advice for enslavers on how to regulate enslaved people's movements in attending religious services. Only "within a convenient distance" should enslaved people "be encouraged to attend church," as "the negroes should not be allowed to run about over the neighborhood." Enslavers should, furthermore, allow and encourage only the "pious negroes" to hold "prayer meetings among themselves." If

¹⁷ Ibid., 70.

¹⁸ Anthony E. Kaye, *Joining Places: Slave Neighborhoods in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 38, 40, 149-150.

¹⁹ Larry M. James, "Biracial Fellowship in Antebellum Baptist Churches," in *Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord: Race and Religion in the American South, 1740-1870*, edited by John B. Boles (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1988), 52.

²⁰ Kaye, *Joining Places*, 150.

the number of “pious negroes” exceeded the amount of space available for a prayer meeting, however, then enslavers should “have a separate building for the purposes of worship.”²¹

With advice from agricultural journals and mandates set forth in Mississippi law in mind, enslavers enacted specific procedures for church meetings. Enslaved people often needed a pass to attend religious gatherings. On Sundays, as Eliza Bell and her mother Frebry left for Oak Hill Church, located about five miles from the farm, their enslaver Joe Wiley would state “Don’t lose your pass... the patrollers get you, ‘stead of the Devil!”²² Polly Turner Cancer remembered that if “you tried to go off de place de paterollers wud meet you in de road an’ wear you out rite dar in de road.”²³ Rebecca Woods, likewise, recalled that enslavers “had paterollers at ever’ fork in de road to keep de slaves frum runnin’ away.”²⁴ Frank Gill recalled attending special afternoon services for enslaved people at a white church, but needed a pass “‘ca’se de church was eight miles away from de plantation.”²⁵ Lorena Thomas’s grandmother also needed a pass when she traveled by wagon or horseback to attend Lowndes County’s Hardshell Baptist Church, located several miles from her plantation.²⁶ In Clay County, according to Henry Cheatam, most enslaved people “could go sometimes to de white wolks church then dey gits a pass from dere Massa.” The “mean” overseer, however, “always tried to keep us from goin’ so’s us couldn’t learn nothin’.”²⁷ The power of slave patrollers and overseers did not end with the walls of the church.

²¹ James O. Breeden, ed., *Advice Among Masters: The Ideal in Slave Management in the Old South* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980), 227.

²² Eliza Bell, *Oklahoma Narratives*, Volume 12S, 52.

²³ Polly Turner Cancer, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 07S, 336.

²⁴ Rebecca Woods, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 10S, 2392.

²⁵ Frank Gill, *Alabama Narratives*, Volume 06A, 148.

²⁶ Lorena Thomas, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 10S, 2095.

²⁷ Henry Cheatam, *Alabama Narratives*, Volume 06A, 66.

Enslaved people's attendance at religious gatherings, regardless of the format, depended on the prerogatives of individual enslavers and the nature of their agricultural operations. Seasonal shifts in church attendance coincided with the laying and harvesting of crops. A formerly enslaved woman, Jane McLeod Wilburn, indicated that her Presbyterian enslavers, Angus and Betsy McLeod of Lafayette County, did not believe in working on Sundays: "We did all de cookin' on Saturday an' all went to church on Sundays"²⁸ Frances Cobb recalled that as an enslaved child in Lowndes County, "we didn't go to no church until July come, when we'd have a bit meeting on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, and dar would be plenty to eat."²⁹ Jerry Eubanks remembered camp meetings that included many enslaved people and their elders, who would "work till three, den knock off and come to de camp ground."³⁰

Some enslaved people refused to attend church because enslavers sometimes left Sundays as the only free day of the week. Non-attendance at church services could represent a silent critique of white notions of Christianity and a statement on the incompatibility of enslavement and salvation.³¹ According to Joe Rollins, enslaved in Clay County, some enslaved people "would stay home on Sundays under de shade trees."³² Jerry Eubanks, a man formerly enslaved in Lowndes County, reported that some enslaved people "wanted to go to church and some didn't," but "de Boss would go through de quarter and tell em to get out and hear de word of

²⁸ Jane McLeod Wilburn, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 10S, 2283.

²⁹ Frances Cobb, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 07S, 416.

³⁰ Jerry Eubanks, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 07S, 687.

³¹ Edward E. Baptist, "The Absent Subject: African American Masculinity and Forced Migration to the Antebellum Plantation Frontier," in *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South*, eds. Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 151.

³² Joe Rollins, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 09S, 1891.

God.”³³ Some enslaved people “cared not at all about church, revival meetings, or prayer services, would not go if they could, and resented being forced to attend.” Instead of attending church services, nonreligious enslaved people “spent Sundays in hunting, fishing, marble shooting, storytelling, or simply resting when allowed.”³⁴ Due to harsh frontier conditions, changes in the agricultural labor regimes, and the demands of the market, according to historian Ira Berlin, enslaved people faced new work routines that lengthened the work day and sometimes cut into free Sundays and half-Saturdays.³⁵ With the changes in their daily routines, enslaved people appropriated church time for taking care of their own needs.

The religious inclinations of individual enslavers did not preclude their use of routine violence against enslaved people. Reverend Wamble, enslaved in Monroe County, recalled his enslaver, Mr. Westbrook, a leader in the Methodist Church. As an enslaver, Westbrook hired two overseers to manage his farm and enslaved property. Despite his status as a religious leader, Westbrook “was very severe with his slaves and none were ever permitted to leave the farm. If they did leave the farm and were found outside, they were arrested and whipped.” Once Westbrook had been notified of an enslaved person’s escape from the farm, an overseer took the “slave home where he would again be whipped. The slave was tied to a cedar tree or post and lashed with a snake whip.”³⁶ The use of violence against enslaved people was common, whether or not an enslaver attended a church.

Worship, baptism, and singing allowed black and white congregants to transcend racial

³³ Jerry Eubanks, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 07S, 687.

³⁴ Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 225.

³⁵ Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 177.

³⁶ Rev. Wamble, *Indiana Narratives*, Volume 06B, 198.

boundaries, but coercion always lay at the root of enslaved people's participation in white churches, especially during the 1840s and 1850s. According to historian Randy Sparks, biracial churches across denominations evolved from "relative egalitarianism to segregation and discrimination."³⁷ For example, prior to an 1830s Mississippi law that restricted black preaching, New Hope Primitive Baptist Church in Monroe County allowed black ministers to preach to all congregants, both black and white. In June 1832, when a black member asked for permission to "exercise his gift in exhortation," the church made an allowance within the space of the church and under the regulation of church authority and boundaries.³⁸ After the law banned black preachers, some churches still allowed enslaved people to participate in other roles. In general, Methodist churches allowed large numbers of black members in circuits, missions, and stations, and permitted black men to serve as exhorters and preachers. Other denominations allowed enslaved people to serve as deacons.³⁹

Despite worship traditions that emphasized that unity in Christ, white Christians' recognition of black people members of the God's family extended the domestic metaphor that justified a hierarchical enslaver-enslaved relationship and the absolute obedience to white authority. The application of familial language, according to historian Ira Berlin, carried plantation order into the space of the church, which "joined master and slave together in a collective enterprise that benefited all."⁴⁰ White Christians controlled the content of religious messages transmitted to enslaved people, the movement of enslaved people to and from religious

³⁷ Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, 101-102.

³⁸ Fairybelle Tubb Hathcock, "New Hope Primitive Baptist Church," *Journal of Monroe County History* 2 (1975-1976): 43.

³⁹ Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 169, 207, 232-233, 236-238, 240.

⁴⁰ Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 204-205.

meetings, and the spatial layout of religious spaces. Enslaved people could represent co-participants in the eyes of white Christians within the space designated for the family of God, but enslaved people always found themselves coerced into participation in spaces designated for white control in the settings of both the plantation and the church.

Through the 1840s and 1850s, separate worship services for enslaved people became more common. Enslaved black people desired more control over the content and emotional tenor of worship services. Mississippi law nonetheless mandated that whites oversee black religious services, but the nature and severity of control depended on the minister. Yet for enslaved attendees of biracial or segregated churches, discrimination became more common as the antebellum years drew to a close. The growth of separate church spaces for enslaved people necessitated greater restrictions and control from white Christians.

Before the Chickasaws' forced removal, churches across North Mississippi allowed for the attendance of enslaved people, and the trend continued through emancipation during the middle of the 1860s. Holly Springs Presbyterian Church first admitted black people enslaved by Chickasaws who had yet to leave their homeland in 1839. The church's first enslaved communicants included Manuel and Nancy, enslaved by Benjamin Love. It continued to include several enslaved men and women on its roster, often with the names of their enslavers. In 1840, Molly, an enslaved woman, joined the church with her enslaver, Mr. Chalmers. In 1843, the church received a black man named Billy, enslaved by Frances Doak. Three years later, Hannah, a woman enslaved by Thomas G. Polk, joined the church, and the church maintained a separate roster of "Colored Communicants" by 1855. Holly Springs Presbyterian Church also expected

enslaved people “to learn the Catechism, and records show that some did.”⁴¹ Spring Hill Baptist Church in Choctaw County included twelve enslaved people on its membership roster. Between 1858 and 1865, Spring Hill “received by experience” Hannah, Bill, Steward, Anna, Milly, Hannah, Sarah, California, Eliza, Sarah, James, and Zach. The minutes of Spring Hill often included the names of enslaved people with the title of “brother” or “sister” alongside of the designation “colored,” but it is unclear whether they joined the church as independent members or with their enslavers. By 1868, after emancipation, Spring Hill had “excluded” or “dismissed” all of its formerly enslaved congregants.⁴²

In many churches, increasing numbers of enslaved congregants increased and resulted in the creation of special services for black members under white supervision. Agricultural journals advised enslavers with large plantations to construct separate church buildings, like Greenwood Baptist Church established by Isham Harrison in 1840.⁴³ Eliza Bell remembered Oak Hill Church in Pontotoc County as “just a little one room log house, with a dirt floor, but it was a place to worship the Lord”: “Nobody worried about what there was to walk on. Just the dirt, but it was God’s earth, the same earth that Jesus walked on and we was all glad to be there.”⁴⁴ In 1847, Aberdeen Methodist Church constructed a new Methodist church solely for black members, even as the original church continued to have black members. The new black

⁴¹ Presbyterian Churches, undated, Folder 8, Box 7, McAlexander/Marshall County Collection, Archives and Special Collections, J.D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi.

⁴² Spring Hill Baptist Church (Choctaw County) Records, Special Collections Department, Mississippi State University Libraries, Starkville, Mississippi. For more on individual Baptist churches’ regulation of enslaved people’s behavior, adultery in particular, see Jeff Forret, “Slaves, Sex, and Sin: Adultery, Forced Separation, and Baptist Church Discipline in Middle Georgia,” *Slavery and Abolition* 33 (September 2012): 337-358.

⁴³ Breeden, *Advice among Masters*, 227.

⁴⁴ Eliza Bell, Oklahoma Narratives, Volume 12S, 52.

Methodist church became the largest black antebellum church in Mississippi with 437 members.⁴⁵ At Holly Springs Presbyterian Church, the minister sometimes conducted special services for enslaved people in the afternoon.⁴⁶

Depending on the denomination, white people increasingly appointed special committees, mostly comprised of enslavers, within churches to monitor black behavior, receive black members, and hear black testimony during discipline cases—”a dramatic departure from past practice, in which such cases were handled in the same ways for whites and blacks.” In biracial or segregated churches, discrimination intensified from the late 1840s and through the early 1860s.⁴⁷ Concord Baptist Church of Christ in Choctaw County disproportionately dismissed enslaved men and women for offenses such as adultery, lying, swearing, and theft, compared to disciplinary actions against white members.⁴⁸ During the 1850s and early 1860s, Spring Hill subjected its enslaved members, like its white members, to high standards of discipline. For example, church records indicate charges against Zach, Ann, and California for stealing and against Steward “and wife” for separation.⁴⁹ In the absence of legal recognition of enslaved people’s marriages, congregations enforced morality and attempted to replicate white marriages among enslaved couples.

