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HOUSEHOLDS BUILT ON SHIFTING SANDS: SLAVERY AND EMANCIPATION IN  
THE LOYAL WESTERN BORDER STATES

A Dissertation in

History

by

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation engages with recent scholarship on the slaveholding household and on struggles over the terms of labor as slavery underwent its internal collapse. Slavery stood at the crux of Border State political economies and political identities on the eve of Civil War. Vigorous markets in hiring and sale distributed widespread access to enslaved labor, disrupted black familial and social life, and stood as a terrain of struggle across which both white and black identities were articulated. Border State emancipation, no less traumatic than its Confederate counterpart(s), nonetheless took a different path. Recent scholars have observed that in much of the Confederacy, wartime emancipation was neither secure nor absolute. In the loyal Border States, it was more fraught yet. Slaves and ex-slaves struggled to navigate the overlapping terrains of federal policy, civil law, and the market in their labor as they began to lay the material and ideological foundations of free households. Long experience with hiring markets and geographical mobility gave Border State freedpeople valuable tools in the post-war economy. Nonetheless, many remained enmeshed in ongoing relations of coercion and dependence with the former master class, and still others found that waged labor required hard, often agonizing choices, once again compelling the separation of husbands from wives and children from parents in order to ensure the survival of all family members.

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## Introduction

This dissertation explores the decline and eventual collapse of slavery in the loyal western Border States of Missouri and Kentucky. These slave states were among the four that remained loyal to the Union during the Civil War and which were, as a result, exempted from the Emancipation Proclamation. I contend that the factors which have been typically considered an index of slavery's decline or diminishing salience in the Upper South—among them smallholdings, mixed agriculture, and, most importantly for this project, the robust and multi-layered market in enslaved labor(ers)—both enabled the institution to survive as long as it did, and helped to facilitate—albeit not without cost—former slaves' navigation of the post-war market in free labor. A notion characteristic of slavery's post-war apologists, Dunning-school academic historians, and their contemporaries, the idea that Border State commitment to slavery was waning on the eve of the war has dogged subsequent generations of scholars.<sup>1</sup>

Slavery was flourishing on the eve of the Civil War, and it endured, despite what Lincoln termed the “friction and abrasions” of war<sup>2</sup>, beyond the last year of the conflict. This project takes issue with those scholars who have presumed that slavery was declining in the Border States in the late antebellum period and that indeed this decline explains why secession with the rest of the Upper South in the aftermath of the Fort Sumter crisis and Abraham Lincoln's call for troops ultimately came to naught. Although Missouri brought an end to slavery with its new state

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<sup>1</sup> These factors, among others, have led some scholars to conclude that slavery itself was on the decline in the western Border States. Edward Conrad Smith contends that by the secession crisis, slavery had become an issue of only secondary importance. Although careful to note that the border region, one of many “Souths” rather than part of a monolithic single South, was hardly antislavery, William W. Freehling suggests that the region's demographics and geography left its residents less committed to ensuring slavery's perpetuity than their counterparts elsewhere. And Ira Berlin argues that Kentucky and Missouri (as well as some eastern districts in the Upper South) had largely “devolved from slave societies to societies with slaves.” See Smith, *The Borderland in the Civil War*, 1; Freehling, *The Road to Disunion*, 17; Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 162; as well as Egnal, *Clash of Extremes*, and others.

<sup>2</sup> Abraham Lincoln, Address to Border State Representatives, July 2, 1862, ALP.  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/malhome.html>.

Constitution in January of 1865, slavery endured in Kentucky for nearly a year longer, or until the ratification of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

The market in enslaved bodies and enslaved labor had been central to slavery's development, and continued to be central in ensuring its profitability.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the market also created the fault lines along which slavery eventually fractured. Several scholars have explored the salience of the market in southern slave society. While earlier historians outlined the market's financial scope and reach, focusing on professional slave brokerage firms, auction houses, and traders, others have explored the market as a social phenomenon. An institution of robust profitability, it nonetheless occupied an unsettling position in the southern mind. The sale and purchase of human beings stood in stark contrast to slaveholder pretensions to humanitarian values and paternalist obligations. Moreover, as at least one historian has argued, in the professional business practices required of the successful trader in flesh, the slave trade best embodied the market revolution as it most dramatically affected the South. For numerous reasons, then, in the person of the professional slave trader were condensed the anxieties of an entire class. Even hiring, which has only more recently come under serious historical scrutiny, proved troublesome. In rendering enslaved bodies into individual units of production and exchange, it too troubled the values of a society which prided itself on ostensibly non-capitalist values.<sup>4</sup>

This project seeks to expand and deepen the historical understanding of the slave market, not simply as a place, but as an idea, as a nexus of relationships, and as a terrain of struggle.

Only when we begin with the household as an analytical framework and a container of human

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<sup>3</sup> See Frederic Bancroft's *Slave-Trading in the Old South* for a detailed discussion of importation and exportation of slaves to and from the western Border States before the Civil War. Even before 1820, he observes, Kentucky supplied considerable numbers of slaves to the Natchez and New Orleans markets, and the trade became yet more vigorous following the annexation of Texas. Missouri, too, by the 1830s supplied hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of human property to Deep South markets (124-144).

<sup>4</sup> Johnson, *Soul by Soul*; Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*; Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*.

relationships do we uncover the networks of local and informal transactions which by-passed the public terrain of the slave market. Much scholarship has focused on public marketplaces, but has often elided the many private, hidden transactions which may, in fact, have made up the majority of the trade in the Upper South. More than one historian has estimated that, although the figures can never be known with certainty, many more slaves were exchanged privately or informally than in the public sales which loom so large in the historical imaginary.<sup>5</sup> This market, among other factors, would enable the slaveholding household to expand and contract in response to market stimuli, family need, and the exigencies of slave management itself.

Paying serious attention to the public and private transactions through which enslaved bodies were transferred from white household to white household, and in the interstices of which enslaved men and women struggled to determine the course of their lives, forces us to reevaluate the scholarship of the household as well as that of the market. Close attention to private markets helps to restore white women of the slaveholding classes to the historical narrative, as they bought, sold, hired, and otherwise exchanged the bodies and domestic labors of enslaved women, girls, and boys. Such attention suggests that far from passive victims of a hierarchal society which placed white men at the apex of power, white women of the slave South were active participants in creating, perpetuating, profiting from, and disciplining slavery as an institution. And in their acquisition, exchange, and management of enslaved bodies—usually although not always those of other women and girls—they articulated and clarified their own social identities.

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<sup>5</sup> Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*. The relative prevalence of intra- versus inter-state sales, however, shifts according to the criteria used. According to Wilma Dunaway, “fewer than one-third of all Appalachian slave sales were transacted locally” (*The African-American Family*, 36). Seen another way, Frederic Bancroft, estimates that intra-state sales, mostly “private” and “inconspicuous,” probably “involved as many *slaves* as all the *interstate* trading, an annual average of at least 19,839” (*Slave-Trading in the Old South*, 404). Jonathan Martin observes that a slave’s likelihood of being hired out in a given year was probably “three to five times greater” than the likelihood of their being sold, “and perhaps more” (*Divided Mastery*, 8).

The household itself supplies a useful interpretive lens. In recent years the question of “scale” has arisen as a topic of concern in writing the history of emancipation and other matters. In a recent article, the historian Edward Ayers has observed that in shifting the scale of analysis, the trajectory, causes, and driving force of emancipation changes.<sup>6</sup> An analysis that takes place at the scale of the household reveals much about the collapse of slavery. Recent scholars have made it clear that in many regions of the South, wartime emancipation was neither secure nor absolute. The Border States were more fraught yet. Because the region remained loyal to the Union—not due to declining interest or faith in the institution of slavery but rather in order to protect it—federal policy pertaining to the region remained conservative. This conservative federal policy, among other factors, meant that emancipation there was particularly ad hoc, asymmetrical, and fragile. Close attention to particular households across both time and space makes the workings of power visible, revealing what is concealed by a top-down or policy-driven approach or by a reliance on the agency of the individual.

During the war, the market in enslaved labor grew in significance. This occurred as the Border States encountered guerrilla violence, increasingly brutal if not always effective federal counterinsurgency measures, and large-scale Confederate invasions.<sup>7</sup> As prices fell, and slaveholders sought to rid themselves of superfluous laborers, some non-slaveholding households were able for the first time to enter the slaveholding class. Although by 1862, numerous slaveholders had begun to acknowledge what they recognized as the inevitability of emancipation, the intra-state and local markets in slave hiring provided the mechanism by which

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<sup>6</sup> Ayers and Nesbit, “Seeing Emancipation: Scale and Freedom in the American South,” *Journal of the Civil War Era*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (March, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> See Michael Fellman’s *Inside War* and Goodrich’s *Black Flag*, Geiger’s *Financial Fraud and Guerrilla Violence*, among others, for an exploration of Missouri’s insurgent violence. Aaron Astor and Anne E. Marshall have touched on the culture(s) of violence for Kentucky. Benjamin Franklin Cooling, and others, offer narratives of the region’s conventional military campaigns.

masters and mistresses sought to discipline labor and to maximize whatever profits remained to be extracted from the institution through the end of 1865.

Those slaves who fell victim to public and private transactions were hardly passive objects of exchange. They navigated the market with whatever tools they had at their disposal, both seeking to hold masters and mistresses accountable to their own paternalist pretensions and holding in their own hands the threat of self-destruction. The scholarship of slave resistance is well-known and intricately developed. Although power remained firmly in the hands of slaveholders, an enslaved individual who was both clever and lucky might find on the auction block, as elsewhere, the chance to preserve vital family ties or to shape the terms of their labor. Nonetheless, the market imposed tremendous strains upon black family life. Not only were at least one in three enslaved adults likely to be sold into the interstate trade that fed the cotton and sugar regimes of the Deep South, but men and women alike were also sold and hired regionally in yet greater numbers still. As a result, husbands and wives struggled to maintain their marriages and to parent their children across fluctuating distances and with little guarantee of future stability.

As the war unraveled slavery at its edges, enslaved individuals felt the terrain of the slave market shifting beneath their feet. Much to the dismay and indignation of the master class, the presence of federal troops, the shortage of labor as healthy young men were drawn into military service, and other factors meant that slaves increasingly were able to set the terms of their own hires. The lines between the employment of a hired slave and the employment of a free or quasi-free laborer blurred. Those who had claimed their liberty by federal edict, or simply by flight, confronted great hazards as they remained liable to the state laws which mandated their arrest,

detention, and reclamation or sale as fugitives. But many eluded the law, and went quietly about the business of establishing free households of their own.

The coercive mobility experienced by Border State slaves, I contend, had an unexpected effect. Much recent scholarship has addressed the transition to free labor and the planting of free households in disparate regions of the slave South. A common refrain—sung by Julie Saville, Thavolia Glymph, Nancy Bercaw, and numerous others—has been that the experience of enslavement offered to southern freedpeople crucial tools with which to construct lives in freedom. From the work of these scholars has emerged a rough consensus—that the values former slaves clung to meshed badly with the free labor ideology then predominant, and which idealistic Yankees hoped to inculcate in the conquered South. I have found something different. Numerous Border State slaves brought out of slavery a long history of hiring and being hired. Unlike some regions of the Confederate South, where only the most skilled male artisans left the plantation complex, in Missouri and Kentucky, women and men alike hired out as nurses, servants, field hands, and craftsmen. Smallholdings and the exigencies of the slave market, therefore, lent valuable experience to Border State freedpeople and enabled them to participate actively in a burgeoning market in free labor. Such participation, however, often came at tremendous cost. Mapped onto a region of small households dedicated to mixed agriculture, free labor often required difficult, if not agonizing choices from the freedpeople, as they found themselves compelled once again to separate husbands from wives and children from parents in order to find employment and to ensure the survival of all family members.

The Border State household did not look like the plantation households of the Deep South. Its differences have often been assumed to reflect a diminished commitment to the

institution of chattel slavery, or a more benign, more truly paternal iteration of the same. The first chapter of this project takes issue with the assumption that slavery in the western Border States was in a state of decline on the eve of the Civil War. I contend that the institution remained crucial not only to the region's political economy, but to its political identity. Although tied by commerce, culture, and kinship to northeastern and Deep South markets, Border State masters and mistresses (and their later apologists) juxtaposed themselves against both rapacious Yankee industrialists and slave-killing Delta planters. In doing so, they gestured to the slaveholding household of their own region as the exemplar of order and humanity. Contested vigorously by the actions of those enslaved within the household, and by the rhetoric of the region's freedom-seekers, the Border State household emerges as a politically vexed entity at the crux of slaveholders' defense of the peculiar institution as well as of attacks upon it.

The subsequent chapters of this manuscript will continue to explore the complicated interplay between master and slave, white and black, within household fences and walls, and in the interstitial spaces between households as well. Chapter II, entitled "The Flexible Household: The Production and Reproduction of Slavery in Missouri and Kentucky," draws from the scholarship of Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and others.<sup>8</sup> I investigate the ways in which the region's political economy, in addition to being shaped by the household, shaped the household in turn. My primary focus in this chapter is on the market in enslaved labor, both sold and hired, on the eve of the Civil War. The interstate trade looms large in studies of enslavement, but contemporary sources reveal a more complicated picture. The market in local sales and hires, I contend, produced a slaveholding household capable of responding flexibly to market stimuli and family need. For slaves, however, the prevalence of hiring and sale worked against their

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<sup>8</sup> Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*.

ability to craft enduring familial ties and communal identities, and the market—both the auction block and the private transactions negotiated among white women as well as men—emerged as a terrain of struggle.

Chapter III seeks to uncover, from the perspectives of enslaved women and men themselves, the corrosive effects of military occupation upon the institution of slavery. Conservative federal policy aimed to secure the continued allegiance of Unionist masters and mistresses in the Border States, but the actions of federal soldiers were another matter entirely. Although the region was presumed to be loyal, federal soldiers deployed to the Border States increasingly collapsed all slaveholding households together into the category of disloyalty. Increasingly they behaved as an occupation force in a foreign land. Enslaved people encountered the war first from their vantage points within the slaveholding household, reconciling federal policy, the actions of Union soldiers themselves, and the behavior of their masters and mistresses with the widespread expectation that the war would bring about their liberation. Ultimately, although the master class continued to wield extraordinary power within households and on the terrain of politics and the market, customary hierarchies were destabilized, and space was opened for the enslaved to bring their subterranean politics into the light.

Chapter IV returns to the question of the role played by local, and often informal, slave markets. Due to the periodization of the field, few scholars have considered, in depth, the endurance of wartime slave markets. Under sustained wartime pressures from multiple sources, the Border State market in enslaved labor faltered, but did not necessarily collapse. Indeed, it likely gained in significance for the region's households. As prices fell, new households entered

the slaveholding class. White women of the master class took an active, and growing, part in this process as they bought, sold, and hired slaves in the private transactions which generally elided the socio-sexual disorder of the public marketplace. Even while the market (re)emerged as a site of anxiety, rendering household boundaries uncomfortably porous, its endurance served as a tool of discipline, and worked to partially cushion slavery's internal collapse.

The market was not the only way in which the master class struggled to weather slavery's collapse. Chapter V argues that by 1862, many Border State slaveholders had begun—often in horror and sometimes in resignation or even a kind of guarded optimism—to grapple with the idea that despite the powerful tools at their disposal, among them the endurance of civil law and the ability to leverage loyalty to the Union into the retention of their rights in enslaved property, they could not stem the tide of emancipation. But they would not go quietly. The chapter considers two major phenomena of the later war years—the impressment of labor and the enlistment of black men into the federal service—in order to evaluate the continued intransigence of the master class, as well as their ongoing efforts to lay claim to the extraordinary privileges, profits, and prerogatives of mastery. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ways in which masters and mistresses began tentatively to remake their households in a society predicated on free labor, bringing long experience in the ownership, discipline, and management of other human beings to the task.

The sixth and final chapter of this manuscript engages with recent scholarship on the blurred lines between slavery and freedom.<sup>9</sup> I suggest that the vigorous market in enslaved labor which characterized Border State slavery prior to and during the war may have helped to

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<sup>9</sup> See, among numerous others, the work of Anthony E. Kaye, Thavolia Glymph, Leslie Schwalm, Amy Dru Stanley, Thomas Holt, Nancy Bercau, Laura E. Edwards, and Susan Eva O'Donovan.

facilitate, for former masters and former slaves alike, the transition to free labor. Shaped in part by the collective experience of enslavement, many freedmen and –women flexibly combined waged labor with independent production towards the common goal of household subsistence. Nonetheless, the exigencies of wage labor in a society of smallholdings required hard, often cruel choices of the freedpeople, and an alternate narrative of emancipation emerges, in which family separation, not unification, was the norm, and freedpeople struggled to navigate enduring relations of dependency and coercion with the former master class.

## Chapter I

### “At the Crux of Identities: The Slaveholding Household in Missouri and Kentucky”

On the eve of the Civil War, the western Border States—defined for the purposes of this project as Missouri and Kentucky—were largely flourishing. There were, of course, exceptions. Backward, old-fashioned farmers “scratch[ed] their ground over and over, year after year; all the fertility of the soil laying dormant, and, of course, useless.”<sup>1</sup> Reverend Robert J. Breckinridge described to some Yankee travelers the conditions of agriculture in Kentucky’s eastern mountains, explaining that the region was “inhabited to a considerable extent by a squatter population” which subsisted “almost entirely on the scanty products of their own rough fields.” These farmers engaged only in the most marginal way with the market economy, traveling to Paris or Lexington once a year with barrels of tar and baskets of ginseng loaded in “a ponderous and roomy wagon of ancient fashion... about as large as six of the present day.”<sup>2</sup> But in many households, improved agricultural methods, including the use of labor-saving machinery, enabled the production of a healthy surplus over and above the household’s subsistence.<sup>3</sup> In 1850, St. Charles County, located along both the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, produced an

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<sup>1</sup> J. T. Cleveland, “Hemp Culture,” *The Western Journal of Agriculture* (April, 1850).

<sup>2</sup> “A ‘Rev. Farmer’: Kentucky Stock,” *New York Observer* (September 4, 1856).

<sup>3</sup> James Huston observes that most yeoman households throughout the South evidently “practiced family-first agriculture but ... raised enough commercial crops to earn cash.” Their “connections” with the market, however, remained “tenuous” prior to the incursion of the railroad and other transportation innovations which by the 1850s would begin to “penetrate” “yeomen strongholds” (*Calculating the Value of the Union*, 37). Jeremy Neely largely agrees, pointing out that for the yeomen and small planters of the Missouri counties along the Kansas line, “subsistence-level production was a matter of circumstance as well as choice.” When access was at all possible, even remotely situated farmers “found themselves drawn to widening regional markets” (*The Border Between Them*, 30). See R. Douglas Hurt’s *Agriculture and Slavery in Missouri’s Little Dixie* for a detailed exploration of the fluctuations of commercial agriculture in that region.

abundance of timber to supply the region's steamboat industry. Cereal crops, garden produce, and fruit found ready markets at St. Louis and Alton, Illinois. Hogs and beef cattle went to "the packer at St. Louis." Finally, in addition to their subsistence and commercial needs, farmers in the area experimented in wine grape, rice, and cranberry cultivation for local use.<sup>4</sup> New Madrid, Missouri, as boosters wrote with pride, shipped corn—more than two hundred thousand bushels of it in a six-month period in late 1849 and early 1850; oats, potatoes, and wheat in smaller quantities; and hundreds of head of cattle, hogs, horses, and mules.<sup>5</sup>

Slavery was central to the region's prosperity. Some scholars have presumed that on the eve of the Civil War Border State slavery was in a state of decline. This chapter contends that the institution remained crucial not only to the region's political economies, but to its political identities. Despite post-war claims to have harbored emancipationist sentiment, at the time Border State masters vigorously defended their practice of slavery, particularly after the rise of abolitionist sentiment and political anti-slavery thought. Like their counterparts throughout the South, they turned to the discourse of the paternalist household to justify and reconcile their institution. But in so doing, they accomplished a secondary goal—that of crafting a specific regional identity as well as a regionally specific pro-slavery argument. Tied by commerce, culture, and kinship to northeastern and Deep South markets, Border State masters and mistresses (and their later apologists) juxtaposed themselves against both rapacious Yankees and slave-killing Delta planters. They gestured to the slaveholding household of their own region as the exemplar of order and humanity. Contested vigorously by the actions of those enslaved within the household, and by the rhetoric of the region's freedom-seekers, the slaveholding

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<sup>4</sup> "St. Charles County, Missouri," *The Western Journal of Agriculture* (February, 1850).

<sup>5</sup> William S. Mosely, "New Madrid, Missouri," *The Western Journal of Agriculture* (March, 1850).

household emerges as a politically vexed entity at the crux of slaveholders' defense of the peculiar institution as well as of attacks upon it.

Slavery was central to the settlement of the Border States, and many expected that it would remain central to the region's future. Slaveholders migrating westward, as Ira Berlin puts it, arrived certain that their rights as masters—to claim “property-in-persons,” to arbitrate discipline within the bounds of their own households, and to retrieve fugitives with the aid of the law and the neighborhood—would be respected.<sup>6</sup> In short, they arrived in what would be from the outset a slave society, and one geared toward market as well as subsistence production. Incorporation of slaves within the household elevated social status as well as guaranteeing economic security.

During the early years of their settlement, the Border States had inherited from the older slave states of the eastern seaboard a culture of slaveowning and the legal codes which gave it legitimacy. Kentucky, argues Ivan E. McDougale, “inherited from her mother State of Virginia the ancient theory of a landed aristocracy” whose wealth derived from the ownership of slaves. In 1792, the state's slave code drew almost verbatim from that of Virginia.<sup>7</sup> Missouri, comprised of territory obtained from France, had never excluded slavery. Indeed, slavery had long existed under French and Spanish imperial control, and the slave population further swelled with the influx of settlers from Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, and North Carolina, who sought profit and opportunity in the last years before statehood in 1820 and in the first years after it. Virginia's code, reconciled with the much older French and Spanish codes upon United States possession of the Louisiana Purchase in 1804, also provided the model for Missouri's. Intended to secure the rights of the existing residents of the upper reaches of the District of Louisiana, the territorial

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<sup>6</sup> Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 166.

<sup>7</sup> McDougale, *Slavery in Kentucky*, 7-8, 30-43.

codes actually rendered the strictures on slave life more severe.<sup>8</sup>

In the decade after the Revolutionary War, immigrants from Virginia and North Carolina flooded into Kentucky, slaves in tow, quickly settling the fertile Bluegrass lands as well as their “less favored adjacent regions.”<sup>9</sup> Historian Marion B. Lucas speculates that “blacks were probably never fewer than one in ten” of the population of territorial Kentucky. The slave population would mushroom following statehood, but by 1790 slave-driven agriculture had already displaced “frontier conditions” throughout much of the state.<sup>10</sup> And as the westward conquest progressed, the proportion of southern cultural and political influence increased.<sup>11</sup>

The territorial expansion of the United States, coupled with expanded domestic and global markets for slave-grown commodities, “opened an entire subcontinent in which slaveholders could make real their new dreams.”<sup>12</sup> Although many settlers, even in the plantation region of Missouri later known as “Little Dixie,” would engage in subsistence agriculture under frontier conditions, others brought with them the slaves—and the commercial mindset—which would make profitable staple production possible.<sup>13</sup> As the traveler Timothy Flint observed of migrating households in 1819 Missouri Territory, “I have seen... nine wagons harnessed with four to six horses. We may allow a hundred cattle, besides hogs, horses, and sheep, to each wagon; and from three to four to twenty slaves.”<sup>14</sup> By the early 1820s, subsistence production in the central Missouri River floodplain had given way to the vigorous marketing of crops, hampered only by the dearth of hard cash and the difficulty of delivering one’s product to

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<sup>8</sup> Frazier, *Slavery and Crime in Missouri*, 29-46.

<sup>9</sup> Smith, *The Borderland in the Civil War*, 10.

<sup>10</sup> Lucas, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky, Vol. 1*, xv.

<sup>11</sup> Smith, *Borderland*, 6-12; Lucas, *Blacks in Kentucky, Vol. 1*, xv; Bancroft, *Slave-Trading in the Old South*, 123.

<sup>12</sup> Baptist, “‘Stol’ and Fetched Here,” Baptist and Camp, eds., *New Studies in the History of American Slavery*, 245.

<sup>13</sup> Hurt, *Agriculture and Slavery*, 6-7.

<sup>14</sup> Timothy Flint, quoted in Stone, *Slavery, Southern Culture, and Education*, 14.

market.<sup>15</sup>

Southern-born migrants wrote home with wonder and a fair degree of ambition at the potential for prosperity which they found. Thomas H. Harvey arrived in Saline County, Missouri, in May of 1836. In June, he wrote to Susan W. Harvey back home in Virginia that although not a single acre of his new land was “not rich enough to raise tobacco plants,” and he could “add to it any quantity at \$1.25 an acre.” Were Susan to visit, he thought that she “would be delighted with the scenery.” He planned to build his first home in the new district with a view of “a beautiful plain,” and looked forward to future opportunities for profit. Everything for sale in the region was “very high” in price—cattle from ten to fifteen dollars a head and oxen from thirty-five to sixty dollars a yoke, and bacon eight cents per pound. Although timber was “scarce” in general, his own land boasted “an abundance.”<sup>16</sup> In 1848, Dade County, Missouri, farmer John Appleby wrote to his parents back home in Tennessee that “times is better here than I ever saw them.” He listed off the prices of good horses, pork by the hundredweight, corn, cows and calves, and land. “Negroes sell high,” he concluded. “Men six to seven hundred each.”<sup>17</sup>

The wealth of the region’s hemp crop, too, rested squarely on the backs of the enslaved workers who cultivated the crop. Indeed, they were necessary. As a former slaveholder from Platte County, Missouri, boasted, no machinery could match the skill and efficiency of the slave men who cut, broke, and cleaned the fibers. “We became wealthy by its culture,” he recalled.<sup>18</sup> The labor of the slaves in the hemp fields loomed large in memories both black and white. “I can remember how twenty or thirty negroes would work in line cutting hemp with sickles,” recalled a

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<sup>15</sup> Hurt, *Agriculture and Slavery*, 13.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas H. Harvey to Susan W. Harvey, June 20, 1836, Harvey Family Papers, Mss. 338, Folder 1, WHMC.

<sup>17</sup> John Appleby to John and Jane F. Appleby, January 2, 1848, Appleby, John, Letter, 1848, Mss. 498, WHMC.

<sup>18</sup> J. G. Haskell, “The Passing of Slavery in Western Missouri,” in *Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society*, Vol. VII, quoted in Trexler, *Slavery in Missouri*, 23.

white veteran from Lafayette County, Missouri. “I have seen a long line of wagons loaded with hemp extending from the river nearly to the court house.”<sup>19</sup>

Demand drove up the purchase price of a slave in the Border States, and frugally-minded farmers often chose to buy from a trader rather than locally, invigorating the interstate trade and hastening the departure of eastern slaves, many of whom left behind kin and close friends. The first slave whom Alice Bruce Power’s grandfather purchased was a four year old girl, imported from Virginia to Flemingsburg, Kentucky, to rock and tend to his own newborn baby.<sup>20</sup> And still other Border State migrants undertook the return trip to the eastern seaboard, or sent word to a contact there, in order to buy at the lower prices which still prevailed in older districts. In 1834, A. A. Edwards of Saline County, Missouri, told his uncle Lewis G. Harvey that he had sold an enslaved girl, undersized and sickly, for \$800, as well as a man whom he also found unsatisfactory, but who still brought \$1,225 at sale. “Negroes here are very high,” he explained. “Likely negro men” sold for between fourteen and fifteen hundred dollars. He asked Harvey not to quote the enticing prices to anyone at home in Virginia until he had had a chance to “buy one or two... myself,” and requested that if his uncle saw “a chance” to “purchase a likely negro man on moderate terms, before I get there,” that he should do so. He also expressed hope in obtaining “a good stout woman if I could get one cheap.”<sup>21</sup>

The journey from the eastern seaboard to the western slave states, whether in a trader’s coffle or in the possession of masters and mistresses, stood as “the central event” in black life between the Revolution and the Civil War,<sup>22</sup> resonating not only through planter family mythos, but through that of their slaves as well. As historian Edward E. Baptist contends, former slaves

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<sup>19</sup> Captain Joseph A. Wilson of Lafayette County, quoted in Trexler, *Slavery in Missouri*, 24.

<sup>20</sup> Historical Memoir by Alice Bruce Power re: Slavery on the Bruce Homestead in Flemingsburg, Kentucky, 1914, addressed to Mrs. C. C. Leer, Historian of the Kentucky Division, United Daughters of the Confederacy, Paris, Kentucky, Dudley Family Papers, 1861-1971, Mss. A D847, Folder 5, Filson.

<sup>21</sup> A. A. Edwards to Lewis G. Harvey, Sr., February 12, 1834, Harvey Family Papers, Mss. 338, Folder 1, WHMC.

<sup>22</sup> Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 161.

told and retold the stories of their coerced migrations, producing what amounts to a vernacular historiography, by which Baptist means “a narrative about the past constructed by laypeople in their everyday tongue.”<sup>23</sup> Robert Cheatham, Sr., “often retold tales” of how he and his mother and father had accompanied their master from Virginia to Kentucky in the early years of the nineteenth century.<sup>24</sup> “Mother was brought here” to Marion County, Missouri, Clay Smith recalled, “by the Maupins [her master’s family] from Virginia.”<sup>25</sup>

Once established, still other Border State farmers bought slaves from traders who brought human inventory from the eastern seaboard. As Carl Boone remembered, his father, born in Maryland in 1800, “was bought by a nigger buyer while a boy and was sold to Miley Boone in Marion County, Kentucky.”<sup>26</sup> Emma Knight relayed a vivid tale heard from her mother. Traders had brought the woman from “Virginia or down south some place” to Palmyra, Missouri, “in a box car with lots of other colored people. There were several cars full, with men in one car, women in another, and the younger ones in another, and the babies in another with some of the women to care for them.”<sup>27</sup> In memory, the transportation of slaves westward took its place amid the other events of the nation. Filmore Taylor Hancock’s grandmother “come hyar [to Missouri] with her missus... when dey brung de Cherokee Indian tribe hyar from middlin’ Tennessee, de time dey moved de Missouri Indians back to Oklahoma.”<sup>28</sup> Still others traced their lineage directly to Africa, whether or not such narratives could be strictly true. “Father wuz took by slave traders from Africa, en dey done bring him to Norfolk, Virginia, en put him on de block, en sold him to Jim Lane of Bath County, Kentucky,” Thomas McIntire claimed.<sup>29</sup> “My grandmother

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<sup>23</sup> Baptist, “‘Stol’ and Fetched Here,” Baptist and Camp, eds., *New Studies*, 245.

<sup>24</sup> Robert J. Cheatham, Indiana, WPA, Vol. 5, 46-47.

<sup>25</sup> Clay Smith, Missouri, WPA, Supp. Series I, Vol. 2, 263.

<sup>26</sup> Carl Boone, Indiana, WPA, Vol. 6, 16.

<sup>27</sup> Emma Knight, Missouri, WPA, Supp. I, Vol. 2, 203.

<sup>28</sup> Filmore Taylor Hancock, Missouri, WPA, Supp. I, Vol. 2, 178.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas McIntire, Ohio, WPA, Vol. 5, 408-409.

came straight from Africa and wuz auctioned off and bought” by the father of her own former master, Sophia Word explained.<sup>30</sup>

Border State slavery would never be as thickly layered as that elsewhere. Absent were the great black majorities so notable in the plantation belts of the Old South. Absent too was the cultivation of a single staple crop such as cotton, rice, or sugar. Slaveholdings, overall, were smaller, and plantation slavery was limited to the most fertile regions. The rolling land along the Missouri River was known as “Little Dixie” for its high black population and profitable staple agriculture. In Kentucky, the Bluegrass region in the central part of the state was the heart of slave-owning. Western Kentucky, too, harbored slave agriculture, especially in the “gently rolling hills” and “broad alluvial bottoms” of the north-western counties and in the limestone soils of the south-west.<sup>31</sup> But the slave population would remain comparatively low. Census data from each state reveals a comparatively diffuse pattern of slave-ownership. According to the 1860 census, Kentucky’s slaves constituted 19.5%, and Missouri’s slaves 9.7%, of each state’s respective total populations (as compared to 57.5% in South Carolina and 43.7% in Georgia; among the other states of the Upper and Border South, Virginia’s slaves accounted for 30.7% and Tennessee’s 24.8%).<sup>32</sup>

A smaller percentage of Border State householders owned slaves as compared to the Deep South, and those who did own slaves owned fewer of them. Outside the plantation districts, slaves were scattered singly or in complete or partial family groupings among individual households. For example, Jim Galvin of Ste. Genevieve County, Missouri, owned an adult male slave, that man’s sister, and her six children (four of whom would live to adulthood). In addition,

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<sup>30</sup> Sophia Word, Kentucky, WPA, Vol. 16, 66-67.

<sup>31</sup> Ivan E. McDougle, *Slavery in Kentucky*, 30-43.

<sup>32</sup> James L. Huston, *Calculating the Value of the Union*, 28.

he owned “an old lady by de name of Malinda.”<sup>33</sup> In Missouri, nearly three quarters of all slaveholders owned fewer than five slaves. Only slightly more than 500 households owned more than twenty. Only 38 households owned more than fifty. In Kentucky in 1850, roughly twenty-five percent of slaveowners owned only a single slave. Eighty-eight percent owned fewer than twenty. Only five households owned more than one hundred. And no single household owned more than three hundred. Moreover, by 1850 the enslaved population in each state showed a diminishing rate of increase as compared to both the enslaved populations elsewhere in the South and the white population of the border.<sup>34</sup>

Other factors differentiated border state slavery from the slavery of the Deep South. The region exhibited greater “occupational diversity” than much of the rest of the South, with “significant manufacturing and artisanal activity,” particularly in hemp and tobacco processing, developing prior to the war.<sup>35</sup> Each state was varied in its soil and topography, and hence in its mix of crops.<sup>36</sup> Early twentieth-century historian E. Merton Coulter notes that “although tobacco came nearest to dominating” Kentucky’s “agricultural life,” it met with competition from wheat, corn, hemp, flax, rye, and livestock. This “varied agricultural wealth,” he observes, in turn “called for wide commercial activities and connections.” By 1830, a primary connection was New England and the industrializing northeast.<sup>37</sup> The construction of canals, and later, the arrival of the railroad (which reached St. Louis in 1853) intensified the northeast’s commercial pull

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<sup>33</sup> Peter Corn, *Missouri*, WPA, Vol. 11, 85.

<sup>34</sup> Figures from Lucas, *Blacks in Kentucky*, Vol. I, xvii-xix; Fellman, *Inside War*, 7; Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 7-8. See Trexler, *Slavery in Missouri*, for a detailed exploration of what can be known about some of the largest slaveholders of the state (13-18).