Regardless of denomination, typical white churches reserved a separate section for black

⁴⁵ Charles Granville Hamilton, “Monroe County Churches to 1876,” *Journal of Monroe County History* 3 (1977): 43-44.

⁴⁶ Presbyterian Churches, undated, Folder 8, Box 7, McAlexander/Marshall County Collection.

⁴⁷ Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, 93-96, 101-102.

⁴⁸ Concord Baptist Church of Christ (Choctaw County) Minutes, Special Collections Department, Mississippi State University Libraries, Starkville, Mississippi.

⁴⁹ Spring Hill Baptist Church (Choctaw County) Records, Mississippi State University Libraries.

members. In Lowndes County, Jerry Eubanks “set up stairs” in “dat big ole Methodist Church gallery.”⁵⁰ Lorena Thomas’s mother attended a Baptist church in Columbus and sat in a gallery for enslaved people.⁵¹ Enslaved people reached a separate gallery in Holly Springs Presbyterian Church, “by a spiral staircase, thirty-six steps above the ground floor in the octagonal South tower.” Despite segregated seating arrangements, “on sacramental occasions, all received communion from the common cup,” and one might assume that white congregants took part before enslaved people.⁵² In 1851, College Hill Presbyterian Church, likewise, constructed a balcony for enslaved people. It had two outside entrances that allowed enslaved people to enter the building without ever stepping on the ground-level sanctuary reserved for white congregants. Enslaved men and women each entered a separate entrance and sat on separate sides.⁵³ Polly Turner Cancer remembered attending a white church in Lafayette County, where “de black folks wud set on one side ov de partition an’ de white folks ‘ud set on de udder.”⁵⁴ At Jim Allen’s neighborhood church in Lowndes County, enslaved people and white people sat on opposite sides of the sanctuary. While a white preacher usually presided over church services, sometimes a black preacher also sat in the pulpit.⁵⁵ As churches grew in membership, white members used funds to build physical structures that replicated white supremacist social hierarchies.

Instead of allowing enslaved people to attend church services, many enslavers hired

⁵⁰ Jerry Eubanks, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 07S, 687.

⁵¹ Lorena Thomas, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 10S, 2095.

⁵² *Presbyterian Churches*, undated, Folder 8, Box 7, McAlexander/Marshall County Collection.

⁵³ Don Doyle, *Faulkner’s County: The Historical Roots of Yoknapatawpha* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 156.

⁵⁴ Polly Turner Cancer, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 07S, 336.

⁵⁵ Jim Allen, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 06S, 52.

white ministers to preach to enslaved people at home.⁵⁶ Agricultural journals advised enslavers on the employment of ministers and proper procedures for religious instruction and church services. Foremost, preaching should amount to “as much a matter-of-course business as anything else,” and “constitute part of the general regulations and discipline of the place.” As such, enslaved people should “observe as strict punctuality in their attendance as in feeding the mules they plow.” Enslavers should avoid interfering with the operation of farms and plantations “by having the appointments for preaching at noon during Summer and at night during Winter.”⁵⁷ Weekday preaching would interfere with day-to-day work routines. Most enslaved people return from work “with dirty clothes on,” and “scarcely wait to hear the text announced [before] most of them are asleep.” The situation would create too much urgency for the white minister, and “make him feel like an intruder upon the time that the overseer considers his own.” According to the agricultural journals, enslavers should, instead, enforce a rule that every enslaved person “come up clean and decent to the place of worship.” By saving religious instruction for Sundays, enslavers would ensure the attendance of enslaved people who “look lively and cheerful” and “dress out in their best ‘bib and tucker’ and promenading the street ready at a moment’s warning to assemble for preaching.” No matter which day an enslaver might choose for preaching, some enslaved people would “make it a settled point to sleep during

⁵⁶ As white Christians gained greater social mobility, town ministers prospered and benefitted from the education and professionalization of the clergy. Town ministers benefitted from the education and professionalization of the clergy, but less educated ministers questioned the usefulness of an educated clergy, and its value to the notion of spiritual equality. Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, 114.

⁵⁷ Breeden, *Advice among Masters*, 227.

sermons, whether it be Sunday or not.”⁵⁸

Whether they preached on plantations or in church pulpits, white ministers often reinforced the edicts of enslavers who sought religious instruction that emphasized discipline. Greater control, along with anti-literacy laws, resulted from white enslavers’ fears of abolition and slave insurrection rose in response to the Denmark Vesey conspiracy of 1822, the Nat Turner rebellion of 1831, and the spread of abolitionists’ pamphlets.⁵⁹ Jake Dawkins remembered a Monroe County preacher who “never did much preachin’” to enslaved people at the white New Hope church, and “never told us a word about savin’ our souls from hell fire and damnation.” Instead, the preacher’s “text was, ‘Obey your marster and mistress.’”⁶⁰ A white preacher in Chickasaw County, likewise told enslaved congregants to “be good to de Massa an’ Missus,” according to Anderson Williams: “Don’t steal dey chickens an’ eggs an’ when you die dey will carry you to Heaven.”⁶¹ Because literacy held the potential for enslaved people to overpower white enslavers’ intellectual domination, enslavers sought increased influence over the format of religious instruction.⁶²

Even as white people restricted mobility, enslaved people found ways to carve semi-autonomous religious spaces and imagined a spiritual world where they would find release from

⁵⁸ Ibid., 229-231.

⁵⁹ As historian Heather Andrea Williams argues, literacy formed a contested terrain upon which enslaved people and enslavers defined the parameters of their relationship. See Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 18; Sparks, *On Jordan’s Stormy Banks*, 5, 13, 97.

⁶⁰ Jake Dawkins, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 07S, 592.

⁶¹ Anderson Williams, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 10S, 2297.

⁶² Dwight N. Hopkins, *Down, Up, and Over: Slave Religion and Black Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 121.

the shackles of bondage. Many enslaved people chose to carve time for themselves in place of religious services, and in effect resisted the notion that white dominance could restrict free time on Sundays. While white preaching often reinforced the edicts of mastery, many enslaved people alternatively took religious messages from white spaces and applied them to their own conceptions of spirituality. By combining their own vision of Christianity with older beliefs and practices that originated in West and West Central Africa, enslaved people appropriated spiritual spaces for their own visions of control and empowerment. Ultimately, enslaved people's visions of spirituality shaped the ways in which white people controlled spiritual spaces and interpreted their own religious beliefs.

Enslaved people held their own religious meetings “out of disgust for the vitiated Gospel preached by their masters’ preachers.” Depending on the plantation, the “religious format” of secret meetings varied. Through attendance at church services and revival meetings, enslaved people not only prayed, but also gossiped, attended picnics, and socialized.⁶³ Historian Stephanie M.H. Camp shows how enslaved people’s ability to move about plantations created a “rival geography” defined by alternative communication, expression, and knowledge, which challenged enslavers’ demands.⁶⁴ Although Sunday services gave enslaved people brief and rare opportunities to interact with enslaved people from neighboring plantations, white people carefully monitored their activities.⁶⁵ Yet enslaved people used secret meetings to strengthen the social ties that white enslavers sought to manage.

⁶³ Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 213, 219, 223.

⁶⁴ Stephanie M.H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 6.

⁶⁵ Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, 97.

To adapt to enslavers' tightening surveillance, enslaved people held illicit gatherings that reflected alternative understandings of spirituality. Illegal gatherings, sometimes called "brush harbor meetings," took place in "illicit plantation space" and often conflated secular and spiritual enjoyment through eating, dancing, dressing up, drinking, preaching, and singing.⁶⁶ During his enslavement in Monroe County, Pet Frank had "mighty good meetin's at our place." One preacher, Old Daddy Young, "could sho' make de niggers shout and roll. You'd have to hold some of dem, dey'd get so happy."⁶⁷ When not allowed to attend church, some enslaved people, like Dora Brewer and her kin in Lowndes County, used the illicit gatherings as alternatives. When one enslaved woman confessed to "having religion," according to Brewer, her angry enslaver "beat her within an inch of her life" until she renounced her faith.⁶⁸ Enslaved people risked violent punishment for attending illicit religious meetings because they insulted white enslavers' ability to monitor their movements.

Enslaved people devised ways to avoid drawing the attention of enslavers and overseers. Secret meetings often reflected the blending of Christianity and West and West-Central African folk beliefs.⁶⁹ Clara C. Young of Monroe County recalled that secret religious meetings lasted from early Sunday mornings until late in the night.⁷⁰ Jake Dawkins's enslaver would not allow enslaved people to have meetings, so some older enslaved people went to the neighboring Davis place without the enslaver's knowledge. If caught by patrollers, the enslaved people would

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 61, 68.

⁶⁷ Pet Franks, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 07S, 793.

⁶⁸ Dora Brewer, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 06S, 200.

⁶⁹ Sobel, *Trabelin' On*, xvii, xxii.

⁷⁰ Clara C. Young, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 10S, 2402.

receive thirty-nine lashes.⁷¹ Victoria Randle Lawson, formerly enslaved in Monroe County, noted that if her enslaver knew about the meetings, then he would not allow them to continue. As a result, Lawson and other enslaved people met “at night at one house and next night at a nudder.”⁷² Enslaved people developed ingenious ways to ensure their meetings would not catch the attention of overseers. Using hanging wash pots, enslaved men and women buffered noise from singing and shouting. After nightfall, according to Young, enslaved men “wud hang up a wash pot, bottom up’ards, in de little brush chu’ch house us hed, so’s it’d catch de noise an de oberseer woulden’ hear us singin’ an shoutin’.”⁷³ Lawson, likewise, recalled a wash pot, which enslaved people put “down in front ob de meeten house so’s de overseer couldn’t hear us a singing and a prayin. Dis wash pot caught de sound.”⁷⁴ In Lowndes County, Lorena Thomas remembered that enslaved people who prayed and sang “put their heads in barrels or wash pots... to keep the sound from being heard.”⁷⁵ Pots, typically used for washing with water, not only hid the noise of illicit meetings, but they also linked Christianity with West and West-Central African cultural symbols of the womb and fertility, which reflected how enslaved women often preserved traditions. Water symbolized life, and many enslaved people believed that water housed the gods.⁷⁶

By closely observing enslaved people’s behavior during illicit meetings, enslavers legitimized encroachments upon plantation time and sanctioned enslaved people’s creative

⁷¹ Jake Dawkins, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 07S, 592.

⁷² Victoria Randle Lawson, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 08S, 1302.

⁷³ Clara C. Young, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 10S, 2402.

⁷⁴ Victoria Randle Lawson, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 08S, 1302.

⁷⁵ Lorena Thomas, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 10S, 2095.

⁷⁶ Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, 84-85.

expressions, yet censored the extent of enslaved people's autonomy and enjoyment. As Jerry Eubanks recalled, "You know niggers will shout and sing if dey is living. White folks would come to our church jis to see us have a good time."⁷⁷ Often without permission, black preachers organized meetings in secrecy with the perpetual threat of careful observation from whites. Expecting to hear a white preacher, Presbyterian minister Samuel Agnew stumbled into a prayer meeting of enslaved people, and found the "'king's English' was so mercilessly cut up that after I could scarce restrain a smile. 'Dis,' 'dat,' 'warship,' 'scourse,' 'retentions' are given as specimens."⁷⁸ From Agnew's perspective, illiterate enslaved preachers in particular proved the need to reign in black religious autonomy. To combat superstitious and false spiritual influences, enslavers had to properly educate enslaved people in the "true doctrines and precepts of Christianity." One white minister described enslaved preachers as "oracles" and "villain[s]" with a "magical sway over the minds and opinions of the rest."⁷⁹ Close monitoring from enslavers often revealed itself despite attempts to hide illicit religious meetings.

The late hours of gatherings, along with the possibilities of physical exhaustion, sleep deprivation, and alcohol use, meant a financial loss for enslavers who depended on enslaved people's productivity.⁸⁰ According to Clara C. Young, the overseers did not mind daytime meetings, but they "thought if we stayed up ha'f de night we wouldn't work so hard de next day, an dat was de truf."⁸¹ The truancy of enslaved women especially impacted enslavers because

⁷⁷ Jerry Eubanks, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 07S, 687.

⁷⁸ September 10, 1854, Volume 3, Folder 4, Samuel A. Agnew Diary, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁷⁹ Breedon, *Advice among Masters*, 229-231.

⁸⁰ Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 90-92.

⁸¹ Clara C. Young, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 10S, 2402.

their labors immediately affected the orderly running of households.⁸² Robert Williams of Pontotoc County recalled that his enslaver “want us all to sleep instead of listening to preaching. Said we could work better with the rest.” When enslaved people planned meeting nights, “everybody slip away quiet so the old master wouldn’t know about it.”⁸³ Late night illegal meetings posed problems for enslavers’ control and order. Enslaved people believed that their bodies functioned as more than “implements of agriculture,” so their illicit gatherings burdened plantation order and “insulted [enslavers’] feelings of authority.” Illicit gatherings, furthermore, “corrupted” enslaved people’s minds by encouraging them to view their enslavers as “natural enemies.” By holding illicit gatherings, enslaved people stole time and space for themselves, ignored enslavers’ control over their bodies, and failed to remain at the bottom of antebellum social hierarchy.⁸⁴

Illicit gatherings provided some enslaved people with time to learn how to read and write outside the view of the white gaze. Literacy would give enslaved people an avenue through which they could mount challenges to the institution of slavery through written communication, beyond the gaze of their white enslavers. The bible, in particular, provided enslaved people with a language of liberation, and enabled them to mold new political and social identities.⁸⁵ Frederick Douglass’s knowledge of the bible, for example, gave him the power to run away to the North: “Biblical knowledge through reading made him unfit to remain a slave.”⁸⁶ The more Douglass read, the more he “was led to abhor and detest my enslavers... I loathed them as being

⁸² Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 36, 38-40, 58.

⁸³ Robert Williams, *Oklahoma Narratives*, Volume 12 S, 392.

⁸⁴ Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 90-92.

⁸⁵ Williams, *Self-Taught*, 18, 21-24.

⁸⁶ Hopkins, *Down, Up, and Over*, 121.

the meanest as well as the most wicked of men.”⁸⁷ The ability to read and write could allow enslaved people the chance to form original interpretations of the bible and transmit those views of Christianity to wider audiences through the written word. Enslavers feared enslaved people’s reinterpretation of biblical messages. One enslaver remarked that he would “gladly learn [*sic*] every negro on the place to read the Bible,” but “fanaticism... is keeping a cloud over [individual enslaved people’s] mental vision, and almost crushing out his hopes of salvation.”⁸⁸ Literate enslaved people appropriated the bible as a sacred text for cognitive liberation, a process through which they overpowered enslavers’ control and language.

After the 1830s, white enslavers’ suspicion forced many black preachers underground, and they had to find congregants and influence at the illicit religious meetings of enslaved people. Often without permission, enslaved preachers organized secret religious meetings under the perpetual threat of careful observation from whites. Within enslaved communities, the prestigious status of black preachers, some of whom drew upon West and West-Central African practices, aided in the growth of black converts.⁸⁹ Black Christianity had roots in West Central African folk beliefs, as well as traditional Christianity and Islam.⁹⁰ Eugenia Weatherall’s uncle

⁸⁷ Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, ed. John W. Blassingame, John R. McKivigan, and Peter P. Hinks, textual ed. Gerald Fulkerson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 35.

⁸⁸ Breeden, *Advice among Masters*, 231.

⁸⁹ Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, 81.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 76-77. Historians have long debated the influence of African religious heritage on southern religion. Jon Butler argues that “enslaved Africans lost their traditional systems of worship and their collective religious practices.” Sylvia Frey and Betty Wood argue that enslaved Africans combined traditional religions, Africanized Christianity, and Africanized Islam, with a major turning point in the Christianization of enslaved Africans between 1785 and 1830. See Frey and Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion*; Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

had a special style of baptizing: “He and the head deacon would carry the person out in the water that they was gwineter babtize and have all de rest stand around in a circle and shout and sing. They would be quiet til the person comed out of the water and then the noise would start in right.”⁹¹

Illiteracy forced enslaved preachers to memorize and listen intently to the biblical recitation of white preachers, and then repeat for enslaved congregants. Though illiterate, enslaved preachers combined “native wit and unusual eloquence.”⁹² Eugenia Weatherall recalled her Uncle Ned, a Baptist preacher and “as good a one as you've ever heard.” Although her uncle could neither read nor write, Weatherall remembered how “one of the women on the place would read him his text and parts of the Bible and he would remember it and would preach grand sermons.”⁹³ Describing her favorite preacher Mathew Ewing, Clara C. Young of Monroe County revealed “he was a comely nigger, black as night, an he sho cud read out'n his han'.” Although Ewing could neither read nor write, he knew the bible and held “his han' out an mek lak he uz readin' an preach de purt'est preachin's you ever heard.”⁹⁴ Black preachers employed a formulaic yet dramatic speaking style in their sermons. Beginning with a conversational tone, black preachers' sermons gradually built rhythm and incited exclamatory shouts from congregants, and “climaxed in a tonal chant accompanied by shouting, singing, and ecstatic behavior.” Black preachers attributed the dramatic flair of their sermons not to their own skill, but to the power of the spirit inside of them. The success of sermons directly depended on the

⁹¹ Eugenia Weatherall, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 10S, 2214.

⁹² Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 232.

⁹³ Eugenia Weatherall, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 10S, 2214.

⁹⁴ Clara C. Young, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 10S, 2402.

preacher's ability to rouse the congregation to an excited response.⁹⁵

In coded religious language, black preachers often spoke of liberation in sermons, which enslaved people understood as contrary to the intent of white enslavers to indoctrinate obedience and submission. Forced to attend white religious services on “distinctly unequal terms,” black people often reinterpreted white enslavers’ Christianity based on their experiences in enslavement.⁹⁶ Jerry Eubanks believed that if he joined the church, he would “be saved.” If people lived good lives according to Christian teachings, according to Eubanks, they would “die that life... God will take care of you.”⁹⁷ Frank Gill understood Jesus Christ’s resurrection as paving the way for his own liberation. According to Gill, “den one come, who said, ‘Father, hand me a body, and I’ll die for dem,’ Dat’s Christ, an’ He was baptized, an’ God gib Jesus dis whole world.”⁹⁸ Henry Gibbs thought that God gave “every boy de same spirit—the Spirit of God. God aint made no hell for us.” Religion guided Gibbs’s treatment of others in the physical world, and would ultimately determine his eternal fate: “For your disobedience you shall be striped with many stripes. Dis in de flesh. Religion is de way I treat my fellow man. I gwine reap what I sew.” With a Christian faith, Gibbs believed that “de flesh is goin be punished befo he die, but the spirit belongs to God, and he goin take care of it.”⁹⁹ The focus on religion and the afterlife allowed enslaved men like Eubanks, Gill, and Gibbs a “way to avoid complete despair, but to survive in body and spirit.” Prayer and conversion emphasized “ordinary virtue” and

⁹⁵ Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 232-233, 236-238, 240, 207.

⁹⁶ Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind*, 125-126.

⁹⁷ Jerry Eubanks, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 07S, 687.

⁹⁸ Frank Gill, *Alabama Narratives*, Volume 06A, 148.

⁹⁹ Henry Gibbs, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 08S, 815.

replaced “heroic resistance and self-destruction” as responses to trauma under enslavement.¹⁰⁰

Conversion showed enslaved people the promise of salvation, which allowed entry into God’s kingdom, an eternal site beyond enslavers’ gaze. Historian Anthony E. Kaye observes that “a Christian’s walk of life had interior moments when slaves transcended the neighborhood without setting foot outside it.”¹⁰¹ As a result, enslaved people sacralized their nearby surroundings, grounded their interpretation of these spaces in Scripture, and imagined heaven as a place.

Conversion experiences represented intense and personal spiritual events that could last for several days or weeks. According to scholar Albert J. Raboteau, “The normal context for sinners to become seekers was the mourners’ bench, or anxious seat, at prayer meetings and revivals. But some were suddenly moved when alone in the wood or fields”¹⁰² Pet Franks knew that he “had ‘ligion” when he got baptized: “Dey took me out in de river and it took two of dem to put me under but when I come up I told dem to turn me loose I believe I could walk right on top of de water.”¹⁰³ During conversion, according to Clara C. Young, “de best way was to carry dem to de cemetery an let dem stand ober a grave.” Enslaved people would “start singin’ an shoutin’ ‘bout seein fire an brimstone; den dey would sin’ some mo’ an look plum sanctified.”¹⁰⁴

Both black and white people sometimes participated in conversions at the same time. When “we had Baptizins to do,” remembered Jerry Eubanks, “dere would be as many white folks on de bank as niggers.” After converts went “under de water,” they “would shout,” and

¹⁰⁰ Baptist, “The Absent Subject,” 151.

¹⁰¹ Kaye, *Joining Places*, 154-155.

¹⁰² Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 267.

¹⁰³ Pet Franks, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 07S, 793.

¹⁰⁴ Clara C. Young, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 10S, 2402.

“some time we would have to go in de water after em.”¹⁰⁵ In May, recalled Henry Gibbs, men and women engaged in foot-washings: “De women would wash each others feet, and men would wash each others feet.” Although some enslaved people were baptized in Tibbee Creek, Methodists sprinkled their converts, as “Dey didn't believe in washing feet.” During the foot-washings, enslaved people sang lyrics such as “come ye that love de Lawd, let your joys be known, join in de songs with sweet accord, and thirst around de throne.” They also sang during baptisms, reciting “on Jordans stormy banks we stand, and cast a wistful eye, to Caanons happy land, where my possessions lie. That generous fruit that never fails, on trees of mortal glory.”¹⁰⁶ The emancipatory lyrics of songs represented a desire to break free from the constraints of bondage, including the legal mandates that required slave patrols, overseers, passes, and curfews. Coded language in songs expressed hope and strength in navigating the physical restrictions that enslavement imposed.

During prayer meetings, enslaved people often conflated religious lyrics with secular enjoyment, and blurred the distinction between spiritual and secular music. According to scholar Albert J. Raboteau, spirituals symbolized more than printed notes and words, and “emerged as communal songs, heard, felt, sung and often danced with hand-clapping, foot-stamping, head-shaking excitement.” Songs relied as much on performance as singing, as enslaved people assigned multiple meanings to verses “not only sung in the fields or at prayer and worship services... but shouted—that is, danced in the ring shout.” Because enslaved people often improvised songs, they incorporated individual experiences into lyrics. The act of personal

¹⁰⁵ Jerry Eubanks, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 07S, 687.

¹⁰⁶ Henry Gibbs, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 08S, 815.

testimony and worship spoke for the entire group through participation and made the performance of spiritual songs a communal experience, which gave the individual “consolation for sorrow” and “heighten[ed] joy.” The experience “extended [the present time] backwards so that characters, scenes, and events from the Old and New Testaments became dramatically alive and present.”¹⁰⁷ Enslaved people connected the physical world with the spiritual world, and identified intensely with the children of Israel. As historian Paul Harvey observes, among many enslaved people, biblical figures from the Old Testament like Moses and the New Testament like Jesus existed not in the past, but in a state of “constant present.”¹⁰⁸ Enslaved people often identified with the biblical story of Exodus, saw Jesus Christ as a personal redeemer, found biblical heroes who overcame obstacles, and viewed Christian messages of brotherhood and the equality of all souls before the Creator as indictments of slavery.

Songs carried multiple, layered meanings as enslaved people expressed joy, sorrow, hope, and despair in allusions to the experiences of work, uprooting, separation, and migration. Frank Gill recalled songs that cried to Peter, Paul, and Silas for strength: “Don’t you hear de young lambs a bleatin’?”¹⁰⁹ Lorena Thomas noted that enslaved people “would sing any where, when de spirit struck them.” One of her grandmother’s favorite songs recited “don’t let’er ketch you wid de work undone.”¹¹⁰ The theme of movement manifested itself in references to chariots, running, and bodies of water. According to historian Ira Berlin, spirituals drew upon the travel imagery of the Old Testament in their emphasis on place and processes of continuous recreation,

¹⁰⁷ Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 243, 245-246, 250-251.