<sup>35</sup> Huston, *Calculating the Value of the Union*, 33,

<sup>36</sup> Trexler, *Slavery in Missouri*, 22.

<sup>37</sup> Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 16, 9-10.

upon the Border States.<sup>38</sup> Railroad construction in particular also brought influxes of new immigrants—many of them northern- or European-born.

These factors, among others, have led some scholars to conclude that slavery itself was on the decline in the western Border States. Edward Conrad Smith contends that by the secession crisis, slavery had become an issue of only secondary importance. Although careful to note that the border region, one of many “Souths” rather than part of a monolithic single South, was hardly antislavery, William W. Freehling suggests that the region’s demographics and geography left its residents less committed to ensuring slavery’s perpetuity than their counterparts elsewhere. And Ira Berlin argues that Kentucky and Missouri (as well as some eastern districts in the Upper South) had largely “devolved from slave societies to societies with slaves.”<sup>39</sup>

But the apparent relative decline for the region as a whole becomes more complicated when a closer look is taken. In the Osage Valley of western Missouri, for example, slavery expanded vigorously during the decade of the 1850s. As Jeremy Neely points out, considering Missouri as a whole tends to obscure the growth and entrenchment of slavery in sub-regions such as the counties along the Kansas line, where slavery expanded in both raw and comparative terms. The slave population doubled, and so did the number of slaveholding households.<sup>40</sup> The slave population in the “large and excessively rich” counties along the Missouri River, particularly in the west, as well as the belt of counties abutting the Kansas line also exhibited a rate of increase far greater than that for the state as a whole.<sup>41</sup> And the population of slaves within the region, in both raw and relative terms, was certainly far from the only issue at stake. As the early twentieth-century historian E. Merton Coulter contends, declining numbers “in no

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<sup>38</sup> See Egnal, *Clash of Extremes*; and others.

<sup>39</sup> Smith, *The Borderland in the Civil War*, 1; Freehling, *The Road to Disunion*, 17; Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 162.

<sup>40</sup> Neely, *The Border Between Them*, 33.

<sup>41</sup> Trexler, *Slavery in Missouri*, 11-12.

way prevented” Kentucky from “persistently clinging to the constitutional right to hold slaves, if it so chose.”<sup>42</sup> Slavery, in the abstract as well as concretely, remained central to the political identity as well as the political economy of the border region.

Bonds remain strong between the Border States and the slave regimes of the Deep South. “From 1820 to the Civil War,” Coulter observes, “constant streams of horses, mules, cattle, and swine passed along” Kentucky’s turnpikes “to southern markets,” and the river trade continued to boom. As the *Louisville Courier* reminded its largely pro-southern readership, the state’s “flour and machinery, bagging and rope [grown in Kentucky’s hemp fields and manufactured in Kentucky’s manufactories], jeans and linseys, segars and manufactured tobacco, candles and soap, agricultural implement[s]” and other commodities brought millions of dollars into the state’s economy.<sup>43</sup> And slaves themselves constituted a source of considerable revenue. “A large number of persons,” W. E. B. Du Bois observes, “followed the profession of promoting this sale of slaves. There were markets and quotations, and the stream of black labor, moving continuously into the South, reached yearly into the thousands.” Du Bois estimates that in the decade of the 1850s alone, between fifty and eighty thousand slaves were sold southward.<sup>44</sup>

Internal improvements also served to reinforce existing patterns and to strengthen slaveholding districts’ commitment to the institution. The railroad tied the region more firmly to the rest of the upper South as well as to the Northeast, and many expected it to revitalize slavery and facilitate its spread outwards from the prosperous river and Bluegrass counties, where plantation agriculture flourished. In his call for “cordons of railroads or turnpikes” to bind New Madrid, situated in a bend of the Mississippi River, to the southeastern portion of the state as well as to northeastern Arkansas, and for government-funded internal improvement projects

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<sup>42</sup> Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 7-8.

<sup>43</sup> Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 16, 9-10. *Louisville Courier* quote is cited on p. 9.

<sup>44</sup> Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 43.

which would reclaim “the great swamps or submerged lands” for agriculture, William S. Mosely also praised the county’s notable increase in slave population relative to total population, and expressed his hope that these additional laborers would produce bumper crops of cereal grains for market, as well as for home use.<sup>45</sup>

Rail spurs and improved roads, these men contended, would bind marginal farmers to new markets and encourage improved agriculture and investment in slave labor. Isolated yeoman districts, one advocate claimed, remained marginal “for the want of facilities of transportation,” their productive and mineral wealth lying un-extracted.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, something similar was underway in Virginia, where railroad and canal development opened new lands to tobacco cultivation—and with it, slaveholding.<sup>47</sup> And rail advocates also spoke plainly of the desirability of attracting new immigrants from the older regions of the Deep South, and contended that an interior railway network within the state, linked to larger national networks, would tie the state’s agriculture not only to the East and the Far West, but to the Red River, the Gulf Coast, and to New Orleans. If the Deep South imagined itself driven at bay by the forces of northern anti-slavery opinion, the Border States scoffed. “It is getting to be seen,” Missouri’s *Liberty Weekly Tribune* observed in the spring of 1860, that “the mild temperature of the Southern states is better for manufacturing purposes than the frozen North.” The South’s career was unlimited: “She has only to go on in extending her manufacturing establishments, and building railroads in order to destroy abolitionism.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Wm. S. Mosely, “New Madrid, Missouri,” *The Western Journal of Agriculture, Manufactures, Mechanical Arts, Internal Improvements...* (March, 1850).

<sup>46</sup> “Internal Improvements,” *The Western Journal of Agriculture, Manufactures, Mechanic Arts, Internal Improvements...* (September, 1850).

<sup>47</sup> Blair, *Virginia’s Private War*, 13.

<sup>48</sup> “The Right Course for the South,” *Liberty (Mo.) Weekly Tribune* (April 20, 1860).

It is true that the Border region tolerated—albeit not without contention and occasional violence—the coexistence of a vigorous anti-slavery politics within a slaveholding culture.<sup>49</sup> And a diversifying economy tied firmly to northern markets as well as southern provided alternatives to slave-driven agriculture. But as Harrison Anthony Trexler points out for Missouri, the assumption of slavery’s decline was a function of subsequent events. As he observes, by the early years of the twentieth century four out of five “old slaveholders” acknowledged that slavery had never “pa[id].” But, he warns, if asked in the 1850s, most of these men would have given a different answer indeed.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, prior to the Civil War, the Border State pro-slavery press self-consciously defended the institution against accusations of decline. “Abolition has had no effect,” the *St. Louis Herald* confidently declared. “Slaves are as high [in price] in the Border States, and on the very borders of the Free States, as they are anywhere else.” The *Herald* continued, in an article which would be reprinted in Clay County, Missouri’s, *Liberty Weekly Tribune*, that

as has been pertinently remarked, just when anti-slavery doctrines seem to have reached their most complete development... when, if ever, we might reasonably expect to discover some prospect of realization [of] the blessed fruits so long promised by agitators—what is the actual state of things? Does the institution of slavery betray signs of dissolution? Are the slaveholders apprehensive of a large depreciation of their ability and so, seized with panic, willing to sell out at any sacrifice? Exactly the reverse is true, in every respect.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> As J. Winston Coleman, Jr., notes, it took some thirty years for Kentucky’s colonization advocates to realize the “futility” of their “social experiment plan of transporting and colonizing freed Negroes in its African colony of Liberia” (*Slavery Times in Kentucky*, xiii). Frederic Bancroft observes that Kentucky’s 1850 constitution, which included a declaration that “the right of the owner of a slave to such a slave, and its increase, is the same, and is as inviolable as the right of the owner of any property whatever,” proved “how little the antislavery movement there gained in practical results after a long agitation” (*Slave-Trading in the Old South*, 123). E. Merton Coulter observes that despite loud minority voices in opposition to slavery, there were few legislative attempts to actually curtail the institution (*The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 6).

<sup>50</sup> Trexler, *Slavery in Missouri*, 52-55.

<sup>51</sup> “Increased Value of Slave Property,” *St. Louis Herald*, reprinted in the *Liberty (Mo.) Weekly Tribune* (February 17, 1860).

During the early years of their settlement, the Border States had inherited from the older slave states of the eastern seaboard a culture of slaveholding. This culture was grounded in the concept of the household. Understood as a material and conceptual unit crucial to the maintenance and defense of slave society, the household contained within itself relations of both production and reproduction, the former of which, in bourgeois societies, was increasingly relegated to the public sphere.<sup>52</sup> Its boundaries were codified in law and reified by a legal and social discourse which defined it as the domain subject to the master's authority and delimited largely by the extent of his ownership of land and people.<sup>53</sup> In the slave society of the South, the master himself was constituted, with few exceptions, as sole arbiter of authority over his dependents.<sup>54</sup> The ownership of land and dominion over the people who resided on that land undergirded white male southerners' claim to political legitimacy, and, in the minds of southern intellectuals, stood as a necessary bulwark against the disorder inherent in bourgeois capitalist society.<sup>55</sup>

But the slave society which developed during the early national and antebellum periods in the Border States was not a mirror image of what had been left behind. Forced migrants left behind family members, well-established customary privileges, and communal identities.<sup>56</sup> Ex-

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<sup>52</sup> Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*. Recently, scholars such as Amy Dru Stanley and Jeanne Boydston have shown the dichotomy between the northern and southern household to be less stark than previously assumed, with northern households retaining more of a productive character than has been assumed. Nonetheless, as northern society became increasingly vocal in its prescriptive insistence that the household be sheltered from the market, the South remained deeply invested in the concept of the productive household (see Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work*, and Amy Dru Stanley, "Home Life and the Morality of the Market," in Stokes and Conway, eds., *The Market Revolution in America*).

<sup>53</sup> McCurry, "Boundaries of Power" in *Masters of Small Worlds*, 5-36.

<sup>54</sup> Among others, Peter W. Bardaglio has pointed out that the state rarely intervened in the doings of a household head unless his behavior were to become so egregious as to threaten the legitimacy of slavery (and, more broadly, patriarchy) as a social system (*Reconstructing the Household*).

<sup>55</sup> See Eugene D. Genovese, *The Slaveholders' Dilemma*. For a fuller explanation of the origins of the household as the guarantor of white men's political independence, even freedom itself, see also Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*.

<sup>56</sup> O'Donovan, *Becoming Free in the Cotton South*, 6. Those from the Chesapeake, O'Donovan observes, suffered a breach from "long-settled communities" and a diversifying economy which accommodated artisanal, urban,

slave memoirist Francis Fedric recalled the “wailings and lamentations” of the spouses and children left behind when his master sold his Virginia plantation for the prospect of a new life in Kentucky.<sup>57</sup> The experience of migration likely “flattened” hierarchies within the slaveholding household, and perhaps, some historians have suggested, between white households as well, mitigating against the development of stark “class distinctions.”<sup>58</sup> Slaves recalled breaking new ground and clearing timber alongside their masters. Francis Fedric and the rest of his master’s slaves arrived in Mason County, Kentucky, to find “a great deal of uncultivated land.” They were soon set to work clearing timber, sowing bluegrass seed, and fencing in woodland pastures. “The neighbors,” Fedric recalled, had to teach his master “how to manage his new estate.”<sup>59</sup>

The needs of a frontier society also lent themselves to harsh discipline. Violence may indeed have been more prevalent in Border State slaveholding households. Smallholdings fostered greater invigilation of slave life by the master and mistress, and brought many into constant, often contentious, interaction with their owners. Although some scholars have presumed that close contact fostered benevolence and friendly feelings between master and slave, such does not seem to be the case. Indeed, violence spiked at whim.<sup>60</sup> Told to “come in the house” one day, the Kentucky slave Sophia Word refused to go. Her mistress grabbed her and tried to drag her inside, and this abuse was something Word could not tolerate. “Then I grabs that

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industrial, and mobile work patterns. Those who left the Low Country behind also left “insular enclaves” and distinctive cultural forms. Even those who hailed from older cotton districts found that they left behind them a well-developed array of customary privileges (21-24).

<sup>57</sup> Fedric, *Slave Life in Virginia and Kentucky*, 14-15.

<sup>58</sup> Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 181; Smith, *The Borderland in the Civil War*, 14.

<sup>59</sup> Fedric, *Slave Life in Virginia and Kentucky*, 17.

<sup>60</sup> Eugene D. Genovese carefully weighs the merits of the claim that farmers, as opposed to planters, treated their chattel with greater humanity, concluding that close quarters and fluid divisions of labor likely produced an “easy familiarity” between master and slaves. Nonetheless, the same factors subjected slaves to the “indulgence” of the master class’s “daily passions” and the intrusion of their “scrutiny.” Precarious finances led to the breakup of family units, and among the most marginal households, slaves might go without the material necessities of life (*Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 7-10). Harold D. Tallant notes in *Evil Necessity* that slaves endured daily interaction with “petty, racist tyrants” (63). Wilma A. Dunaway suggests that on yeoman farms and small plantations in mountain districts, “masters meted out the most severe forms of punishment,” did so more frequently than in plantation belts, and often enough were met in return with violent retaliation (*The African-American Family*, 11-12).

white woman,” she recalled with a hint of nostalgia, “when she turned her back, and shook her until she begged for mercy.” She took a “terrible beating” from the master for her crime, but she “didn’t care,” because she had given the mistress “a good’un too.”<sup>61</sup>

Close supervision and a brutal pace of work were necessary, as Susan O’Donovan points out for the cotton frontier of southwest Georgia, to “turn forest to field,” as well as to recompense the master for the costs of migration. Slaves struggled to renegotiate the pace of work and to carve out space for personal and communal necessities under the noses of the master class.<sup>62</sup> Even after the frontier period had passed, slavery in Border States could be materially harsh, as the slaves themselves made plain (although their often-expressed fears of being sold southward suggest that it was not believed to be, in general, as harsh as that practiced elsewhere), and slaveholders might prove as brutal, capricious, or exploitative as those anywhere else. The lash drove the production of hemp and tobacco just as it did cotton and sugar. The accustomed task was one hundred pounds of hemp picked or broken per day, and while many masters seem to have offered pay for daily tallies which surpassed the goal, they also turned to the whip when slaves fell short.<sup>63</sup>

The observations of Kentucky planter Mildred Bullitt, of her husband’s late antebellum attempts to carve a working plantation, named Cottonwood, out of raw land in Union County, far to the west of the state, suggest something of what may have prevailed in an earlier day as well. Miasmatic diseases prevailed at Cottonwood, as did slave resistance, and even rumors of murder. Mildred Bullitt suspected the involvement of the overseer in the deaths of enslaved men Sam and Harry. Harry had died following a “blow in his side, which knocked him down, from a hand-spike, while rolling logs,” and Sam of “pleurisy.” Two other enslaved men, Daniel and Simon by

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<sup>61</sup> Sophia Word, Kentucky, WPA, Vol. 16, 66-67.

<sup>62</sup> O’Donovan, *Becoming Free in the Cotton South*, 25.

<sup>63</sup> See Trexler, *Slavery in Missouri*, 25.

name, “headed a conspiracy to kill every mule” on the Cottonwood farm, “with the hope they’d get back to Oxmoor,” the Bullitt’s more comfortable primary residence near Louisville. The “conspiracy” took its toll, as the mules became “so starved” that Bullitt was forced to “drop off fifty acres of his corn.” And when the overseer failed to discipline either of the men, he lost his job. “I expect he was afraid,” Mildred Bullitt concluded, “& well he might be, if he wasn’t a brave man. An overseer was killed in that neighborhood last winter, by a negro he undertook to correct.” No son of hers, she declared, would ever reside on Cottonwood farm in its present condition: “To live there without a wife would be doleful, & to take a wife to a farm, that was subject to such overflows, would be most unkind.”<sup>64</sup>

The slaveholding classes, several scholars have made clear, inscribed their power and authority, not just over their chattel but over other whites as well, upon built environments across the South. But the built environment did not simply reflect or articulate power: it served to produce it. In Loudoun County, Virginia, for example, the “exquisite manor homes” constructed by tobacco planters in this piedmont district documented their importation of the “lavish lifestyle” of the tidewater. For all classes of Loudoun residents, “housing styles” as well as the “control of resources such as land and slaves,” among other factors, distinguished, divided, and united white society.<sup>65</sup> And historian Stephanie Camp contends that “social relations and social values” are “constituted” as well as “reflected in the design of the built environment and the distribution of people in space.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Mildred Bullitt to Tom Bullitt, May 31, 1859, June 14, 1859, June 18, 1859, Bullitt Family Papers, Oxmoor Collection, 1683-2003, Thomas W. Bullitt (1838-1910), Mss. A B937c, Folder 296, Filson.

<sup>65</sup> Stevenson, *Life in Black and White*, 21-24.

<sup>66</sup> Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 4.

The slaveholding household of the western Border States generally lacked the grandeur sometimes exhibited by those at the apex of the planter class in the Old South. Absent were the great disparities of wealth and poverty evident in some southern regions, and slaveholding, as E. Merton Coulter observes, was “widely dispersed” and “entrenched with the average” householder.<sup>67</sup> Border State freedpeople often recalled their masters and mistresses having resided in modest yet comfortable homes which were a far cry from the mansions of the plantation legend. Bill Simms, who had grown up an enslaved boy in Missouri, explained for his interviewer that “A man who owned ten slaves was considered wealthy,” in his home neighborhood, and even for the master class, “a four or five room house was considered a mansion.”<sup>68</sup> Bert Mayfield’s Kentucky master had “lived on a large plantation with a large old farm house, built of logs and weatherboards, painted white. There were four rooms on the first floor, and there were also finished rooms on the second floor.”<sup>69</sup>

Nonetheless, power was inscribed in the lineaments of the built terrain. As Eugene D. Genovese argues, no matter how modest, the master’s home daily confirmed “the apparently unshakable power of the master class.”<sup>70</sup> Joseph Ringo, for example, described his master, one John French, as having owned “a fair plantation” of “bout 300 acres” and an “eight room, weather boarded log cabin” in which he housed his family of three children. “Our cabin didn’ set fur fum de house,” Ringo explained, and “dat cabin wuzn’t comfu’table a tall.”<sup>71</sup> And perhaps seeking to give concrete weight to their memories of the master class’s overweening power, some exaggerated. Jim Lane of Bath County, Kentucky, for example, had owned, in the recollection of his former slave Thomas McIntire, more slaves (five hundred and fifty) than any

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<sup>67</sup> Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 7-8.

<sup>68</sup> Bill Simms, *Kansas*, WPA, Vol. 16, 8-13.

<sup>69</sup> Bert Mayfield, *Kentucky*, WPA, Vol. 16, 13-17.

<sup>70</sup> Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll*, 534.

<sup>71</sup> Joseph Ringo, *Ohio*, WPA, Vol. 5, 430.

Kentucky slaveholder is on record as having owned. “He wuz one of de big rich men in dem days,” McIntire explained, “en I reckon he’s de same now. He had a big red brick house with 24 rooms...”<sup>72</sup>

The Border States produced a pro-slavery argument unique to the political economy of their region. As it did in the Deep South, the figure of the hypocritical Yankee or European abolitionist stood as a useful foil. In July of 1852, for example, Missouri’s *Liberty Weekly Tribune* reported an event which would not, on the surface, seem particularly newsworthy. Peter Bondurant of Saline County, a slave, had returned from the California gold fields to his master’s household, with a small fortune in gold dust in his possession. Some two or three years before, the *Tribune* noted, Bondurant had been sent “in company with a former overseer” to the far West, there to work “on shares” for his master. After a “falling out with the overseer,” Bondurant struck out on his own, eventually falling in with a party of “abolitionists.” The “abolitionists,” according to the *Tribune*, exploited his labor and “took care of him” only while “his money and health lasted in the mines.” Abandoned by the northern men, Bondurant next took up with a cohort of “Kentuckians and Missouriians.” The Border State men gave the enslaved miner a “home welcome,” and then set him to work once again. In contrast to the time he had spent with the northern men, however, Bondurant was now given “a chance to make something by his industry.” By the time he returned to Missouri, he had, the *Tribune* concluded, learned an important lesson—that “his best friends” were “those who were legally so.”<sup>73</sup>

A few years later, the *St. Louis Herald* would issue—and the *Tribune* would repeat—a scathing report on the horrors of the so-called “coolie trade,” in which the “professed negro loving Governments” of Great Britain, France, and Spain had undertaken to import Asian

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<sup>72</sup> Thomas McIntire, Ohio, WPA, Vol. 5, 408-409.

<sup>73</sup> *Liberty (Mo.) Weekly Tribune* (July 9, 1852), Reel April 16, 1852-April 8, 1853, SHS.

laborers for exploitation in the sugar islands of the West Indies.<sup>74</sup> And the following month, the *Tribune* reprinted from the *St. Joseph (Mo.) Gazette* a report on ongoing labor unrest in New England. Laborers who had toiled “fifteen hours a day at four dollars per week” now demanded “enough to support their families—to keep body and soul together.” Perhaps the only truly “irrepressible conflict,” the *Tribune* speculated, loomed not between the sections, but between “these half-starved operatives,” vulnerable to “agrarian” or socialist rhetoric, and their Yankee exploiters.<sup>75</sup>

For many observers, relative smallholdings and other factors contributed to the perception, then and now, that Border State slaveholders somehow better lived the practice of paternalism. Both popular and the first scholarly conceptions of the Border States have taken the slaveholder at his word and accepted his claim to more fully than slaveholders of the Deep South embody the tenets of paternalist ideology. The essayist James Lane Allen, for example, contended that under the conditions of Kentucky agriculture, “slavery was not stamped with those sadder features which it wore beneath a devastating sun, amid unhealthy or sterile regions of country, and through the herding together of hundreds of slaves,” but “assumed the phase which is to be distinguished as domestic.” Early twentieth-century historians such as Edward Conrad Smith and Ivan R. McDougale largely agree.<sup>76</sup>

The voices of slaveholders and their subsequent apologists, however, are not the only ones. Former Border State slaves, themselves, produced a counter-narrative of Border State enslavement. Historian Edward E. Baptist explores ex-slave recollections of westward migration and pieces together what he terms a “vernacular history” of this aspect of slavery, which, he

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<sup>74</sup> “The Coolie Trade,” *Liberty (Mo.) Weekly Tribune* (February 17, 1860).

<sup>75</sup> “The Great Strike in New England,” *Liberty (Mo.) Weekly Tribune* (March 20, 1860).

<sup>76</sup> Allen, “Uncle Tom at Home,” in *The Blue-Grass Region*, 52-53. Smith argues that given the prevalence of slaveholdings of “only three or four” slaves, “it was natural that the system should be paternalistic, with close personal relations between master and slave,” (*The Borderland in the Civil War*, 27). Ivan R. McDougale observes that in Kentucky, at least, “slavery was decidedly patriarchal” (*Slavery in Kentucky*, 71).

contends, cut to the heart of “slavery’s deepest, most immoral cruelties.”<sup>77</sup> Literary scholar William Nichols observes that close attention to the various narratives produced by enslaved people would complicate our vision of the South, revealing the “bitter ironies” at the heart of southern history—indeed, “a kind of absurd drama that might be closer to the imaginative world of William Faulkner than to much of the history that has been written.” Slave narratives, to Nichols, “are controlled by the ironic vision, a sense of gigantic discrepancies between what men say, what they seem to intend, and what they actually do.”<sup>78</sup> They cut to the heart of what scholar Willie Lee Rose describes as the “hundred paradoxes set by the contradiction of property in man,” and more specifically, by the entire concept of “domestic” slavery, by the enmeshment of slavery and the family.<sup>79</sup>

Former slaves turned a bitterly critical eye on the internal workings of the slaveholding household itself. Slaves, scholar Nancy Bercaw has observed, made instrumental use of “the theoretical model of the plantation ‘family’ to negotiate with slaveholders” and to improve their own working lives, family stability, and entitlement to subsistence and sociability, even as they simultaneously went quietly about the construction of their own dissident definitions of family.<sup>80</sup> Outside the confines of the white household, however, challenges became more direct and more pointed. Far from a harmonious home, in the recollections of freedmen and fugitives the Border State household emerges as a site of disorder and conflict.

Intimacy between black and white, far from a marker of egalitarianism, was dangerous to the slave. Enslaved mothers, the former slave preacher Elijah P. Marrs recalled, did their best to keep their children strictly disciplined in order to maintain in them an awareness of social

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<sup>77</sup> Baptist, “‘Stol’ and Fetched Here,” Baptist and Camp, eds, *New Studies*, 246.

<sup>78</sup> Nichols, “Slave Narratives,” *Phylon*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (4<sup>th</sup> Quarter, 1971).

<sup>79</sup> Rose, “The Domestication of Domestic Slavery,” in Rose, *Slavery and Freedom*, 21.

<sup>80</sup> Bercaw, *Gendered Freedoms*, 3.

boundaries which could not be violated without peril. All too often gossip and other intelligence filtered from black children to their white playmates, and from white children to master or mistress. The results could be disastrous.<sup>81</sup>

And the close conditions of labor within Border State households precluded strict divisions of tasks by gender. Although men seem to have been rarely if ever set to work at domestic tasks, young boys often were, and at least one former slave recalled that such arrangements unsettled and destabilized his own sense of himself as male. When his young mistress married, Kentucky slave Elisha Winfield Green found himself experiencing “very rough times.” Tasked with cooking, washing, spinning flax and yarn, and doing “all the house-work the same as a woman,” he observed in later years, as a free man, that “here was where a man became a woman if such ever were possible in the history of the world.”<sup>82</sup>

And the fraught intimacy of enslavement extended far beyond childhood. The ex-slave Lewis Clarke regaled his abolitionist audience with a multi-layered tale: “My sisters were as white and good-looking as any of the young ladies in Kentucky,” he informed them, not without a measure of pride. Their ambiguous phenotype, however, proved troublesome to racial order within the household. “It happened once of a time,” Clarke began,

that a young man called at the house of Mr. Campbell, to see a sister of Mrs. Banton [Clarke's mistress]. Seeing one of my sisters in the house, and pretty well dressed, with a strong family look, he thought it was Miss Campbell; and, with that supposition, addressed some conversation to her which he had intended for the private ear of Miss C. The mistake was noised abroad, and occasioned some amusement to young people.

The incident suggested not only the possibility of further miscegenation, but of the upending of social hierarchy and a world in which a pretty slave could not be reliably distinguished from a young lady of the family who owned her. When the gossip reached the ears of Mrs. Banton, “it

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<sup>81</sup> Marris, *Life and History of the Rev. Elijah P. Marris*, 11.

<sup>82</sup> Green, *Life of the Rev. Elisha W. Green*, 1.

made her cauldron of wrath sizzling hot.” She took her rage out on Clarke, forcing the young house servant to strip nude before being sent to work out of doors. The punishment had more than one effect. It was humiliating and physically painful for the boy. And, by darkening his light skin with sunburn, it served to restore the racial and familial order which had been undermined by the Clarke sisters' fair-complected beauty and made mockery of by the error of the gentleman caller and the gossip of the neighborhood's “young people.”<sup>83</sup>

Some decades later, William Wells Brown relayed a strikingly similar tale about a young “quadroon of eight or nine years” named Billy. An acquaintance once called on the household where Billy was enslaved. During the course of casual conversation, the man noted that he “would have known [Billy] was [his master’s son], if he had met him in Mexico!” (It seems likely that the man’s use of Mexico as hypothetical foreign locale was no accident.) The mistress of the household quickly corrected the apparent mistake, explaining that Billy was “only a slave and nothing more.” But when the visitor had departed, “Billy was seen pulling up grass in the garden, with bare head, neck and shoulders... for the purpose of giving the slave the color that nature had refused” him.<sup>84</sup>

The home, the emotional center of the household, stood as central to the practice of slavery. As Catherine Clinton observes of the cotton South, the planter home was “the most visible symbol of the slaveowner's wealth and status.”<sup>85</sup> Mistresses, who participated in and oversaw domestic production and the discipline of the slaves who carried it out, were central symbols of slavery's perpetuity and were often mustered to its defense in complicated and at times contradictory ways. As historian Nina Silber observes, “because women were assumed to

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<sup>83</sup> Clarke, “Narrative of Lewis Clarke,” in *Narrative of the Sufferings of Lewis and Milton Clarke*, 19-20.

<sup>84</sup> Brown, *My Southern Home*, reprinted in Andrews, *From Fugitive Slave to Free Man*, 121-122. See Amy Greenberg (*Manifest Manhood*), among other scholars, for an exploration of Mexico as racially mixed in the American mind.

<sup>85</sup> Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress*, 18.

be the moral caretakers of the age, southern female characters in antebellum fiction often embodied the antimaterialist sensibilities of the region and the prewar era.”<sup>86</sup> According to Clinton, the “persona of the plantation mistress” as the individual responsible for the well-being of her dependents and as a potential check on the violent whims of the master served to “defend slavery in the public sphere.”<sup>87</sup> Ideologically and materially, the relationships contained within its walls bolstered the power of the master class. And in many ways, this image of the slaveholding woman has continued to be taken at face value by scholars. Slaveholding women, according to Eugene D. Genovese, presided over, and indeed produced, paternalism in its most refined form.<sup>88</sup> And if there was any “haven for anticommercial values” in the slave South, George Rable observes, “it was in the home.”<sup>89</sup>

But if the mistress of the master’s household was central to the defense of slavery, she was also central to its undermining. Slaveholding women, in the eyes of many former slaves, were neither good mistresses nor good women. Freedom-seekers who explicitly addressed northern abolitionist audiences offer the most vivid, and perhaps, the most carefully crafted, examples. Kentucky fugitive Israel Campbell used animal imagery to describe his former mistress. A harridan to her husband and her slaves alike, she fed her household’s slave children “like so many pigs, and her presence was to them like a hawk flying over a hen with a young brood.”<sup>90</sup> Lewis Clarke offered his anti-slavery audience vivid images of slaveholding women whose bad tempers filled the big house to overflowing. “Some of the slaveholders may have a *wide* house,” he acknowledged, “but one of the *cat-handed*, snake-eyed, brawling women, which

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<sup>86</sup> Silber, *The Romance of Reunion*, 7.

<sup>87</sup> Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress*, 14-15.

<sup>88</sup> Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 363.

<sup>89</sup> Rable, *Civil Wars*, 29-30.

<sup>90</sup> Campbell, *An Autobiography*, 9.

slavery produces, can fill it from cellar to garret.”<sup>91</sup> He portrayed himself as a wide-eyed naïf first arriving in the North and discovering, much to his awe, that women there “could live without quarrelling.” He had originally, he claimed, speculated that northern women simply *must* fight “with their husbands,” with “the girls,” or with the “children”—but he hadn’t seen it happen. Perhaps, he thought, “they do it somewhere; in the kitchen, or down cellar.” His brother Milton set him—and their audience—straight about the characters of Yankee women. “These women,” Milton told him, “are not like our women in Kentucky; they don’t fight at all.” “I reckon slavery must work upon [Kentucky women’s] minds and dispositions,” Clarke speculated disingenuously, “and make them ugly.”<sup>92</sup>

The abolitionist trope that slavery destroyed the enslaved family is well known. But in memoirs and speeches tailored to appeal to abolitionist audiences, the white Border State family also falls under attack. Slaveholders’ marriages emerge from these sources as absurd in their disorder and depravity. One of the Kentucky freedom-seeker Andrew Jackson’s former masters was a preacher known to “preach and pray with a great deal of correctness and feeling,” who “often had the people all in tears.” At home, however, the man “quarreled with his wife like Lucifer.” Jackson, for his audience’s amusement and edification, relayed a “dialogue” he had overheard:

*Wife.*- “You have been to the kitchen, to see Hannah [the family’s enslaved cook].”

*Preacher.*- “You lie; I have not been there at all.”

*Wife.*- “Well, I know you have, you brute; I have a great mind to cut my own throat!”

*Preacher.*- “O dear, I really wish you would.”

*Wife.*- “Yes, I presume you do, so that you could run to the kitchen, as much as you please to see Hannah.”

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<sup>91</sup> Clarke, “Narrative of Lewis Clarke,” in *Narrative of the Sufferings of Lewis and Milton Clarke*, 9-10.

<sup>92</sup> Clarke, “Narrative of Lewis Clarke,” in *Narrative of the Sufferings of Lewis and Milton Clarke*, 62.

By contrast, in New York, where he addressed his audience, “husbands appear to love their wives, and wives reverence their husbands.”<sup>93</sup>

Slaveholding spouses, in these narratives, turned violence upon each other as well as on their slaves. According to Kentucky fugitive Milton Clarke, his master and mistress fought “like the meeting of the sirocco and the earthquake,” their rage exotic and literally inhuman. Minerva Logan “would scorch terribly with her provoking tongue.” Joseph Logan “would shake her terribly in his anger.” Their fights culminated when Joseph “held her out at arms length and gave her the horsewhip to the tune of about thirty stripes,” driving his wife shortly thereafter to the sanctuary of a neighbor’s.<sup>94</sup> Israel Campbell’s former mistress would “swear, rant and beat the slaves as if they were brutes.” She patrolled the fields, “swearing, bawling and screaming at some of the hands,” venting her rage “by applying the lash.” But the slaves were not her only victims. In a stark reversal of the standard narrative of the gendered use of violence in slaveholding households, it was the husband, Campbell’s master, who sought to “interpose” between his wife’s use of the lash and her enslaved victims. When he did so, Campbell explained, his wife was just as liable to turn the whip on him.<sup>95</sup>

Ex-slave narratives commonly reveal the profit motive which lay at the heart of white claims to “family, white and black” and which made a lie of paternalist rhetoric and, specifically, the claim that slaveholding women embodied what historian Nina Silver terms “the antimaterialist sensibilities of the age.”<sup>96</sup> In Milton Clarke’s narrative, Minerva Logan eventually died, and after a decent interval Joseph Logan again sought to marry. In Clarke’s retelling, the white marriage itself appears as a fiscal transaction. Joseph Logan was introduced to the

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<sup>93</sup> Jackson, *Narrative and Writings of Andrew Jackson*, , 61.

<sup>94</sup> Clarke, “Narrative of Milton Clarke,” in *Narrative of the Sufferings of Lewis and Milton Clarke*, 73-79.

<sup>95</sup> Campbell, *An Autobiography*, 7-8.