¹⁰⁸ Paul Harvey, *Bounds of Their Habitation: Race and Religion in American History* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017), 80.

¹⁰⁹ Frank Gill, *Alabama Narratives*, Volume 06A, 148.

¹¹⁰ Lorena Thomas, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 10S, 2095.

“sometimes the nostalgia for a place lost, the desire to be ‘returned’ and ‘carried home’; sometimes that other place, of final rewards.”¹¹¹ Jim Allen remembered several of his favorite church songs, including “Am I Born to Die,” “Alas and Did My Savior Bleed,” and “Must I to de Judgment be Brought,” but verses like “here come chariot, les ride, come on les ride,” carried special resonance. According to Allen, the preachers said, “Pull down de line and let the spirit be a witness, working for faith in de future from on high.”¹¹² Jerry Eubanks remembered songs such as “When Shall I See My Fathers Face,” and lyrics such as “I’m goin Home to Die no more.”¹¹³ The words, stories, and lessons in spirituals and songs gave enslaved people senses of pride, self-worth, and social cohesion.¹¹⁴

As churches became more directly dominated by white control during the 1840s and 1850s, extrasensory communication with the spiritual world even more important to enslaved people. Visionary experiences and the belief in a spiritual world linked Anglo and African systems of belief.¹¹⁵ Enslaved people reached the spiritual plane through hearing, sight, and touch, and communicated with entities on that plane. Communication with the spiritual world could occur at any time, and constituted a form of spiritual revelation that did not just occur on Sundays. Communication with the spiritual world was often random and not limited to certain days or spaces, enslaved people saw their spirituality as a way to transcend the boundaries of forced labor, and explains why some enslavers sought to control the spiritual lives of enslaved

¹¹¹ Ira Berlin, *The Making of African America: The Four Great Migrations* (New York: Viking, 2010), 128-129.

¹¹² Jim Allen, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 06S, 52.

¹¹³ Jerry Eubanks, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 07S, 687.

¹¹⁴ Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, xxiv-xxv; Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, ix-x.

¹¹⁵ Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, 82.

people. If enslaved people could imagine and communicate with entities in a space beyond enslavers' physical control, then they could and did turn their spiritual practices into resistive acts in the quarters. The spiritual world existed as a metaphysical space for enslaved resistance. Conceived as both a reality and a manifestation of the supernatural, the spiritual plane provided a space for enslaved people to exact revenge against their enslavers and to exert control over their own destinies. The spiritual world allowed enslaved people to turn the tables on the physical world to imagine a world unreachable to their enslavers, where they held complete control over a social space. African American folk beliefs and practices helped to facilitate this process.

Enslaved people interacted with a spiritual world that transcended the limits of evangelical Christianity. While many white enslavers expected enslaved people to worship on Sundays, many enslaved people viewed communication with the spiritual world as a possibility detached from the space of a church building and as a way to override the physical boundaries of plantation space imposed by white enslavers. Through the practices of conjure, enslaved people were convinced they experienced the power of a supernatural world in which they could forego the restrictions of the physical world. According to scholar Albert J. Raboteau, both enslaved people and white people “knew the world of conjure to be real because they had experienced its power.” Conjure, writes Raboteau, “made sense of the mysterious and inexplicable occurrences of life.”¹¹⁶ Many enslaved people, thus, viewed the spiritual world as an extension of the physical world, a duality that posed opportunities for communication with beings like ghosts and animal spirits whose presence existed beyond the purview of white authority and transcended the structural limitations of Christianity, racial hierarchy, and physical bondage.

¹¹⁶ Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 275-276.

Often random and not limited to specific days or particular places, spiritual communication could and did transcend the boundaries of forced labor by collapsing boundaries between the physical and metaphysical. Adaptations of West and West Central African folk beliefs and practices under the template of Protestant Christianity, sometimes through conversion, facilitated auditory and visual communication with the spiritual world, a broad matrix of the living, the deceased, and the community.¹¹⁷ Conversion experiences revealed to enslaved people the promise of salvation and entry into God's kingdom, an eternal site beyond the geography of bondage. By imagining heaven as a place and interpreting their environments through Protestant imagery, enslaved people sacralized their immediate surroundings and transcended confinement without physical flight.¹¹⁸

Many enslaved people understood their connection to the spiritual world as an extension of West and West-Central African beliefs that gave certain people the ability to see and interact with ghosts and other spirits. They combined this rich folk tradition with the teachings of Christianity. Jake Dawkins, for example, blended his belief in ghosts with the Christian dichotomy between good and evil. As Dawkins explained, "Ghost'es? Why, cose I believes in dem. Why, don't de good book teach dat dere is two kinds of sperrits, de evil and de good? And don't it say dat de sperrit is allus with you? Cose it does." During a walk to church with his wife, Annie, who "didn't have much faith in ghostes," Dawkins stepped aside when he encountered a ghost, "a big fellow without no head and with a white bosom." According to Dawkins, ghosts policed the supernatural realm and would not "bother you lessen you get in de

¹¹⁷ Mitchem, *African American Folk Healing*, 6-7.

¹¹⁸ Kaye, *Joining Places*, 154-155.

way and lessen you do somethin' wrong."¹¹⁹ Henry Cheatam, likewise, recognized the distinction between “good spirits an’ bad spirits.” As Cheatam’s father Sam, “a wicked man” sat in front of the fireplace, a “big brindle dog” came to the door and started barking. When Sam Cheatam snapped his fingers at the dog, the dog dropped dead.¹²⁰

The belief that physical markings and events during birth held spiritual meaning endured throughout the African Diaspora among enslaved people in the United States South and the Caribbean, as well as among Africans in the Kingdom of Dahomey, the Gold Coast, and Dutch Guyana. While many African-descended peoples believed that the caul predisposed certain children to the “ability to manipulate spiritual forces,” anthropologist Melville Herskovits notes that abnormal births, strange birthmarks, and other unique physical features “often made certain children likely candidates to be future root doctors or conjurers.” For example, an infant born with the caul, or veil-like membrane covering the face of the child at birth, meant that he or she could possess the ability to communicate with ghosts and predict future events, among other interactions with the spiritual dimension.¹²¹

Although the spiritual world could represent a space in which enslaved people found a metaphysical release from the shackles of bondage, it faced the threat of both white control and invasion. Jake Dawkins linked his encounters with ghosts to his enslavement, and remarked that he would “hate to meet old marster on one of dese dark nights and him drunk, I’s talkin’ bout his ghost. I’d sho’ strike it out for de biggest stream of water in de country and get across as fast

¹¹⁹ Jake Dawkins, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 07S, 592.

¹²⁰ Henry Cheatam, *Alabama Narratives*, Volume 01S, 89.

¹²¹ Walter C. Rucker, “Caul,” in *Encyclopedia of African American History*, ed. Leslie M. Alexander and Walter C. Rucker (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2010), 1:176.

as I could cause you know, ghostes can't cross water."¹²² Letha Gholson refused to enter graveyards at night: "I ain't never seed none my white folks graves at night. I seem 'em in de day, but never in de night."¹²³ Jim Allen confirmed Gholson's wariness about visiting graveyards at night: "Yes we believed hants would be at de grave yard. I didn't pay no tention to em do, for I know de evil spirit is here, if you don't believe it, let one of em slap you."¹²⁴ When Henry Cheatam's mother saw a ghost, she had been staying with a white woman whose brother had just died. Cheatam's mother saw "dis spirit lak an angel... tol' her to tell de white lady to read de Bible backards three times, 'caze dere was one talent 'tween her an' Jesus. Atter dat she were comforted."¹²⁵ After Eliza Bell's enslaver Joe Wiley returned from visiting his daughter Mary, he said nothing and "just walked into the house and humped himself down in a chair. He covered his face with hands that couldn't hide his grief." When Wiley's wife, also named Mary, asked about his unusual behavior, he responded that "[daughter] Mary's dead!" Several months later, as enslaved children, along with Mary and her other daughters Emma and Lucy, played in yard, someone pointed to the gate in the front yard. Everyone stopped to see who had arrived, and Mary exclaimed, "It's [daughter] Mary!" According to Bell, "There she was, standing by the gate post, something bright shining around her head, and the folks knewed they was seeing a ghost. Reckon everybody was too scared to say anything and whatever it was that was Miss Mary didn't say nothing either. The form just kinder melted through the gate and run to the house." Soon after, Bell heard piano music inside of the empty house, and Mary had always

¹²² Jake Dawkins, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 07S, 592.

¹²³ Letha Gholson, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 08S, 813.

¹²⁴ Jim Allen, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 06S, 52.

¹²⁵ Henry Cheatam, *Alabama Narratives*, Volume 01S, 89.

played the piano. As Bell remembered, “Aunt Betty [the cook] run to call Master Joe and we all followed him into the house, but the music had stopped when we got to the porch and wasn’t heard no more. The master and mistress led the way to the parlor, nobody there.” After combing the rooms of the house, no one saw Mary or any other unusual forms.¹²⁶ For enslaved people, an encounter with an individual’s spirit, including that of a white enslaver, might mean that person had unfinished business in the physical realm.

Enslaved people noted sensory methods of detecting ghosts, which made their presence known in a variety of manners. Jake Dawkins relied upon the sense of touch to detect the presence of ghosts: “You know how I tells if I is gwineter meet one? I feels de warm streak of steam in de air.”¹²⁷ According to Joe Rollins, ghosts made their presence known through bright lights, most often in graveyards. Rollins said, “I seed a big light. Dat place was lit up so I puts my hat over my head so I couldn’t see good. Go round dem grave yards and see em. I specs de do talk to you some time. Dat place hanted to def.”¹²⁸ According to Jerry Eubanks, a ghost visited Charlie Cox near Waverly Plantation in Lowndes County. As Cox sat to read his paper, the light extinguished. Eubanks remembered: “Somein said ‘Phew’—[Cox] lighted it four times. Mr. Charlie Cox and something said ‘phew’ everytime. Mr. Cox left dat house and went to his Sister.”¹²⁹ The detection of ghosts demonstrated how enslaved people’s religion encompassed extrasensory communication beyond the physical realm.

While some enslaved people believed that ghosts primarily appeared in graveyards at

¹²⁶ Eliza Bell, *Oklahoma Narratives*, Volume 12S, 52.

¹²⁷ Jake Dawkins, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 07S, 592.

¹²⁸ Joe Rollins, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 09S, 1891.

¹²⁹ Jerry Eubanks, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 07S, 687.

night, others thought they could appear in any location and at any time of the day. While monitoring a cotton gin, Jerry Eubanks encountered ghosts and “dey run us home. Dey was little bity low things.” According to Eubanks, several black people had drowned in the river near Silver City, located in the Delta, after falling out of the cotton gin house. Their ghosts returned when, at “about eleven oclock de whistle blowed jes like fire, and dar wasn't a bit of fire. But we run and de agent went hissself next night, and he was run off too.” During a dance at the home of Dr. Brothers’s brother, Eubanks encountered another ghost: “We was up stairs and fo God we was a sittin there, preachers, too, and a door was pitched down on us. Oh, I done some running. Dat house is dere now, but Somin brings em out. Looks like de house goin be tore down every night. Dey jes runs around all over de house.”¹³⁰

Enslaved people came up with a variety of ways to protect themselves and their homes from the presence of ghosts. Henry Gibbs heard that people could not live in a house where someone had died.¹³¹ When a ghost tormented Letha Gholson as tried to rest, she spread newspapers around the bed, hoping that they would act as a shield of protection. In the future, Gholson noted that she would stay in haunted homes only if “paid” and with “plenty newspaper.”¹³² Jerry Eubanks and others combated the “evil around Columbus” with “horse shoes over de door. But dat don’t turn de evil spirits.”¹³³ Seeing ghosts meant more than visualization, and it also meant protecting one’s body, home, and community.

In the minds of enslaved people, deceased relatives or acquaintances could appear as

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Henry Gibbs, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 08S, 815.