<sup>96</sup> Silber, *The Romance of Reunion*, 7.

widowed Mrs. Robb, “negotiation was commenced,” and eventually the two were wed. Neither, however, proved willing to merge their household goods with those of the other. The marriage they consummated was one of brinksmanship and treachery, in which each sought to “outwit” the other. Logan gave over keys to his own rooms to Clarke, “and attempted to limit the freedom of his new spouse in the house of which she was installed mistress.” In turn, his bride “got to the old man’s closet, drank his wine, and then charged it to the slaves.” Unable or unwilling to merge their property—including slaves, bedding, and stores of alcohol—the two “quarreled openly,” and Logan resorted to the whip once again. One day, Clarke informed his readership, “his old withered hand seized the horsewhip and crowned their bliss with a dozen or two good smart lashes.”<sup>97</sup>

The slaveholders’ homes and familial relations emerge as a materially and rhetorically contested site, and the slaves’ cabins, too, both reflected and shaped the operation of power within slaveholding households. When Alice Bruce Power’s grandfather built the home he called “Big Brick” to replace the cabin which had housed his family upon their arrival in Fleming County, Kentucky, the old cabin was not demolished but was “removed to the side yard.” Mariah, imported from Virginia as a child of four and now married and a mother of two children of her own, was “installed,” in Power’s words, “as ‘Queen of the Log Manor.’” As the household’s enslaved population grew, Mariah’s cabin would become the center of the quarters, and boast of both a porch and a “huge fireplace in which the fire was never allowed to go out.” Each morning, “live coals” or “a flaming brand” were carried from Mariah’s fireplace to light the fire in the brick house. In Power’s highly nostalgic reminiscences, much is revealed. The fire daily transmitted from slave cabin to brick house as well as Mariah’s central positioning in the household’s geography mirror her centrality to the production of household prosperity. The

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<sup>97</sup> Clarke, “Narrative of Milton Clarke,” in *Narrative of the Sufferings of Lewis and Milton Clarke*, 73-79.

children she birthed; the productive labor she accomplished in feeding “all the colored children” of the household and in helping to rear “the children of her young ‘Missus;’” her managerial role in “bossing” her daughters and the other young house servants and in training them to their occupations—all of these were crucial and most likely indispensable to the independence of the Bruce clan.<sup>98</sup>

Masters throughout the slave South worked to ensure that the construction and spatial positioning of the cabins served their interests. In some households, a cabin to oneself was warranted a privilege, one meant to encourage family formation. August Messersmith remembered that his parents “had their own cabin to live in, with their family,” but that “the rest of the slaves stayed with the mistress.”<sup>99</sup> As Eugene Genovese suggests, masters and mistresses saw in well-ordered cabins the reproduction and continued health of their work force. And by the 1850s, “the great majority of the slave cabins” throughout the South conformed to the basic specifications recommended by reformers of earlier decades, especially pertaining to size and tenancy. Cabins should be constructed, reformers had insisted, of a single room of approximately sixteen by twenty feet in size, and should be inhabited, in the interests of social order and domestic peace, by only one family.<sup>100</sup>

A “respectable distance” between where the slaves lived and where the master and his family conducted their social life, Ira Berlin points out, worked to relieve slaveholders “of the egalitarian discomfort of living directly with field laborers.”<sup>101</sup> As Sarah Gayle of Greensboro, Alabama wrote to her husband, their household “must have negro houses. I think I could get along with them far better, if I were not obliged to see them every time I look out.” The

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<sup>98</sup> Historical Memoir by Alice Bruce Power re: Slavery on the Bruce Homestead in Flemingsburg, Kentucky, 1914, addressed to Mrs. C. C. Leer, Historian of the Kentucky Division, United Daughters of the Confederacy, Paris, Kentucky, Dudley Family Papers, 1861-1971, Mss. A D847, Folder 5, Filson.

<sup>99</sup> August Messersmith, Missouri, WPA, Supp. I, Vol. 2, 241.

<sup>100</sup> Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll*, 524-528.

<sup>101</sup> Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 197.

construction of cabins, she further believed, would give her greater control over access to the kitchen and other household spaces.<sup>102</sup> And yet, too much distance might confer, from the master's perspective, an unacceptable degree of autonomy upon the slaves. Indeed, Richard C. Wade observes that the presence of a formal “quarters” served to balance the master’s competing requirements of “social distance” and of discipline and oversight.<sup>103</sup> Masters resolved the difficulty in a variety of ways. On the Scott County, Missouri, farm where W. C. Parson Allen was raised, the fourteen slave cabins “was placed so dat de old master could sit on his porch and see every one of dem.”<sup>104</sup> And William Wells Brown spent several childhood years on a “large” farm along the banks of the Missouri River, where “the slave cabins were situated” a fair distance from the master’s residence, “on the back part of the farm.” To ensure supervision, and perhaps reflecting the socially liminal status of non-slaveholding white men in a slave society, the overseer’s cabin (where he lived with an enslaved woman who was his housekeeper and, perhaps, his concubine) sat “in their midst.”<sup>105</sup>

Located within eyesight of the master’s house or porch, the slave cabin was a porous space, its claim to privacy fragile. Mistresses made inspection tours, and withdrew children from their parents at whim. Ada Isabelle Suggs was removed from her mother's care before the age of five when her mistress, on a visit to the cabins, noticed that the little girl had already learned to knit.<sup>106</sup> The only child on her master’s Garrard County, Kentucky plantation, Belle Robinson was raised “at the big house with my mistus,” although her “mother and father lived at the cabin in the yard.”<sup>107</sup> Simultaneously, however, the cabins strengthened “the sense of family” in

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<sup>102</sup> Sarah Gale to John Gale, December 17, 1831, quoted in Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 24.

<sup>103</sup> Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 55.

<sup>104</sup> W. C. Parson Allen, Missouri, WPA, Vol. 11, 18-19.

<sup>105</sup> Brown, *Narrative of William Wells Brown*, reprinted in Andrews, ed., *From Fugitive Slave to Free Man*, 27.

<sup>106</sup> Ada Isabelle Suggs, Indiana, WPA, Vol. 6, 189-192.

<sup>107</sup> Belle Robinson, Kentucky, WPA, Vol. 16, 21.

“important if limited ways.”<sup>108</sup> Scholar Stephanie Camp gives them still greater weight. As she argues, “slave cabins were extensions of two worlds,” serving the needs of the master class and yet allowing for the creation of a sustaining black family and communal life. Camp contends that the slave cabins, site of married and family life, aided in the creation of “alternative ways of knowing and using plantation and southern space.” More specifically, she argues that within the four walls of the slave's cabin home occurred vital “practices and ideologies” central to the “development of visible slave resistance.”<sup>109</sup>

For one, the cabin stood as the proving grounds of slave marriages when, following the Civil War, neighbors were called to testify as to the validity of their friends' and kinsfolk's unions. The heart of the marriage was located in the cabin. Former slaves attested to as much when they deposed themselves in pension claims. Jack Chom and Cal Howell, enslaved on a neighbor's farm, validated Lucinda and Charles Adams's marriage when they swore that they had been frequent guests in the cabin “where Mrs. Lucinda Adams lived & where [Charles] Adams came to of nights.”<sup>110</sup> Delia Moore, a cook in the Eustace household, testified that Caleb and Susan Jones, although enslaved on neighboring farms—Susan on the Eustace place and Caleb by Stephen Wheeler-- “slept in the same Cabin during all of” the years of their marriage.<sup>111</sup> As Anthony E. Kaye contends for the Mississippi Delta, slaves “appropriated for themselves authority to sanction ties between spouses and to regulate intimate relations as a whole.” They presented themselves as knowledgeable witnesses, and they participated with the master class, whose power to shape or disrupt a slave's family life must not be underestimated, as arbiters of

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<sup>108</sup> Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll*, 524-528.

<sup>109</sup> Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 93, 7, 94. Her hypothesis, while sound on the surface, relies heavily on two examples of enslaved women who invested their homes with meaning through the acquisition and display of abolitionist or Republican print material.

<sup>110</sup> Deposition of Jack Chom and Cal Howell, December 26, 1889, File of Charles Adams, Co. A, 109<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T., Widow's Cert. No. 295,499, Box No. 37659, Bundle No. 7, NAI.

<sup>111</sup> Deposition of Deliah Moore, 1882, Benecke Family Papers, Mss 3825, Box 96, Folder 2559, War Claims and Pensions—Blacks, Caleb Jones, WHMC.

the validity of slave marriages. In doing so, neighborhoods brought themselves into being as regulatory, disciplinary bodies.<sup>112</sup> What they also brought into being were the nascent origins of the free black households to be formed in the wake of emancipation.

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<sup>112</sup> Anthony E. Kaye, *Joining Places: Slave Neighborhoods in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 54.

## Chapter II

### **“The Flexible Household: The Production and Reproduction of Slavery in Missouri and Kentucky”**

Slavery flourished in the Border States, enduring in Missouri until the ratification of the new state constitution in January of 1865, and in Kentucky until slavery was terminated nationwide by the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment. Slaves toiled at mixed agriculture for both home use and the market, and their masters kept up a vigorous—and profitable—exchange of chattel via the mechanisms of sale and hiring which bound the region together and tied it to the slave regimes of the Deep South. The household was central to Border State slavery, as it was central to slavery elsewhere. Its specific parameters, however, were shaped by a constellation of factors. Mastery over dependents both black and white guaranteed the private and public power of male heads of household. But those dependents, from the mistress and her children to slaves both owned and hired or lent by another, were more than the passive terrain upon which the master exercised his power. Their interactions encoded the limits and boundaries of power across the natural and built environment. The household as a category was constantly formed and reformed by the interaction of its members as their combined efforts were mustered toward the goal of household independence.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As the social archeologist Julia A. Herndon contends, households at any historical moment are produced by “social difference” and “lived experience” operating across a “built environment” (“Living and Working at Home: the Social Archaeology of Household Production and Social Relations,” in Meskell and Preucel, eds., *A Companion to Social Archaeology*, 272-280). Historian Stephanie Camp argues that the “distribution of people in space,” among other factors, works to constitute the meaning of the household (*Closer to Freedom*, 4). Both she and Anthony Kaye stress that slaves as well as their masters took an active, if not strictly authorized, role in producing, identifying, and elaborating on the meanings of household space (see *Joining Places*).

These interactions were largely shaped by the particular conditions of Border State slavery. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Border State household was generally of modest size. Slavery in these states could be materially harsh, as the slaves themselves made plain (although their often-expressed fears of being sold southward suggest that it was not believed to be, in general, as harsh as that practiced elsewhere), and slaveholders might prove as brutal, capricious, or exploitative as those anywhere else. Smallholdings fostered greater invigilation of slave life by the master and mistress, and brought many into constant, often contentious, interaction with their owners. Greater contact between master and slave did not necessarily foster the benevolence and friendly feelings claimed by slavery's apologists. Rather, violence spiked at whim.<sup>2</sup> Small farms, mixed agriculture, and fluidity of population shaped the character of the slaveholding household.

What was produced in the Border States was a flexible household, whose population expanded and contracted in response to the stimuli of the market, and of the life cycle of its members. This had several effects. Border State slaves fought, as did slaves elsewhere, to shape the outcome of their lives, and sale or hiring transactions were a frequent site of struggle. These contests, however, although they sometimes ended in ways favorable to the slave, served ultimately to arrogate power to the master. Hiring and sales permitted masters, and mistresses, to respond more flexibly to fluctuations in the marketplace. What looked like flexibility to the master class, however, appeared as radical instability to the slave. Constantly vulnerable to sale

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<sup>2</sup> Eugene Genovese carefully weighs the merits of the claim that farmers, as opposed to planters, treated their chattel with greater humanity, concluding that close quarters and fluid divisions of labor likely produced an "easy familiarity" between master and slaves. Nonetheless, the same factors subjected slaves to the "indulgence" of the master class's "daily passions" and the intrusion of their "scrutiny." Precarious finances led to the breakup of family units, and among the most marginal households, slaves might go without the material necessities of life (*Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 7-10). Harold Tallant notes in *Evil Necessity* that slaves endured daily interaction with "petty, racist tyrants" (63). Wilma Dunaway suggests that on yeoman farms and small plantations in mountain districts, "masters meted out the most severe forms of punishment," did so more frequently than in plantation belts, and often enough were met in return with violent retaliation (*The African-American Family*, 11-12).

either within the region or into the Deep South, they also had little ability to anticipate the conditions they would confront if hired to a new household. Shuffled from master to master, slaves repeatedly made and remade their familial and social worlds across and between the boundaries of individual households.

The slave market was ubiquitous in antebellum southern life. The interstate trade constituted a forced migration of extraordinary dimensions, with the typical Upper South slave liable to about a thirty percent chance of sale at some point between early adolescence and old age.<sup>3</sup> Not limited to the physical environs of the trader's yard or the auctioneer's stump, it suffused most aspects of the lives, as historian Walter Johnson makes clear, of slave and master alike. Its most dramatic—and troublesome—manifestation, however, was in the auction block and the coffles which regularly made the journey from the exporting states of the Upper South to the newer, harsher, hotter states of the cotton frontier. Indeed, as Saidiya Hartman observes, what was “staged” there was “nothing less than slavery itself.”<sup>4</sup>

Slaves dreaded the social and bodily death which they knew could result. The specter of sale haunted slave life, posing the threat of separation from family and friends and even of death in the Deep South. As a child in Kentucky, the former slave Israel Campbell had heard rumors of a nightmarish incident: a neighbor woman had “heard that her master had sold her to a slave dealer.” Distraught and unhinged at the notion of being “parted from her husband,” the unfortunate slave “cut her throat with a razor.” Some few years later, Campbell too was sold. Campbell's mother was milking cows when she saw her son ride past in the company of their

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<sup>3</sup> Johnson, *Soul by Soul*; Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*; Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*. See Frederic Bancroft's *Slave-Trading in the Old South* for a detailed discussion of importation and exportation of slaves to and from the western Border States before the Civil War. Even before 1820, he observes, Kentucky supplied considerable numbers of slaves to the Natchez and New Orleans markets, and the trade became yet more vigorous following the annexation of Texas. Missouri, too, by the 1830s supplied hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of human property to Deep South markets (124-144).

<sup>4</sup> Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 41.

master. Understanding immediately that the boy was to be sold, she approached him and made her farewells, giving him the advice in a few minutes which she otherwise would have doled out over a lifetime. As Campbell later recalled, she urged him to “be a good boy,” to be “honest and trustworthy” and not “saucy,” and to be sure and meet his mother in heaven.<sup>5</sup>

News often made its way back to the Border States of the deaths of men and women sold away from there. Susan Parker married Henry Lewis in a Baptist ceremony and lived with him “as his wife, in the slave manner,” for some four years before he was “sold to some slave traders, and taken down South.” She learned of his death through a traveling white man who made his residence in her husband’s new neighborhood.<sup>6</sup> The Missouri slave Mary Eddings received only a vague “report” that her husband Pomp, who had been “sold away from” her, had “died in the South.”<sup>7</sup> Others were not so minimally fortunate. Twentieth-century slave narratives are replete with references to those sold and never heard from again. Watt Jordan’s grandmother, for example, was sold “off somewhere, en we nebber seen er heard tell of her ergin.”<sup>8</sup> And those sold young might entirely forget those left behind. Vina Micken was sold from her Kentucky parents as an infant. Freed by war at thirteen, she did not know either of their names.<sup>9</sup>

The material conditions of life on the cotton frontier compounded the matter. The ex-Kentucky slave Lewis Clarke explained to his abolitionist audience that slaves dreaded “so bad to go to the South” because they believed that those enslaved there were often driven to death within a few years.<sup>10</sup> Gabe and his wife, enslaved in Missouri, must have been profoundly relieved to receive news from their son Dave, who wished to reassure them that he was well

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<sup>5</sup> Campbell, *An Autobiography*, 18, 24.

<sup>6</sup> Deposition of Susan Lewis Clay, November 28, 1888, Pension File of George Church Lewis, Co. D, 116<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T., Mother’s Cert. No. 257,890, Box No. 36327, Bundle No. 21, NAI.

<sup>7</sup> Deposition of Mary Eddings, Pension File of Frank Eddings, Co. A, 62<sup>nd</sup> U. S. C. T., Mother’s Cert. No. 229,627, Box No. 35,409, Bundle No. 29, NAI.

<sup>8</sup> Watt Jordan, *Ohio WPA*, Vol. 5, 395.

<sup>9</sup> Cited in O’Donovan, *Becoming Free in the Cotton South*, 21.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Johnson, *Soul by Soul*, 23.

clothed and fed at his new home in Texas. “Dont be uneasy a bout me,” Dave urged them through the intermediary of his semi-literate master. He “war good cloths” and ate the same as master and mistress did: “cakes and coffe bacon and Beans milk and Butter molasses and hunney pickle Beets and Cucumbers.” And soon there would be a fine crop of sweet potatoes and corn for roasting. For his part, the master was “well pleased” with Dave’s agreeable disposition and willingness to work hard. He thought that he could sell the young man for at least twelve hundred dollars, but promised (guardedly) that he would not, for “money caint b[u]y him.”<sup>11</sup>

The auction block itself was degrading. Seven-year-old Isaac Johnson was shocked to hear his family described as “niggers.” He had always understood them to be, in the parlance of the respectable Kentucky white people with whom he was familiar, “negroes” or “colored folks.”<sup>12</sup> A vulgar white man put “two dirty fingahs” in Mandy Cooper’s mouth to inspect her teeth.<sup>13</sup> Sold as a child, Mark Discus overheard alarming rumors about slaves being poked with pins to test their reflexes and muscle tone.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the technology of sale confirmed the master’s conceptualization of the enslaved body as a thing with monetary value.<sup>15</sup> The Kentucky fugitive Andrew Jackson asked his reading audience to identify with the indignity and rage of the enslaved husband and father whose master “could not distinguish [the slave’s] wife from old Pride, the spotted sow, or those children from Buck and Bright, your oxen, and that lovely daughter, ranked with hogs and sold for gold.”<sup>16</sup> Damaged by a brutal beating by her mistress

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<sup>11</sup> Dave to Gabe, and T. T. Bradley to Gabe, in care of A. Higgins, July 11, 1859, T. T. Bradley Letter, 1859, Mss. No. 2388, Folder 1 of 1, WHMC.

<sup>12</sup> Johnson, *Slavery Days in Old Kentucky*, 9.

<sup>13</sup> Frank Cooper, *Indiana*, WPA, Vol. 6, 62.

<sup>14</sup> Mark Discus, *Missouri*, WPA, Supp. I, Vol. 2, 172.

<sup>15</sup> See Johnson, *Soul by Soul*.

<sup>16</sup> Jackson, *Narrative and Writings of Andrew Jackson*, 41.

and a gang of white ladies, Mandy Cooper was sent to auction, she told her son in later years, “so mah owner could see if ah was worth anything or not.”<sup>17</sup>

Women suffered uniquely. It becomes chillingly clear from ex-slave Milton Clarke’s description of his sister Delia’s sale that, packaged along with the girl’s piety and religious observance, came her virginity, a commodity to be enjoyed by the highest bidder.<sup>18</sup> Orville H. Browning, an Illinois statesman who had grown up in Kentucky, took notice of the “very handsome mulatto women,” refined in demeanor and skilled in needlework and other feminine arts, who were, in the presence of potential buyers, made to “get up and turn around to show to advantage their finely developed and graceful forms.” This scripted display lent a genteel gloss to the purpose for the women’s sale—as potential concubines.<sup>19</sup> Those to be sold as domestic servants or ordinary field hands were also stripped, fondled, molested, and otherwise humiliated by potential buyers who sought to ascertain their “capacity for childbearing” as well as for productive labor.<sup>20</sup> And if reproductive potential enhanced value, the presence of actual or potential children diminished value, in ways which worked against family survival. As Isaac Johnson remembered, nobody bid on his mother with her youngest son (described by big brother Isaac as “our little baby boy Eddie”) in tow. Upon the urging of a man in the crowd, the auctioneer took the child away. Jane Johnson sold for \$1,100, and Eddie, to a different master, for \$200.<sup>21</sup> Parthena Rollins of Scott County, Kentucky, recalled a slave trader who wished to purchase a young mother but not her small child. Determined to make the sale, her master beat the child to death before her eyes and the eyes of the public.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Frank Cooper, *Indiana*, WPA, Vol. 6, 62.

<sup>18</sup> Clarke, “Narrative of Milton Clarke,” in *Narrative of the Sufferings of Lewis and Milton Clarke*.

<sup>19</sup> Browning, *Diary*, 138-139, quoted in Bancroft, *Slave-Trading in the Old South*, 130-131.

<sup>20</sup> White, *Aren't I a Woman?*, 32.

<sup>21</sup> Johnson, *Slavery Days in Old Kentucky*, 10-11.

<sup>22</sup> Parthena Rollins, *Indiana*, WPA, Vol. 6, 167.

The dual spectacles of the slave market and the coffle focused and intensified observers' and victims' emotional and intellectual reactions to slavery itself. In their recollections of the trade, freedpeople directed their interviewers' attentions to those "If'n you wants to know what unhappiness means," former slave John Rudd declared, "Jess'n you stand on the Slave Block and hear the Auctioneer's voice selling you away from the folks you love."<sup>23</sup> Kentuckian Susan Dale Sanders found in her recollection of the sight a chance to express gratitude for her own master's relative humanity. Other masters, she explained, sold both male and female slaves and sent them "further south to work in the fields, leavin their babies." By contrast, she was careful to note, her own master permitted her and her many siblings to remain with their mother, and allowed them leeway to enjoy sociability—church services, parties, and dances—with their neighbors.<sup>24</sup> Freedman Dr. Solomon Hicks observed, recalling the sight and sound of seventy-five slaves singing hymns as they were "chained to a large cable" to be marched southward, that "in those days the true religion was manifest," a testament to the slaves' stalwart character in the face of utter disaster.<sup>25</sup>

To the former slave Isaac Johnson, the trade made a lie of the United States' "boasts" of "freedom" as well as southern white men's pretensions to "chivalry."<sup>26</sup> And the market and its painful history also made a lie of Amy Elizabeth Street Patterson's initial declaration that "'John Street was never unkind to his slaves.'" It revealed the true obscenity, chaos, and horror of the trade in human flesh. Amy Elizabeth, firstborn child of her mother, was "fair," her interviewer discreetly explained, "with gold brown hair and amber eyes." She and two sisters were the daughters of their master; their mother breast-fed her own children as well as those belonging to

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<sup>23</sup> John Rudd, Indiana, WPA, Vol. 6, 169-172.

<sup>24</sup> Susan Dale Sanders, Kentucky, WPA, Vol. 16, 43-45.

<sup>25</sup> Dr. Solomon Hicks, Indiana, WPA, Supp. I, Vol. 5, 85.

<sup>26</sup> Johnson, *Slavery Days in Old Kentucky*, 21-22.

the master's lawful wife. By Patterson's account, the babies, both brown and white, were affectionately treated by all household members. When John Street "contemplated moving into another territory," however, his biracial children and their mother were placed on the block. "That was the greatest crime ever visited on the United States," Patterson declared. "It was worse than the cruelty of the overseers, worse than hunger..." "[W]hen a father can sell his own child, humiliate his own daughter by auctioning her on the slave block, what good could be expected where such practices were allowed?"<sup>27</sup>

Scholar Saidiya Hartman finds in the observations of white northern travelers a complicated reaction. Bearing witness to the sight of slaves at auction and in transit, she argues, convinced northern men of slavery's evils, but also opened opportunities for them to indulge in speculation on nothing less than "the human condition"—a line of thought which uncovered their deeply ambivalent ideas about race.<sup>28</sup> For example, when Abraham Lincoln encountered, and had the chance to closely observe, twelve Kentucky slaves chained together and en route to "a farm in the South," he concluded that separation from kin, from "the scenes of their childhood," from "their wives and children," and the looming fate of "perpetual slavery where the lash of the master is proverbially more ruthless and unrelenting than any other where" did not distress the victims in the way that "we" white men would be distressed. To Lincoln, pastimes such as dancing, singing, card-playing, and folk humor apparently belied any real grief the black Kentuckians could feel.<sup>29</sup>

But it is likely that the most complicated response came from those most dependent upon the trade. Slaveholders distanced themselves as much as they could from the practice which

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<sup>27</sup> Amy Elizabeth Patterson, *Indiana*, WPA, Vol. 6, 150-152.

<sup>28</sup> Saidiya Hartman argues compellingly in *Scenes of Subjection* that despite the near-unanimous recognition of the trade's evil among white northern observers, those observers also found in the "emotional resources, animal needs, and limited affections of the enslaved" a means by which to minimize slavery's horrors (32-42).

<sup>29</sup> Abraham Lincoln to Mary Speed, September 27, 1841, in Lincoln, *Abraham Lincoln: Speeches and Writings*, 74-75, quoted in Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 34.

posed such a stark contradiction to their self-serving but not insincere vision of an orderly, paternalist society in which laborers were incorporated into their masters' households, and indeed, into their families. Indeed, as W. E. B. Du Bois observes, the planter "denied that there was any considerable interstate sale of slaves; he denied that families were broken up; he insisted that slave auctions were due to death or mischance, and particularly did he insist that the slave traders were the least of human beings and most despised."<sup>30</sup> In the trade—and in the trader—were condensed the slaveholding class's angst.<sup>31</sup>

A few made more or less sincere efforts to avoid complicity with the nasty business. The former slave William Emmons recalled that the man who had bought him when he was seven years old "done ax his family to nebber sell off any of de darkies, ef dey cud he'p it, an' nebber to sell any of em to darkie traders."<sup>32</sup> M. B. Edwards of Saline County, Missouri, thanked his uncle in Virginia for arranging the sale of some slaves in a way which kept them out of the hands of a "regular negro dealer."<sup>33</sup> Many more acknowledged sale into the interstate trade as a fate to be avoided—both directly, and obliquely, in their attempts to concoct a comforting narrative which glossed over the practice—and the tremendous profits to be reaped therefrom.<sup>34</sup> Often it was their slaves—themselves the objects of sale—who saw keenly through the artifice of the master class and revealed their duplicity. The Missouri slave Mattie J. Jackson's stepfather, for

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<sup>30</sup> Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 43.

<sup>31</sup> See Johnson, *Soul by Soul*.

<sup>32</sup> William Emmons, Ohio, WPA, Vol. 5, 327.

<sup>33</sup> M. B. Edwards to Lewis G. Harvey, Esq., May 7, 1849, Harvey Family Papers, Mss. 338, Folder 1, WHMC.

<sup>34</sup> To a significant extent, historians have taken the slaveholder at his word that slaves were sold only under duress or due to the slave's own bad character, or that to sell slaves into the interstate trade was an aberrant act. Ivan McDougale suggests that other than those owned by "unscrupulous" men, those sold out of Kentucky to the cotton frontier were either discipline problems or unclaimed runaways (*Slavery in Kentucky*, 18). Trexler notes that in addition to unfortunates such as these, there was a "surplus from the natural increase" which could not be incorporated easily into Missouri slave society (*Slavery in Missouri*, 47). And somewhat more recently, John Blasingame observes that in the exporting regions of the South as a whole, death in the big house, relentless creditors, and expensive tastes could account for many sales (*The Slave Community*, 173-174). Michael Tadman and Wilma A. Dunaway, however, agree that profit and speculation were likely the "primary motivations" for most Upper South slave sales (see *Speculators and Slaves* and *The African-American Family*, 41, respectively).

example, was told that he would face the auction block for the “insult” of having asked his master for “a different kind and enough food.” Jackson, however, suspected the truth. Her stepfather was a talented man, foreman in a Saint Louis tobacco factory, as well as “trustworthy and of good moral habits.” These qualities meant that he “was calculated to bring the highest price in the human market,” and desire for the profit to be reaped by his sale, Jackson was convinced, was the real motive at work.<sup>35</sup>

For the master class, condemnation of the slave trade intersected with condemnation of other bad acts and thereby served useful political and social purposes. Missouri’s *Liberty Weekly Tribune* managed to achieve a partisan dig as its editors castigated the mercenary behavior of one Judge Ballinger of Mercer County, Kentucky, who, even as he stumped for the Republicans in Iowa, sold his slaves at “prices so exorbitant that no humane farmer or mechanic” could afford them. With responsible men priced out of the market, the author of the article continued, slaves put up for sale by this man would fall victim to the professional trader—a grim prospect indeed.<sup>36</sup> Kentucky slaveholder Agatha Marshall Logan regaled her cousin with some choice gossip regarding the fate of a mutual acquaintance, Louise Berthe, who had married a “horridly degraded negro trader.” The union had apparently ruined the woman’s life. Her beauty had faded and though she and her husband owned a fine home in an up-market neighborhood the ladies of her former social circle refused to call upon her. Logan further conflated her old friend’s perceived sexual immorality with the social evils perpetrated by the trader husband. Berthe was “not what she ought to be,” Logan observed obliquely. A far cry from the “pretty & amiable & innocent” maiden she had been, she was now “changed,” and likely “ruined.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Jackson, *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson*, 8.

<sup>36</sup> “A Model Freedom Shrieker,” *Liberty Weekly Tribune* (August 8, 1856).

<sup>37</sup> Agatha Marshall Logan to Apolline Alexander Blair, April 1, 1856, in Caldwell, ed., “A Web of Family,” in *Records of Antebellum Plantations*. See Fox-Genovese for an exploration of slaveholding women’s “highly

But the interstate trade was not the only way in which slaves changed hands. The memory of the interstate trade dominates twentieth-century narratives, but sources closer to the event reveal a very different picture. Masters and mistresses both sold and hired their slaves within the region as well. Michael Tadman estimates that the rate of local sales was probably higher than that of interstate sales.<sup>38</sup> And hiring was more frequent yet.<sup>39</sup> Hiring in particular, as Tera Hunter observes, “democratized access to slaves,” raised the standard of living for at least some middling white people, and invested nonslaveholders in the preservation of the institution.<sup>40</sup> Slave hiring had allowed slavery itself to survive in the Chesapeake during the revolutionary period, and had, during the cotton boom, freed up laborers, “thereby facilitating westward expansion.”<sup>41</sup> And it kept the institution alive in the cities and large towns of the South by “greatly broaden[ing] the opportunity for the use of slaves.”<sup>42</sup> In addition to these, less formal transactions also took place, as slaves were lent, borrowed, and exchanged among neighborhoods and extended families. These transactions, implemented instrumentally, allowed slaveholding households to respond flexibly to a variety of pressures.

Hiring, the former slaves recalled, could be brutally exploitative. Slaves often recalled that conditions when hired were worse than conditions in the household of one’s own master. They implicitly contrasted their expectation of at least minimal subsistence and protection, to which they believed they could lay claim, with the treatment they received when hired. Betty

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stratified ritual of knowing and not knowing,” which was enacted and reenacted via “fashionable calls,” particularly in towns and urban areas (*Within the Plantation Household*, 225-226).

<sup>38</sup> Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*. The relative prevalence of intra- versus inter-state sales, however, shifts according to the criteria used. According to Wilma Dunaway, “fewer than one-third of all Appalachian slave sales were transacted locally” (*The African-American Family*, 36). Seen another way, Frederic Bancroft, estimates that intra-state sales, mostly “private” and “inconspicuous,” probably “involved as many slaves as all the interstate trading, an annual average of at least 19,839” (*Slave-Trading in the Old South*, 404).

<sup>39</sup> Jonathan D. Martin observes that a slave’s likelihood of being hired out in a given year was probably “three to five times greater” than the likelihood of their being sold, “and perhaps more” (*Divided Mastery*, 8).

<sup>40</sup> Hunter, *To ‘Joy my Freedom*, 10-11.

<sup>41</sup> Martin, *Divided Mastery*, 2.

<sup>42</sup> Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 38.

Abernathy recalled that her master had “often” hired “his cullud folks out to neighbuh farmuh,” and that he “didden’ care how they was treated” by these men.<sup>43</sup> Jane Baker had believed, as her sons explained, that “de worse side ob slabery wuz when de slabs war ‘farmed out’” to a man other than their master. This practice too often left slaves in the hands of men who “wud treat dem jus lik[e] animals.”<sup>44</sup> When William Wells Brown complained to his master of the harsh treatment he received from the tavern owner to whom he was hired—chairs thrown, “cut and slash—knock down and drag out” assaults, and being half-strangled by the smoke of burning tobacco stems in the smokehouse after a whipping— “it made no difference.” The man “cared nothing about it, so long as he received the money” for Brown’s hire.<sup>45</sup>

Historian Jonathan Martin contends that this practice, which rendered slaves into “individual units of financial return,” rather than household members to whom something was owed even as much could be compelled, deeply troubled the master class.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, many scholars presume an inherent antagonism between the market and the paternalist and arguably non-modern values of slave society. The encroachment of the market, Peter W. Bardaglio observes, tended to “generate an undifferentiated individualism” at fundamental odds with slave society.<sup>47</sup> It is my contention, however, that the Border State master class could and did bring the exchange of human property within a kinship group, a neighborhood, or a district, into rough congruence with paternalist ideology. On the surface less fraught than sale “down the river,” such transactions rarely required the psychological dissembling with which slaveholders distanced themselves from the interstate trade.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Betty Abernathy, Missouri, WPA, Vol. 11, 6-7.

<sup>44</sup> Jane Baker, Missouri, WPA, Vol. 11, 24.

<sup>45</sup> Brown, *Narrative of William Wells Brown*, reprinted in Andrews, ed., *From Fugitive Slave to Free Man*, 31.

<sup>46</sup> Martin, *Divided Mastery*, 19.

<sup>47</sup> Bardaglio, *Reconstructing the Household*, 35.

<sup>48</sup> Hiring, according to Jonathan Martin, “never acquired the same aura of gravity and consequence” as did the interstate trade (*Divided Mastery*, 9).

The masters and mistresses of the Border States did reveal hints of unease at the fate of hired slaves who fell into the hands of brutal men. The Democratic *St. Louis Republican* deplored “the most cruel whipping and beating” its editors had ever heard of. An eight-year-old girl had been sent home from the Tanner household, where she had been hired, after having been grievously injured: “The flesh on the back and limbs were beaten to a jelly—one shoulder bone was laid bare—there were several cuts, apparently from a club, on the head—and around the neck was the indentation of a cord.” The child’s constant requests for bread in the days before she died suggested that she had been starved, as well.<sup>49</sup> But the Border State press also mitigated in the strongest terms against the worst abuses perpetrated by owners against their own slaves. Certain outrages were bad enough to unsettle the system as a whole, drawing down abolitionist condemnation and potentially inviting reprisals from the slaves themselves.<sup>50</sup> In many ways, the way masters and mistresses talked about hiring slaves was little different from the ways they talked about transferring title in a local or regional sale.

As Border State slaveholders talked over their local transactions in human property, they began to reveal the nature and limits of their understanding of paternalism. That they believed themselves—and perhaps more importantly, believed each other—to have obligations toward their enslaved dependents, including those hired out, is clear. In December of 1854, the *Missouri Courier* advised slaveholders optimistically that those with “hireling slaves” available would “find good places and high wages for them in Hannibal.”<sup>51</sup> Slaveholder T. H. Bradford of Boone County, Missouri, suggested that individual masters, too, recognized a master’s ongoing obligation, which extended well beyond the boundaries of his own household—especially when

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<sup>49</sup> Quoted in Brown, *Narrative of William Wells Brown*, reprinted in Andrews, ed., *From Fugitive Slave to Free Man*, 92.