¹³² Letha Gholson, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 08S, 813.

¹³³ Jerry Eubanks, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 07S, 687.

ghosts in the physical realm to relay messages to their families. Frances Cobb had seen only one ghost, that of her mother. “My Mother came back once when she had been dead a year. I was laying across de bed one day at twelve o'clock, and she come stood by me and said, ‘Don't let my son-in-law, Sam have one thing of mine.’ You know he was mean as a dog to her.”¹³⁴ Cobb’s experience showed how many enslaved people interpreted their encounters with ghosts as people they once knew in the physical realm. This connected enslaved people’s physical bodies to the essence of their ancestors and collapsed time into a contemporary, present experience similar to how enslaved people understood biblical figures such as Moses and Jesus.

The spiritual world could manifest in the form of animals or in the behavior of animals. After Henry Cheatam’s mother returned from the field and laid across the bed, Cheatam sat in front of the fireplace when “a big somp’n lak a cow widout no haid come in de do’ an’ I commence to beat on it wid my fists.” Having likened the ghost to a headless cow, Cheatam said his mother asked him what was wrong. Believing he had witnessed the headless cow walk out of the door, Cheatam “looked outen de window an’ dere it was a-goin’ in Aunt Marfa’s cabin. I neber did see it no mo’.”¹³⁵ Ghosts assumed the form of domesticated animals, but domesticated animals such as horses and mules could also sense the presence of ghosts. Henry Gibbs remembered seeing a mule “early one morning, what jes looked and looked and backed and backed. I tell my wife ‘Dat mule see a hant.’” Days after the mule’s encounter with the ghost, after plowing, the mule “reared up, and running back, and kept rearing up until he fell back on de plow and died.” According to Gibbs, the mule “had seen [another] hant.” Gibbs linked the

¹³⁴ Frances Cobb, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 07S, 416.

¹³⁵ Henry Cheatam, *Alabama Narratives*, Volume 01S, 89.

mule's experience with the supernatural world to his own religious beliefs: "De Bible say a mule got a soul."¹³⁶ Many enslaved people understood extrasensory experiences in biblical terms and collapsed the divide between their own interpretation of Christianity and folk beliefs.

Enslaved people saw animals as connected to the spiritual dimension. Animals, according to scholar Stephanie Y. Mitchem, symbolized the interrelationship between humans and nature.¹³⁷ Doc Quinn attached a powerful spiritual meaning to his encounter with a black cat in a graveyard. "One dark, drizzly night, de niggers wuz out in de woods shootin' craps. I didn't hab no money to jine in de game." In exchange for a dollar, one of the game's participants dared Quinn to go to the cemetery to steal the foot board from a gravesite. Willing to take the dare, Quinn "amble[d] off to de cemete'y, 'cause I really needed dat money." Once he arrived at the cemetery, Quinn entered, but "walk[ed] careful, like, not wantin' to distu'b nuthin', an' finally de grave stone leapt up in front ob me." As Quinn reached down to pick up the foot board, he encountered black cats, which "wuz habin' a meetin' ovah dat grave an' dey objected to mah intrudin', but I didn't pay 'em no mind." Quinn retrieved the foot board and brought it back to the game participants, and "bless de Lawd,—dey gib me two dollars!"¹³⁸ To many enslaved people like Quinn, the appearance of a powerful spiritual animal like black cats on the hallowed ground of a graveyard exemplified the flow of the natural, the spiritual, and relational aspects of life.¹³⁹ Just as enslaved people attached meaning to the spirits of deceased humans, animals had contact with the spiritual realm.

¹³⁶ Henry Gibbs, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 08S, 815.

¹³⁷ Mitchem, *African American Folk Healing*, 17-18.

¹³⁸ Doc Quinn, *Arkansas Narratives*, Volume 10B, 1.

¹³⁹ Mitchem, *African American Folk Healing*, 17-18.

Many enslaved people believed in supernatural occurrences because conjurers proved their powers and gained authority in enslaved communities, even as some interviewers noted the superstitious ideas of enslaved people and placed little importance on the significance of “superstition.”¹⁴⁰ The existence of a spiritual world defined by West and West-Central African folk beliefs explained the occurrence of otherwise unexplainable events. Many times enslaved people understood inexplicable events in terms of the unleashing of spiritual forces against them. George Coleman recalled a story from his Uncle Reuben and Aunt Mary Ann Coleman about a time when the stars fell. He stated, “How scared dey all was. Some of de niggers on dat place jumped in a creek. Jus plain scared to death, you know dey thot de worl had done cum to a end.”¹⁴¹ Enslaved healers described their powers as divinely ordained gifts, and played a crucial role in the web of social relations within enslaved communities. Because enslaved people held a relational vision of health, their collective relationships within the enslaved community and with the spiritual realm influenced how they treated illness and defined well-being. The spiritual realm encompassed a “broadly defined community of living kin and neighbors, ancestors, and spirits.”¹⁴² Due to enslaved healers’ perceived ability to communicate beyond the physical space of the plantation, their treatments gained authority among enslaved people. Within the spiritual consciousness, the boundary between enslaved people and the natural world collapsed.

African American folk healing beliefs carried deep cultural, political, and social meanings, and connected European American Protestant Christianity to folk practices that originated in West and West-Central Africa. Enslaved communities connected individuals’

¹⁴⁰ Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 281.

¹⁴¹ George Coleman, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 07S, 423.

¹⁴² Fett, *Working Cures*, 36.

health to broader community relationships, emphasized collective affliction and healing, relied upon kinship relations by linking ancestors and living descendants, and centralized healing authority in elders and divine revelation. Enslaved people's relational visions of healthcare combined West and West Central African spirituality with their interpretations of Christianity and critiqued enslavers' authoritative notions of medical care. Although enslaved people practiced relational healthcare within their own communities, they faced invasions from enslavers, overseers, and white doctors seeking to practice their own versions of medical care.¹⁴³ Scholar Stephanie Y. Mitchem locates expression and content of black folk healing within African American intellectual and mystical traditions, which operated in a holistic and not necessarily institutional cosmology. While folk healing provided an expression of ethics and values that informed individuals and the community, its content and methods changed over time based on cultural reasoning, such as the merging of African folk beliefs with white Christianity.¹⁴⁴

Hoodoo, or conjure, consisted of practices that allowed healers to harness nature's energy to yield a specific outcome.¹⁴⁵ Within the matrix of Protestantism, white Christians viewed hoodoo through the negative connotations of magic, witchcraft, and sorcery, which broke with the "natural, God-created order of life to align with evil forces, such as the devil, for malevolent

¹⁴³ Ibid., 5-6.

¹⁴⁴ Mitchem, *African American Folk Healing*, 6-7.

¹⁴⁵ Like the studies of Sharla M. Fett and Stephanie Y. Mitchem, this chapter interchangeably uses the terms "conjure" and "hoodoo." Fett sees conjure or hoodoo as the performance of the ritual harnessing of spiritual forces for the purposes of healing, harming, and protection. Mitchem views conjure or hoodoo as a "set of practices and beliefs that draw on nature and its perceived energies in order to shape preferred conditions." See Fett, *Working Cures*, 85; Mitchem, *African American Folk Healing*, 15.

purposes.” White Protestant Christians often feared the practice of hoodoo, and equated it with the acceptance of damnation. Black folk believers, however, revered the powers that the supernatural brought to the adherent. Conjure provided enslaved people the opportunity to continue folk practices within a rubric structured by European American religious beliefs. They transcended the shackles of enslavement through a pragmatic approach of using “roots and herbs for healing or protection, with a constant awareness of the interconnectedness of all life.”¹⁴⁶

Through the process of divination, conjurers relied on supernatural knowledge to trace the origins of illness back to social conflicts. Conjurers employed several methods of divination, including reading the movements or alignments of coffee grounds, cards, bones, and other materials.¹⁴⁷ According to Doc Quinn’s interviewer, “Some aged negroes believe that many of the superstitious ideas that are practiced by their race today had their origin in Africa.”¹⁴⁸ The mere listing of folk healing methods in WPA interviews raises questions about authority and power, and represents the interaction of images and language to construct racial hierarchy in both the antebellum South and in the climate of the 1930s. Without cultural or historical context, interviewers’ listing of cures reinforced public images of black ignorance and inferiority and schemes for racial interaction.¹⁴⁹

In the concept of pharmocosm, healing and harming shared a dual relationship within a “single transformational process.” Historian Sharla M. Fett reassesses the importance of enslaved people’s healing traditions using religion scholar Theophus Smith’s concept of

¹⁴⁶ Mitchem, *African American Folk Healing*, 15, 19-20.

¹⁴⁷ Fett, *Working Cures*, 101.

¹⁴⁸ Doc Quinn, *Arkansas Narratives*, Volume 10B, 1.

¹⁴⁹ Mitchem, *African American Folk Healing*, 12-13.

“pharmacosm” to describe the biblical worldview of enslaved people. While conjuration could serve a curative purpose, at the same time it could also serve a destructive purpose. For instance, while conjurers might mend a relationship, the cure might come at the cost of affliction for another person.¹⁵⁰ Doc Quinn, a formerly enslaved man, noted the common folk practices of enslaved people. For instance, each member of a family would commonly extract all of their teeth and believed that doing so would prevent disagreements. To prevent the separation between spouses, enslaved husbands and wives wrapped a “rabbit’s forefoot, a piece of loadstone, and nine hairs from the top of the head in red flannel,” and buried it under the front door steps. Bad luck came from carrying an axe or hoe into a house. Itching sensations also carried larger meanings: “An itching nose indicates someone is coming to see you, while an itching eye indicates you will cry.”¹⁵¹ Jerry Eubanks corroborated Quinn’s recollections, but discounted voodoo as “jes somein to make money off of.” He understood, however, that enslaved people wore charms such as “dimes with a hole in it to keep off evil spirits, and red flannel bands around the wrist to keep from loosin de nerve.”¹⁵²

Enslaved healers and conjurers perceived their powers as divinely ordained gifts and facilitated supernatural phenomena through cures and remedies that enabled enslaved people to make claims to dignity through their bodies and labors.¹⁵³ The human body placed enslaved people in touch with the spiritual realm, and unified people with the community. The body connected enslaved people to their ancestors, and new births could mean the return of an

¹⁵⁰ Fett, *Working Cures*, 39-41.

¹⁵¹ Doc Quinn, *Arkansas Narratives*, Volume 10B, 1.

¹⁵² Jerry Eubanks, *Mississippi Narratives*, Volume 07S, 687.

¹⁵³ Fett, *Working Cures*, 5-6, 36, 85, 101; Mitchem, *African American Folk Healing*, 15, 35-37; Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 275-276.

ancestral spirit. With the power of healing, people and their communities could find both physical and spiritual cures.¹⁵⁴ In 1930s WPA interviews, former bondspeople emphasized folk practices and herbal knowledge as functional tools.¹⁵⁵ Discussing “boneset tea made from a weed,” Henry Cheatam remarked that “it was bitterer dan quinine, an’ it were good for de chills an’ fever, an’ it would purge you too. Den us used life-everlastin’ tea for fever, an’ Jerusalem breshweed to git rid of worms.”¹⁵⁶ Though perceived as superstitious, enslaved people exerted control over their destinies through folk practices, conceived as supernatural realities.

Black women, in particular, served as cornerstones of health practices and herbal knowledge within enslaved communities, and experienced the tension inherent in claiming moral authority while enslaved. On one hand, enslaved women cared for the sick, made medicinal remedies, and attended births. On the other hand, because enslaved women lacked the moral authority afforded to white women as caregivers, white society denied enslaved women the authority to care for their own families. Although enslaved women played crucial roles in healing, they always practiced under the purview of enslavers, whether in family dwellings, plantation hospitals, and yards, and “their work traversed the frayed boundaries between public and private, home and market, and skill and expected subservience.” Unlike enslaved men,

¹⁵⁴ Mitchem, *African American Folk Healing*, 35-37.