<sup>50</sup> According to Bardaglio, the sovereignty of a master over his household was sacrosanct in slave society, except for those instances when the behavior of an individual master “posed a threat to the legitimacy of patriarchy as a social system” (*Reconstructing the Household*, 28).

<sup>51</sup> December 21, 1854, *The (Hannibal) Missouri Courier*, Archive of Americana, America’s Historical Newspapers.

it came to another man's slaves. Bradford warned his colleague Charles Buford in the strongest terms that he could not abandon his responsibility to his slaves. Buford, who wished to divest himself of the property he held in Kentucky and move northward, had consulted Bradford for advice. To sell outright would be rash, Bradford warned, and "to hire them out and leave them will *never, never, never* do."<sup>52</sup>

Women of the slaveholding class had obligations to their enslaved women, in particular but certainly not exclusively. But often enough, as were men's, slaveholding women's paternalist obligations were honored only in the breach. Ellen Wallace of Christian County, Kentucky, feared that her slave Eliza, recently hired to a new household in punishment for bad behavior, might not "fare as well" as she herself wished for her, but hired her nonetheless.<sup>53</sup> Mira Madison Alexander at first refused to hire her slave Lucyann to a strange household. The young woman was "a timid thing," whom she hoped would flourish in a familiar setting where her "excellent properties you know such as honesty" would shine. When her cousin wrote back with complaints about Lucyann's job performance, however, Alexander agreed to exchange the one slave for another, stating that "your comfort in this matter, my dear, is uppermost with me."<sup>54</sup> Sue Alexander warned Susan Grigsby against permitting the enslaved woman Florence to fall into the hands of a neighboring slaveholding household. This household, Alexander believed, was "an excellent home except in one respect." The caveat was that the household's mistress, Mrs. Gordon, kept her servants, particularly the women, "so busy" that they had no time to "attend to their dress." Another potential buyer, Mrs. Shotwell, was likewise "a very harsh mistress." When Grigsby eventually decided to dispatch Florence to the Gordons, Alexander, perhaps as a

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<sup>52</sup> T. H. Bradford to Charles Buford, April 27, 1853, Buford, Charles, Papers, 1797-1866, LoC. [italics mine, A. B.].

<sup>53</sup> Diary entry January 3, 1859, Ellen Kenton McGaughey Wallace, Journal, 1849-1865, Mss. No. 96mo7, KHS.

<sup>54</sup> Mira Madison Alexander to Agatha Marshall Logan, January 8, 1848, and Mira Madison Alexander to Agatha Marshall Logan to Agatha Marshall Logan, May 6, 1848, in Cardwell, ed., "A Web of Family," Vol. I, *Records of Antebellum Southern Plantations*.

preemptive measure, sent the young woman on her way with a gift of “plenty of comfortable clothes” and a promise to keep a close eye on her welfare.<sup>55</sup>

Under certain circumstances, these formal and informal transactions confirmed the master class in their claims to paternalism, offering to them a convenient defense of their institution. William Emmons’s mother lost her other seven children when each was sold away from her. But William, aged seven, was sold to a neighboring household, and the boy was permitted to visit his mother “once in a while.”<sup>56</sup> Ex-slave Henry Clay Bruce suspected that the vigorous hireling market in Chariton County, Missouri, had opened an opportunity for his master to avoid the distasteful sight of his brother’s “cursing and whipping of slaves.” Hiring out his slaves to other households, he departed the state.<sup>57</sup>

Indeed, a transaction which permitted a slave to remain within the region often had incalculable benefits. Isham and Mary Howard had been wed in the Catholic Church some time during the early 1850s, when Isham belonged to John G. Howard and Mary to the Mason household. In 1857, Mary, now owned by John P. Devereaux, was hired out to the Rudd household of Daviess County, Kentucky, as a domestic servant under the supervision of mistress Colegate Rudd. In 1858, tragedy menaced. John Devereaux withdrew Mary from the Rudds’ hire and took her to Memphis to be sold. A chance encounter with James Rudd, however, salvaged the Howards’ marriage. “Moved,” as Colegate Rudd put it, “by the expressions of grief on the part of the husband and wife” as they clung to each other at the Memphis slave market, her own husband purchased Mary “to keep her and her husband together.” And together they would

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<sup>55</sup> Sue Alexander to Susan Grigsby, October 7, 1860, and Sue Alexander to Susan Grigsby, December 11, 1860, Grigsby Collection, Susan Preston (Shelby) Grigsby (1830-1891), Mss. A G857, Folder 168, Filson.

<sup>56</sup> William Emmons, Ohio, WPA, Vol. 5, 326.

<sup>57</sup> Bruce, *The New Man*, 21.

remain, until Isham Howard's enlistment in the federal service and his subsequent death of disease in a military hospital at New Orleans.<sup>58</sup>

In some instances, with the approval or the connivance of a cash-strapped master, slaves were able to participate in negotiating for themselves a local sale or a hire as the best alternative to the risk of sale to a trader, and perhaps a safer alternative to the risk of flight. Walter Johnson suggests that enslaved women, who, by virtue of childcare responsibilities and inexperience with the world beyond the farm, generally lacked the ability to flee, may have found their best hope in parlaying their status as enslaved mothers into an appeal to slaveholding mothers, forcing these women (and their husbands) to hold themselves accountable to their claims of humane benevolence.<sup>59</sup> But enslaved women also appealed directly to their masters or to potential masters who, after all, were generally the ones who did the buying and selling in the public marketplace. To do so successfully might mean the retention of invaluable kinship and communal ties. And sometimes it worked. Dave Harper's mother "cried so hard" when sent to auction that a neighboring slaveholder took pity and bought her so that she might remain in the neighborhood. Though she and her son lived on different farms, Dave, as he recalled in later years, "used to go to see her real often."<sup>60</sup>

And though no doubt the specific obligations of the master class to their women slaves played their part, successful appeals to slaveholder paternalism were not restricted to women. Enslaved men, as well as women, had familial obligations, which they were sometimes able to compel white men to respect. When Mary Crane's father was forced to confront the possibility of

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<sup>58</sup> Deposition of James C. Rudd, August 27, 1885, and Deposition of Colegate M. Rudd, August 27, 1885, Pension File of Isham Howard, Co. E, 109<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T., Widow's Cert. No. 308,758, Box No. 35036, NAI. Memphis was a hub in a major western trading route which concentrated slaves from eastern Kentucky and Middle Tennessee in Louisville, Lexington, and Nashville, then transported them southward to Vicksburg and Natchez (Dunaway, *The African-American Family*, 22).

<sup>59</sup> Johnson, *Soul by Soul*, 36.

<sup>60</sup> Dave Harper, Missouri, WPA, Vol. 11, 163.

being “sold at auction, along with all the rest of [his master’s] property,” his father, enslaved on a neighboring farm, contributed a hard-earned twenty-five dollars to encourage his own master to purchase the younger man and save him from the New Orleans market. In Crane family lore, the extra twenty-five dollars enabled the neighboring master to outbid a professional trader and take possession of Crane’s father, thereby preserving a host of family ties.<sup>61</sup> Though previously unwilling to compromise his morals by investing in human chattel, Union County, Kentucky, entrepreneur George Carvill purchased Peter, his hired “engineer & fireman,” to “save him from the horrors of a sugar plantation, and separation from his wife & family.”<sup>62</sup>

Slaves also inserted themselves into the process at the point of sale, attempting to sway the decision in their own favor. But power rested in the hands of the buyer and seller, not the bought and sold. No matter how dramatic or compelling, an assertion of will on the part of the slave, as scholar Saidiya Hartman warns, was also determined by the “constraints of domination.” And what may appear as agency on the part of a subject striving for autonomy in actuality ultimately worked to “reanchor subordination.”<sup>63</sup> Beeny, sold by her Kentucky master for theft, knew well how best to revenge herself on him: she “kept her jaws tied up at the Jail and represented that she was unsound and was in a certain particular way.” The ploy worked. Her pregnancy, possibly feigned, dropped her market value and infuriated her erstwhile master, but only at the cost of her compliance with the brutal commoditization of reproduction.<sup>64</sup> Even open defiance could feed slaveholder avarice. Delicia Patterson’s father persuaded his own master to attend Delicia’s sale in the hopes that he would purchase the young woman and, as they had hoped, “we could be together.” But once bid on by one Judge Miller, known to be a

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<sup>61</sup> Mary Crane, Indiana, WPA, Vol. 6, 9-10.

<sup>62</sup> George Carvill to Sister, May 23, 1860, Carvill, George, Letters, Mss. 2697, Folder 6, Letters 1860-1863, WHMC.

<sup>63</sup> Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 54-56.

<sup>64</sup> Caleb Logan to Agatha Marshall Logan, February 14, 1858, in Caldwell, ed., “A Web of Family,” *Records of Antebellum Plantations*.

cruel driver, Delicia publicly threatened to slit her own throat rather than live with the man, and her father's master concluded that "he would not buy me, because I was sassy, and he never owned a sassy niggah." Another man, however, concluded that her sass imbued her with exactly those qualities which would make her a desirable slave. While her father wept, Delicia was sold.<sup>65</sup> Desperate to sustain their families, slaves were compelled to perform their own fitness for enslavement. William Wells Brown described a vignette in which an enslaved husband, sold at auction, pleaded with his buyer to purchase his wife as well, begging, "'Master, if you will only buy Fanny, I know you will get the worth of your money. She is a good cook, a good washer, and her last mistress liked her very much.'" In throwing himself on the man's mercy, Fanny's husband placed himself in the unenviable position of marketing his own wife's value as saleable commodity. And it was to no avail. The man was outbid, and Fanny was sold to someone else.<sup>66</sup>

A site of horror for most, the market also may have stood as a site of possibility for a few desperate to escape an untenable situation. This was a gamble. Often beaten by his mistress, Isaac Carpenter of Allen County, Kentucky, took the advice of an old man known for expertise in the supernatural. The peculiar course of action which he then took indeed prompted a speedy sale—but Carpenter found soon enough that his new mistress was no less cruel than the last.<sup>67</sup> Wallace, a field hand on one of the Bullitt farms outside Louisville, Kentucky, also discovered the hazards of attempting to orchestrate his own sale. Offered a chance to be purchased by his overseer and set to work on a steamboat, a situation in which he would be able to keep "a large amount of money out of his wages," his habits and demeanor changed in ways which were apparently intended to prompt William Bullitt to sell him. If so, the gamble backfired. Bullitt

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<sup>65</sup> Delicia Patterson, Missouri, WPA, Vol. 11, 270-271.

<sup>66</sup> Brown, *Narrative of William Wells Brown*, reprinted in Andrews, ed., *From Fugitive Slave to Free Man*, 82.

<sup>67</sup> Sarah Carpenter Colbert, Indiana, WPA, Vol. 6, 57.

sold him indeed—but to a third party, depriving him of the chance at the steamboat job. The overseer was fired soon after.<sup>68</sup>

Once in a while, even the risk of sale down South was worth running. Lewis Barnett fled his Kentucky master concealed in a wagonload of corn but, recaptured, was returned to Louisville and held for his master's reclamation. When the master arrived, Barnett refused to recognize him. "Therefore," his niece recalled, "he was compelled to be sold again, and was sold on the block for \$1,500 and taken to New Orleans."<sup>69</sup> Desperate to escape his master's cruelty, the Missouri slave Spotswood Rice spent three days laying out "under houses and in the woods" from the slave patrol, waiting for a chance to "cross the line" to "de free state land." Finally, half-starved, he emerged and, as his daughter recalled, "gave himself up to a nigger trader dat he knew, and begged de nigger trader to buy him from his owner."<sup>70</sup>

In compelling the slave to firstly participate in the selection of their own master, and secondly to throw themselves on the mercy (and the pocketbooks) of both the potential buyer and seller, these transactions lent credence to the master class's defense of slavery. Apologists for Border State slavery in particular often launched the argument that slavery in much of Missouri and Kentucky was "more a domestic than a commercial institution," especially as compared to the rest of the South, and hence not liable to the same profit motives which drove slavery elsewhere.<sup>71</sup> To either sell a slave locally, at rates which were in general lower than those obtainable from a trader, or to purchase a slave as a humane gesture, contributed to the belief that Border State masters prioritized other values than the strictly profitable. Essayist James Lane Allen, admiring of the Kentucky slaveholder in general, favorably described the efforts taken by

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<sup>68</sup> M. A. Bullitt to Tom Bullitt, November 6, 1860, Bullitt Family Papers, Oxmoor Collection, Papers of Thomas W. Bullitt (1838-1910), Mss. A B937c, Folder 298, Filson.

<sup>69</sup> Sarah Merrill, Indiana, WPA, Vol. 5, 5.

<sup>70</sup> Mary A. Bell, Missouri, WPA, Vol. 11, 28.

<sup>71</sup> J. G. Haskell, "The Passing of Slavery in Western Missouri," in *Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society*, Vol. VII, quoted in Trexler, *Slavery in Missouri*, 18-19.

masters to find local buyers for the “good ones” among their slaves, thus shifting the blame for a more disruptive sale onto the shoulders of the slaved him- or herself. The humane master of a “good” slave, he wrote, would first look for buyers within the neighborhood. If this were not possible, he would, “mounting his saddle horse,” widen his search to surrounding counties.<sup>72</sup> George Carvill, a British subject, was openly unsettled by slavery. Having brought his wife and children to live in Union County, Kentucky, sometime in the mid 1850s, he remarked with disdain upon the tendency of southern politicians to spout “alcoholic gas” about the equality of man while “four millions of individuals are considered in law, chattels, & sold in bulk.” But when he told his sister about his purchase of “our faithful” fireman Peter, he indulged in frankly paternalist sentimentality.<sup>73</sup>

Focused mainly on the auction block and hires contracted at annual court days, historian Harrison Anthony Trexler contends that the market in slaves “well illustrates the weakness of the entire slavery system.” To hire slaves by the year, rather than by the season, he finds, left the hirer responsible for the burden of subsisting the additional household members.<sup>74</sup> But this was far from the only means of title transfer. Slaves were exchanged locally, as Wilma A. Dunaway points out, as loan collateral, debt fulfillment, or in barter for goods or services. In addition to court-day auctions, slaves were traded through the medium of a broker, and still more via private deals.<sup>75</sup> In this region, the instrumental, and sometimes interchangeable, transactions of hiring and sale rendered human property comparatively liquid, and enabled slaveholding households to

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<sup>72</sup> Allen, “Uncle Tom at Home,” in *The Blue-Grass Region*, 66.

<sup>73</sup> George Carvill to Sister, May 23, 1860, Carvill, George, Letters, Mss. 2697, Folder 6, Letters 1860-1863, WHMC.

<sup>74</sup> Trexler, *Slavery in Missouri*, 29.

<sup>75</sup> Dunaway, *The African-American Family*, 36-38.

respond flexibly to familial needs and market pressures in ways that the great planters of the Deep South, with their large, fixed slave inventories, perhaps could not.<sup>76</sup>

Do what they might to distance themselves from the uglier aspects of the market in slaves, that same market allowed Border State slavery to flourish. Indeed, many among the master class expanded and contracted their household populations in close response to market stimuli. Short-term hires brought quick cash into a household and further maximized the flexibility of labor, allowing for the acquisition of a slave for a week or less. George R. Jacobs hired Aaron from his master, Mr. Payne, for a week's work at a dollar a day, and later hired his own slave Patrick to one Mr. Witt at the same price, also for one week's labor.<sup>77</sup> The short-term hire of a slave might fill temporary familial needs as well. Isabelle Henderson, skilled at sewing and childcare, recalled that "one time" she was hired to "the white preacher's family to take care of his children when his wife was sick."<sup>78</sup> While George Jacobs's new home was under construction, he hired his cook, Ellen, to one Mr. Witt, as he temporarily had no need of her services.<sup>79</sup>

On some farms, agricultural labor forces flexed with the cycle of planting and harvest. The Madingly brothers, John and William, each oversaw a workforce which varied widely in size and occupation within the course of a year's cycle. William Madingly, according to one of his erstwhile slaves, "brought in" "new hands" every few days during the spring planting, and again during the harvest. In January, the surplus hands were disposed of at the Bardstown, Kentucky, market by both sale and hire. Johnson, then a small boy, and older slaves Jim and Peter were hired out for the year. Anna, the household's cook, whose labors were no longer

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<sup>76</sup> See Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery*, on the relative in/flexibility of slavery in different sub-regions.

<sup>77</sup> George R. Jacobs Account Book, 1857-1877, Mss. No. 2218, WHMC.

<sup>78</sup> Isabelle Henderson, Missouri, WPA, Supp. I, Vol. 2, 194.

<sup>79</sup> George R. Jacobs Account Book, 1857-1877, Mss. No. 2218, WHMC.

necessary to feed the depleted labor force, was “sold outright to the slave dealers.” In the winter of 1857, John Madingly divested himself of more than one hundred slaves, then set the diminished crew about the slack season’s work. As Johnson recalled, they “were kept busy husking and shelling corn, taking same to the mill, then to the distillery and made into liquor.” The result of the winter’s work was “from five to six hundred barrels of liquor made and stored in the cellar.”<sup>80</sup> On Oxmoor farm outside of Louisville, Kentucky, William and Mildred Bullitt oversaw the stacking of their hemp crop by their own “men,” whose labors were supplemented by “hired hands,” “Dr. Young’s hands,” and “free men too.” The work completed, William Bullitt left for Cottonwood, the household’s secondary farm, leaving Mildred to pay off and dismiss the extra hands.<sup>81</sup> In this way, many slaveholders avoided the necessity of feeding and housing, year-round, the work force which was only required during labor-intensive periods of the year.

Within and between the households of those devoted to primarily mixed, rather than staple crop, production, a slightly different and perhaps yet more flexible pattern prevailed. In 1844 and 1845 Thomas Conyers combined enslaved labor, both owned by himself and by neighbors, with free white labor. In July of 1845, he sent the enslaved man Park and two local white boys, Robert and John Barnes, to help his own son John Conyers cut his wheat; sent the enslaved man George to help John Conyers plow; then set the enslaved man Sam as well as the white Barnes boys to plowing his own fields. Once Park had finished at John Conyers’s place, he was set to work pulling flax and setting the ground for turnips at Thomas Conyers’s. When the turnips were sowed, Park and Sam both were dispatched to the Barnes place to cradle oats, and then the two slaves, and the two sons of the Barnes household, returned to each of the Conyers

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<sup>80</sup> Johnson, *Slavery Days in Old Kentucky*, 18-19, 21-22.

<sup>81</sup> Mildred Bullitt to Tom Bullitt, April 22, 1859, Bullitt Family Papers, Oxmoor Collection, Papers of Thomas W. Bullitt (1838-1910), Mss. A B937c, Folder 296, Filson.

households to deal in turn with their crops of oats. In the meantime, wheat was also stacked, and a wayward cow brought home. In August, another son of the Conyers household returned from college, hay was cut and stacked, and hogs turned in to the oat-stubbed fields for fattening. At mid-August, Park and George cut a neighbor's grass, while the Barnes boys cut the last of the Conyers hay.<sup>82</sup>

Slaveholding men and women alike balanced the need for the cash a slave might bring in to their households through sale or an ongoing hire with the work that slave might accomplish at home. Samuel Sutton's Knox County, Kentucky, master sold "one or two" slaves whenever he got "hard up fo money," then bought "one or two cheap" when "he'd getta lotta work on his hands."<sup>83</sup> William C. Boon wrote to William Carson in 1841, informing him that a mutual acquaintance wished to hire the slave Ben from him for two months and was willing to pay \$12.50 per month. Boon encouraged Carson to agree and to send Ben on the road "if you possibly can spare him, early tomorrow morning." The amount of Ben's hire, he explained, was "more than he can make you at home."<sup>84</sup>

Women of the slaveholding classes took active part in brokering those transactions which (generally speaking) elided the public marketplace. Unlike the auction block or slave pen, sites of social and sexual disorder into which a well-bred woman rarely ventured, privately transacted sales and hires fell well within the purview of the matrons of slaveholding households. A close examination of this practice reveals much. Early studies—and some more recent ones as well—have approached the problem of slaveholding women from a standpoint grounded in the assumptions of bourgeois individualism, particularly the notion of "sisterhood" between women

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<sup>82</sup> Entries July 1-August 19, 1845, Conyers, Thomas W., Diary, Mss. No. 755, Folder 1, 1844-1849, Memorandum Book 1845, WHMC.

<sup>83</sup> Samuel Sutton, Kentucky, WPA, Vol. 16, 92.

<sup>84</sup> William C. Boon to William Carson, August 12, 1841, Mss. No. 2209, WHMC.

across the boundaries of race and class.<sup>85</sup> Historians concerned with the very real legal and social disabilities which constrained the lives of even the wealthiest women have cut to the heart of an often brutally hierarchal social order, but have tended to elide the often extraordinary power wielded by slaveholding women.<sup>86</sup> For example, Catherine Clinton, although she touches on women's initiative in hiring slaves, does so in a chapter which attempts to situate the slaveholding woman as the figurative slave of her own slaves.<sup>87</sup> Somewhat more recently, some historians have acknowledged that white women were perhaps even more strongly invested than their husbands in purchasing enslaved labor—and hence purchasing social whiteness—for their households.<sup>88</sup> Where Border State women could, they sought to maintain a household staff firstly, of sufficient size to relieve them of their most burdensome chores, and secondly, small enough to allow for efficient delegation of tasks and to cut down on redundancy. As did their men, they also expanded and contracted their household populations to meet various personal as well as domestic and sometimes agricultural needs.

Husbands held the bank accounts, and in many cases legal title to the slaves in question. But in many transactions their involvement was perfunctory at best. Sue Alexander, in evaluating one Mrs. Shotwell's qualifications to purchase her cousin Susan Grigsby's slave, noted that Mr. Shotwell's bank account was "not what would suit you." Mrs. Shotwell had offered \$1,000 for the woman's purchase, but as Alexander rather acidly remarked, "whether the money could be found is the question."<sup>89</sup> Kate Ronald, as she discussed her hire of the enslaved woman Mary from Susan Grigsby in early 1861, took care to note that her "Pa" was aware of the pending

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<sup>85</sup> Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 38-42.

<sup>86</sup> Glymph (*Out of the House of Bondage*) has gone a long way towards unpacking the assumption of powerlessness on the part of the mistress.

<sup>87</sup> See Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress*.

<sup>88</sup> Martin, *Divided Mastery*; Johnson, *Soul by Soul*.

<sup>89</sup> Sue Alexander to Susan Grigsby, December 11, 1860, Grigsby Collection, Susan Preston (Shelby) Grigsby (1830-1891), Mss. A G857, Folder 168, Filson.

transaction and that she expected to “hear from him shortly.” It may not have been coincidental that on the morning “Pa” Ronald returned home, Kate was able to specify the amount (one hundred dollars for the year) her household could pay for Mary’s hire. Nonetheless, the impetus for the hire had come from Kate and her mother to reconcile their domestic concerns. Kate’s little sister Sue was “nearly three,” she explained, and no longer required a nurse, so that any new laborer, although she would take the place of two white servants, would be required only to “clean the house and help to sew.”<sup>90</sup> Rachel Murrah and R. J. Murrah sent their hired slave Susan and her children home to their master, Thomas Gooch, in mid-January, 1860, and bid for the hire of another slave. “Mr Gooch I wante Manday and will gave you Moore than Any on Else will Gave for hir,” Rachel Murrah declared. She promised that if Gooch sent Manday “Backe with the wagon,” she would “Make it All rite” when next she saw him.<sup>91</sup>

Other women, though responsibility for the transaction itself likely rested solely with the husband, took part in deciding to acquire or divest themselves of a slave. When Lucy Hughes’s enslaved woman Maria fell sick, Hughes herself was “kept pretty busy” “between kitchen & house.” Her relief, when her husband hired “a good woman” who came well recommended by master and hirer alike, was palpable.<sup>92</sup> When the Simmonses of Pike County, Missouri sold their “Girl” in 1857, the sale disadvantaged Margaret Simmons severely, leaving her with “no help only a girl about 12 years old” so that she herself had to “do the most of the work.” Nonetheless, her description of the event suggests that she as well as her husband had made the apparently necessary decision to sell.<sup>93</sup> William J. Wood warned his father-in-law Moses Payne in the

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<sup>90</sup> Kate M. Ronald to Susan Grigsby, November 23, 1860, and January 5, 1861, Grigsby Collection, Susan Preston (Shelby) Grigsby (1830-1891), Mss. A G857, Folder 168, Filson.

<sup>91</sup> Rachel Murrah and R. J. Murrah to Thomas Gooch, January 18, 1860, Gooch, Thomas G., Papers 1827-1885, Mss. A G645, Folder 3, Correspondence 1860-1884, Filson.

<sup>92</sup> Lucy Hughes to Father, May 23, 1859, Hughes Family Papers, Mss. 97mo2, Box 1, Folder 4, Correspondence 1850s, KHS.

<sup>93</sup> Margaret Simmons to Nancy Cris[t]ler, June 30, 1857, Crisler-Pope Collection, Mss. No. 91Mo3, KHS.

winter of 1841 that Mrs. Payne likely did “not want” the boy whom Payne had hired on her behalf; if she did not want him, the hire should be canceled. As for the enslaved woman Ellen, however, Mrs. Payne and Wood’s wife Marie both declared that they would “not hear to anything but her coming, and that speedily.”<sup>94</sup>

The market in hirelings served the specific needs and priorities of slaveholding women, and the ways in which women of this class entered into market transactions suggests something of their varying attitudes toward the exercise of mastery. Widows, scholars have observed, often hired out those slaves to whom they had fallen heir.<sup>95</sup> When her husband died and left her in charge of their Missouri farm and its slaves, Mrs. Perkinson, perhaps unprepared to undertake the task of management, hired out the household’s slaves, “most of them,” freedman Henry Clay Bruce recalled, “to the tobacco factory owners, and really received more money yearly for them than when they worked upon the farm.”<sup>96</sup>

But not all women sought to escape the burdens of mastery, and for these women, the careful navigation of the hiring market enabled the exercise of firmer control and the extraction of maximum profit. In the winter of 1848, Mira Madison Alexander sent word that the money for the hire of her slave Lewis ought to be collected and used to pay the millinery bill for part of her spring wardrobe. In 1849, she asked that Lewis be sent back to her household and her immediate control. The climate along the Louisville waterfront, where he preferred to work, was unhealthy, she feared, and she couldn’t afford to lose her investment in his value. Moreover, she had wood

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<sup>94</sup> William J. Wood to Moses Payne, January 7, 1841, Payne-Broadwell papers, Mss. 983, Folder 11, Payne Correspondence, 1834-1841, WHMC.

<sup>95</sup> See Kristin E. Wood, *Masterful Women*.

<sup>96</sup> Bruce, *The New Man*, 21.

to be hauled at home. If Lewis wouldn't do the job, she would have to hire another man and pay his wages out of pocket.<sup>97</sup>

In hiring out their female slaves, slaveholders also weighed the price they could obtain for an enslaved mother's labor against the cost of subsisting her non-producing infant or small child. Mothers hired for less than did childless women, likely making the purchase of their labor accessible to more marginal households. Mill owner Thomas Gooch of Logan County, Kentucky, hired numerous slaves to various employers around the state. His business records reveal that his male slaves ranged in cost from \$60 per year for Anderson, to \$80 for Tom, to \$140 each for Jerry and Washington, and finally, to \$175 for Cato. One of the women, Sara China, hired for the same amount as did Tom. But of the other women, none approached the price per year of any of the men. Each of the other women had children in tow, the necessity of whose care and supervision depleted the amount of work they could accomplish for a hirer. Of these women, "Susan & two children" brought \$40 per year; "Rosa & one child" brought the same (the ledger entry for Rosa indicates that she was "likely to be confined" soon); "Charity & child" brought \$30; "Jinny & two children brought \$25;" and, finally, "Frances & 4 children" worked only for their "victuals & cloaths."<sup>98</sup>

When Susan Grigsby decided that her enslaved woman, Aunt Judy, must take over the day to day care of her (Judy's) grandchild, she was forced to renegotiate the woman's hire accordingly. Aunt Judy had lived and worked in the James F. Zimmerman household of Danville, Kentucky, for most of 1860. But the Zimmerman household could not accommodate the arrival of the child. James Zimmerman wrote to Grigsby that his family was "as anxious to keep [Aunt Judy] as she is to stay," but that he would not renew her hire. He and Aunt Judy both

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<sup>97</sup> Mira Madison Alexander to Agatha Marshall Logan, January 8, 1848, and Mira Madison Alexander to Caleb Logan, June 25, 1849, Caldwell, ed., "A Web of Family," Vol. 1, *Records of Antebellum Southern Plantations*.

<sup>98</sup> Undated document (ca. 1850s), Gooch, Thomas, Papers 1827-1885, Mss. A G645, Folder 4, Filson.

agreed that she, “being now old, and as a consequence not fast at work, would not be able to do our work, and attend to a child as young as the one you wish her to keep.” He “very reluctantly” had to “decline keeping her on the terms proposed.” Within three days, Grigsby had confirmed that N. H. Walter, also of Danville, would “take Judy & her grandchild just as you propose.”<sup>99</sup>

Well before an enslaved child reached adolescence, they might be adjudged as worth more working apart from their mothers than with them. Jonathan D. Martin notes that the hiring of small children meant that nearly “no slave had to be a total loss.”<sup>100</sup> The choices made by the Carson household of Palmyra, Missouri, suggest something of the rubric of calculation at work. In 1852 or 1853, Captain Carson and his wife sent their enslaved woman Harriet Johnson and her small son George from Palmyra, Missouri, to Louisiana, Missouri, to “serve in the family of” the Carsons’ daughter and son-in-law. After two years, Harriet followed her young mistress and master to Columbia, Missouri. George, who was not yet ten but apparently mature enough to work alone, returned to Palmyra, having been hired to a farmer outside of town. Two years later, when Captain Carson fetched Harriet Johnson back from his daughter’s household to work in his own household as a domestic servant, he also withdrew George from his hire and set the boy to work on his own farm, a few miles from the city.<sup>101</sup> At about the age of nine, Israel Campbell was hired to a tanner for the year for the sum of ten dollars.<sup>102</sup> Others were hired as caregivers for children scarcely younger than themselves. Employment in this area was a practice which, as historian Stephanie Cole observes, “helped to make the capital investment in human labor

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<sup>99</sup> James F. Zimmerman to Susan Grigsby, December 5, 1860, and N. H. Walter to Susan Grigsby, December 8, 1860, Grigsby Collection, Susan Preston (Shelby) Grigsby (1830-1891), Mss. A G857, Folder 168, Filson. Evidently negotiations had been ongoing between the Grigsbys and the Walters. As a December 4, 1860, letter from N. H. Walter to John Warren Grigsby indicates, Walter was anxiously awaiting word from “you & Mrs Grigsby” “about litting me have Judy” (N. H. Walter to John Grigsby, Dec. 4, 1860, Grigsby Collection, John Warren Grigsby (1818-1870), Mss. A G857, Folder 274, Letters 1860, July-Dec., Filson).

<sup>100</sup> Martin, *Divided Mastery*, 13.

<sup>101</sup> Deposition of James Green, July 2, 1889, File of George Johnson, Co. D, 65<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T., Mother’s Cert. 203516, Box 34624, Bundle 35, NAI.

<sup>102</sup> Campbell, *An Autobiography*, 14.

profitable as early, and for as long, as possible.”<sup>103</sup> William Black, aged eight, was “bonded out” to a household in New London, Missouri, where his main duty was to escort the household’s white children to school in the morning and back again each evening.<sup>104</sup> When Mary A. Bell was seven years old, her mistress Kitty Diggs hired her “out to a Presbyterian minister... to take care of three children.” Child care was not the extent of her duties, she recalled, and the family was “not nice.”<sup>105</sup>

As did men, women got rid of those slaves whom they disliked, feared, or could not discipline. Sue Alexander’s “house woman” Margret gave birth to a child who, Alexander observed, was “whitest baby I ever saw of a mother her color.” Alexander disliked this woman, for this and probably for other reasons, and hoped, as soon as her mother-in-law’s estate could be settled, to inherit a woman who could take her place. She looked gleefully forward to the day when the new slave, “having been drilled by the old lady all her life,” would arrive, and Margret could be sold.<sup>106</sup> Ellen Wallace of Christian County, Kentucky, devoted several diary entries to the decision of whether or not to hire out her domestic slave Eliza. Eliza, she wrote, was “idle and disobedient,” but also possessed some “good qualities that in some degree compensate[d] for the bad.” She grappled with the issue over a period of several days, using her inability to discipline the other woman’s character as well as her behavior as a lens with which to scrutinize her own. Eliza’s “faults,” neither “few nor small,” she eventually concluded, were too much to contend with, especially given her own impatient temperament, and Eliza was dispatched “for

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<sup>103</sup> Cole, “A White Woman, of Middle Age, Would Be Preferred,” in Delfino and Gillespie, eds., *Neither Lady nor Slave*, 78.

<sup>104</sup> William Black, Missouri, WPA, Vol. 11, 32.

<sup>105</sup> Mary A. Bell, Missouri, WPA, Vol. 11, 25-26.

<sup>106</sup> Sue Alexander to Susan Grigsby, August 26, 1860, Grigsby Collection, Susan Preston (Shelby) Grigsby (1830-1891), Mss. A G857, Folder 168, Filson.

her new home” on the morning of January 3, 1859.<sup>107</sup> In the spring of 1859, Mildred Bullitt and her married daughter Helen Chenoweth each complained of misbehavior on the part of their domestic staffs. With the exception of newlywed Tinah, judged to be “very happy” and “very well behaved,” Bullitt was vexed. Louisa had watered the milk, and the task had had to be reassigned. Helen had her share of problems as well. She had never learned to assert her authority over Beck, whom she had brought to her marriage, and Beck refused to “be interfered with in any thing.” By the autumn, nothing much had changed. Beck “[cut] up,” refused to “mend her hand right straight” when ordered to do so, spoiled meals on purpose, and threw “tantrums,” and Bullitt, appealed to for advice, concluded that the only solution would be to dispatch her (as well as Louisa and perhaps Tinah as well) to the family’s secondary farm at Cottonwood. Managed—badly, Mildred Bullitt suspected—by her husband William, Cottonwood farm was a most unpleasant place to live—subject to disease outbreaks caused by a festering slough, accidents as slaves cut timber and broke new ground, sabotage, and, it was rumored, even murder.<sup>108</sup>

In moving black bodies from household to household, women of the slaveholding classes clarified and reiterated their own social and political identities. The transactions they brokered amongst themselves worked both to trouble and to reinforce existing (and occasionally contentious) relations among white women. The local exchange of slaves bound prosperous households together with more marginal ones. Local, informal sales were often paid on the installment plan. Prices remained consistently lower than those obtainable from a professional trader making up a coffle for the New Orleans market. And hiring, too, made the acquisition of

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<sup>107</sup> Diary entries December 26, 1858, December 30, 1858, and January 3, 1859, Ellen Kenton McGaughey Wallace, Journal, Mss. No. 96mo7, KHS.

<sup>108</sup> Mildred Bullitt to Tom Bullitt, May 19, 1859, Mildred Bullitt to Tom Bullitt, October 29, 1859, Bullitt Family Papers—Oxmoor Collection, 1683-2003, Thomas W. Bullitt (1838-1910), Mss. A B937c, Folder 297, Correspondence, January-June, 1859, Filson.

slave labor accessible to less than wealthy households. As more than one scholar has pointed out, the availability of hired slaves rendered yeomen, artisans, and landed but non-slaveholding white men invested in slave society. Hiring worked to level some of the socioeconomic discrepancies among white men.<sup>109</sup>

But most scholars have assumed that these cross-class allegiances prevailed mostly, indeed, among men. The white women of the South were understood, by contrast, to literally embody socioeconomic difference. Their interactions, according to Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, “strengthened and reaffirmed class distance among free white families,” militating against the gestures towards egalitarianism required by their men.<sup>110</sup> In the Border States and in other regions where white women engaged in the buying, selling, and hiring of slaves, the transactions they brokered may have worked against this dynamic. Wealthy Susan Grigsby, for example, hired more than one slave to households which likely claimed yeoman status. The Zimmermans, to whom she hired Aunt Judy, evidently relied on only the one servant to supplement the domestic labors of Mrs. Zimmerman. The head of the Walter household was scarcely literate. Kate Ronald’s awkward handwriting and deference-tinged modes of address hint at her lower social standing relative to Grigsby, even as Grigsby’s willingness to hire Judy to the Zimmermans and later to the Walters and Mary to the Ronalds ushered them into the slaveholding, if not slaveowning, class.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*; Martin, *Divided Mastery*.

<sup>110</sup> Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 43. Stephanie McCurry complicates this appearance of egalitarianism required of white men, at least for the South Carolina Low Country. The region’s great planters, she observes, likely expected something akin to “the allegiance, perhaps, of client to patron” from their yeoman associates. Yeomen, on the other hand, insisted that favors done on either side constituted part of a “larger exchange relation, one defined by a rough reciprocity.” Although a “workable alliance” resulted, the insistence on the appearance of equality came from below, not above (*Masters of Small Worlds*, 108-112).

<sup>111</sup> James F. Zimmerman to Susan Grigsby, December 5, 1860, Grigsby Collection, Susan Preston (Shelby) Grigsby (1830-1891), Mss. A G857, Folder 168, Filson.

But there were limits to any flattening of social hierarchies which might have obtained. In their discussions of the management, acquisition, and liquidation of enslaved property, women clarified and reiterated their familial and social roles. Lucinda Helm seemed to gloat when she relayed the story of Jane, a member of her social circle. Jane, she informed her daughter, had missed her chance to purchase an enslaved woman named Margaret. Jane's regret, as related by Helm, was compounded by the fact that Margaret had turned out to be "a jewel of [a] maid," a talented seamstress, and "pleasant in her countenance, anxious to please, & thoughtful of all her duties."<sup>112</sup> Older women asserted their expertise in matters such as these. Mrs. Fishback wrote to Susan Grigsby that she had heard that Grigsby's recently-purchased woman "did not answer" her purposes, being apparently prone to gossip. She offered her niece some gentle criticism: as she warned, it was "a great risque and uncertainty" to buy an improperly-vetted slave.<sup>113</sup> Mary Payne used the acquisition of slaves, through the mediation of her husband and sons, to assert her primacy over her daughters and daughters-in-law. "Mother says she wants Eliza, which must be complied with if she is determined on it," Jacob U. Payne wrote to his brother Moses. Their sister Elizabeth (Betsey) Broadwell had a competing claim on the woman's services, however, and needed an additional slave while their mother did not. This was not an isolated incident. Every "girl" whom Betsey Broadwell expressed an interest in purchasing, "Mother says she wants."<sup>114</sup>

Furthermore, slavery in the Border States coexisted alongside, among, and around thriving nodes of free labor, and Border State matrons dabbled in the employment of white

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<sup>112</sup> Lucinda Helm to Lizzie Helm, August 29, 1856, Helm Family Papers, Mss. C Ha, Filson.

<sup>113</sup> Susan Fishback to Susan Grigsby, November 12, 1860, Grigsby Collection, Susan Preston (Shelby) Grigsby (1830-1891), Mss. A G857, Folder 168, Filson.

<sup>114</sup> J. U. Payne to Moses Payne, April 7, 1833, Payne-Broadwell Papers, Mss. 983, WHMC.

servants, both immigrant and native born.<sup>115</sup> Free labor brought with it incentivized job performance, which slaveholding women tended to naturalize as a function of the racial body. Sue Alexander of Nelson Furnace, Kentucky, carefully described her own domestic staff and evaluated the relative merits of the two white women whom she believed her cousin Susan Grigsby might wish to hire. Her assessment reveals much. She believed black women to be, whether free or enslaved, “some times good & vice a versa,” and to “[require] oversight.” White women, by contrast, might be expected to “do just what a negro would only cleaner and better.”<sup>116</sup> But white women also brought the vexing problems of mobility and social and racial privilege. White servants, unlike slaves, enjoyed certain prerogatives. For one, they could not be hit without repercussion. And their mobility could not be restricted. Mira Alexander found that for “persons who are hard to please,” white servants might “suit” better than enslaved or free black servants. Their employment served as a character-building exercise for women accustomed to nearly total power over slaves. The ability to walk off the job enjoyed by white women of the poorer classes meant that, in Alexander’s words, “there cannot be much scolding” and the temper of the mistress was of necessity “kept in check.”<sup>117</sup> Slaveholding women accommodated, albeit rather reluctantly, the white servant’s right to bodily and personal integrity and to mobility, but they skirted the issue where they could. Sue Alexander recommended that Susan Grigsby hire a country girl who had “never been in service” rather than an experienced servant who had “run from place to place in a city” seeking higher wages and shorter hours. As a white servant’s religious preferences would have to be respected, she recommended a nominally Protestant

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<sup>115</sup> See Cole’s “A White Woman, of Middle Age, Would Be Preferred,” in Delfino and Gillespie, eds., *Neither Lady nor Slave*, among others.

<sup>116</sup> Sue Alexander to Susan Grigsby, August 26, 1860, Grigsby Collection, Susan Preston (Shelby) Grigsby (1830-1891), Mss. A G857, Folder 168, Filson.

<sup>117</sup> Mira Madison Alexander to Agatha Marshall Logan, March 12, 1850, Caldwell, ed., “A Web of Family,” Vol. 1, *Records of Antebellum Southern Plantations*.

woman, and not an Irish Catholic one.<sup>118</sup> And slaveholding women's preference for these landless white girls ran hard aground against any servant's presumption to social equality. A kinswoman, Mira Madison Alexander informed her cousin, had employed "a white girl" as a nurse, but quickly found that although the young woman was kind to the baby, she "took a notion she must eat in the dining room" and began to "put on high airs." She was, Alexander remarked with satisfaction, "accordingly dismissed."<sup>119</sup>

The same factors which kept slave populations in the Border States low may have made women's involvement in the slave trade necessary. The diversified business climate which kept slaveholding husbands on the road probably required slaveholding wives to take an active role in market transactions and other aspects of household mastery.<sup>120</sup> Left in charge of Oxmoor farm while her husband, William, broke ground at Cottonwood farm, Mildred Bullitt developed "energies and abilities for business" which William Bullitt had "never suspected her to possess." She coordinated the sale of some thirty tons of hemp to a neighbor and ably assessed the "thrift[iness]" of her hogs and the productivity of the household's various wheat varieties as well as the cost-effectiveness of newly-purchased farm machinery.<sup>121</sup> Kentucky matron Lucinda Helm observed in a letter to her grown daughter that April was "a very month to a country housekeeper," with gardening to catch up on and summer clothing to manufacture. The slave Polly "would do the best she knew how" in this line of work, but required instruction and help to

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<sup>118</sup> Sue Alexander to Susan Grigsby, August 26, 1860, Grigsby Collection, Susan Preston (Shelby) Grigsby (1830-1891), Mss. A G857, Folder 168, Filson.

<sup>119</sup> Mira Madison Alexander to Agatha Marshall Logan, March 12, 1850, Caldwell, ed., "A Web of Family," Vol. 1, *Records of Antebellum Southern Plantations*.

<sup>120</sup> For discussions of white women and the business aspects of farming, see Jacqueline Glass Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North from the Sea*; Nancy Bercau, *Gendered Freedoms*; among numerous others. These more recent scholars generally counter Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's assumption that slaveholding matrons left agricultural and business matters largely to their men (see *Within the Plantation Household*).

<sup>121</sup> William Bullitt to Tom Bullitt, July 7, 1859; Mildred Bullitt to Tom Bullitt, October 29, 1859; and Mildred Bullitt to Tom Bullitt, June 14, 1859; Bullitt Family Papers—Oxmoor Collection, 1683-2003, Thomas W. Bullitt (1838-1910), Mss. A B937c, Folder 297, Correspondence, January-June, 1859, Filson.

produce a finished garment. In terms of farm management, ordinarily Helm would have been able to rely on the dubious assistance of her husband's overseer, Mr. Dallas, who "suited" her "admirably... for he obeyed implicitly every order [she] gave." Functionally illiterate and "entirely innocent of the sin of calculation," his "only merit" that of "working hard under orders," Dallas, however, had been dispatched to the household's secondary farm at Fountain Blue. Her criticism of Dallas was biting; her criticism of her husband's decision to give the man more work than he had "intellect to manage" was scarcely veiled; and apparently the superintendence of the home farm had fallen entirely to her.<sup>122</sup>

And for other women of the slaveholding class, the mixed agriculture and low-density slaveholding of the Border region meant that they might move in and out of productive labor over the course of a life cycle. For some, the transition from productive to supervisory labor was a relatively linear trajectory, as a household accrued wealth and incorporated enslaved dependents. As a wealthy matron of middle age, Mildred Bullitt looked back with nostalgia at the labor from which her ownership of slaves had spared her. She rather enjoyed the morning which she spent watching her enslaved women wash the farm's wool crop in spring water. Their toil allowed her to reminisce about the "old times," years before, when she as a young wife still "had that job to attend to" herself.<sup>123</sup> The acquisition of even a small child might begin to relieve a white woman of the least pleasant chores. The mistress of the Madingly household, whose husband had purchased seven-year-old Isaac Johnson to aid her in her domestic tasks, carefully evaluated the amount of work she could compel from the boy. Johnson vividly recalled the woman's kindness as well as her avidity, explaining that his ability to wash laundry was first tested with "the baby's soiled clothes," then with the master's, and finally with the mistress's

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<sup>122</sup> Lucinda Helm to Lizzie, March 13, 1857, Helm Family Papers, Mss. C Ha, Filson.

<sup>123</sup> M. A. Bullitt to Tom Bullitt, May 31, 1859, Bullitt Family Papers—Oxmoor Collection, 1683-2003, Thomas W. Bullitt (1838-1910), Mss. A B937c, Folder 297, Correspondence, January-June, 1859, Filson.

own garments, which required a finer touch. His facility with the iron was then tested, after which he was permitted to sit down and rest.<sup>124</sup>

But fortunes varied and so did health, and many women, even prosperous ones, found themselves returned, much to their dismay, to productive labor several times over the course of a lifetime. When her slave Jane fell victim to religious delusions and broke down, Agatha Marshall Logan slotted herself into her household's labor roster in her stead. Jane, she complained to her cousin, had become convinced that "the Savior had come & taken possession of her body & that her mission was to preach to the city," and simply refused to work. Instead, she rocked compulsively in the rocking chair while Logan "did Milly's work & Milly got breakfast."<sup>125</sup> Disease cut a swath through Elizabeth Hubbard's Boone County, Missouri, household in the summer of 1841. She lost an infant child of her own, and she also lost five slaves, including someone she referred only to as "our black woman." This woman's death, Hubbard wrote plaintively, "has all most broke me up." She had long dreamed that "by hard work and good economy," she could "soon slack [her] hand," but found herself clinging, bereft, to her Baptist faith as she once again took up, with only the labor of a six-year-old slave girl to command, the domestic chores necessary to maintain a household of eight.<sup>126</sup>

Births, too, might return the mistress of a middling household to productive, often arduous, labor. The birth of Beeny's son left Agatha Marshall Logan with her regular housework as well as the "spring sewing all upon [her] & no assistance."<sup>127</sup> Mira Madison Alexander complained viciously when Izzie's "fine little gal" was born. As she put it, she "should have

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<sup>124</sup> Johnson, *Slavery Days in Old Kentucky*, 16.

<sup>125</sup> Agatha Marshall Logan to Mira Madison Alexander, April 30, 1856, "A Web of Family," Vol. 1, Caldwell, ed., *Records of Antebellum Southern Plantations*.

<sup>126</sup> Elizabeth Hubbard to Elizabeth Moberly, August 9, 1841, King, George, Family Papers, Mss. 125, Folder 2, WHMC.

<sup>127</sup> Agatha Marshall Logan to Mira Madison Alexander, April 30, 1856, "A Web of Family," Vol. 1, Caldwell, ed., *Records of Antebellum Southern Plantations*.

much preferred animals of another kind such as chickens, ducks, etc. of which there are none.”<sup>128</sup>

Elvira Scott, the wife of a modestly successful merchant in Missouri’s plantation belt, took over the bulk of household duties while her slave Margaret gave birth and recovered. “Got the breakfast & worked in the kitchen all morning,” she noted in her diary on March 9, 1860. Around noon, Margaret was delivered of a daughter, and while she rested Scott continued to struggle to keep up with the unaccustomed work load. Eight days later, she continued to complain: “Have been doing the cooking & most of the housework for a family of 10. It is hard to keep up.” Margaret and her child were healthy, but she had not yet gotten back to work. To Scott’s immense relief, within two days Margaret was able to assist with the preparation of meals, and by early April, she was back at heavy labor over the laundry tub.<sup>129</sup>

The birth of their own children also prompted white women of the slaveholding classes to enter the market in enslaved labor. The employment or purchase of a nurse for a new infant was, as might well be imagined, a topic of considerable concern and importance. Indeed, the “anxiety” of the slaveholding class regarding “who should be minding their children” had been growing over the course of the antebellum period, as Stephanie Cole observes, as notions of domesticity and idealized motherhood increasingly penetrated “a region supposedly devoted to patriarchal rule.”<sup>130</sup> The matter further gained in complexity, she finds, in the variegated labor market of the Upper South. In the choices they made regarding the employment of childcare workers, Cole argues, mistresses and masters sought to exercise control and enforce order on

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<sup>128</sup> Mira Madison Alexander to Agatha Marshall Logan, May 29, 1849, “A Web of Family,” Volume 1, Caldwell, ed., *Records of Antebellum Southern Plantations*.

<sup>129</sup> Entries for March 9, 1860, March 17, 1860, and April 11, 1860, Elvira W. Scott, Diary, Mss. 1053, Folder 2, pages 42-48, WHMC.

<sup>130</sup> Cole, “A White Woman, of Middle Age, Would Be Preferred,” in Delfino and Gillespie, eds, *Neither Lady nor Slave*, 76-78. In contravention of a growing body of prescriptive literature which advised mothers north and south that their own affectionate care, and not the labor of slaves or servants, was central to the well-being of their children, many southern white households continued to employ enslaved women and children in early childcare. The needs of a slave society, which included the extraction of maximal value from the enslaved, Cole suggests, thwarted the wholesale adoption of such advice.

what they believed to be a chaotic world.<sup>131</sup> Nonetheless, the market in enslaved black nurses continued to flourish, alongside and in conjunction with the new market in free women's labor. The independence of these women, many slaveholding women seemed to fear, undermined the control that the master class expected to wield over their dependents. Perhaps the discomfort of the master class was further heightened by enslaved nurses' position at the physical and emotive center of the household—responsible for the survival of the smallest children. Louisa Newman got a scolding from her father-in-law when she and her young husband revealed to him their difficulty in securing a nurse. Kate, who had been gifted to the couple, was thought to be unreliable in such a responsible position. Neither could a “hired or free negroe” be trusted. But, he believed, his own enslaved woman Courtney, trained from her own childhood to look after babies, could do the job. He recommended her as “a capable and reliable servant of fair persona,” honest, highly motivated, and although “obstinate when provoked,” responsive to both “kind treatment and a little encouragement” and to threats of punishment.<sup>132</sup>

The most skilled nurses, in particular, were in high demand, and exercised a certain degree of liberty. “Heavy set” and “lite skinned” Aunt Barbara, her master's favorite slave, nursed his children as well as those in neighboring households near Elizabethtown, Kentucky—including the father of Federal Writers' Project interviewer Iris Cook.<sup>133</sup> Mrs. Fishback, Susan Grigsby's aunt and mentor, wrote to her with dismay that one Aunt Rhoda, an enslaved woman belonging to an acquaintance, could not attend Grigsby in childbirth and afterwards. Her services had been engaged by another expectant mother, who, with her sister, had a longstanding claim

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<sup>131</sup> Cole, “A White Woman, of Middle Age, Would Be Preferred,” in Delfino and Gillespie, eds, *Neither Lady nor Slave*, 82-83. Cole stresses the imbrication of bourgeois ideals of domesticity with the values of slave society as she grapples with the question of why southern matrons increasingly hired white, rather than enslaved nurses.

<sup>132</sup> James Newman to Louisa Newman, December 18, 1861, Newman Family Papers, 1861-1864, Mss. C N, Filson.

<sup>133</sup> Peter Gohagen, Indiana, WPA, Supp. I, Vol. 5, 72.

upon her.<sup>134</sup> The status of nurse, in particular, may have offered to a few enslaved women the opportunity to enjoy mobility and status which approached that of male artisans.<sup>135</sup> Women known as “professed nurses,” Fishback warned Grigsby, were often unwilling to “be dictated to” by the new mothers for whom they worked. In addition, they were often kept busy by many “engagements” and could refuse to travel an inconvenient distance or to remain in any given household as long as the mother might wish.<sup>136</sup> These enslaved women knew well the value of their services, and slaveholding women found to their dismay that, as Agatha Marshall Logan complained, women employed as nurses were “apt to cut capers when they are away from home & feel that they have Mothers somewhat in their power.”<sup>137</sup>

But though they may have held a position of some esteem, nurses suffered many of the same hardships as other slaves. The market in their labor worked against their ability to parent their own children and cohabit with their own husbands. Baby Priscilla, Mira Madison Alexander wrote, was “devoted” to her nurse Charlotte, and Alexander was forced to concede to the woman “the preference for the management of children.” Not many mothers, she concluded, “combine gentleness and firmness as she does.” But the excellent care which Charlotte took of Priscilla may have come at her own child’s expense. Another enslaved woman, Alexander wrote, was “always ready to take her child so she never has an excuse for being away from Priscilla a moment.”<sup>138</sup> James Newman’s slave Courtney, dispatched to Newman’s daughter-in-law’s

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<sup>134</sup> Susan Fishback to Susan Grigsby, December 11, 1860, Grigsby Collection, Susan Preston (Shelby) Grigsby (1830-1891), Mss. A G857, Folder 168, Filson.

<sup>135</sup> In South Carolina, for example, Leslie Schwalm observes that male slaves with “valued skills or special training” had “far more opportunities” for mobility, wage-earning, escape from immediate white supervision, and relationship-building “outside the immediate plantation community” than did women, who rarely attained such status (*A Hard Fight for We*, 32).

<sup>136</sup> L. H. J. Fishback to Susan Grigsby, December 11, 1860, Grigsby Collection, Susan Preston (Shelby) Grigsby (1830-1891), Mss. A G857, Folder 168, Filson.

<sup>137</sup> Agatha Marshall Logan to Apolline Alexander Blair, June 12, 1856, in Caldwell, ed., “A Web of Family,” Vol. 1, *Records of Antebellum Southern Plantations*.

<sup>138</sup> Mira Madison Alexander to Agatha Marshall Logan, September 24, 1849, in Caldwell, ed., “A Web of Family,” Vol. 1, *Records of Antebellum Southern Plantations*.

household, would have to leave her own toddler child behind, to be “taken care of by its grand Mother.”<sup>139</sup>

Border State women in general may have experienced a degree of mobility which, although often coerced and frequently abusive, helped distinguish the region from some of the other newly-settled regions of the South. Unlike the Chesapeake women who participated in a “richly populated” and “translocal” social world, those on the cotton frontier lived lives circumscribed by the boundaries of the master’s plantation. Few women hired or were hired, and their knowledge of the broader world was often limited to the second-hand.<sup>140</sup> By contrast, women often hired and were hired in the Border States. Although opportunities for self-hire were probably never as open to them as to their men, a few did take charge of their own time. In the winter of 1857 the Kentucky slave Rebecca Shelton wrote to her mistress, Virginia Breckinridge, imploring to be allowed to remain in Lexington, Kentucky, where she had traveled without permission, and where she apparently lived with or courted with a man named Tom. She did not wish to return to Danville, and to the household to which Breckinridge had hired her. “I think if you should allow me to stay here until Spring that I will be able to make as much as I made in Danville,” she predicted. She wished her mistress to know that she and Tom “did not want to conceal my being here,” and assured her that if they hadn’t told her before, it was because they had simply forgotten. Apparently Breckinridge consented. Nearly two and a half years later, Shelton, still in Lexington, addressed to Breckinridge a brief note, in which she enclosed most but not all of her month’s wages (“nine dollars 50 cents keeping 50 cents for cake”), explained

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<sup>139</sup> James Newman to Louisa Newman, December 18, 1861, Newman Family Letters 1861-1864, Mss. C N, Filson.

<sup>140</sup> O’Donovan, *Becoming Free in the Cotton South*, 46-50.

that she had forwarded her previous months' pay by a man headed down the road to Danville, warned that her health was poor, and requested a new pair of shoes.<sup>141</sup>

But slaves, no matter how privileged, knew well the radical uncertainty which underlay even the local market in their persons. Mattie J. Jackson, a Missouri freedwoman, recalled that even though her father had been sold "in the immediate vicinity" of the household where her mother was enslaved, both of her parents understood that "he would be likely to be sold again at" the will of his new master. Perhaps expecting that one sale only heightened the likelihood of another, together they plotted his escape.<sup>142</sup> Former slave Andrew Jackson told his reading audience that he

had to go like a livery stable horse, to any one who saw fit to pay the largest sum. Money I want, yes I am pushed for cash; I shall have to sell a human being. Go Jack, to Hickman, then to Isbel; now to Bounds; back to Wall; then to Prunty; off to Robertson; now to Price; go to Noles; then to Bratton; quick to Adams; away to Dackett; then to Ivins; round to Claypool; now to Ford; then to Ray; up to Withrow; go Jack, go Andrew, go it Niger, I paid for you; down to Dan, run Jack, run; off to Kerns; oppression, ow how it burns; over to White; now to Haley.

His breathless narrative highlights his essential powerlessness in the situation.<sup>143</sup> Isaac Campbell, nine years old, viewed with trepidation the dissolution of his master's household. "On New Year's day we went to the auctioneer's block," he wrote in his autobiography, "to be hired to the highest bidder for one year." The auction "scattered" his "associates" among new households, "casting each among strangers, and perhaps hard masters."<sup>144</sup> The typical Border State slave could expect to live in more than one household, and often in several households, over the course of a lifetime.

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<sup>141</sup> Rebecca Shelton to Virginia Breckinridge, January 10, 1857, and Rebecca Shelton to Virginia Breckinridge, June 5, 1859, Grigsby Collection, Breckinridge, Virginia (Hart), Mss. A G857, Folder 84, Filson.

<sup>142</sup> Jackson, *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson*, 5-6.

<sup>143</sup> Jackson, *Narrative and Writings of Andrew Jackson*, 54-55.

<sup>144</sup> Campbell, *An Autobiography*, 14.

The death of a patriarch or matriarch generally meant the dispersal of the household's slaves, often by sale. In some households, particular care was taken to determine the placement of those slaves who constituted, often enough, the bulk of the estate. Nancy Austin swore out her last will and testament at Morganfield, Kentucky, in May of 1837, specifying that Margaritte and Solomon be given to her grandsons, to be held in trust until each boy attained the age of twenty-one. Her daughter would inherit Mahala, Washington, and Julian; her son, Alexander and Theresa, some livestock, and some pieces of household furniture. Another daughter could lay claim to Sarah, John, and Amanda, as well as livestock and furniture. Finally, another Amanda would be granted her liberty and subsistence.<sup>145</sup>

Widowed women used the power which accrued to their ability to distribute human property to shape the households of their beneficiaries. Elizabeth Bryan of New Madrid, Missouri, for example, provided for many contingencies when she bequeathed two enslaved men to her granddaughter Mary Eliza Phillips. Her efforts served to ensure that the men would never fall under the legal control of her grandson-in-law, but would remain the provenance of her granddaughter. Mary Eliza Phillips would inherit two enslaved men for her sole and separate use, not liable to "any debt or charge of her said husband or any future husband." The balance of Bryan's slaves she willed to her son. Upon his death, the enslaved man and woman Adele and John would pass directly to Mary Eliza Phillips, again to be secured against her husband's debt, with the rest inherited by Bryan's daughter-in-law, in whose possession they would remain so long as she remained a widow. In the event of her remarriage, they, too, would devolve to Mary Eliza Phillips, but, again, not to her husband. In this way, Elizabeth Bryan took pains to keep human property within the line of her biological descent, exercising, through the mechanism of

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<sup>145</sup> Last will and testament of Nancy Austin, May 26, 1837, Kentucky, WPA, Vol. 16, 78-79.

her will, control which extended long into the future.<sup>146</sup> Missouri slaveholder Jim Lane too sought to use the transmission of human property within his extended clan to exert control over his descendants. According to his former slave Thomas McIntire, Lane “nebber give no writin’” to accompany those slaves whom he gave as wedding presents. Without “writin’,” or proof of legal ownership, the slaves remained McIntire’s property and could not subsequently be sold without his authorization.<sup>147</sup>

Others expressed their wishes, but left the specifics up to the heirs, in ways which multiplied the possibilities of enslaved family separation. Missouri patriarch Thomas H. Harvey specified that if any of his slaves must be sold in order to settle his estate, that they should “as far as practicable choose their homes.”<sup>148</sup> And still others resorted to simpler, and often crueler, expedients. Claiborne Fox Jackson, future governor of Missouri, inherited nine slaves with the settlement of an 1853 estate. The slaves of the decedent had been grouped into “lots” of roughly equal value. Jackson paid fifty dollars in order to have his “choice of lots,” and walked away in possession of 34-year-old Fanny (worth \$350), nine-year-old Nancy (\$400), seven-year-old Amelia (\$275), two-year-old Isaiah (\$175), seventeen-year-old Susan (\$500), 21-year-old Margaret (\$400), two-year-old Jo (\$200), one-year-old Cornelius (\$100), and six-year-old William (\$275). In comparison, Jesse M. Baskett became the owner of seven slaves, ranging in price from three-year-old Harriet (\$200) and 32-year-old Louisa (\$250) to thirteen-year-old Frances (\$450) and 36-year-old Tilman (\$650). The document gives no clue as to the familial

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<sup>146</sup> Last will and testament of Elizabeth Bryan, June 28, 1853, Phillips Family Papers, 1853-1942, Mss. 4008, Folder 1, WHMC. See Yvonne M. Pitts, “I Desire to Give My Black Family Their Freedom,” in Boswell and McArthur, eds., *Women Shaping the South*, for an exploration of how willed manumissions troubled both the property rights of a testator’s white heirs and the orderliness of southern society.

<sup>147</sup> Thomas McIntire, Ohio, WPA, Vol. 5, 410.

<sup>148</sup> Thomas H. Harvey’s last will and testament, July 9, 1852, Harvey Family Papers, Mss. 338, Folder 2, WHMC.

relationships of those grouped together in lots.<sup>149</sup> When John W. Fields's master died, he and his siblings were separated from their parents in order to settle the estate. As Fields explained,

We slaves were divided by this method. Three disinterested persons were chosen to come to the plantation and together they wrote the names of the different heirs on a few slips of paper. These slips were put in a hat and passed among us slaves. Each one took a slip and the name on the slip was their new owner.

It was the last time Fields ever saw his mother "for longer than one night."<sup>150</sup> And Israel Campbell recalled a similarly randomized method. When his master died, each heir drew a slip of paper on which were written the names of five slaves. Once lots had been drawn, the family commenced to bargain amongst themselves for particularly desirable servants.<sup>151</sup>

Slaves were gifted to brides and to grooms upon their marriages. Black family ties hinged upon white, and the formation of a white household often meant the dissolution of a black family. White marriages separated black spouses. Emily Camster's stepfather, owned by a neighbor, was taken from Missouri to Texas when his master's daughter married. "Cose he never 'spected to see my mammy again an' he married a young woman down dar," Camster explained in later years. He and Camster's mother had had no children together, but he fathered several with his Texas bride, and when he made his way back to Missouri after emancipation, he and Camster's mother agreed that their own marriage should be permanently dissolved.<sup>152</sup> And white marriages and the birth of white children also divided black children from their mothers. Malinda Noll's younger siblings Ellen (about ten years old) and Daniel (thirteen or fourteen) were given

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<sup>149</sup> Settlement and division of slaves made between Jesse M. Baskett and Claiborne F. Jackson, January 1, 1853, John Sappington Papers, Mss. 1027, Folder 61, Correspondence and Papers 1852-1853, WHMC. It is interesting to note that the highest priced slave, Tilman, was also the oldest, at 36. No doubt his value reflected his attainment of desirable skills at a trade. By contrast, the prices of the girls and women peaked much earlier, in adolescence, plummeting after the early twenties, suggesting that they were assessed according to reproductive potential rather than domestic or other skills. Another possibility is that one or more of the younger children belonged to the adult women and older girls, and would need to be cared for, thereby depleting the amount of work they could perform for a new master and depressing their value accordingly.

<sup>150</sup> John W. Fields, *Indiana*, WPA, Vol. 6, 77-80.

<sup>151</sup> Campbell, *An Autobiography*, 19-20.

<sup>152</sup> Emily Camster Green, *Missouri* WPA, Vol. 11, 139-141.

away when a son of the master's household married. Ellen died (of neglect, Noll suspected) "soon after." A few years later, Noll herself was given away, accompanied by two of her own children but leaving a third child behind.<sup>153</sup> John Eubanks was gifted to his young mistress upon the occasion of her marriage. He recalled her as reasonably humane, interposing herself between her husband's violence and the slaves she had brought from her natal home, but also that she refused to allow him contact with his mother. "She wan' me to fohgit mothah," he concluded. "But I nevah could."<sup>154</sup> Georgia Ann McCann Dawson, daughter of a Monroe County, Missouri, slaveholder, married a man who "didn't believe in slaves and didn't own any." Following the birth of her second baby, however, she "took" the eight-year-old slave Margaret Nickens from her father's household "as a nurse for the children." Nickens's memories of her departure were vivid: "the baggage and slaves and other things they hauled in a covered wagon," she explained, "and the white folks rode in a rockaway." Her mother, she recalled bitterly, "had to stand there like I wasn't hers and all she could say was 'be a good girl, Margaret.'"<sup>155</sup>

Nor could slaves count on remaining within the household to which they had been given or bequeathed. Following the death of her master, Sarah O'Donnell of Nelson County, Kentucky, was given to his daughter Nancy Thompson. Thompson swiftly sold O'Donnell to one Jack Mulligan, who then gifted her to his own married daughter.<sup>156</sup> When Mary Howard's master, George Mason, died, his son-in-law John Devereaux inherited her and her two children. He then hired her to James and Colegate Rudd, before making the fateful decision to sell her at the Memphis market, from which fate she was rescued by James Rudd's timely purchase.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> "Practice at the Marriage of Slaveholders," McKivigan, ed., *The Roving Editor*, 259.

<sup>154</sup> John Eubanks, Indiana, WPA, Vol. 6, 76.

<sup>155</sup> Margaret Nickens, Missouri, WPA, Supp. I, Vol. 2, 212.

<sup>156</sup> Sarah O'Donnell, Indiana, WPA, Vol. 5, 151.

<sup>157</sup> Deposition of Amos McCreary, August 26, 1885, Deposition of James C. Rudd, August 27, 1885, and Deposition of Colegate M. Rudd, August 27, 1885, Pension File of Isham Howard, Co. E, 109<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T., Widow's Cert. No. 308,758, Box No. 35036, NAI.

America Morgan, who grew up in Ballard County, Kentucky, was given to her master's daughter, Meda Rudd. She remained with the Rudds for only one year before she was sold for \$600 to the Utterback household.<sup>158</sup> Mary Crane's father was selected by his master's oldest daughter to accompany her to her new husband's home. The husband's drinking soon left him bankrupt, sending the balance of his property—including the slaves whom his wife had brought to her marriage—to auction.<sup>159</sup>

Throughout the slave South, the material conditions of enslavement helped to determine the contours of the slave family. Modest households and other demographic and preferential factors contributed to the prevalence of abroad marriages among enslaved couples, and the market added further strains. A lucky few found spouses within their masters' households, or had a spouse purchased subsequent to the marriage. But it seems likely that more courted and formed marriages off the farm. Indeed, historian Steven Hahn has estimated that “on farms and small plantations, fewer than half” of enslaved family groups would have included two parents and their children.<sup>160</sup> The market in slaves multiplied the separations that Border State families might expect over the course of a lifetime and shaped the formation of marriages between slaves, as well as the familial lives which they crafted together.

In the Border States, small slaveholdings and a fluctuating slave population made the development of a relatively autonomous enslaved black community hard to achieve. Masters and mistresses of only a few slaves likely found it possible, indeed desirable, to intervene with greater frequency in black marital and communal affairs. The Border State marriage stretched to accommodate sale, hiring, and other inescapable facts of life. And within the context of these families, the distribution of subsistence and surplus as well as norms of behavior reinforced

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<sup>158</sup> America Morgan, *Indiana*, WPA, Vol. 6, 142.

<sup>159</sup> Mary Crane, *Indiana*, WPA, Vol. 6, 9.

<sup>160</sup> Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 18.

power dynamics and affection, and gestured towards the type of free households which would eventually form.