¹⁵⁵ Historian Edward E. Baptist argues that in WPA interviews, former bondspeople “encoded a critique of slavery, whiteness, power, and white history that contradicts academic historians’ assessment of the interviews as inherently limited.” See Edward E. Baptist, “‘Stol’ and Fetched Here’: Enslaved Migration, Ex-slave Narratives, and Vernacular History,” in *New Studies in the History of American Slavery*, ed. Edward E. Baptist and Stephanie M.H. Camp (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 247-248, 251. See also Mitchem, *African American Folk Healing*, 12-13; Stephanie J. Shaw, “Using the WPA Ex-Slave Narratives to Study the Impact of the Great Depression,” *Journal of Southern History* 69 (August 2003): 623-658.

¹⁵⁶ Henry Cheatam, *Alabama Narratives*, Volume 01S, 89.

enslaved women possessed fewer options for specialized labor, but engaged in doctoring work that offered prominence and included unique opportunities for work as midwives, nurses, and hospital attendants, as well as cooks and seamstresses.¹⁵⁷

Enslaved women's experiences and experiments with nature provided them with ideas about themselves as women, and formed the foundation of their identities in spiritual spaces.¹⁵⁸ Enslaved women protected family integrity by supplying children and extended kin with care and nourishment, which allowed them to order some intimacy in daily life. Josephine Coxe indicated that "us little chillum was took care of by the Drop Shot Gang," or the "women that was too old or was sick and couldn't work in the field." Work as midwives and nurses forced enslaved women to build networks of support and forge alliances for medical and maternal care. Within this division of labor, enslaved women often retrieved plants from gardens and the woods for beverages and medicines. This gave them intimate knowledge about the availability and productive use of botanical resources. Many enslaved women also cultivated medicinal herbs for personal and family use in their own small gardens. By raising, harvesting, and using herbs for

¹⁵⁷ Fett, *Working Cures*, 9-11, 114, 125; Deirdre Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017), 50-52. See also Rana A. Hogarth, *Medicalizing Blackness: Making Racial Difference in the Atlantic World, 1780-1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Marli F. Weiner with Mazie Hough, *Sex, Sickness, and Slavery: Illness in the Antebellum South* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012).

¹⁵⁸ See Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," *Signs* 17 (Winter 1992): 252-253, 274; Elsa Barkley Brown, "'What Has Happened Here': The Politics of Difference in Women's History and Feminist Politics," *Feminist Studies* 18 (Summer 1992): 298-299, 300; Michele Mitchell, "Silences Broken, Silences Kept: Gender and Sexuality in African-American History," *Gender and History* 11 (November 1999): 434, 439-440; Ula Taylor, "Women in the Documents: Thoughts on Uncovering the Personal, Political, and Profession," *Journal of Women's History* 20 (Spring 2008): 188, 191.

their own purposes, women claimed the product of their labor. In treating their bodies with their own remedies enslaved women rejected the commercial value that planters placed on them.¹⁵⁹ For instance, Josephine Hamilton's cures and remedies included beating charcoal to relieve stomach gas and burning red corn cobs and sifting white ashes instead of using soda. Herbal knowledge extended to cooking, and reflected the possibility that Hamilton may have experienced enslavement in a white household as a cook. Hamilton made bread using meal, salt, collard leaves, and water. To make meal, Hamilton grinded either okra seeds or parched corn. After combining sifted meal, salt, and water, enslaved people placed the mixture on top of a collard leaf, covered the top with another collard leaf, and placed it into and covered with hot ashes. The resulting bread was "really good." Along with bread, enslaved people roasted potatoes and eggs in hot ashes. Enslaved people also made persimmon beer, which "won't make you drunk." In regular beer barrels, they constructed a faucet, and placed old hay in the bottom, along with persimmons, baked cornbread, and water. After sitting in the barrel for "about a week," the persimmon beer provided a "fine drink with tea cakes."¹⁶⁰ Under the racist and

¹⁵⁹ Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1985), 22-24, 124, 119-120, 141, 153, 158-160; Fett, *Working Cures*, 9-11, 70-72, 114, 125; Josephine Coxe, Rawick, *American Slave*, supplemental ser. 1, 7: 525; Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 10-13; Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 28, 36, 38-40, 78-80, 83, 85. See also Brenda E. Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Angela Davis, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," *The Black Scholar: Journal of Black Studies and Research* 3 (December 1971): 2-15.

¹⁶⁰ Many white interviewers merely listed the cures and remedies that formerly enslaved people remembered. The lack of context for herbal remedies mentioned in interviews reinforced white people's disregard for folk healing and the gendered dynamics of enslaved labor. Scholar Ula Taylor argues that African American women, in particular, existed at the periphery of such fragmented historical documents. By placing scant and "list-like" documents in dialogue with

misogynistic rubric of slavery, knowledge of herbal remedies redefined black women as more than the mere “spiritual conduits” that historian Brenda Stevenson describes.¹⁶¹ Enslaved women’s ability to harness the natural entities of the physical world to care for their families and communities, instead, offered a radical reinterpretation of spiritual life that endangered the fundamental foundations of racial slavery. By providing for themselves and their families, enslaved women cultivated influence and articulated a sense of dignity. By claiming spiritual knowledge with practical uses, enslaved women debunked slavery’s tenets that cast them as ignorant vessels of filth.¹⁶²

Enslaved people’s understanding of health strengthened communal bonds in the physical and spiritual realms, but enslavers often co-opted the healing practices of enslaved people and claimed similar herbal remedies to ease their own medical afflictions. The W.T. Lenoir family’s plantation journal listed detailed descriptions for making and administering medicines for ailments such as fever, edema, colic, rheumatism, consumption, cough, skin infections, scurvy, pulmonary imbalance, venereal disease, and cholera, as well as a recipe to cleanse the blood and

knowledge of periods and locations, historians can “fill in a historical picture.” Taylor, “Women in the Documents,” 188, 191; Josephine Hamilton, *Arkansas Narratives*, Volume 09A, 133; For more on black women’s knowledge of plant cultivation, food, and medicine in a wider Atlantic context, see Londa Schiebinger, *Secret Cures of Slaves: People, Plants, and Medicine in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017); Judith A. Carney and Richard Nicholas Rosomoff, *In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa’s Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Judith A. Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

¹⁶¹ Brenda E. Stevenson, “‘Marsa Never Sot Aunt Rebecca Down’: Enslaved Women, Religion, and Social Power in the Antebellum South,” *Journal of African American History* 90 (Autumn 2005): 347.

¹⁶² See Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 64-66.

a cure “for the glut.” Like enslaved healers, white Southerners relied on herbs for their healing power, yet the ability to read and write prescriptive measures granted intellectual authority to white medical advice. “For the glut,” the Lenoir family combined “prickly ash root, holly root, wild crab apple root, and black walnut root,” and put “a handful” into two gallons of water to be boiled down to three quarts, “a tumbler full of which [was] to be taken [three] times a day.” In describing enslaved people’s herbal remedies as “superstitious” yet adapting them in formal practice, educated white Southerners created a “moral and intellectual mastery” over enslaved healers, whose knowledge they devalued as primitive, irrational, and emotional.¹⁶³

By the 1840s and 1850s, enslaved people received care from physicians more often than white Southerners, though they still continued to practice folk remedies. As enslaved people increased in economic value for enslavers, immunity to diseases like cholera and dysentery improved. Diseases like smallpox affected both white and black people in Lafayette County. The 1850 diary of prominent slaveholding resident Goodloe Warren Buford, who donated land to found College Hill Presbyterian Church in 1836 and North Mississippi College in 1840, mentions an outbreak of smallpox. On Monday, February 4, 1850, Buford recorded that he “put vaccine matter” out of his daughter Julia’s arm and “into the little negroes.” In a later entry, dated Thursday, February 7, 1850, Buford observed “there are 12 or 15 cases of smallpox, but of mild type.” The following week, Buford “vaccinated 2 of R. Wilson’s negroes.”¹⁶⁴ Buford’s use

¹⁶³ Lenoir Plantation Journal Transcript, Lenoir Plantation Records, Box 7, Folder 91, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; Fett, *Working Cures*, 6, 50, 45-47, 69; See also Marie Jenkins Schwartz, *Birthing a Slave: Motherhood and Medicine in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 1-7, 321.

¹⁶⁴ Goodloe Warren Buford Diary, 1850. Small Manuscripts 1979, Box 1, Folder 7. Archives and Special Collections, J.D. Williams Library, The University of Mississippi.

of vaccinations reveals not only his financial incentive in maintaining a healthy enslaved population, but also the intimacy, in the exchange of bodily fluids, that professionalized medical knowledge required between white and black people. In spite of Buford's success in inoculating enslaved people, limits to nineteenth-century medical science did not guarantee successful cares.¹⁶⁵ Enslaved women, who had accumulated generations of their own herbal knowledge, continued to care for the afflicted by using folk remedies.

Enslaved people's alternative understanding of physical and spiritual spaces shook the ordered sociocultural foundation that white enslavers sought to impose. As enslaved people engaged in insurrection, outright rebellion, and murder in isolated incidents throughout North Mississippi in the late 1850s, the instability of enslavers' attempted to regulate their movements and independent thoughts. White enslavers' fear of violent insurrection contained some truth. As scholar Gayraud S. Wilmore writes that "there is good reason to believe that religion was considerably more involved than the most available records would seem to reveal."¹⁶⁶ Although records do not indicate the religious or spiritual proclivities of individuals engaged in rebellion, these instances occurred within a larger cultural climate in which enslaved people understood their existence as multidimensional, a state that undermined the boundaries imposed by enslavers.

The appearance of enslaved people in court records revealed the shaky foundation of

¹⁶⁵ For more on general medical care in the South during the antebellum period, see Steven M. Stowe, *Doctoring the South: Southern Physicians and Everyday Medicine in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Todd L. Savitt, *Medicine and Slavery: The Diseases and Health Care of Blacks in Virginia* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

¹⁶⁶ Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*, 31.

North Mississippi's white sociocultural order and the restrictions that white enslavers enforced. Scholar Ariela J. Gross argues that enslaved people possessed a "double character," with characters as persons under criminal law and as property in all other instances. Criminal cases forced white enslavers to deal with enslaved people as humans with free will and with their own culture propped up by religious institutions. Within a legal system that defined them as property, enslaved people who committed crimes possessed moral agency and a capacity to reason, both qualities that enslavement debased. At the same time, enslaved people's appearance in public spaces like courts challenged white enslavers' grip on the society they controlled. The law had defined enslaved people as property with few, if any, rights.¹⁶⁷

Enslaved people's appearances in court records forced white enslavers to continually remake the boundaries that governed the institution of slavery and affirmed enslaved people as property. Accused of murdering his white overseer William G. Ford in Monroe County, an enslaved man, Wesley, entered the Mississippi's High Court of Errors and Appeals in 1859. Prior to his murder, Ford had tied Wesley to enslaver John A. Walker's smokehouse with a strap. Ford returned to the smokehouse with his wife, and was hit in the head with a large instrument upon opening the smokehouse door. He died the following day.¹⁶⁸ The Mississippi court ruled that enslaved people charged with the murder of their enslavers and overseers cannot show in their own defense "the violent and cruel character of the master in the government of his slaves, nor specific acts of severity and cruelty committed by him." Moreover, the "mere fear,

¹⁶⁷ Ariela J. Gross, *Double Character: Slavery and Mastery in the Antebellum Southern Courtroom* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2000), 3-5.

¹⁶⁸ Thomas D. Morris, *Southern Slavery and the Law, 1619-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 282.

apprehension, or belief, however sincerely entertained by one man, that another designs to kill him, will not justify the former in slaying the latter, where the danger is neither real nor urgent.”¹⁶⁹ The case of *Wesley v. State* (1859) constituted a moment when Mississippi’s High Court of Errors and Appeals had to recognize enslaved people’s ability to make moral decisions, yet also had to interpret the law in such a way that would uphold enslavers’ legal right to extract labor from enslaved people’s physical bodies. An enslaved person’s murder of a white enslaver or overseer would render the color line meaningless.

In January 1852, three enslaved people—Bill, Will, and Laura—murdered John D. Watkins on his return home to DeSoto County from a business trip in Memphis, Tennessee. Bill, Will, and Laura had expected Watkins to return home on the night of Thursday, January 15, but he returned before nightfall, which thwarted the plan to “waylay him before he reached the house” to “effect their hellish purpose.” On Friday, January 16, Watkins went to a clearing where Bill, Will, and Laura had worked all morning, and they “attacked him with axes, breaking his skull at every stroke and causing instant death.” After killing Watkins, the three enslaved people “felled a tree across the dead body” and “reported that their master had been accidentally killed by his making.” To “consume the blood [that] flowed from [Watkins’s] wounds,” Bill, Will, and Laura “built a brush fire over the spot where the murder was committed.” Before Watkins’s burial, the situation aroused suspicions among white residents in DeSoto County. Further examination of Watkins’s body found that an axe, not a fallen tree, had caused the

¹⁶⁹ *Wesley v. State*, in *The American Decisions Containing the General Value and Authority Decided in the Courts of Several States from the Earliest Issue of the State Reports to the Year 1869*, ed. A.C. Freeman, vol. 75 (San Francisco: Bancroft-Whitney Company, 1886), 62.

wounds. After being arrested and questioned, the three enslaved people “confessed the whole story of their diabolical guilt.” On the evening of Sunday, January 18, “the exasperated citizens met together and meted out to the two men that swift retribution which even so atrocious a crime could hardly justify.” Although members of the community hanged Bill and Will on a tree near the site of Watkins’s murder, they spared the Laura because of her pregnancy.¹⁷⁰ In March 1853, the DeSoto County circuit court indicted and sentenced Laura to capital punishment for Watkins’s murder. A motion had been made for a new trial, but the lower court had refused and Laura entered Mississippi’s High Court of Errors and Appeals on a writ of error. In the end, Chief Justice Cotesworth Smith reversed the initial judgment, but left Laura in police custody to await further action from the DeSoto County court.¹⁷¹ Records do not reveal Laura’s fate.

Though large-scale slave insurrection was rare, one documented slave revolt, the Coffeerville Revolt, occurred on the plantation of former United States First Lady Sarah Childress Polk, in Coffeerville, Yalobusha County, in August 1858.¹⁷² Polk had inherited the Coffeerville plantation from her deceased husband, the former president, James K. Polk, and herself lived in Nashville, Tennessee at the time of the revolt. After an overseer, John H. Mairs, “undertook to

¹⁷⁰ “Awful Tragedy,” *Mississippi Palladium*, January 29, 1852; *Laura (a slave) v. The State of Mississippi* (1853), Circuit Court of DeSoto County, Book No. 33, 1-24.

¹⁷¹ *Laura (a slave) v. The State of Mississippi*, in *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the High Court of Errors and Appeals for the State of Mississippi, Volume XXVI*, compiled by John F. Cushman (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1855), 177.

¹⁷² Brenda E. Stevenson, *What is Slavery?* (Malden: Polity Press, 2015), 153; Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 351. For a more general overview of the Polk family as enslavers and the purchase of and conditions on the Yalobusha County plantation, see William Dusinger, *Slavemaster President: The Double Career of James Polk* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). For letters between James Polk or Sarah Polk and their overseers in Yalobusha County, see Katharine M. Jones, ed., *The Plantation South* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1957), 279-287, 343-348.

whip one of the hands,” other enslaved people intervened and rescued the enslaved man. Mairs, in response, “started out for assistance” from neighbors.¹⁷³ During Mairs’s absence, the enslaved people assembled and “arm[ed] themselves with divers clubs, sticks, axes, hatchets, scythe-blades, and rocks.”¹⁷⁴ They “retreated to the gin house, bid defiance to the overseer and his friends, and swore they would die to a man before one of their party should be whipped.” When Amos Duke attempted to arrest one of the enslaved people, he “was struck across the side of the head with a club, and it is feared, will lose one of his eyes from the effects of the blow.” The revolt continued for four days, until seventy-five armed men “visited the plantation, and arrested every negro on the place.” At the plantation on the following morning, Judge Fisher “committed four of the ringleaders to jail, to await the action of the grand jury.” Between fifty and sixty other enslaved people, meanwhile, received whippings.¹⁷⁵ The state charged two of the enslaved leaders of the insurrection, Giles and Emanuel, with “a conspiracy to make insurrection,” which was punishable by death. Evidence in the case demonstrated that Mairs, “a timid man, and afraid of the negroes, was in the habit of calling upon his associates to assist him in correcting them.” On this particular occasion, Giles and Emanuel “resisted [Mairs] and his friends, and apparently with concerted purpose.”¹⁷⁶ Sarah Polk, however, intervened to prevent the execution of Giles

¹⁷³ “General Summary,” *The National Era*, August 26, 1858.

¹⁷⁴ *Emanuel and Giles (slaves) v. State*, in *Mississippi State Cases: Being Criminal Cases Decided in the High Court of Errors and Appeals, and in the Supreme Court, of the State of Mississippi; from the June Term 1818 to the First Monday in January 1872, Inclusive. With Explanatory Notes of English and American Decisions and Authorities; and a Manual of Forms for Making Up Records, Entries, Criminal Pleadings, Etc, Volume 2* (Jackson: Published by the compiler, 1872), 1218.

¹⁷⁵ “General Summary,” *The National Era*, August 26, 1858.

¹⁷⁶ “President Polk’s Slave on Trial—A Negro Insurrection,” *The Liberator*, January 28, 1859.

and Emmanuel by petitioning the judge for bail. She paid \$3,000 and brought Giles and Emmanuel back to the Polk plantation in Coffeerville.¹⁷⁷

Although white enslavers attempted to limit the ability of enslaved people to practice traditional healing methods and often dismissed folk healers as backward or superstitious, views of health derived from West and West-Central Africa retained cultural significance. Spirituality never carved a completely autonomous physical or social space for enslaved people in North Mississippi, but it strengthened communal bonds and allowed enslaved people to adapt their spiritual practices within the confines of Protestant Christianity. The suggestion of a more “visible” invisible institution does not detract from the vitality of spirit among enslaved people. Increasing surveillance, instead, must instead point to the creative adaptation that forced enslavers to recognize the humanity and souls of enslaved people. Within the southern confluence, interpersonal relationships had built the legal and sociocultural structures of white supremacy. At the same time, white enslavers’ power was never absolute. White supremacy already contained the seeds of its own destruction because ultimately the people it sought to confine could undermine its foundations.

¹⁷⁷ In her biography of Sarah Polk, historian Amy S. Greenberg devotes a chapter to the Coffeerville plantation, and posits several reasons for the former first lady’s intervention to prevent the executions of Giles and Emmanuel. First, Polk may have received special treatment as a former first lady, and executing enslaved people would have further inflamed sectional tensions. Second, Polk may have had a personal relationship that extended beyond property and punishment with one or both of the men. Third, Polk needed the steady income that her plantation provided, and it remained profitable when Giles and Emmanuel returned. See Amy S. Greenberg, *Lady First: The World of First Lady Sarah Polk* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2019), 200-202.

CONCLUSION

On Monday, October 31, 1933, a local newspaper reported that residents in the town of Toccopola, located in Pontotoc County in northeastern Mississippi and about 100 miles southeast of Memphis, Tennessee, observed “Betty Allen Day.” Sponsored by the Betty Allen Club, “composed of women in the community who are interested in local history” along with Toccopola High School history classes, the day’s activities would commence “in honor of [the] lady who won a decision of law with world-wide bearing.” According to a local newspaper, Elizabeth Love Allen, the namesake of the day and women’s club and “daughter of Henry Love, died in 1837, the same year in which the Mississippi High Court of Error and Appeals decided her right to own property separate from that of her husband, thereby establishing a rule of law that governs jurisprudence in all English speaking nations.” The day’s observance would involve the excavation of Allen’s remains, which organizers would place in a wood casket crafted from a tree near the original burial site and then re-inter “with appropriate ceremonies in a grave adjoining the school grounds where a marker will be placed in honor of her memory.”⁸⁷⁰ According to a much later account of the reburial, “Toccopola High School students [had] redeemed a bit of history.”⁸⁷¹

While the newspaper article established Elizabeth Love Allen’s legacy as a pioneer for women’s property rights, it failed to address the broader context of the court’s decision.⁸⁷² As

⁸⁷⁰ “‘Betty Allen Day’ to be Observed Oct. 31st,” *The Oxford Eagle*, October 26, 1933.

⁸⁷¹ Elmo Howell, *Mississippi Back Roads: Notes on Literature and History* (Memphis: Langford and Associates, 1998), 290.

⁸⁷² Legal scholar Megan Benson opens her article with a description of Elizabeth Love Allen’s re-interment, but does not provide interpretation or documentation of the event beyond a

the first chapter of this project revealed, Elizabeth “Betsy” Love lived as an elite Chickasaw woman enslaver.⁸⁷³ During the 1820s and 1830s, drawing upon matrilineal Chickasaw customs, Love willed enslaved people to her children and became the center of a Mississippi state supreme court case, *Fisher v. Allen* (1837). The case ultimately served as a foundation for Mississippi’s Married Women’s Property Act of 1839, the first such law in the United States. Through the early twentieth century, elite white Mississippi women commemorated Love as a hero for women’s rights in the state. In 1933, nearly a century after the 1837 decision, white Mississippians excavated and reburied Love’s remains and later installed a monument to memorialize her. By venerating Love as a women’s rights pioneer, white Mississippians not only disregarded Chickasaw understandings of burial and the afterlife, but also erased her identity as both a slaveholder and a Chickasaw woman.

Several generations earlier, during the 1860s, Presbyterian minister Samuel A. Agnew had written for the Smithsonian Institution and described Indian mounds in North Mississippi as burial places that also held artifacts: “Human bones were found in one near J.M. Simpson’s. A gentleman not far from here used the earth of a mound for making brick. He found, to use the expression of another, ‘a heap of coals and a piece of isinglass.’ In the mound near Sullivan’s, ashes were found.”⁸⁷⁴ After the physical removal of the Chickasaw people during the 1830s and

footnote that mentions non-contemporary sources and conversations with Pontotoc County residents. This conclusion, however, moves beyond Benson’s description to contextualize Love’s commemoration during the 1920s and 1930s. See Megan Benson, “*Fisher v. Allen*: The Southern Origins of the Married Women’s Property Acts,” *Journal of Southern Legal History* 6 (1998): 97.

⁸⁷³ From this point forward, I will refer to Elizabeth Love Allen by her full name, “Betsy Love Allen,” “Betsy Love,” or “Love.” Although people referred to Love as “Betty Allen” during the 1930s, documents contemporary to the 1830s most often refer to her as “Betsy,” “Elizabeth,” or “Love.”

⁸⁷⁴ Samuel A. Agnew, “Mounds in Mississippi,” in *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution Showing the Operations, Expenditures and Condition of the Institution for the Year 1867*, Senate, 40th Congress, 2d Session, Mis. Doc., No. 86

1840s, the making of bricks out of mound remnants effectively reconceptualized the cultural and social landscape of northern Mississippi. Antebellum settlers cut into the body of the earth and reconstructed its constituent parts to lay the foundation for northern Mississippi as a biracial, slave society. And the structures that served as the foundation of that society resonated among the elite white women who memorialized Betsy Love. Elite Chickasaw women like Love developed enslaving practices that would define antebellum society as well as laid the groundwork for women's civic culture in Mississippi through the twentieth century.⁸⁷⁵

Nearly a century later after the Mississippi court's decision in *Fisher v. Allen*, interest in Love's story re-emerged in 1832 in Pontotoc County as residents commemorated the centennial of the 1832 Treaty of Pontotoc Creek, which ceded the remaining Chickasaw homeland to the United States in exchange for the Chickasaws' forced removal. The celebrations included a reenactment of the treaty's signing, the dedication of a marker at the Old Natchez Trace, and visits to the former Chickasaw Council House and the Chickasaw Village. More tellingly, however, the County Committee endorsed a Beauty Revue that would crown a "Miss Princess Chickasaw" to reign over the centennial festivities.⁸⁷⁶ While the historical record does not reveal

(Washington: Government Printing Office, 1868), 405.