Interstate sale haunted slave familial life, and historians estimate that the sale of a spouse ended at least one third of all first marriages among enslaved couples.<sup>161</sup> Sarah Frances Shaw Graves's mother was hired away from her husband and transported across state lines from Kentucky to Missouri. Transacted out of state, a hire could be as disastrous as a sale. "My papa never knew where my mama went," Graves explained. "An' my mama never knew where papa went." The information had been kept from her in the knowledge that "she would never marry so long as she knew where he was." Years later, when she did choose to remarry, unwilling to further enrich her master with the birth of children, she chose as companion a man whom she believed to be sterile.<sup>162</sup> To do so was to evade the entrenched and powerful interest claimed by the master class in the bodies and reproductive potential of their female slaves, and the risks run were high. When the Missouri slave Lavinia's betrothed was sold from her, for example, she "resolved not to marry any other man," as acquaintance William Wells Brown put it. The consequence of her refusal was a whipping that brought her near to death.<sup>163</sup>

Courtship games played by black and white youth in the vicinity of Henderson, Kentucky, ex-slave Katie Holloway Rose recalled, incorporated a keen and strikingly frank awareness of the possibility of interstate sale, particularly of the sale of young women into the so-called fancy trade. Gathered at parties, unmarried men and women played a game she called "Rock Candy." The young women arranged themselves in two lines, while the young men began

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<sup>161</sup> Figure cited Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 18.

<sup>162</sup> Sarah Graves, Missouri, WPA, Vol. 11, 128-134.

<sup>163</sup> Brown, *Narrative of William Wells Brown*, reprinted in Andrews, ed., *From Fugitive Slave to Free Man*, 69-70. See Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women*, among others, for an exploration of the centrality of black women's reproductive capacity to the establishment and perpetuation of slavery as an institution. As Elizabeth Fox-Genovese puts it, the slaveholders' interests in reproduction "arrogantly assimilated the essence of womanhood to the prerogatives of class and racial status" (*Within the Plantation Household*, 324).

the game at the foot of each line, partnering with each woman in turn. In this way, they kept time to the lyrics: “A poor man he sold me, and a rich man he bought me and sent me down to New Orleans, to learn how to rock candy. Rock candy, two and two, Rock candy, two and two. Rock candy, two and two. For it’s no harm to rock candy.” The “preachers and church-going people” claimed that this game constituted dancing, but their disapproval, Rose remembered, “only made us more determined to play it.”<sup>164</sup>

Some weathered the trade in other ways. Once separated by a master, slaves sometimes accepted the end of their marriages as inevitable, adopting the social identity of widow or widower regardless of the physical survival of a former spouse. Indeed, slaveholders sometimes demanded a swift remarriage. William Wells Brown recalled several conversations with female acquaintances as to why they had married so soon after the loss of their husbands or sweethearts to sale. Sally, whose husband Ben had been sold to a trader, married Peter within days of Ben’s departure. When Wells Brown asked her why, she replied, “because master made her do it.”<sup>165</sup> The actions of a few enslaved women suggest that they may have marked subsequent romances as different from the marriage which had been ended against their will. Sexual relationships which fell short of marital commitment, which otherwise do not seem to have been common among Border State slaves, may have helped to assuage the hurt and loneliness of a spouse’s sale or death while avoiding the leap of faith of a second marriage. It was tacitly acknowledged among her Kentucky neighborhood that the father of Milly Scott’s youngest child was the preacher who had performed the marriage ceremony between her and her slain husband

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<sup>164</sup> Katie Holloway Rose, Indiana, WPA, Supp. I, Vol. 5, 177-178.

<sup>165</sup> Brown, *Narrative of William Wells Brown*, reprinted in Andrews, ed., *From Fugitive Slave to Free Man*, 69-70.

Augustus.<sup>166</sup> It may not have been a coincidence that after Pomp Eddings was sold away from his wife and son, Mary Eddings “took up with,” but did not marry, her friend Samuel Boone, having one child, a daughter she named Georgianna, with him before he married another woman in the first years of emancipation.<sup>167</sup>

What scholars have less frequently considered, however, is the effect of the coerced *intraregional* mobility of the Border State slave upon marriages, abroad or otherwise. Fortunate couples navigated arrangements that might last a lifetime. But many Border State slaves could expect to live and work in multiple households over the course of a lifespan. As a result, they made and remade their familial and social worlds across and between the boundaries of individual households. Historian Diane Mutti Burke suggests that while sale, migration, hiring, and estate division pulled marriages apart, local transactions might bring only minimal disruption.<sup>168</sup> For some, this may have been the case. A slave’s marriage might be written into his or her sale or hire, and some slaves were sold or hired in partial or complete family groups. Fanny Ann and Peter Flood were married in Shelby County, Kentucky, in about 1855. Both belonged to Jason Chamberlin, who soon withdrew them both to Pettus County, Missouri, and hired them to the preacher James Mitchel of Saline County. After two years of employment in the Mitchel household, the Floods were sent back to Pettus County, and sold together “by private bargain” to Dr. George Rothwell, who kept title to them for the next eight years.<sup>169</sup> Watt Jordan, his numerous siblings, and both of their parents were owned by the Jordans of Flemingsbug,

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<sup>166</sup> Deposition of Solomon Phillips, May 15, 1884, Deposition of Cyphena Brett, May 2, 1884, File of Anthony Curtis aka Anthony Courts aka Anthony Scott, Co. B, 109<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T., Mother’s Cert. No. 207154, Box 34722, Bundle 28, NAI.

<sup>167</sup> Deposition of Mary Eddings, Pension File of Frank Eddings, Co. A, 62<sup>nd</sup> U. S. C. T., Mother’s Cert. No. 229,627, Box No. 35,409, Bundle No. 29, NAI. As Anthony E. Kaye observes, to “take up” rather than to marry “reflected a couple’s determination to live with the temporary character of all intimate relations in slavery” (*Joining Places*, 60).

<sup>168</sup> Burke, “Mah Pappy Belong to a Neighbor,” in Appleton, Jr., and Boswell, eds., *Searching for Their Places*, 73.

<sup>169</sup> Deposition of Fanny Ann Flood, March 7, 1866, Berlin et al, eds., *Free at Last*, 356.

Kentucky. At least once they were sold for cash, to one Dick Spencer. On yet another occasion the entire family was traded for a plot of land, and then traded back the same day.<sup>170</sup>

Masters and mistresses believed firmly that it was their own consent which legitimized the union of an enslaved couple, inscribing their authority into the ceremonies and vows which united the two, and some participated in facilitating the survival of a marriage, perhaps especially that of a trusted or favored slave. Their encouragement of marriages among their slaves, historian Steven Hahn observes, “reflected an ethics of sovereignty.”<sup>171</sup> Ellen Hobson of Warren County, Kentucky, arrived at her 1860 wedding to Ewing Donovan (presided over by one Reverend Bottomly) bearing a “certificate of permission” from her mistress.<sup>172</sup> Sally Gaines, owner of a farm north of Brunswick, Missouri, had purchased Asbury Warden from her brother with the “express understanding” and “promise” that she would “give him certain time to go and see his wife and family.” To bridge the added distance, she saw to it that he had a horse available for his use.<sup>173</sup> The Rudds hired Mary Howard with the knowledge that she was married, and her husband spent frequent nights with her in their cabin on the Rudd property.<sup>174</sup>

Masters and mistresses often took the opportunity of a slave wedding to perform their own largesse, inscribing both power and benevolence into the ceremony itself. Peter Corn of Ste. Genevieve County, Missouri, remembered that his master was prone to saying “in de ceremony something like dis. ‘Now, by God, if you ain’t treatin’ her right, by God, I’ll take you up and whip you,’” and that “the girl’s mistress would chastise her de same way.”<sup>175</sup> And Malinda Noll

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<sup>170</sup> Watt Jordan, Ohio, WPA, Vol. 5, 395.

<sup>171</sup> Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 17.

<sup>172</sup> Deposition of Mrs. H. A. Hobson, Pension File of Ewing Donovan, aka Ewing Cox, Co. B, 109<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T. Widow’s Cert. No. 349,746, Box 39,281, Bundle 17, NAI.

<sup>173</sup> Deposition of Sally Gaines, August 8, 1889, Benecke Family Papers, Mss. 3825, Box 94, Folder 2645, War Claims and Pensions—Blacks, Asbury Warden, WHMC.

<sup>174</sup> Deposition of James C. Rudd, August 27, 1885, and Deposition of Colegate M. Rudd, August 27, 1885, Pension File of Isham Howard, Co. E, 109<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T., Widow’s Cert. No. 308,758, Box No. 35036, NAI.

<sup>175</sup> Peter Corn, Missouri, WPA, Vol. 11.

recalled that, as “a respectable colored girl” coming of age in Missouri, it was “the custom there, and in Kentucky, for all the neighbors, white and black, to come and see the ceremony.” She was married at her master’s house, by a minister. “I remember the words [my master] said after I was married,” she told her interviewer:

Says Mr. Campbell, says he, ‘You join these people together; *that is, till I choose to make a separation.*’ I heard it myself. He went up to the minister just as soon as the ceremony was over, and said it aloud, in the presence of everybody in the room. I was young and happy, and didn’t think much about it then, but I’ve often, often thought about it since.<sup>176</sup>

Indeed, the trappings of the wedding itself often served to highlight a master or mistress's beneficence toward a particularly favored slave. In the spring of 1859, Mildred Bullitt, on the occasion of house servant Tinah's marriage, helped to prepare a “handsome” and “abundant” supper for the couple and their friends. She oversaw the bride's wedding attire, which included Tom Bullitt's castoff “white kid gloves, [his sister] Helen's glove tops, & flowers, sash, a dress of white tarlatan, & a tulle veil 3 yds long.” When Tinah was dressed, Bullitt presented her to members of her own family, who praised the younger woman's beauty, comparing her to “an Indian queen,” and then Bullitt, with the rest of “us white folk,” stood on the porch while the bridal couple conducted their processional “over the style [sic]” and into the yard. Bullitt described Tinah's wedding, in letters to her son Tom, as a most idyllic affair. The wedding reinforced her own sense of generosity, from her involvement in cooking the supper to her presentation of the bride for formal white approval. The choreography of the ceremony itself embodied racialized order. White attendees stood elevated on the porch, while the black officiate stood in an intermediate zone on the steps, and the black guests congregated in the yard. The

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<sup>176</sup> “A Kind Master,” McKivigan, ed., *The Roving Editor*, 259.

yard of Oxmoor farm was thus sacralized, bride and groom entering over the stile as another couple would enter the interior space of a church.<sup>177</sup>

Slaves learned to navigate, manipulate, and sometimes to evade the whims of their owners as they courted and wed. “I would choose who I wanted to marry,” Peter Corn recalled. “But I had to talk to my master about it. Den him and de owner of de girl I wanted would get together and talk it over.”<sup>178</sup> The vanity of the slaveholding class was great, savvy slaves knew, and might be levied to their own benefit. His relationship with his sweetheart Charlotte having ended badly, Jerry, a Kentucky field hand, next courted the house servant Fanny. After the couple came to a tentative agreement to wed, Jerry consulted Fanny's master and mistress. Interrogated as to the depth of his devotion to Fanny, Jerry responded passionately—and shrewdly: “me lub ebery ting on de plantation since me lub Fanny—de hosses, and all de tings on de plantation seems better dan anybody else's. It seems to me Fanny got de best missis in de country.” Touched by this outpouring, Fanny's master gave his own consent and implored his wife—whose personal servant Fanny was—to do likewise.<sup>179</sup>

But the often barely expressed anxieties of slaveholders suggest the insurrectionary potential posed by the black marriage. Even Tinah's charming wedding at Oxmoor farm could be the cause of unease. Mildred Bullitt wrote to her son that during the ceremony and subsequent reception, “your aunts seemed a little afraid to be here.” Bullitt minimized the cause for fear of these more timid women, noting that she “never saw a more orderly, well behaved set” than Tinah's wedding guests. Nonetheless, she took care to forestall any potential trouble with a subtle

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<sup>177</sup> M.A. Bullitt to Tom Bullitt, May 10, 1859, Bullitt Family Papers, Oxmoor Collection, Papers of Thomas W. Bullitt (1838-1910), Mss. A B937c, Folder 296, Filson.

<sup>178</sup> Peter Corn, Missouri, WPA, Vol. 11, 86.

<sup>179</sup> Fedric, *Slave Life in Virginia and Kentucky*, 32-37.

but unmistakable display of her own authority. As the party progressed, she “walked around & let the crowd know I was awake.”<sup>180</sup>

The familial relations crafted by enslaved couples and parents posed both overt and covert challenges to the paternalist ideology undergirding slavery itself. Lizzie Underwood’s friend and future husband went by his master’s surname of Montgomery “of week days,” but by his father’s name Alexander “of Sundays and among the colored people.”<sup>181</sup> But more than naming, the mobility of abroad husbands, several historians have contended, proved a necessary exception to the containment which otherwise stood at the center of slave discipline.<sup>182</sup> The ceremony authorized by the master or mistress may have begun the marriage of slaves, but thereafter, it was the actions of the slaves which counted most.

Testimony from ex-slaves and ex-masters and –mistresses alike reveal the importance of an ongoing pattern of behaving as a married couple. Elisabeth Columbus attested to her marriage to her late husband Christopher by explaining that they had, in addition to producing ten children (seven of whom lived), “they were known as Husband and Wife by their owner and the whole

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<sup>180</sup> M.A. Bullitt to Tom Bullitt, May 10, 1859, Bullitt Family Papers, Oxmoor Collection, Papers of Thomas W. Bullitt (1838-1910), Mss. A B937c, Folder 296, Filson.

<sup>181</sup> Deposition of Lizzie Alexander, February 15, 1906, File of George Alexander aka George Montgomery, CO., REGT., Widow’s Cert. No. 610,083, Can 51206, Bundle 14, NAI.

<sup>182</sup> Across-farm or abroad marriages predominated in regions of small-holdings, and, for a variety of reasons, in the plantation belts as well. Herbert Gutman suggests compellingly that black southerners found the practice of cousin marriages and other forms of endogamy common among white southerners to be nasty (*The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*). Marriage off the farm and outside the kin group may have been more desirable as a result. The master class across the South tended to prefer that their slaves marry at home so that children born to them would enrich their own estates, John W. Blassingame observes, and to minimize travel and other political and logistical difficulties. Enslaved men, however, often preferred to marry a woman from another farm. He cites the explanations of Border State slave Henry Bibb, among others, that to be forced to witness the abuse and exploitation of a wife was nigh-unto unbearable for enslaved husbands. Living elsewhere minimized the misery (*The Slave Community*, 164-165). Literary scholar Daniel P. Black agrees that abroad marriages reconciled the desire for marriage with the horrors of slavery. He too cites the Kentucky ex-slave Henry Bibb’s memoirs, detailing the man’s despair at being forced to witness his wife Malinda’s abuse at the hands of white men. Indeed, as he points out, Bibb lamented that his fatherhood of a child, which ought to have been a source of joy, was perverted into the “one act of my life as a slave, that I have to regret.” The birth of Mary Francis, his only daughter, left him only the “father... of slaves” (Bibb, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb*, quoted in Black, *Dismantling Black Manhood*, 121). Among Missouri slaves alone, some fifty-seven percent of marriages were likely contracted between spouses enslaved in different households (Burke, “Mah Pappy Belong to a Neighbor,” in Appleton, Jr., and Boswell, eds., *Searching for Their Places*).

community.”<sup>183</sup> Everyone in their Lincoln County, Kentucky, neighborhood knew that Jerry and Melissa Powell were a respectable married couple, “having never had a question raised or a doubt expressed.” Jerry acknowledged Melissa as his wife, and Melissa herself was “esteemed and known as a respectable woman.”<sup>184</sup>

Most couples sustained their marriages with a pattern of visits. “Most often,” notes Deborah Gray White, it was “the husband who traveled to the wife.”<sup>185</sup> “My Daddy wuz Henry Litener and my mammy wuz Rosanna Litener. My daddy belonged to Woodson Morris. He wuz a cousin of Massa Joe Mott an' lived a few miles away. He wuz allus allowed to visit us over Saturday night an' Sunday,” Lucy Davis recalled of her Hickman County, Kentucky, childhood.<sup>186</sup> Lucinda Prewett met Charles Adams when she was owned by Nelson and Mary Ann Prewett and he by a neighboring household. After three years of courtship they were wed in a formal ceremony conducted by “an old colored man named Elwin Gatewood.” In later years, neighbors testified that they had “often” visited the cabin where “Mrs. Lucinda Adams lived & where Chas. Adams came to of nights.”<sup>187</sup> King Deam of Henry County, Kentucky, married Susan Dickens, the slave of a neighboring farmer. Though the couple worked apart during the day, they spent nights together in their cabin on the Deam farm, and to them were born eight children.<sup>188</sup>

The frequency of visits was established by custom and, evidence suggests, depended to at least an extent on the husband's status and occupation. Even within the region, a wide variety of

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<sup>183</sup> Deposition of Elisabeth Columbus, File of Christopher Columbus, Co. A, 68<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T., Minor Children's Cert. No. 183,073, Box 34,126, Bundle 19, NAI.

<sup>184</sup> Deposition of James Powell and J. A. Blair, no date, File of Jerry Powell, Co. C, 109<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T., Widow's Cert. No. 173,171, Box 33964, Folder 10, NAI.

<sup>185</sup> White, *Arn't I a Woman?*, 76.

<sup>186</sup> Lucy Davis, Missouri, WPA, Vol. 11, 100.

<sup>187</sup> Deposition of Lucinda Adams, August 16, 1889, Deposition of Jack Chom and Cal Howell, December 26, 1889, Deposition of Burrell Prewett, August 27, 1888, File of Charles Adams, Co. A, 109<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T., Widow's Cert. No. 295,499, Box No. 37,659, Bundle No. 7, NAI.

<sup>188</sup> Bell Kelley, Indiana, WPA, Supp. I, Vol. 5, 106.

experiences were possible. Dr. Solomon Hicks was four before he met his father for the first time. Hearing someone enter his mother's cabin by night, the little boy “raised the covers a speck and saw the biggest blackest man [he] had ever seen.” Thereafter, he saw his father no more than once every two weeks.<sup>189</sup> By contrast, Sarah H. Locke saw her father at least twice weekly. Employed in cradling “all the grain for the neighborhood,” and known for his high temper, perhaps he proved a figure of sufficient importance as to command special privileges.<sup>190</sup> Similarly, Spottswood Rice was “de head man” on his master's Missouri tobacco farm; he, too, visited his wife and children twice a week.<sup>191</sup>

But mere visiting did not and could not constitute a marriage. Border State slaves do not seem to have developed the elaborate hierarchy of permissible sexual liaisons discerned by Anthony E. Kaye and Nancy Bercaw among Natchez District and Mississippi Delta couples. Infidelity and other forms of extramarital sexuality were clearly a fact of life for Border State neighborhoods, but post-war pension testimony reveals a different, and perhaps less fluid, moral and social landscape than that seen elsewhere. A wedding was important, but not necessarily essential to the making of a marriage. But the salience of an actual wedding for at least some couples is suggested by the subsequent actions of those who had lived as husband and wife without the minimal benefit of a ceremony. Harriett Ewing had been “married to James Barclay during slavery under the slave custom,” but there “was no ceremony performed.” They had, she testified, “eight or nine” children together. But as a woman friend of Harriett’s explained, when James Barclay “joined the church” he “left Harriet[t] and ... never returned.” Another friend,

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<sup>189</sup> Dr. Solomon Hicks, Indiana, WPA, Supp. I, Vol. 5, 84-87.

<sup>190</sup> Sarah H. Locke, Indiana, WPA, Vol. 6, 128-130.

<sup>191</sup> Mary A. Bell, Missouri, WPA., Vol. 11, 25-31.

who would become Harriett's brother-in-law after her second marriage, speculated that after his conversion, Barclay "thought it was not right" to cohabit with her, and lit out for California.<sup>192</sup>

Martha Hogan, daughter of a slaveholding household, lent some credence to Eliza Casebolt Jones's claim to have been married to Caleb Jones. As Hogan deposed, Jones "used to visit a woman named Liza who was a slave of Peter Casebolt." Other neighbors did not find it implausible that Caleb Jones was in fact the father of one of Eliza Casebolt's three children. Nonetheless, all agreed that the two could not have been a married couple. Martha Hogan knew that Jones "never acknowledged her as his wife." The former slave Andrew Jackson too denied that Caleb Jones ever acknowledged Eliza, and as Jones's comrade and tent-mate during their service in the Civil War, he was in a position to know. Finally, Deliah Moore, Jackson's wife, observed that Eliza had not been a chaste woman either during or before her liaison with Caleb Jones. "It is generally known in her neighborhood," Moore testified, "that her children have different fathers, as their natural appearance would also indicate."<sup>193</sup>

As was widely true in the rest of the South, both a ceremony and ongoing cohabitation and chaste behavior were required to render a couple truly "married."<sup>194</sup> Both Emma Borum Warden and Harriet Sylvy Warden claimed a pension as the lawful widow of Asbury Warden, who died in Co. K of the 65th U. S. C. T. The testimony of their friends, neighbors, and Asbury Warden's former mistress is contradictory, but yields important insight. Former slaveholder Sally Gaines clearly identified Warden's widow as having been Harriet Sylvy, noting that she had refused Warden permission to abandon Harriet in order to court and marry Emma Borum. The former slave Beverly Givens upholds this view. Givens witnessed the couple's marriage. He

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<sup>192</sup> Deposition of Harriett Ewing, December 28, 1897, Deposition of Matilda Miller, December 29, 1897, Deposition of Charles Ewing, December 28, 1897, File of Henry Ewing, Co. B, 109<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T., Widow's Cert. 463,924, Box 43,735, NAI.

<sup>193</sup> Deposition of Martha Hogan, July 25, 1882, and deposition of Deliah Moore, 1882, Benecke Family Papers, Mss. 3825, Box 96, Folder 2559, War Claims and Pensions—Blacks, Caleb Jones, WHMC.

<sup>194</sup> See Anthony E. Kaye, *Joining Places*, and Nancy Bercau, *Gendered Freedoms*, among many others.

knew that they cohabited until Warden's enlistment, and, serving alongside Warden in the 65th, knew that "he wrote letters to her while absent in the service, and addressed her as wife."<sup>195</sup> But other slaves saw it differently. Jackson Rowlett testified that although Warden may have visited a woman named Harriet, his true and lawful bride was Emma, owned by one Jesse Borum. Their marriage was ratified by the community, and prior to it, Warden had been "a single man." Although Warden had, Rowlett further deposed, been "known to favor one Harriet Sylvy and payed considerable attention to her," they were never married. Indeed, Harriet could not be Warden's wife. She had, it was known, "put up with another man... and was living with him as man and wife." Further, he added, "her reputation for virtue is not good."<sup>196</sup>

While local sales and hiring indeed often fell short of the nearly guaranteed rupture of an interstate sale, this interpretation elides the leap of faith and what must have been the repeated negotiations required to sustain a marriage across the boundaries of subsequent households. Black marriages were forced to stretch and contract in response to masters' and mistresses' market decisions. To maintain a pattern of marital visiting hinged on the relative proximity of a hired spouse. Lucinda Adams, born in Montgomery County, Kentucky, lived in a single household her entire early adulthood. She testified that after her marriage to Charles Adams, "he would see me every Saturday night," if he was hired within the district. "When he was working at the Iron Works," however, he saw her "but once in 6 months." Nonetheless, she remarked tartly, no one else had "slipped in and got me in the family way with [her youngest sons] Tom or Charles [Junior]." All of her children, she insisted (and the neighbors agreed) had been fathered

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<sup>195</sup> Deposition of Beverly Givens, September 13, 1888, Benecke Family Papers, Mss. 3825, Box 94, Folder 2653, War Claims and Pensions—Blacks, Asbury Warden, WHMC.

<sup>196</sup> Deposition of Jackson Rowlett, Benecke Family Papers, Mss. 3825, Box 94, Folder 2653, War Claims and Pensions—Blacks, Asbury Warden, WHMC.

by Charles Adams.<sup>197</sup> When Maria Mahoney married Sinclair Watson at her master's home in Georgetown, Kentucky, both were slaves, Maria having been owned by James Mahoney since the age of eight, and Sinclair belonging to a Lexington, Kentucky, household. The couple had become acquainted when Sinclair Watson's master hired him to a Georgetown hemp factory. Sometime after their marriage, Sinclair's master called him back to Lexington, but as Maria later testified, he continued to visit her in Georgetown on Sundays. A subsequent sale to one Mr. Herndon proved lucky. For the next four years, Herndon hired Sinclair to a Georgetown carriage maker, where he could see his wife more frequently until, during the war, she, having by that point bought her own freedom, scraped up the cash to hire his time herself.<sup>198</sup> During the first few years of Westly and Ellen Turner Jackson's marriage, they resided "in the same neighborhood, but a short distance from each other." Each were sold or transferred multiple times, yet still sustained their relationship. Upon the occasion of Ellen's first sale, Westly was present, and was allowed to "carefully lift her down from the [auction] block" and escort her to her new household. Even when Westly Jackson was "removed" by his master to a household twenty miles away, he was able to maintain a schedule of weekly visits to his bride and their growing family of children, "walking the distance every Saturday evening and returning on Sunday evening." Only a toddler at the time, their daughter Mattie clearly recalled "the little kindnesses my father used to bestow upon us, and the deep affection and fondness he manifested for us," but she also became aware of the deep strain placed on her mother, who turned, in

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<sup>197</sup> Deposition of Lucinda Adams, December 11, 1890, File of Charles Adams, Co. A, 109<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T., Widow's Cert. No. 295,499, Box No. 37,659, Bundle No. 7, NAI.

<sup>198</sup> Deposition of Maria Watson, April 18, 1889, File of Sinclair Watson, Co. C, 116<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T., Widow's Cert., No. 254,981, Box No. 36,231, Bundle No. 7, NAI.

Christian faith, to “Him who rescued his faithful followers from the fiery furnace and the lion’s den.”<sup>199</sup>

Men were not the only ones to be transferred from household to household, and in the Border States, abroad marriages flexed to accommodate the mobility of wives as well as husbands. Ellen Sloan, a Missouri house servant, married Emanuel Clopton, who “lived on another place.” Mrs. Sloan and her youngest children were sold once for cash and once again for land, while an older boy was sold “down south somewhere” and not heard from again “until he was almost grown.” Nonetheless, her daughter recalled, the couple remained “man and wife,” and by a rare stroke of luck were reunited when death and remarriage once again reshuffled the ownership of human property.<sup>200</sup> Augustus Scott visited his wife Milly often, dying, in the mid-1850s, in the household of one of her several employers. Milly had been born the property of the Scarce household of Woodford County, Kentucky. Augustus (or Gus) Scott was the property of one Jack Egbert. When Gus and Milly Scott’s second oldest son, Anthony, was born, Milly was hired to John Hawkins of Graves Mill, in Woodford County, while Gus lived with his master near Versailles. When Milly Scott was thirty, her young mistress Annie Scarce married, and Scott became the property of Annie and Hanson Courts, who took her to Bowling Green, Kentucky. When Gus Scott died, some five or so years later, Milly was hired to yet another household, that of Ike Wilson of Mortonville.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Jackson, *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson*, 4-5.

<sup>200</sup> Malinda Discuss, Missouri, WPA, Supp. I, Vol. 2, 166-170.

<sup>201</sup> Deposition of Mrs. Philips, January 23, 1883, Deposition of Millie Scott, November 1881, Deposition of Millie Scott, October 4, 1881, Deposition of Nathaniel Williams, May 15, 1884, Deposition of Solomon Phillips, May 15, 1884, Deposition of Cyphena Brett, May 2, 1884, Deposition of Millie Scott, May 1, 1884, Deposition of Lucinda Morton, May 19, 1879, File of Anthony Curtis aka Anthony Courts aka Anthony Scott, Mother’s Cert. No. 207154, Box 34722, Bundle 28, NAI.

The market was central to the formation and survival of the Border State slaveholding household. Hiring and sales invigorated a slave society made up predominantly of modest household and mixed, rather than staple, agriculture, permitted the household to respond flexibly to market stimuli and (white) familial need, and, moreover, played a salient role in shaping Border State masters' and mistresses' understandings of their own social roles, paternalist values, and personal identities *vis a vis* their slaves. For the slave, however, the market stood as an even more fraught terrain. Some ran the risk of sale as the last attempt to escape a desperate situation, and it is likely that more parlayed a master's willingness to hire their time into control over their day to day existence and their family lives. But the market multiplied the separations from kin and from friends that any slave might expect. The social and bodily death threatened by the interstate trade loomed large, but even local transactions strained the black marriage, withdrew children from their mothers before puberty, and severed friendships, faith communities, and neighborhoods. But the market did more than shape the contours of the antebellum household. As later chapters will explore, the market in enslaved labor opens a window into the ways in which black and white household members assessed, navigated, and endured the uneven and ad hoc process of Border State wartime emancipation.

## **Chapter III**

### **The View from Within the Household: Enslaved Men and Women Confront the Civil War**

The allegiance of the Border States to the Union, intended in large part to secure the region's households, farms, and institutions from invasion, would prove to have unintended consequences. Federal military presence, for all that policy dictates called for restraint, could not help but have a corrosive effect on the institution of slavery. Conservative federal policy aimed to secure the continued allegiance of Unionist masters and mistresses in the Border States, but the actions of federal soldiers would prove to be another matter entirely. Although the region was presumed to be loyal, soldiers deployed to the Border States increasingly collapsed all slaveholding households together into the category of disloyalty. In effect, as they interpreted evidence of what they believed to be the wavering, self-serving, or contingent allegiance of Border State households, they behaved as an occupation force in a foreign land.

Enslaved people were watching carefully. Primed by an informal politics which looked to an outside power, particularly in the wake of the Republican Party's rise, to interpose itself in the nearly-unlimited power of the master class, many expected their liberation to be imminent. They encountered the war first from their vantage points within the slaveholding household. In a difficult process of interpretation, reinterpretation, and action, they reconciled federal policy, the actions of Union soldiers themselves, and the behavior of their masters and mistresses with their own dreams. Ultimately, although the master class continued to wield extraordinary power within households and on the terrain of politics and the market, customary hierarchies were

destabilized, and space was opened for the enslaved to bring their subterranean politics into the light.

If the master class had believed, however guardedly, that loyalty to the Union would preserve their ownership rights in enslaved bodies and the stability of their society, their slaves had their own ideas about what loyalty to the nation could mean. As did bondspeople throughout the South, Border State slaves vested high hopes in Abraham Lincoln's election. Contradictory to the assertions of the moderate Republican himself, but generally in line with the paranoid concerns of masters and mistresses, slaves commonly believed that Lincoln's election stood as the harbinger of their own freedom.<sup>1</sup> Their struggle to give meaning to this expectation would be made more complicated by the particular historical conditions of antebellum slavery in the United States. At least in theory, barring extraordinary circumstances, United States slaves (and some other dependents) encountered the state only through the person of the head of household. Slaves at other times and in other places, including colonial America, had been well-accustomed to the use of the law in their own behalf. But by the Civil War, things had become very different. United States slaves had long before lost nearly all access to the apparatus of federal or state power.

This is not to say that slaves, themselves, had lacked political identities. Rejecting the notion that household dependents must encounter the nation-state only via the mediation of the household head or his deputy, some, at least, marked time by the presidential election cycle and hinged their fortunes on the outcome thereof. Missouri slave Henry Clay Bruce's mother had impressed upon him the idea that he had been born on "March 3rd, of the year that Martin Van

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<sup>1</sup> See Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*; Berlin et al., "The Destruction of Slavery, 1861-1865" in *Slaves No More*. For slave interpretations of the war in the Natchez District, see Kaye, *Joining Places*; for the Mississippi Delta, see Bercaw, *Gendered Freedoms*; for Maryland, see Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground*.

Buren was elected President of the United States.” And during the 1856 election cycle, which witnessed the defeat of John C. Fremont, the first presidential candidate to run on a Republican ticket, the Chariton County, Missouri, Bruce would become, as he put it, “a ‘Fremont man,’ but a very silent one.” Nor had he been alone in his convictions. Most of the slaves of his Missouri neighborhood fully expected to be “set free if Fremont was elected.”<sup>2</sup> Another enslaved Missourian also recalled the significance of Fremont’s campaign. The men of William Webb’s neighborhood had held secret political meetings in which they discussed, among other things, “what steps they would take” in the wake of Fremont’s electoral defeat. Hotheads had proposed insurrection, but the more cautious urged that they “wait for the next four years.” Webb explained that these conservative men “said they felt as if the next President would set the colored people free.”<sup>3</sup>

These men ran a serious risk. In Christian County, Kentucky, rumors of such talk sparked a tremendous insurrection scare. “The excitement and speeches during the presidential election,” slaveholder Ellen McGaughey Wallace concluded, had resulted in a “dark and stormy” state of affairs. Suspicion fell hardest on slaves and on “white men who had fought in the Mexican War,” as well as on “a certain negro” preacher who, it was believed, had taken up “a collection for the avowed purpose of obtaining arms and ammunition for the Negroes in their intended rebellion.” The murder of an overseer by the slaves under his supervision heightened the anxiety, even hysteria, among the white population. Suspected conspirators were imprisoned and tortured, and the information they gave up under what Wallace called “terrible” “punishment” confirmed to

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<sup>2</sup> Bruce, *The New Man*, 11, 85-86.

<sup>3</sup> Webb, *The History of William Webb*, cited in Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 60-61.

many slaveholders that potential rapists, incendiaries, and poisoners slept in their cabins, nursed their children, and prepared their meals.<sup>4</sup>

Sensing the keen awareness of their slaves and the destructive potential of the war that most of them had not wanted, the master class, during the Civil War, would do what they could to maintain the status quo. The reinvigoration of slave patrols, the cancellation of passes, and other measures sought to close off each household from ideological contamination. They would be aided in their endeavors by conservative federal policies, including the retention of the antebellum slave codes, geared towards retaining the allegiance of the Border State men whose loyalty was vital to the survival of the Union. The secession of the three most salient Border States—Missouri, Kentucky, and Maryland—would have greatly bolstered the Confederacy’s white population, potential military manpower, manufacturing capacity, and supply of livestock. And though the enslaved population was low compared to some of the states of the Deep South, Missouri had, Mark W. Geiger points out, “more slaves than either Arkansas or Florida,” and Kentucky had more still. Control of the river system, described by scholar Allen C. Guelzo as “the highways of the American economy,” also potentially offered to the Union ingress into the heart of the western Confederacy, and to the Confederacy, might have opened the way to the Great Lakes.<sup>5</sup> As a result, Abraham Lincoln forced Missouri commander John C. Fremont to revoke his premature proclamation of freedom in that state, fearing that it would “ruin our rather fair prospect for Kentucky” and the retention of its loyalty. Fugitive slaves were excluded from federal lines under Henry Halleck’s command in the Western Theater. At least twice Abraham

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<sup>4</sup> Entries December 10, December 11, December 12, December 13, and December 19, 1856, Journal of Ellen Kenton McGaughey Wallace, KHS.

<sup>5</sup> See Geiger, *Financial Fraud and Guerrilla Violence*, 8; Guelzo, *Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation*, 31; see also McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 284; Harrison, *The Civil War in Kentucky*, 2-3; Huston, *Calculating the Value of the Union*, 25-27; McDonough, *War in Kentucky*, 62-63; among others.