⁸⁷⁵ While many scholars of white southern women's twentieth-century civic work tend to focus on their efforts to secure the franchise or act as guardians of the Lost Cause, their analyses often fail to include how white women understood themselves in relation to the Native South. See Lorraine Gates Schuyler, *The Weight of their Votes: Southern Women and Political Leverage in the 1920s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003); Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the Southern States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign against Lynching* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

⁸⁷⁶ Callie B. Young, ed., *From These Hills: A History of Pontotoc County* (Fulton: *Itawamba County Times*, 1976), 489-491.

a complete motive, it is possible that the following year's commemoration of Betsy Love would be a way to more forcefully assert women's central role in what would become 1930s Pontotoc.

Within the context of the 1920s and 1930s, the excavation and memorialization of Love's remains demonstrated white southern women's continued influence over public memory and modern, gendered articulation of the right to control representations of history and take responsibility for the status quo.⁸⁷⁷ Betsy Love's story provided elite white southern women with what scholar Philip Deloria calls "two interlocked traditions" and reflect what historian Andrew Denson refers to as "both a gesture of respect and an act of possession."⁸⁷⁸ While white southern women could celebrate the dispossession of the Chickasaws and the perceived savagery of Native groups as a whole, they could also bask in Chickasaws' grasp and sense of Euro-American enlightenment through property holding without ever mentioning the institution of slavery as the cornerstone of Love's case. In effect, white southern women could celebrate the idea that conquest entitled them to a timeless spiritual connection to the Chickasaw homeland

⁸⁷⁷ While historians argue that white women's influence over public memory diminished after World War I, commemorations of Indian Removal indicate that this was not always the case. For historians who offer a decline in southern women's activities after World War I, see examples in W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 12-54; Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*; W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "White Women and the Politics of Historical Memory in the New South," in *Jumpin' Jim Crow: Southern Politics from Civil War to Civil Rights*, edited by Jane Dailey, Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, and Bryant Simon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 131; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "'You Must Remember This': Autobiography as Social Critique," *Journal of American History* 85 (September 1998): 439-465. Recent scholars of the Native South, too, have probed commemorations of Indian Removal from the vantage points of tourism and public history, but have largely ignored issues of gender. See Andrew Denson, *Monuments to Absence: Cherokee Removal and the Contest over Southern Memory* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

⁸⁷⁸ Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 4; Andrew Denson, "Reframing the Indian Dead: Removal-Era Cherokee Graves and the Changing Landscape of Southern Memory," in *Death and the American South*, edited by Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 251. See also Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

within the context of Jim Crow.⁸⁷⁹

The effort to commemorate Love collided with early twentieth century notions of Native Americans as a “vanishing race,” or the idea that the rapid progress of white American civilization since the late nineteenth century had doomed Indian cultures to extinction.⁸⁸⁰ Along with a committee from the Betty Allen Club, E.T. Winston, editor of *The Pontotoc Sentinel*, organized the excavation of Allen’s remains and their re-interment. As a local newspaper editor and reporter, Winston commented on United States-Native American relations as “a struggle that has filled many pages of American history, and is drawing to a close in the saga of a vanishing race.”⁸⁸¹ Winston consumed himself with documenting the “legendary history” of the “elusive” Chickasaw Indians, according to his friend George Moreland, a reporter with Memphis’s *Commercial-Appeal*.⁸⁸² Although Winston never stated explicit reasons for his participation in the commemoration of Love, his other commentary suggests that he saw her re-interment as part of his larger mission to “preserve” a “vanishing” Chickasaw history.⁸⁸³

The continued presence of Mississippi Choctaws in the state also offered a foil to Pontotoc’s white population in relation to the Chickasaws, who had long been forcibly removed by the 1920s and 1930s.⁸⁸⁴ Any Chickasaws who remained in the vicinity had married into white

⁸⁷⁹ Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 3-4.

⁸⁸⁰ See Theda Perdue, *Race and the Atlanta Cotton States Exposition of 1895* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), especially 53-95; Ann Fabian, *The Skull Collectors: Race, Science, and America’s Unburied Dead* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

⁸⁸¹ “Seminoles Finally Admit Conquest—Choctaws Still Battling for Rights,” *The Sentinel* (Pontotoc), December 2, 1926.

⁸⁸² Moreland also attended the excavation of Betsy Love’s remains. “Another Friendly Tribute from Geo. Moreland,” *The Sentinel* (Pontotoc), December 2, 1926.

⁸⁸³ As part of this larger mission, Winston also published two hagiographic accounts of the region that devote considerable space to discussing the Chickasaws. See E.T. Winston, *Story of Pontotoc* (Pontotoc: Pontotoc Progress Print, 1931) and E.T. Winston, “*Father*” *Stuart and the Monroe Mission* (Meridian: Press of Tell Farmer, 1927).

⁸⁸⁴ My intention is not to delve into the larger history of the Mississippi Choctaws, but is instead to demonstrate how their presence may have influenced white Mississippians’

families or claimed African American ancestry. Referencing the Mississippi Choctaw and their continuing claim to land covering the town of Mashu'ville in East-Central Mississippi during the 1920s, editors of *The Pontotoc Sentinel* declared that “in due course, the white man’s ownership of the soil will doubtless be validated. The Choctaws are neither citizens or wards of the government. They are outcasts in their own homes. They are not fowls of the air or beasts of the field. They are human beings. Why, we do not know.”⁸⁸⁵ When juxtaposed to the Chickasaws, the Mississippi Choctaws, in effect, represented an exception to Mississippi’s Jim Crow biracial order as well as a drain on federal resources.⁸⁸⁶ To white Pontotoc residents, furthermore, an “authentic” Chickasaw past “had to be located outside modern American societal boundaries.”⁸⁸⁷

Within the context of “vanishing Indians” and the continued presence of Mississippi Choctaws in the state, white Pontotoc women championed visible and revisionist interpretations of what they saw as “true” history, especially those that sidestepped women as slaveholders. Well before the 1930s, prominent Pontotoc women held membership in the local chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, first organized in 1903 at the offices of *The Sentinel* newspaper.⁸⁸⁸ As historian Karen Cox argues, “historical knowledge was important to the

commemoration of the Chickasaws during the 1920s and 1930s. For more on the Mississippi Choctaws during the early twentieth century, see Mikaëla M. Adams, *Who Belongs?: Race, Resources, and Tribal Citizenship in the Native South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), especially 96-131 and Katherine M.B. Osburn, *Choctaw Resurgence in Mississippi: Race, Class, and Nation Building in the Jim Crow South, 1830-1977* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), especially 76-130.

⁸⁸⁵ “Choctaws Still Battling for Rights,” *The Sentinel* (Pontotoc), December 2, 1926.

⁸⁸⁶ See Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 104-105. For more on Mississippi’s Jim Crow-era biracial order, see Neil R. McMillen, *Dark Journey: Black Mississippians in the Age of Jim Crow* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989). For more on how the presence of the Mississippi Choctaws upset the state’s biracial order, see Adams, *Who Belongs?*, 96-131 and Osburn, *Choctaw Resurgence in Mississippi*.

⁸⁸⁷ Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 115.

⁸⁸⁸ Young, *From These Hills: A History of Pontotoc County*, 657.

Daughters for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is that it made them better role models for children and other adults.”⁸⁸⁹ White southern women’s activities in Pontotoc and elsewhere reinforced a notion of themselves as a people with unique and timeless ties to Mississippi. As other historians have noted, southern white women “did not haphazardly inscribe meaning onto some preordained cultural tradition or representation of the past,” but they “devised ceremonies and formalized expressions, ranging from civic rituals and public monuments to fictional accounts, specific to their own times, needs, and possibilities.”⁸⁹⁰ By harkening back to Betsy Love and an imagined Chickasaw past absent Chickasaw women’s slaveholding, southern white women’s cultural and social authority seemed timeless and preordained.

Pontotoc women’s clubs had commemorated Chickasaws well before Love’s re-interment. White women’s rituals venerating Indians drew upon the rhetoric of the Nashville Agrarians and might be read as a way to view themselves as the natural and spiritual heirs of Indians who previously occupied the region.⁸⁹¹ For instance, in 1926, the Twentieth Century Club, of which the membership overlapped with the UDC, held an “Indian Tea” that juxtaposed costumed Chickasaw Indians with the refineries of white women’s club work and activities.⁸⁹² According to a local newspaper recap, “the meeting place was Rosalba Lake, an ideal setting, for it was here that the CChickasaw [*sic*] Indians had their trysting places in the long ago.” At this

⁸⁸⁹ Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters*, 101.

⁸⁹⁰ Brundage, “White Women and the Politics of Historical Memory in the New South,” 116.

⁸⁹¹ For more on the Nashville Agrarians, see Jack Temple Kirby, *Mockingbird Song: Ecological Landscapes of the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Robert L. Dorman, *Revolt of the Provinces: The Regionalist Movement in America, 1920-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Daniel Joseph Singal, *The War Within: From Victorian to Modernist Thought in the South, 1919-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

⁸⁹² Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 39. The Twentieth Century Club of Pontotoc had been organized in 1900, state federated in 1904, and federated as a general women’s club in 1922. See Young, *From These Hills*, 654.

meeting, in which attendees “[sat] around an old Indian mound” and “under the beautiful trees— ‘The trees that have so long looked at God all day, and lifted their leafy arms to pray. ‘Tis only God can make a tree.’” This description of the trees and invocation of the divine in the presence of an Indian mound reflected the timelessness with which the women may have viewed their work and occupation of the land. The officiant of the meeting exhorted: “It is said that the spirit of the Indian still hovers in this wood, and it is thought that if he [*sic*] proper signal is given, they will come forth.” At the signal, a person dressed as an Indian appeared out of the trees and then “gave a signal which was answered by others, and soon a band of them came forth.” According to the report, “the costumes were so perfect that had it no [*sic*] been known they were imitations, they could hardly have been told from the genuine. They all came with their tom-toms, and around a camp-fire staged a pageant which was greatly enjoyed by ll, [*sic*] the guests.” The meeting concluded with a reading from “Hiawatha.” Aside from the meeting’s program, attendees indulged in a “delectable plate luncheon.”⁸⁹³ At the same time that white southern club women invoked Chickasaws and Betsy Love, they could still return to their “civilized” white present. Chickasaws were at one with nature, but southern white women returned to their stations absent costumes and by consuming refreshments. Indeed, these white club women saw themselves as guarding and narrating the past and, in a literal sense, living out the progress of southern civilization.

To conclude, nearly two decades after Betsy Love’s re-interment, a permanent monument would mark Betsy Love’s grave. In 1954, Pontotoc’s Mother’s Study Club placed a stone monument that read “Betty Allen, dau. of Thomas Love and Third Wife, a Chickasaw Indian. Wife of Col. John L. Allen 17??-1837. Noted for her role in the Establishment of Property Rights

⁸⁹³ “An Indian Tea,” *The Sentinel* (Pontotoc), October 7, 1926.

of Married Women in the Anglo-Saxon World. Mothers Study Club 1954.”⁸⁹⁴ While the monument recognized Love’s Chickasaw background, its words failed to recognize slaveholding’s central role in Love’s claim to property. Elite southern white women viewing Love as a somehow kindred spirit within Mississippi’s physical and racial landscape, in effect, transformed her into a martyr for “Anglo-Saxon” women’s property rights. Over a century earlier, Love herself had understood the intricacies of slaveholding and the benefits that she could consciously extend to her kin from that system. Five years following Love’s re-interment on the grounds of Toccopola High School, a WPA writer noted that “Betsy, figuratively removed from the old Indian burial ground that had become a pasture, now rests near the white man’s school, perhaps a little bewildered by all the belated honor that eventually blew her way.”⁸⁹⁵

⁸⁹⁴ Howell, *Mississippi Back Roads*, 290.

⁸⁹⁵ Federal Writers’ Project of the Works Progress Administration (Miss.), *Mississippi: The WPA Guide to the Magnolia State* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009 [1938, 1988]), 487.

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