Lincoln met privately with Border State representatives, offering them the option of accepting gradual, compensated emancipation in order to stave off the chaos of slavery's organic collapse. And along with Maryland and Delaware, both Missouri and Kentucky would be exempted from the Emancipation Proclamation when it finally came.<sup>6</sup>

But the slaveholding household, as will be seen, began to fray at the edges early in the war. Policy was one thing. Soldiers themselves were another. Unlike other regions and sub-regions of the South, where if slavery endured it did so largely due to terrain features, military strategies, and other factors which held the war at bay,<sup>7</sup> the Border States were not sheltered from invasion. Far from it. From the earliest days of the war, Border State residents came into close and often unpleasant contact with regulars of both armies, as well as militiamen, irregulars, and un-uniformed insurgents. The "friction and abrasion"<sup>8</sup> which ensued undermined the authority of masters and mistresses, opened opportunities for resistance and escape, and at various times and places dissolved the relation of master and slave entirely.

Federal policy presumed the loyalty of the Border State household, whether it included enslaved dependents or not, but the men in the ranks were primed to view the household as something other. Soldiers in the service of the Union made incursions across household boundaries, confiscating property, insulting slaveholders, and at times abusing the slaves themselves. Union soldiers were not, on the whole, abolitionists, and as several historians have made clear, they could and often did treat black southerners with shocking brutality. But they had come of age amid a generation of sectional controversy, and most were not prepared to look

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted in McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 352-353; see also McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 498-503.

<sup>7</sup> See O'Donovan, *Becoming Free in the Cotton South*, for an exploration of southwest Georgia, where "an accident of geography" inhibited emancipation (1, 92); Inscoc and cKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia*, 209.

<sup>8</sup> Abraham Lincoln, Address to Border State Representatives, July 2, 1862, ALP.  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/malhome.html>.

kindly upon slaveholding or slaveholders.<sup>9</sup> They would struggle to reconcile the presumption of Border State loyalty with the exigencies of occupation and counter-insurgency as well as with what they observed of Border State households. The end result, intentional or no, was the undermining and sometimes the utter negation of masterly prerogatives.

Enslaved household members watched these developments carefully. The bolder among them began to leave their masters' and mistresses' households within the first weeks of the onset of hostilities, and in some cases, even before. Those who took their chances, fleeing the household at the first opportunity, seeking protection, employment, or safe transit from the federal occupation forces, confronted a desperately fraught situation. The conservative federal policies which allowed the continued functioning of the apparatus of the slave code were geared toward minimizing the war's revolutionary potential and permitting loyal whites to secure their household boundaries and prop up their masterly prerogatives. But the presence of federal soldiers, as historian Steven Hahn observes, stood as "a corrosive element that weakened the chattel institution's supports and rearranged its balances of power and negotiation."<sup>10</sup> Although the majority of enslaved men and women, for compelling reasons of their own, remained within the household, all repeatedly tested and retested their expectations of imminent or eventual liberty against the realities of occupation, invasion, and insurgency. In doing so, they remade their relationship with the nation-state and irrevocably shifted the operation of power within the household itself.

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<sup>9</sup> McPherson observes that Bell Irvin Wiley's older estimate that only one in ten Union soldiers had any real concern for emancipation is too simplistic. In terms of men with active commitments to abolitionism, the one in ten figure might actually be too high; but emancipation as a war measure derived support from perhaps as many as three in ten federal soldiers "during the first year and a half of the war" and increased dramatically thereafter (*What They Fought For*, 56).

<sup>10</sup> Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 84.

In 1860 the aspiration for freedom at the hands of a Republican presidential candidate was reinvigorated. “There are many persons here,” Kentucky planter Mildred Bullitt complained, “who say the servants tell them they won’t have to work for them much longer, that when Lincoln takes his seat they’ll all be free.”<sup>11</sup> Neighbor Nannie Forbes confirmed the tale, informing Tom Bullitt that she believed that “the negroes” had been “deceived” into believing that “Lincon [sic] was to free them.” Many, she suspected, believed Lincoln himself to be “a black man.”<sup>12</sup> Others, inadvertently perhaps, revealed the broader content of these expectations, as freedom brought not only an end to toil in Border State tobacco and hemp fields and Border State homes, but an inversion of the social order and an abrupt redistribution of property and the prerogatives of violence. “A little black child,” playing with a small son of the Winchester household near Louisville, Kentucky, “looked up” from her play and calmly began to enumerate “what would be done with the clock, & different articles of furniture when the black people were free.” The little girl further observed, much to Mrs. Winchester’s alarm, that “if the white ‘folks’ didn’t run fast, the black people would kill them all.”<sup>13</sup> And, as they had four years before, the expectations of a few took an explicitly electoral form. Historian Marion B. Lucas cites the actions of a group of New Castle, Kentucky, black men who staged a demonstration once the working day was done, parading past the homes of rebel sympathizers, “singing political songs and shouting for Lincoln.”<sup>14</sup>

It was from their vantage point within the slaveholding household that most slaves first personally encountered the embodied representatives of the nation. General Nathaniel Lyon and his Union forces passed through Filmore Taylor Hancock’s Greene County, Missouri,

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<sup>11</sup> M. A. Bullitt to Tom Bullitt, January 18, 1861, Bullitt Family Papers, Filson.

<sup>12</sup> Nannie Forbes to Tom Bullitt, January 2, 1861, Bullitt Family Papers, Filson.

<sup>13</sup> M. A. Bullitt to Tom Bullitt, January 18, 1861, Bullitt Family Papers, Filson.

<sup>14</sup> Lucas, “Black Families and Soldiers,” in *Sister States, Enemy States*, 188-189.

neighborhood in August of 1861. Hancock's master and mistress owned a flourishing plantation alongside "the main wagon road from Rolla to Springfield," and the little slave boy was in a good spot to witness the troops on the march, led by Lyon himself, astride a "kinda gray-white horse," with "purties" on the shoulders of his uniform. "He is de general. All dem odder men got to mind him," his mistress explained. The stubborn fighting which took place at the battle of Wilson's Creek, near Springfield, secured the northern part of the state for the Union, but killed Lyon and thirteen hundred federal soldiers. As the survivors passed by on their return, Mrs. Hancock brought the children of her household, white and black alike, out to the road to witness their passage and that of Lyon himself, whose corpse was packed in ice and loaded onto a wagon. Filmore grappled with the meaning and nature of death. When he "asked what was de matter," his mistress explained that Lyon had been killed. He asked if the man in the wagon was the same man as "had dem 'purties' on his shoulders," and she told him yes. He asked if the general would "ever fight again," and was told no.<sup>15</sup>

Enslaved individuals drew from the specifics of their experiences as slaves to make sense of the sudden presence of troops of either army. Former Missouri slave Emma Knight recalled that, as a young girl, "the first we knew there was a war was when some soldiers come through." At first she mistook a soldier, evidently a Confederate, for a "patroller"—until he begged her mother for food. Her mother took him to the mistress, she recalled, who fed the hungry man out of charity, but ordered him to leave the place forthwith.<sup>16</sup> Their careful, if sometimes by necessity uninformed, analyses of the situation located the households of which they were a part in a context of war, occupation, and deeply conflicted loyalties. Filmore Taylor Hancock made sure that he correctly understood the allegiance of his mistress's household when he was taken to

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<sup>15</sup> Filmore Taylor Hancock, Missouri, WPA, Vol. 11, 149-151. For a brief description of the battle of Wilson's Creek, see Hattaway and Jones, *How the North Won*, 52.

<sup>16</sup> Emma Knight, Missouri, WPA, Supp. I, Vol. 2, 202-204.

watch the transit of the federal survivors of Wilson's Creek, asking if "marse Bill and marse George and marse Jeff Hancock," his mistress's grown sons, had helped to kill General Nathaniel Lyon. In later years, with an adult's wisdom, Filmore Hancock recalled that his "Old missus didn't seem glad or anything" that her rebel sons had struck this blow, "jes' looked kinda sad."<sup>17</sup>

For other slaves, disruptions in the routines of work supplied a different interpretive lens. Mattie Jackson and her mother, Ellen, house servants in a St. Louis household, were well-apprieved of the war and its potential. Soldiers threw newspapers over the yard fence, which the women hoarded to read at night. "There was not a word passed" between their mistress and master, Mattie recalled, "that escaped our listening ears." If this had not been enough, they also witnessed their mistress's growing agitation as the fortunes of war in the West turned against the Confederacy. Rumors of the treatment of prisoners of war and other matters prompted this woman to states of ever greater outrage, and she vented her spleen by bursting into the kitchen where Mattie and Ellen were hard at work to inform them of their culpability. On one occasion, Jackson explained, the mistress "visited the kitchen" on the pretence of superintending the pace of work, became "very angry" without apparent cause, and burst out, "I think it has come to a pretty pass, that old Lincoln, with his long legs, an old rail splitter, wishes to put the Niggers on an equality with the whites."<sup>18</sup>

For still other slaves, the presence of federal forces gestured towards a potentially revolutionary new racial order. Perhaps the greatest significance of Yankee troops' brief pause in the Missouri household where Malinda Murphy was enslaved, for example, was revealed when she and the other black children automatically busied themselves "switching off de flies with a

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<sup>17</sup> Filmore Taylor Hancock, Missouri, WPA, Vol. 11, 149-151.

<sup>18</sup> Jackson, *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson*, 10-11.

long pole with paper on the end” while the soldiers ate. The soldiers, she remembered, told the children to stop working and invited them to ““come on and eat with us.””<sup>19</sup> For many Union soldiers, such a gesture towards social equality would have been anathema, and often it was the fear displayed by the master and mistress, rather than overt action on the part of the soldiers themselves, which pointed the enslaved to their conclusions.

The presence of soldiers in any district served a highly corrosive function. The Union army swiftly established military and political control over the Border States. In doing so, according to scholar Leeann Whites, they “drove the conflict backward,” “out of the statehouse and off the battlefield,” and into the household itself.<sup>20</sup> In guerrilla-plagued districts, the “line between civilian and combatant” effectively disappeared.<sup>21</sup> Federal attempts to regulate and discipline the loyalty of Border State civilians made the household a matter of public concern. Indeed, disloyal households were held responsible, and household resources assessed to pay for, the depredations perpetrated by guerrillas.<sup>22</sup> This was a process which occurred not only at the level of policy-making, but in a thousand interactions between soldiers and civilians both white and black. Federal policy may have presumed the loyalty of the Border State household whether it included enslaved dependents or not, requiring a burden of proof to determine otherwise, but the men in the ranks were primed to view the household as something other.

Throughout the Confederate South, civilian households, as Jacqueline Glass Campbell observes, “became strategic targets of war” in a landscape which was both metaphorically and literally female.<sup>23</sup> Distanced physically and psychologically both by the experience of soldiering and by the specific exigencies of military campaigns from the households they had left behind in

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<sup>19</sup> Malinda Murphy, *Missouri*, WPA, Vol. 11, 261.

<sup>20</sup> Whites, *Gender Matters*, 51.

<sup>21</sup> Fellman, *Inside War*, 47.

<sup>22</sup> Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War*, 37-38.

<sup>23</sup> Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North from the Sea*, 44.

the North, Yankee soldiers behaved with “license and gusto” as they made war on rebel households.<sup>24</sup> In the Border States, the household could not automatically be considered disloyal. But it was of no less importance for that. Illinois lieutenant J. F. Culver wrote to his wife that the sight of ravaged and looted civilian households outside of Shelbyville, Kentucky, left him “heartsick.” Who could blame civilian families, he wondered, for “detesting the Army” whose soldiers had wantonly smashed “toilet & work boxes overlaid with shell & ornaments” and “Bureaus full of things sacred to a family,” brought ceilings crashing in, ruined pianos and other treasures, and driven household members, “fearing for their lives, flying all over the Country.”<sup>25</sup>

Northern-born federal soldiers entering the Border States for the first time sought to make sense of the region which, though ostensibly loyal, differed markedly from the Midwest and the Northeast. Sergeant Major Stephen F. Fleharty’s sense of wonder began even before he left his native Illinois. Aboard a south-bound train, he was “surprised at the boundless sea of prairie. The eye grows weary scanning the wide expanse.” But he reassured himself—and his readers at home, who encountered his descriptions in the pages of their local paper—that “occasional lights from quiet cottage homes” reminded him and his comrades of “our own dear homes and the loved ones left behind.” Although impressive, the scene was, due in part to the comforting sight of household lamps glimmering in the dark, fundamentally a familiar one.<sup>26</sup> But as Union soldiers passed into the ostensibly loyal slave states of the Border, their interpretation of the surrounding countryside shifted dramatically. The region through which federal soldiers passed en route to the front, or in which they remained to guard railheads and bridges and to combat the kindling rebel insurgency, was generally not like their own. They struggled to tease out the

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<sup>24</sup> Mitchell, *The Vacant Chair*, 36-37.

<sup>25</sup> Lt. J. F. Culver to Mary Culver, October 5, 1862, in Dunlap, ed., “*Your Affectionate Husband*,” 12-14.

<sup>26</sup> DATE, Reyburn and Wilson, eds., “*Jottings from Dixie*,” PAGE NO.

lineaments of the familiar in an alien terrain. They turned to touchstones of their own—cultivated and uncultivated lands, the organization of labor, the peopling and the built environment of the household—to construct a rubric with which to identify the differences between this new land and their own free soil.

A number cast amused or disturbed aspersions on the gendered relations of Border State households. As Nina Silber has observed, “notions about gender” often, both before the war and in later years, “served as a gauge for such subjective concepts as ‘culture’ and ‘civilization.’”<sup>27</sup> The farmers of the Bowling Green vicinity, George F. Cram concluded, were largely an ignorant set. Though they presented themselves as “Union Men at present,” their difference could be discerned in their bodies as well as in the cultivation of their minds and households. They were short and slight in comparison to Cram and other strapping northern boys, and “of a pale, sickly color.” They let their hair grow long, and their women bore “a careless, ignorant expression.” He further remarked upon their propensity to sit around on fences and to stand “with their mouths wide open,” slack-jawed with enjoyment at the music played by federal musicians.<sup>28</sup> White women, a few soldiers suspected, were bolder than their men. Yankee soldier Lewis Hanback wrote to his wife, Hettie, that “Kentucky matrons are Braver than their Worser Halves Their Curiosity leads them to Brave the army in order that they may see the sight.”<sup>29</sup> And slavery led to sexual disorder. The Missouri household in which Thomas W. Knox passed the night apparently housed its slaves without regard to family groupings, two adult women and one man residing in the same cramped cabin.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Silber, *The Romance of Reunion*, 7.

<sup>28</sup> George F. Cram to Mother, October 15, 1862, November 9, 1862, and November 20, 1862, Borhnstedt, ed., *Soldiering with Sherman*, 9-17.

<sup>29</sup> Lewis Hanback to Hettie Hanback, January 17, 1862, Hanback, Lewis, 1839-1897, Letters, 1862-1865, Filson.

<sup>30</sup> Knox, *Camp-Fire and Cotton Field*, 122-123.

In the minds of the keenly observant (and equally judgmental) Midwestern boys who campaigned through Missouri and Kentucky, the Border State household came up profoundly short. Perhaps the most salient criterion turned out to be the presence of slavery. Midwesterners may have understood themselves to better uphold “the traditional rural virtues” and to thus be better men and soldiers, since they could presume that slavery degraded everything it touched. Although only a few were abolitionists, all would have been well-versed in what historian Reid Mitchell terms the “abolitionist critique of the slaveholding South,” peopled by fathers who “indulged” their “passions,” masters “without self-mastery,” and tyrants “used to doing as they pleased,” who could claim no legitimate authority.

Soldiers’ observations strongly echoed those of antebellum travelers and settlers from the North. Traveling through southern Missouri in the mid-1840s, for example, native Vermonter Abel Lyman had looked with awe upon the surrounding countryside. “On this Prairee a man gets his hair wors snarled up than his wife can do it,” he wrote to a friend at home, “the wind having an uninterrupted sweep.” White and black oak, wild orange, black gum, hickory, and cottonwood trees blanketed the hills and the bottomlands. The water was “clear and pure as in Vermont... and filled [with] the most beautiful kinds of Fish.” The locals, however, were another matter entirely. Lyman complained good-humoredly of spending the night in “Log Cabins where I could medit[at]e upon the moon & stars and finally all of the Planetary Systems. Being in full view to my sight. Through the roof, or polls.” Corn planted in southern Missouri produced “from 20 to 60 Bushels to the acre,” but the cornfields were not cultivated “as Vermonters clear land.” Missourians, Lyman reported, “just grub up (as it was termed) the small trees, and then plant the corn,” which they generally left “all standing out exposed to the storm and cattle.” In an assessment common to northern abolitionists, he located the fault for this slovenly and wasteful

state of affairs with the institution of slavery. “The morals of the people here are generally very corrupt,” he informed his correspondent. “All of the vices connected with the slave system are fully developed,” and far from the masters having elevated their slaves, if anything, the slaves had degraded their masters.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, reports of atrocities committed by Missourians and other southern partisans in Bleeding Kansas confirmed the image of the slaveholding southerner as a bowie knife-wielding thug.<sup>32</sup> Isaac Gause, who would serve as a sergeant in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ohio Cavalry, recalled in later years the influence of the many stories he had heard as a boy from older compatriots who had followed John Brown during his Kansas escapades or who had otherwise been involved in the troubles along the border. Foremost in his mind was the story of a friend who had found himself with a noose tightening around his neck before he managed to convince his captors that they had mistaken him for another man.<sup>33</sup>

These overlapping cultural tropes shaped the observations of those who found themselves marching into the South after the outbreak of armed hostilities. This pre-existing cultural chauvinism directed at the agriculture, virtue, and civilization of the slave states was reinforced, and likely intensified, by the region’s political and military status. It is arguable that Missouri, for example, had been held in the Union only by means of a military coup carried out by Captain Nathaniel Lyon. The governor, slaveholder Claiborne Fox Jackson, had urged the state to join the states of the Confederacy “in one brotherhood,” and many elected state representatives, as well as much of the state’s militia, held similar views. Thwarted by the refusal of the Unionist state convention to consider secession, and by the capture of the rebel militiamen stationed at Camp Jackson on the outskirts of St. Louis, Jackson and much of Missouri’s government

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<sup>31</sup> Abel Lyman to L. S. Goodno, Esq., November 12, 1843, Lyman, Abel, Letter, 1843, WHMC.

<sup>32</sup> See McMurry, *Two Great Rebel Armies*; Mitchell, *The Vacant Chair*, 92; Fellman, *Inside War*.

<sup>33</sup> Gause, *Four Years with Five Armies*, 10-13.

abandoned the capitol at Jefferson City, and fled southward.<sup>34</sup> It was in this context, as U. S. regulars and unionist volunteers chased the elected Missouri government into exile, that Yankee journalist Thomas W. Knox made his scathing observations of the household which offered him shelter.

Knox passed the night, in mid 1861, with a yeoman household along the road between Lebanon and Springfield, Missouri. This household consisted of a “log house with a single room” intended to house a family of six (and their overnight guests). This home, Knox complained, “could not boast of a window,” and the door had to be opened on the cold wind in order to obtain enough light to eat by. The beds lacked sheets; the table lacked a tablecloth; the dishes were of mismatched tin and crockery, “the former battered and the latter cracked;” there were “a less number of knives and forks than there were persons to be supplied;” and the family used “an old fruit can for a sugar-bowl,” with only two teaspoons to dip into it. Nearby the white family’s cabin stood “a similar house” which sheltered the household’s three slaves, as well as “a stable rudely constructed of small poles, with its sides offering as little protection against the wind and storms as an ordinary fence.” Far from being ashamed by this utter lack of bourgeois comfort, reformed slaveholding, or improved husbandry, the head of this household, Knox explained, had confided to him that he “had lived there eighteen years, and found it very comfortable.” The lesson Knox sought to teach his readers was plain: slavery, in which institution this man had seen fit to invest three thousand dollars, had degraded the household, flattening hierarchies between white and black, literally and metaphorically rupturing boundaries

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<sup>34</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 290-293. Quote is from Governor Jackson’s inaugural address, dated January 5, 1861.

between owner and owned, kin and stranger, public and private, inside and outside, and forcing all inhabitants, both human and animal, to live in material deprivation.<sup>35</sup>

A year later, a new wave of Union volunteers would enter the ranks. In the wake of defeats in the eastern theater, Union policy turned toward harder war, and the nation as a whole edged ever closer to the conviction that emancipation would be required to save the republic. By the middle of the summer of 1862, according to James McPherson, “more and more Union soldiers were writing that it was time to take off the ‘kid gloves’ in dealing with ‘traitors,’” and it seems likely that this development too shaped the perceptions of the men deployed to the Border States.<sup>36</sup> So too did recent developments in the West, particularly in Kentucky. The western portion of the state had been a rebel stronghold until the loss of Fort Donelson forced the Confederates to contract their lines. Bowling Green, for example, linked by rail to “every seceding state but two,” had been the bivouac of enough troops to cause neighboring Indiana to fear for its own security.<sup>37</sup>

When George F. Cram, a college man from Wheaton, Illinois, entered the vicinity of Bowling Green, he remarked with favor upon the wild and rugged terrain surrounding the town. “Great huge rocks” jutted “over our heads.” His regiment marched “for miles over high mountains.” In some places, “trees were growing out as it were from the rocks on the side of the hills.” Ultimately, the romanticism of the landscape defeated his powers of description. “I cannot possibly describe it in a letter,” he confessed, “and will not try.”<sup>38</sup> With Kentucky’s improved lands, agriculture, and urban development, however, Cram was less impressed. Bowling Green itself was “a poor looking place, like all the Kentucky towns.” The Scottsville, Kentucky,

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<sup>35</sup> Knox, *Camp-Fire and Cotton Field*, 122-123.

<sup>36</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 490-502.

<sup>37</sup> Oliver P. Morton to Abraham Lincoln, September 26, 1861, ALP.

<sup>38</sup> George F. Cram to Mother, November 9, 1862, Borhnstedt, ed., *Soldiering with Sherman*, 14-15.

courthouse resembled merely “a water tank on one of our northern railroads.” The Kentucky River, which might, properly improved, have facilitated thriving commerce, he derided as “a very insignificant little stream.” Finally, the state capitol at Frankfort was “a very miserable little town,” and the statehouse itself “old” and “shabby.”<sup>39</sup> Nor was he alone. Lieutenant J. F. Culver found Frankfort to be “the poorest looking Capital I ever saw.”<sup>40</sup>

If Border State cities fell short, so did Border State agriculture. As William Henry Harrison Clayton informed his parents, the district between Rolla and St. Louis was “hardly worth fighting for,” citing poor soil, red dirt, too many rocks, and “very few farms.”<sup>41</sup> Although the “old fashioned fire place,” which he found to be typical of Kentucky homes, reminded Sergeant Major Stephen Fleharty of his happy Illinois childhood, he too was less than impressed with the rest of Kentucky’s built environment. Indeed, “to the eye of the western farmer,” the region in which he was stationed “present[ed] few attractions.” Despite the region’s clearly booming tobacco production, the land was dry, the weather was hot, and the houses of Scottsville, Kentucky, itself were “constructed of logs,” their “rude appearance” suggestive of the cultural and political backwardness he associated with the cracker population of the slave states and their “illiterate judges and backwoods sermon-singing parsons.”<sup>42</sup>

As Leeann Whites and other scholars have argued, the war served to “intensify” the centrality of women’s labors to southern society, heightening the “political significance” of

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<sup>39</sup> George F. Cram to Uncle, November 7, 1862, and to Mother, November 20, 1862, and to Mother, October 15, 1862, Borhnstedt, ed., *Soldiering with Sherman*, 9-17.

<sup>40</sup> J. F. Culver to Mary Culver, October 10, 1862, Dunlap, ed., “*Your Affectionate Husband*,” 18-19.

<sup>41</sup> William Henry Harrison Clayton to Parents, September 14, 1862, Elder, ed., *A Damned Iowa Greyhound*, 13-15.

<sup>42</sup> Letter November 15, 1862, Reyburn and Wilson, eds., “*Jottings from Dixie*,” 67-70.

“domestic manufacturing.”<sup>43</sup> The politics of the Border States were slippery to begin with. The Ohio cavalry sergeant Isaac Gause found St. Charles, Missouri, to be

the rendezvous of all kinds of people. Spies for both armies, desperadoes, gamblers, and speculators collected and made headquarters there. It was useless for one to ask another where he was from, or what he was doing, or if he sympathized with the North or the South. If your question was answered at all, it would be with a shot or a look that would tell you at once it was none of your business.<sup>44</sup>

Similarly, upon arrival in Platte City, Missouri, Sergeant Gause had opportunity to observe that many of the Union flags flying from rooftops were “painted in water colors so that they could be washed in case it was necessary.” He realized, at least in later years, that “people were compelled to guide their actions in accordance with the surrounding conditions, and it was necessary to have two flags in one family.”<sup>45</sup> Finding himself in Bowling Green, Kentucky, on an errand of military business, Lieutenant J. F. Culver observed that the city had been “almost destroyed, almost all the good citizens have been compelled to leave.” Those who remained were those willing to accommodate themselves to either side. As illustration, Culver cited “the saying of the old woman in the Revolution, when called upon by some soldier & not knowing who they were, she replied, ‘If you’re Whig, I’m Whig; if you’re Tory, I’m Tory.’”<sup>46</sup>

Soldiers understood the extension of household resources and the symbolic incorporation of relative strangers within the nexus of household subsistence as an index of loyalty. Looking back with forty years’ perspective, Isaac Gause, a former sergeant of an Ohio cavalry outfit, recalled that the women of Platte City, Missouri, had consented to cook for the soldiers in order to obtain access to their surplus rations.<sup>47</sup> But writing from the field, as Stephen Fleharty did in letters to his hometown papers, complained of the stinginess of white Kentuckians in districts

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<sup>43</sup> Whites, *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender*, 20.

<sup>44</sup> Gause, *Four Years with Five Armies*, 42.

<sup>45</sup> Gause, *Four Years with Five Armies*, 46-47.

<sup>46</sup> J. F. Culver to Mary Culver, November 6, 1862, Dunlap, ed., “*Your Affectionate Husband*,” 32-33.

<sup>47</sup> Gause, *Four Years with Five Armies*, 45-46.

which had recently changed from rebel to Union hands. These householders, although “professedly union in sentiment,” and allegedly “willing to submit quietly to a restoration of federal authority,” nonetheless closed off access to the bounty of their households, posting guards at their gates and refusing “the weary, hungry, and half-famished soldier” the privilege of “passing in to quench his thirst or obtain something to allay his hunger.” Their unwillingness to extend hospitality cast serious doubt on their professions of loyalty.<sup>48</sup>

The household, including the domestic arena of the mistress’s domain, had always been a political space, as Thavolia Glymph and other historians have cogently demonstrated, serving as a touchstone for pro-slavery arguments.<sup>49</sup> But in wartime, its politics were increasingly turned against the master class. As they struggled to ascertain the true nature of household politics, soldiers turned to enslaved household members for answers. To the Illinois noncommissioned officer Stephen Fleharty, it was the slaves—the most abject dependents within the household—who revealed the household’s true character in the face of the master’s lies. Most white Kentuckians, Fleharty complained, professed to be Union while denying the federal soldier food and water. But the reports obtained from observant “contrabands” revealed the true colors of these households. As he paraphrased one man, mildly lampooning his southern black patois, ““Oh, massa, he good “cesh” when de “cesh” are about; and he good “cesh” *when de “cesh” are away*; but when de union men come around, *he be good union man, den.*”<sup>50</sup> The proprietor of the hotel along the Gasconade River in Missouri, where Yankee correspondent Thomas W. Knox took breakfast, had taken the oath of allegiance as soon as federal troops entered the district.

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<sup>48</sup> Letter dated October 16, 1862, Reyburn and Wilson, eds., “*Jottings from Dixie*,” 55-56. See Cooling, *Fort Donelson’s Legacy*, 13.

<sup>49</sup> See Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, among others.

<sup>50</sup> Letter dated October 16, 1862, Reyburn and Wilson, eds., “*Jottings from Dixie*,” 55-56.

“But his negroes informed us,” Knox explained, “that he belonged to a company of ‘Independent Guards,’ which had been organized with the design of joining the Rebel army.”<sup>51</sup>

The war, Leeann Whites suggests, was begun in defense of white men’s rights, but soon became a test of the willingness of those dependent on white men to support their cause. The war thus constituted a referendum on household dependents’—white women’s and enslaved people’s—consent to their own subordination, and hence, to the validity of the household itself.<sup>52</sup> Masters and mistresses knew well that the slaves of their household had their own subterranean politics. And slave politics could be perceived as humorous, even sympathetic, when they appeared to roughly cohere with a master or mistress’s own. When rebel troops occupied Bowling Green, Kentucky, and its surrounding countryside, Josie Underwood, the recently come-of-age daughter of a prosperous slaveholding household, carefully observed the local response. Secessionists were “exultant—the Union people depressed,” she noted in her diary. The mood of the neighborhood’s white Unionists extended to her family’s slaves. Though Underwood remained secure in the belief that her family’s slaves’ politics roughly cohered with her own, she noted that “they, poor souls, have more reason perhaps than anybody to be anxious and eager for news.”<sup>53</sup> Lexington, Kentucky, Unionist Frances Peters frequently took note of slaves’ gossip in her own diary. When John Hunt Morgan’s men returned to the city in September of 1862, she observed that Morgan’s mother’s house, which neighbored her own, “was shut up & they didnt come to the front door all that day.” An overheard conversation between two slaves, from which she learned that “they were crying over there for to break their hearts” confirmed her suspicions that Morgan had brought with him bad news. A few days later

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<sup>51</sup> Knox, *Camp-Fire and Cotton Field*, 89-90.

<sup>52</sup> Whites, *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender*, 19.

<sup>53</sup> Entry August 31, 1861, Baird, ed., *Josie Underwood’s Civil War Diary*, 94.

she quoted the slave of a rebel officer's observation that the occupying Confederate forces "look[ed] mighty oneasy," which again confirmed what she had already concluded, that the Confederate fortunes were not going well at all.<sup>54</sup>

In the presence of federal forces, however, slave politics took on new meaning. Indeed, as the war went on, "the core antagonisms" between members of slaveholding households were "laid bare,"<sup>55</sup> and the political expressions of enslaved household members must be either suppressed with increasingly harsh discipline, or negated with mockery. Union soldiers threw newspapers over the yard fence of the Lewises' St. Louis household, much to the delight of the enslaved women Mattie J. Jackson and her mother, Ellen, and much to the Lewises' alarm. The appearance of "a picture of President Lincoln" in Ellen's room revealed the depths of the contamination.<sup>56</sup> The master class refused to recognize slaves' politics as having equal weight with their own. After Lexington, Kentucky, had been retaken by the Union army in the spring of 1863, Frances Peter reported in her journal that "since Mr Lincoln's January proclamation, and since they have found out that the soldiers make them work just as hard if not harder than their masters do," the slaves of her neighborhood "dont take half as much interest in them and are not near as willing to do things for them, as when the army first came here." Slaves' Unionism, she suspected, quailed in the face of what she believed to be their innate racial character. "Sambo doesnt like hard work especially if it has to be done regularly," she sniped. Their politics were neither deeply felt nor lasting. During the winter, she observed, "the servants" had been "always willing to make bread, mush, or cook anything... no matter how much they might have to do, or go to the hospital at all times and in all weathers and put themselves to any amount of trouble

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<sup>54</sup> Entries September 18, 1862 and September 23, 1862, Smith and Cooper, eds., *A Union Woman in Civil War Kentucky*, PAGE NOS.

<sup>55</sup> Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, 99-100.

<sup>56</sup> Jackson, *The Story of Mattie J. Jackson*, 9-11.

and inconvenience to wait on the soldiers.” But by the spring, their commitment had faded, and “if asked to go, they seem to think it is doing you a favor for them to consent and seem to have lost all interest in it.” Perhaps, assuming that her observations were accurate, they believed their liberty to be already secured and the necessity of fighting almost at an end.<sup>57</sup>

Despite this, slaves turned their politics against the master class. Again and again, in thousands of encounters, slaves issued nay votes. Masters and mistresses tried their best to forestall opportunities for this sort of exchange. When George Richard Browder was away from his southwestern Kentucky home in the spring of 1863, for example, federal cavalry trespassed on his property. They “examined” his “stock,” “with a view to pressing” the animals into the federal service. More disturbing than this, they spoke “roughly but not insultingly” to his wife, who sassed them back in kind. And more disturbing still, they “manifested a great desire to talk with my negro man in preference to my wife about the horses.” Mrs. Browder refused to permit the men to speak with her slave, thereby maintaining the customary hierarchies within which she acted as her husband’s deputy in his absence.<sup>58</sup>

But often the master class failed, and their failure signaled to their slaves that change was at hand. Border State slaves, as did their counterparts across the South, saw their masters and mistresses frightened, saw them over-awed by strange men, saw them powerless to protect their households or even, in some cases, their persons. Observant slaves also recognized clearly that in the face of occupation forces, the power of even a white male household head paled. When rebel forces took possession of Hopkinsville, Kentucky, in the autumn of 1862, for example, Ellen Wallace observed that “the Union men” were “compelled” to either flee the city or to “keep to their houses for fear of violence.” Household hierarchies were overturned. Men remained

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<sup>57</sup> Entry March 31, 1863, Smith and Cooper, eds., *A Union Woman in Civil War Kentucky*, 118.

<sup>58</sup> Entry April 24, 1863, Troutman, ed., *The Heavens are Weeping*, 150.

secluded at home like women. Even more disturbingly, “one of the most respectable and amiable young men” of the city had been shot dead, his position in the community no longer offering any protection.<sup>59</sup> Some two years later, the rebels were back in Hopkinsville. Teenaged Annie Starling noted in her diary that the “gentlemen” of the community had “all left town fearing that they would be conscripted.” Groceries had been “sacked,” horses and mules confiscated, and the “poor venerated old court house and the old shell of the male seminary” “put to the torch” and destroyed. Starling herself had been left alone with an aging slave woman, Mama Gamie, and “not a man on the place that I know of.”<sup>60</sup>

Under occupation, despite the very real fright expressed by the women left alone when the men fled, apparent dependence could be a virtue. Ostensibly helpless and non-political, women did not always run the risk of bringing down upon their heads the kind of violent retaliation to which their husbands might have been subjected. Indeed, southern white women, Jacqueline Glass Campbell suggests, “often recognized the advantage of having no men present” when Yankee forces were in the neighborhood.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, when a squad of black Union soldiers, at least one of whom was a former slave of the household, arrived at the residence of Judge and Mrs. Byrnes, outside Cape Girardeau, Missouri, in July of 1863, with the intention of liberating the rest of the household’s enslaved members, Judge Byrnes stayed out of sight. Suspecting, probably rightly, that his presence would only exacerbate the already tense situation, he sent his wife to “make sure of what was transpiring.” The soldiers confirmed her expectation—that they “did not desire to meddle with women, but if any white man, no matter who he should be, interfered with their proceedings, they would shoot him down like a dog.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Entry September 1, 1862, Journal by Ellen Kenton McGaughey Wallace, KHS.

<sup>60</sup> Entry December 14, 1864, My Journal, by Annie Leslie McCarroll Starling KHS.

<sup>61</sup> Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North from the Sea*, 13.

<sup>62</sup> “Negro Attack on the Residence of Judge Byrnes,” *Cape Girardeau Weekly Argus* (July 9, 1863).

More dependent yet, enslaved people sometimes also found that what scholar Thavolia Glymph terms their “long experience with the negotiation of power” and “expertise in the discursive position of the powerless” now stood them in good stead.<sup>63</sup> Some household heads took conscious advantage of this phenomenon. As the keenly observant ex-slave Mrs. Preston recalled, her Kentucky master had believed that “the Union soldiers would kill him, but thought his wife would be safe.”<sup>64</sup> Two other freedwomen, both of whom had been preadolescent girls during the war recalled incidents of striking similarity. Rachel Goings of Stoddard County, Missouri, remembered that when she had been about eight years old, her master had said to her, “Child go out to de gate an see if anyone comin’.” She did as she was told, and saw that “dere was men comin down de road.” “Whew!” she exclaimed to her interviewer. “I never seed so many men in all my life.” She had run swiftly back to the house and told her rebel master. “He didden’ say nuthin,” she explained, “but lit out the back way across the fields an we didden see him again fo some time.”<sup>65</sup>

Lucy Davis’s Hickman, Kentucky, master was also a “reg’lar ole seeshesh!” as she explained in her own interview. With one son in the Confederate army, their household lay within earshot of “de big guns over at Columbus.” The area was replete with rebel sympathizers, and in September of 1861, Kentucky’s formal neutrality had ended here as Confederate troops, encouraged by local citizens, took the city and the bluffs above the Mississippi River. They would not hold it long. The federals would soon reclaim the stronghold, and when they sent patrols through the neighborhood, Davis’s master would, she recalled, “allus have me playing round de front gate so I cud tell em” when the soldiers were “comin’ up de road.” If Davis reported soldiers on the march, her master “goes an’ hides.” He was scared, Davis concluded.

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<sup>63</sup> Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, PAGE NO.

<sup>64</sup> Mrs. Preston, Indiana, WPA, Vol. 6, 152-154.

<sup>65</sup> Rachel Goings, Missouri, WPA, Vol. 11, 121-122.

She had been scared too, but her master had reassured her that “sojers won’t bother little black gal.”<sup>66</sup>

To the master class, tactics such as these stood as, perhaps, a last-ditch attempt to preserve the household and its prerogatives. To the enslaved who witnessed them, however, they appeared as something else. The diminution, undermining, or outright destruction of a master’s or mistress’s authority appears again and again in ex-slaves’ recollections. Through encounters such as these, enslaved household members reinterpreted their relation to the nation-state and to the household. Indeed, in the “vernacular historiography”<sup>67</sup> of emancipation they produced, the presence of armed men proved masters and mistresses fallible, even vulnerable, and oftentimes absurd. As Leon F. Litwack has observed, “rarely had slaves perceived their owners so utterly at the mercy of circumstances over which they had no control.”<sup>68</sup> Joseph Ringo recognized well the fear that drove his mistress to “[see] to” the feeding of the federal soldiers who had just “put dey hosses en er stable, en feeds em,” and then laid “roun’ on er grass,” relaxing comfortably. She didn’t want to, he supposed, but he knew that she knew the men would “do some damage” if they didn’t receive the food they demanded.<sup>69</sup> Harriet Casey’s mistress tried bravely to defend her Farmington, Missouri, household. When a Yankee soldier breached household boundaries, climbing “up over de stile” and into the yard, she turned her dogs on him. An officer’s threat to cut off her head with his sword, however, sent her running to town for help. In the mistress’s absence, Casey recalled, the man went into the house and “ate all he wanted and den went to bed in de house.” He stayed there until “de law come and moved him out of de bed off de place.”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Lucy Davis, Missouri, WPA, Vol. 11, 100-101. See Mackey, “Kentucky and Secession,” in Dollar, et al., eds., *Sister States, Enemy States*, 38.

<sup>67</sup> See the Ed Baptist article.

<sup>68</sup> Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, 4.

<sup>69</sup> Joseph Ringo, Ohio, WPA, Supp. I, Vol. 5, 430-432.

<sup>70</sup> Harriet Casey, Missouri, WPA, Vol. 11, 75.

Federal soldiers intervened in the operation of power between slaveholders and the enslaved, compelling masters and mistresses to comply with directives that came from outside the household. In doing so, they delegitimized slaveholders' presumption of sole authority and sole protective responsibility, and the enslaved could hardly help but take notice. When federal infantrymen passed through Spencer County, Kentucky, they encountered Thomas Lewis, an enslaved boy too young to work regularly in the fields. One of the men, Lewis recalled, inquired of him why he wore no cap. He responded that he did not have one. As he remembered it, "the soldier said, 'You tell your mistress I said to buy you a cap or I'll come back and kill the whole family.'" Evidently he did as he was told, because shortly thereafter he was given a cap, the first he had ever had.<sup>71</sup> The enslaved woman Jinny must have come to conclusions of her own when her mistress requested that she pass the night, in early November of 1862, in the townhouse rather than in her own quarters. With the aid of a pistol and "a very formidable dog," the two women, black and white, guarded the front and back doors of the household.<sup>72</sup>

The craft and sometimes the artifice evident in the recollections of former slaves suggest that these stories were told and retold again and again among friends and kin and down the generations. Power was shifting within the walls and inside the fences of the household, and slaves could not help but notice. In their efforts to evade the draft, protect their property, or safeguard their authority, masters and mistresses were forced into taking actions which diminished both their dignity and their authority in the eyes of their slaves. "Whenever de sojers come aroun'," freedman James Monroe Abbot observed, "Mastuh Joe couldn' nevuh be foun'." During one of these absences, Joe Lane's wife Jane raised a "ruckus" when Yankee troops harnessed her best mules to the brand-new wagon and commenced to load up the contents of the

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<sup>71</sup> Thomas Lewis, Indiana, WPA, Vol. 6, 123-127.

<sup>72</sup> Entry November 6, 1862, Journal of Ellen Kenton McGaughey Wallace, KHS.

household's smokehouse. "Whut dat she say?" a soldier asked ominously. Jane fled for the safety of the house, but the cost of her resistance was plain—the men proceeded to confiscate "all a de meat an' cans o' lard, an a barrel of molasses."<sup>73</sup> George Bollinger's young mistress fought hard to keep her black saddle horse, clinging to the bridle and crying while "de sojer put spurs to" the animal, but eventually she lost her grip.<sup>74</sup> Soldiers confiscated John McWiggin's "iron-gray saddle hosses" and he had to pay five hundred dollars, his former slave recalled, to get them back. Most of his mules he could never retrieve at all.<sup>75</sup>

The satisfaction of former slaves and their children at the comeuppance of the master class often shines through clearly. W. F. Parrott, for example, the son of former slaves, told an obviously beloved tale about his father's master. The result was a layered text rich with irony and perhaps subjected to the narrative intervention of Parrott's interviewer, in whose words the story was relayed. Near the end of the war, when "these Kentucky estates were overrun with bands of Union soldiers moving about in small units," Richard Parrott's master's absurd pretensions were revealed, and his mastery overturned. Fearful of drawing down on himself their destructive ire, Richard Parrott's master on one occasion turned in a heartbeat from "storming" at an enslaved woman who had "just fed a soldier" to ordering that same woman to feed the soldier, who had "suddenly [come] in sight" once again, "'all he can eat and be quick about it.'" On yet another occasion, the master informed a Union cavalry squadron that the Confederate flag which flew from the flagpole in his yard was in fact a "rag" which he had fastened to the pole "to scare the hawks away."<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> James Monroe Abbot, Missouri, WPA, Vol. 11, 3-4.

<sup>74</sup> George Bollinger, Missouri, WPA, Vol. 11, 41.

<sup>75</sup> W. C. Parson Allen, Missouri, WPA, Vol. 11, 18.

<sup>76</sup> Richard Parrott, Indiana, WPA, Supp. 1, Vol. 5, 155-158.

In countless interactions, moreover, space was opened for the enslaved to bring their subterranean politics into the light. The Spencer County, Kentucky, slave Thomas Lewis recalled a vivid incident from his war-torn childhood. His mother and her master had been plowing a field “to get the field ready to put in wheat” while he, then only a small child, sat on the fence and watched the grown folks working. Federal cavalry hove into view. “One rode up to the fence,” he recalled, “and when my mother came to the end of the furrow, he said to her, ‘Lady, could you tell me where Jim Downs’ still house is?’” His mother made as if to reply, but, as Lewis explained, “the man who owned her told her to move on.” The master’s orders, however, were immediately countermanded. “The soldiers told him to keep quiet, or they would make him sorry.” As soon as the master was out of earshot, Lewis’s mother told the soldiers what she knew. The still house in question sheltered her master’s “rebel friends,” and the information she gave resulted in their capture. The cavalrymen had thus disrupted the pace of work, taking Lewis’s mother away from her toil if only for a moment. Their menacing presence also enabled her to defy her master’s direct order, and opened space for her to reveal information which contributed directly to Union military successes, if only on the small scale.<sup>77</sup>

Some were quick to take advantage of disrupted authority. In some households, work slowed down, and in others laborers redirected their attentions to tasks of their own. By 1863, grown brothers Dave, Larkin, and Barnett Fields of Ohio County, Kentucky, had begun to slip away from the farm “after their master went to bed” to help their father, a newly free man, on his rented land. “I needed their help,” their father explained. And with the labor that his sons appropriated from their master, in the first year of his tenancy he “cleared five acres” of the “piece of woods” he had rented, “put in tobacco, and sold it for \$340.”<sup>78</sup> Stubborn slaves under

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<sup>77</sup> Thomas Lewis, Indiana, WPA, Vol. 6, 123-127.

<sup>78</sup> Deposition of Burr Hutson, August 2, 1893, File of Barnett Fields, Co. E, 109<sup>th</sup> Regiment U. S. C. T., NAI.

the master's eye in the fields and within the mistress's domestic domain added "immeasurably to the stresses" which pulled at the slaveholding household's underpinnings, opening what scholar Steven Hahn terms "a 'second front'" in the war for Union.<sup>79</sup>

Even the most apparently benign assertion on the part of enslaved people stood as evidence to the master class that the ground was shifting beneath their feet. In January of 1864, "an old hired Negro" "walked in" to Ellen McGaughey Wallace's home "and deliberately took a seat" without waiting to be invited. Although the old man "pretend[ed] he had some instructions to get from me about his business," Wallace was not fooled, and "soon gave him instructions of another kind." She placed the blame for this man's "insolence" squarely with "Lincoln's damnable black republicans policy." Not quite a month later, she complained of Jinny having "displeased" her, claiming that "Yankey interference with our Negroes would ruin the best servant in the world."<sup>80</sup>

In the face of such disruption, the master class took steps to secure control over the labor of the enslaved members of their households. Well before the war was over, in some households, masters and mistresses clearly understood that the old order stood on the brink of collapse. Backed into corners, they compromised and negotiated. They proffered privileges which elaborated on the customary entitlements secured by generations of struggle, and they proffered wages which gestured towards a new world of free labor. Grim rumors filtered northward of race war in the South. Border State masters and mistresses began to look askance at the slaves of their own households, or to react to the continued necessity of supplying their material needs with

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<sup>79</sup> Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, 132; Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 88.

<sup>80</sup> January 28, 1864, February 14, 1864, Journal of Ellen Kenton McGaughey Wallace, KHS.

revulsion and rage. And still others expressed despair at what seemed to be the inexorable loss of their fortunes.

As several scholars have observed, slaves across the South took advantage of wartime disruption to “rearrange the balances of power and authority,” prioritizing their “own affairs” and defying the commands of master and mistress.<sup>81</sup> In some districts slaves appropriated to themselves the prerogatives and tools of violence. In slaveholding matron’s Elvira Scott’s Missouri neighborhood, the local slave patrol found pistols secreted in slave cabins.<sup>82</sup> Henry, an enslaved boy hired to the Browder household in western Kentucky, eventually ran off for good. But before he did, his behavior grew worse and worse. He insulted Mrs. Browder such that only his having “begged forgiveness and promised to reform” saved him from a whipping by her husband. Worse, he turned violently against other enslaved members of the household. Not a week after his near whipping, Henry “attempted to outrage” the Browders’ “servant girl Dolly[,] causing great indignation & wrath in her parents” and also in Browder himself. He followed his assault on Dolly by putting on his Sunday clothes and riding one of his master’s mules without permission. A boy on the cusp of manhood, perhaps Henry’s sexual aggression (directed physically towards fellow slave Dolly, and verbally towards their mistress) was meant to lay claim to masculine prerogatives, as well as to defy his master’s attempts at discipline. A few days later, evidence was uncovered that Henry contemplated yet more violence. When Dolly and Browder’s daughter Helen were “looking for eggs in the hayloft,” they found a “pistol hidden by our hired Henry.” Nor was Henry the only slave to lash out in Browder’s neighborhood. A

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<sup>81</sup> Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 14.

<sup>82</sup> Entry December 22, 1862, Scott, Elvira Ascenith Weir, Diary, WHMC.

neighbor's slave, Browder observed, "had a difficulty" with his overseer, and in the course of "the affair" was shot.<sup>83</sup>

Under occupation, slaves' labors, as well as their politics, were redirected towards new goals. At times this was a momentary shift, as when Union soldiers in the vicinity of Farmington, Missouri, appropriated for themselves the labors of enslaved women, rousting them out of bed in the night to, in the words of the former slave Harriet Casey, "make 'em cook de soldiers a square meal," or when soldiers told Malinda Murphy to sit down and eat with them, rather than serving them as a slave.<sup>84</sup> Some slaves were keenly aware of the possibilities which inhered in this often painful shift. Dulcinda Baker Martin's first exposure to federal troops "wuzn't so pleasant," as she recalled in later years. Yankee forces had passed through her Winchester, Kentucky, neighborhood, confiscating goods and livestock at will, as it seemed to her. They took "all de saddle en buggy hosses," only leaving behind "one ole broke down nag in er barn." Then they emptied out the smokehouse, claiming for themselves the products of the slaves' own toil. "Dat wuz something awful," Mrs. Martin exclaimed, something which left her wondering what "us goin' ter do fer meat," most of their neighbors having been similarly cleaned out. Her mistress had wept, which Mrs. Martin suspected would do little to remedy the situation. But she, too, had been distressed. Her own upset, however, had been short-lived, lasting only until her mother set her straight. The loss of the household's winter stores was bad, yes, but she "felt de Union wuz bein' helped ter win de war by us havin' enough to feed de soldiers."<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Entries June 15, 1863, June 21, 1863, July 17, 1863, Troutman, ed. *The Heavens are Weeping*, 156-160.

<sup>84</sup> Harriet Casey, Missouri, WPA, Vol. 11, 75.

<sup>85</sup> Dulcinda Baker Martin, Ohio, WPA, Supp. I, Vol. 5, 414-417.

The massive publicly and privately coordinated infrastructure construction projects begun at mid-war withdrew enslaved laborers from their masters' and mistresses' households, often for good, and often at the cost of considerable disruption to black families and black social networks. As historian Marion Lucas observes, by late 1862, wherever either of the contending armies went, they "impressed black laborers, disrupting families, and creating refugees." The process of impressment had begun earlier, as the Confederates built a defensive line from Columbus to Mill Springs, Kentucky, in the first year of the war, and as Union forces set about levying the slaves of the disloyal almost upon their arrival in the state. After March of 1862, it seems, the scale and scope of impressment widened dramatically, peaking at moments of military crisis.<sup>86</sup>

Braxton Bragg's invasion of the state in the summer and fall of 1862, for example, sent Kentuckians scurrying to fortify key cities. In Louisville, Lucas observes, "more than a thousand slaves and freemen," among them those who had been detained on the streets, plucked out of jails and workhouses, and snatched from their homes, were drafted for labor.<sup>87</sup>

In December of 1863, federal soldiers forcibly conscripted a number of black laborers from Lexington, Kentucky. Soldiers stationed themselves outside the city's black churches, and "rushed upon the unsuspecting negroes" as the services let out. Despite the best efforts of the parishioners to escape or otherwise elude capture and forced service, "a good many" were detained against their will, still clad in their best suits, and "sent off to Camp Nelson to work on the wagon road."<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Lucas, "Black Families and Soldiers," in Dollar et al., eds., *Sister States, Enemy States*, 191.

<sup>87</sup> Lucas, "Black Families and Soldiers," in Dollar et al., eds., *Sister States, Enemy States*, 192.

<sup>88</sup> December 13, 1863, Smith and Cooper, eds., *A Union Woman in Civil War Kentucky*, 177.

For many slaves, revolutionary change came at a high price indeed. Encounters with violent men brought fear and danger into the household, and black women may have been at greater risk than their mistresses. The enslaved woman Margaret may well have had reason to be every bit as “terribly frightened & excited & unwell” as her mistress when a party of Kansas Red Legs entered their Missouri household by force in June of 1863. The Red Legs, who, according to historian Thomas Goodrich, were Unionist irregulars more inclined to “the theft of horses and livestock” than to lawful warfare, appeared to Margaret’s mistress as “about the lowest, most desperate looking specimens of humanity” it had ever been her “lot to witness.” Margaret and Hannah, another enslaved woman on hire from a neighbor, quickly set to work preparing a meal for the men. They witnessed their mistress’s agitated attempts to forestall retaliatory violence, setting the table herself and treating the men to genteel hospitality. They also watched her fail. The Red Legs trampled her flower beds, stole her saddle horse, and took her husband into custody for his disloyal politics yet again. Then they entered the kitchen and “told Margaret the way she might know a Redleg was by little bells in their spurs,” gesturing to their own for illustration.<sup>89</sup>

Guerrillas, irregular raiders, and extra-military violence of all kinds drastically reshaped household operations in at times unexpected ways. In Callaway County, Missouri, for example, matters became so chaotic that, as freedmen Charles Wilson and William J. Cooper testified, slave owners fled southward in panic and those who remained soon found that their slaves refused to acknowledge their mastery. Former slaveholder Caleb E. Berry swore that “the disorganization of society” had been such that “the relation of slave and master ceased to exist even prior to the emancipation proclamation.” The district’s enslaved population, he explained, had become “restless and unwilling to submit to the authority of their proper owners.” He had

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<sup>89</sup> Entries for June, 1863, Elvira Ascenith Weir Scott, Diary, WHMC, Goodrich, *Black Flag*, 67-68.

found it “impossible to keep them in subjection and in many instances [undesirable] from the fact that you could no longer work them to profit.” His own solution had been to withdraw material support from the slaves of his household, pushing the teenaged slave John Berry into waged labor and independent production in the support of his aging parents.<sup>90</sup> George Jackson Simpson recalled that in his Crawford County, Missouri, neighborhood, “when the Civil War broke out, my master began to loose all his property. He let his slaves do pretty much as they pleased in order to make a living.”<sup>91</sup>

More often, perhaps, slaves emerged as the victims of military and extra-military violence, their cabins destroyed, the basis for their independent production undermined, and their lives and physical safety menaced. In the autumn of 1862, John Hunt Morgan’s Confederate raiders made preparations to leave the city of Lexington, Kentucky. Fearing that when the federals retook the city, the city’s rebel-sympathizing citizens would see their enslaved property confiscated, the Confederates rounded up said slaves. “The secesh are taking up negroes tonight & putting them in jail,” Frances Peter observed in her diary, “to be ready to take with them tomorrow when they leave.” “Negro men” in particular were targeted, arrested on the street and taken from private homes.<sup>92</sup> Several weeks later, Morgan’s raiders rode through Elizabethtown, Kentucky, during what historian Benjamin Franklin Cooling terms their “Christmas foray” in the winter of 1862. Their official goal to thwart a Union counter-offensive by cutting the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, Morgan’s men destroyed hundreds of feet of bridges, miles of railroad track, depots, water towers, and army stores, as well as stealing horses and the private property of residents both white and black at will. In the face of their raid, former slave Peter Gohagen’s

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<sup>90</sup> Deposition of Caleb E. Berry, Deposition of Charles Wilson and William J. Cooper, File of John Berry, Co. D, 67<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T., NAI.

<sup>91</sup> George Jackson Simpson, Missouri, WPA, Supp. 1, Vol. 2, 219-229.

<sup>92</sup> Entry October 5, 1862, Smith and Cooper, eds., *A Union Woman in Civil War Kentucky*, 52.

Aunt Ceney rushed to hide her chickens under her cabin porch. “All wuz fine,” Gohagen recalled. “The sojers hunted aroun’ and didn’t find much.” All was fine, that is, only until “Aunt Ceney’s old Dominick Rooster come out from under the porch and flapped his wings and crowed like it was Judgment Day.” “That fixed things,” Gohagen declared. That was the end of Aunt Ceney’s flock of chickens, which were soon slaughtered and consumed.<sup>93</sup>

Guerrillas, many of whom were far more lawless than Morgan’s partisans, swept enslaved people into the war, rupturing household bonds, destroying property, and ending lives. In July of 1863, the guerrillas who infested Dade County, Missouri, skirmishing often with Yankee troops, captured “15 negroes” and mounted them on horses to be carried off southward, when they were attacked by a troop of the state’s Unionist Enrolled Militia. The federal irregulars “killed 1” of the insurgents, “severely wounded 3, released the negroes, and captured 10 horses, 5 saddles, and 2 Colt’s navy revolvers,” sustaining only one man wounded among their own.<sup>94</sup> These nameless “negroes” were lucky. At times, the insurgents who raided stores, robbed trains, and harassed Union forces simply shot black folks on sight.

Such seems to have become more prevalent later in the war, as the hopes of successfully rehabilitating slavery diminished. In March of 1864, a part of thirty-five guerrillas plundered a train as it rolled into the station at Mayfield, Kentucky. Confederate irregulars had been conducting this sort of action for months, despite the posting of federal detachments nearby. “Few direct military results came from this kind of activity,” observes scholar Benjamin Cooling, “but the resulting mayhem disrupted civilian life and drastically reduced civilian confidence in Federal occupation as a buffer against banditry and harassment.” In this particular

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<sup>93</sup> Peter Gohagen, Indiana, WPA, Supp. I, Vol. 5, 71-75. See Cooling, *Fort Donelson’s Legacy*, 162-163, and Brian D. McKnight, “Champ Ferguson and the Borderland Style of Warfare,” Dollar et al., eds., *Sister States, Enemy States*, 151.

<sup>94</sup> Report of Major Charles Sheppard, July 29, 1863, *ORs, Series I, Volume XXII, Reports*, 463.

incident, a nameless “negro man” was shot and killed at the station.<sup>95</sup> And in August of that year, in the vicinity of Keytesville, Missouri, “two bushwackers” allegedly “demandet the double barrel shot gun” belonging to a black man named Fulton, who belonged to one Martin Hurt. Fulton handed over the gun post haste, but to no avail. The “bushwackers” shot him “without giving any reasons.”<sup>96</sup> And across the South, as rebel veterans returned home, violence escalated, as these men took out their grief and frustration on the enslaved population.

Extra-military violence worked to break apart slaveholding households, albeit in ways which inflicted a heavy price on all who lived there. When white people took vengeance on one another, often enough slaves paid part or all of the price. In Lexington, Kentucky, occupied by rebel forces under John Hunt Morgan on the retreat after the Confederate loss at Perryville put paid to their invasion of the state, one Mrs. Castleman “had all her out buildings, negro cabins, most of the farm implements & 1000 worth of lumber destroyed by fire.” Neighbor Frances Peter, in whose carefully observant diary the incident appears, suspected arson. Mrs. Castleman was “a secesh,” Peter observed in her diary, and the fire had likely been set by those Lexington citizens infuriated by the Confederate presence in the town. It was, Peter remarked, “the 5<sup>th</sup> fire since the rebels came.”<sup>97</sup>

Lafayette County, Missouri, was a dangerous place to live for black and white in 1862 and 1863. Guerrillas patrolled the region, abusing civilians and soldiers alike. In August of 1863, reported an indignant Unionist, “a Steam Boat” plying the Missouri River “was boarded by guerrillas & robbed and three furloughed Union soldiers shot.”<sup>98</sup> Disloyal citizens of the region, Brigadier General Ben Loan reported, “publicly declared that it was their duty to harbor and

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<sup>95</sup> Colonel S. G. Hicks to Brigadier General Brayman, March 23, 1864, *ORs, Series I, Volume XXXII, Reports*, 131; Cooling, *Fort Donelson's Legacy*, 328-329.

<sup>96</sup> Report dated August 24, 1864, Benecke Family Papers, WHMC.

<sup>97</sup> Entry October 2, 1862, Smith and Cooper, eds., *A Union Woman in Civil War Kentucky*, PAGE NO. See Cooling, *Fort Donelson's Legacy*, 135.

<sup>98</sup> Joseph W. McClurg to Abraham Lincoln, October 1, 1863, ALP.

protect the guerrillas as they were the only protection the slave holders had for their property.”<sup>99</sup> The federal forces stationed in this troubled region, which abutted the Kansas line, cracked down hard. When, in the summer of 1863, the “Kansas colonel in charge of” the post at Independence reported thirty guerrillas killed and one hundred and fifty horses confiscated, other men from the surrounding community reported something different, claiming that the thirty slain were civilians, not insurgents, and that the horses had belonged to neutral households. Wanton violence such as this was complicated, one ostensibly loyal man complained, by the political oppression levied upon the people by the provost marshals.<sup>100</sup>

In an attempt to escape the cycle of violence, some slaveholders refugeed southward into the heart of the Confederacy. Among them was one Webb, who departed early in the conflict, taking with him only his youngest and strongest slaves, men and women alike. Left behind in Missouri under the supervision of an overseer were “some old negro women and children,” perhaps the mothers, aunties, or grandmothers and the offspring of the young folks who had been taken south. The insurgency in Missouri’s heartland, thus, divided black families. But the trouble for the Webb slaves did not end there. Left in charge of an overseer, the remainder of the household became “a kind of headquarters” for Lafayette County’s guerrilla bands. In turn, it became a target of harsh federal reprisals. And on patrol through along the Marshall road in Lafayette County, federal troops under the command of one Captain Wakerlen burned to the ground the entire household, including outbuildings and slave cabins. “I cannot approve of the act,” Brigadier General Ben Loan confessed. “And yet I am not prepared wholly to condemn it.”<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Brigadier General Ben Loan to Abraham Lincoln, October 3, 1863, ALP.

<sup>100</sup> Fellman, *Inside War*, 43.

<sup>101</sup> Brig. Gen. Ben Loan to Maj. Gen. Samuel R. Curtis, November 14, 1862, *ORs, Series I, Volume XIII*, 791-792.

When Border State slaves took their freedom, they looked both outward to the nation and inward to the household. The tactics employed when enslaved people fled shed further light on their keen understandings of the weaknesses, blind spots, and assumptions at work within white households. In making plans to leave, they carefully identified the points of fracture, both material and psychological, which could be exploited in order to gain temporary advantage. Many simply waited until the man of the household was away from home and the mistress frightened. And others were more subtle. Some, as suggested by Ellen McGaughey Wallace's 1862 observation that her neighbors largely expected there to be "a general stampede of negroes at Christmas," may have timed their departure in order to take advantage of a time of traditional sociability, neighborly visiting, and relief from work, as well as of the annual renegotiation of hiring contracts.<sup>102</sup> The unnamed "girl" who "nursed" the children of Reverend and Mrs. Dandy of Lexington, Kentucky, took advantage of both Mrs. Dandy's solicitous concern for her virtue and of the customary privileges of black urban sociability. "One evening," neighbor Frances Peter (herself the daughter of a slaveholding household) explained, the young woman approached her mistress "and asked to be allowed to go to the 'singing' that evening, some of the colored people having agreed to meet together to sing, most likely to practice for the church as negroes do sometimes." Mrs. Dandy carefully inquired as to the character of the young woman's escort, and when informed that "her brother was going with her," gave her permission. By the morning, the girl was gone, and the household's man servant with her.<sup>103</sup>

Masters and mistresses may, themselves, have signaled to the slaves within their households that their power was on the wane. As seen in a previous chapter, in last-ditch efforts to retain their labor forces, masters and mistresses compromised, elaborating upon the customary

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<sup>102</sup> DATE, Journal by Ellen Kenton McGaughey Wallace, KHS.

<sup>103</sup> Entry January 27, 1864, Smith and Cooper, eds., *A Union Woman in Civil War Kentucky*, 187-188.

privileges of slavery and gesturing towards a new world of free labor. In many households, this development seems to have been the impetus behind slaves' decisions to flee. Desperate to save his crop, the Missouri tobacco planter who owned Spotswood Rice promised the man that if "he would stay with him and ship his tobacco for him and look after all his business on his plantation," he would be compensated by the privilege of having "a nice house and lot for his family right on his plantation." After Rice had time to think it over, however, he concluded that his master's promises could not be trusted, and, as his daughter explained in later years, he took "eleben of de best slaves on de plantation, and went to Kansas City" to enlist in the federal army.<sup>104</sup>

Two enslaved families in Kentucky, both of whom had already sent men to the war, evidently thought along similar lines. "The Master begged us to stay and offered us five pounds of meal and two pounds of pork jowl each week if we would stay and work," Betty Guwn recalled. Her husband already in the federal service, she and the children refused this offer. Likely they assessed their liberty as being worth more than corn meal and pork. Leaving the Canton, Kentucky, household where they had been slaves, Mrs. Guwn explained, "we all went to Burgard, Kentucky, to live."<sup>105</sup> As Thomas McIntire, who had grown up a slave in Bath County, Kentucky, recalled that even before the war was over, his master had "freed us... en give us all a little money, or paid some ef dey wuz stayin' on till de war wuz over." McIntire's father and eldest brother were already fighting for the Union, and the rest of the family rejected the "little money" their master could offer. "Us went ter Nicholasville," McIntire recalled, "en wuked roun', some of us on farms."<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Mary A. Bell, Missouri, WPA, Vol. 11, 28-30.

<sup>105</sup> Betty Guwn, Indiana, WPA, Vol. 6, 98-110.

<sup>106</sup> Thomas McIntire, Ohio, WPA, Vol. 5, 408-413.

The war opened new opportunities for enslaved people to safeguard or to secure invaluable family ties. Some scholars have presumed that it was typically those who were free of the burdens of motherhood, pregnancy, or responsibility for aged parents who ran, leaving others behind. Folks who were young, physically strong, and unencumbered by small children, Barbara Fields observes of wartime Maryland, “might freely take their chances with patrols, exposure, and the sheer physical punishment of what might be a very long trip on foot.”<sup>107</sup> But as fugitives had done in slave societies across the Americas since the institution’s planting, the family and the needs of its members could also spur flight.<sup>108</sup> When Kentucky slave Harriott McClain began to fear that her pubescent daughter would be sexually victimized by their master, she determined to abscond with the girl. Harriott slipped away first, waiting in the household’s tobacco barn, while daughter Ada Isabelle completed the day’s tasks and then crept out to join her mother. The two fled in the dark of night, traveling to Henderson, Kentucky, three miles away, where they hid beneath a house until darkness fell again.<sup>109</sup>

The war also spawned new threats to the enslaved family, ones that could also result in flight. Under the exigencies of conflict, the pace of work and the strain on the resources of the slaveholding household were heightened. As seen in a previous chapter, some masters and mistresses relied ever more heavily on the incomes drawn from the hiring of their slaves, a practice which facilitated the severance of spouses from one another and parents from their children. It also encouraged violence in masters and mistresses determined to guarantee their own household’s independence. In 1862, for example, the Missouri slave Betty Abernathy saw her mother nearly murdered by their brutal master when she would not reveal the whereabouts of

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<sup>107</sup> Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground*, 119.

<sup>108</sup> See Morgan, who observes that in the wake of South Carolina’s Stono Rebellion, the number of women who fled with their children in tow actually increased (*Laboring Women*, 189).

<sup>109</sup> Ada Isabelle Suggs, Indiana, WPA, Vol. 6, 189-192.

her sons, who had abandoned the hires contracted for their labor and deprived the master of needed income. This event proved a watershed: “after that,” Abernathy recalled, “we was treated so mean that a neighbor helped us escape.”<sup>110</sup> A particularly brutal beating, following his return from an unauthorized husbandly visit, drove the Reverend Robert Thomas Hickman to flee his Boone County, Missouri, master, taking with him not only his own kin but several enslaved families from the neighborhood. But it seems likely that this event was simply the capstone of the neighborhood’s outrage. Guerrilla bands rampaged through Boone County at mid-war, murdering Unionist citizens, stealing property, and taking shelter, federal brigadier Ben Loan reported angrily, “with their friends in perfect security.”<sup>111</sup>

Leaving the households of their masters and mistresses, as early as the very first weeks of the war, slaves by the thousands gave concrete meaning to the conclusions they had drawn regarding the meaning of a Republican presidency, the war for the Union, and their own experiences of occupation. In a process explored by numerous historians, they acted on the long-standing expectation that the war would bring about their liberation, and in doing so, placed the question of that liberation on the federal agenda.<sup>112</sup> The situation which confronted Border State fugitives, as will be seen below, proved to be more vexed yet than that which confronted fugitives in the occupied Confederacy. In the Confederacy, as Heather Cox Richardson has observed, while slaves “could not look to states for protection, the federal government stood in their behalf.”<sup>113</sup> But federal policies geared towards maximizing the stability of agricultural production, household authority, and the loyalty of Border State whites mandated the exclusion

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<sup>110</sup> Betty Abernathy, Missouri, WPA, Vol. 11, 6.

<sup>111</sup> M. Potekin, “Negroes in Minnesota,” WPA, Supp. I, Vol. 2, 108-111; Brigadier General Benjamin F. Loan to Abraham Lincoln, October 3, 1863, ALP, LoC.

<sup>112</sup> See Ira Berlin, et al.

<sup>113</sup> Richardson, *West from Appomattox*, 29.

of most fugitives from army camps and sought to guarantee that the apparatus of the slave code would continue to function. Military realities in the occupied Border States, too, were such that fugitives could ignore them only at their peril. In making the hard choices that led to flight from the household to Union lines, enslaved men and women looked both to the household itself, assessing its weaknesses, taking advantage of whatever advantage accrued to them, and outward to the nation.

Border State slaves understood Union lines as the terrain of liberty. Military camps offered possible refuge, employment, and later in the war, the chance of military service. Some scholars have assumed that in acting on their expectation that the war would bring about their liberation, slaves simply ignored the repeated statements to the contrary which had been issued by the President, by Congress, and by military leadership.<sup>114</sup> But there was more to it than this. During the antebellum period, enslaved people had commonly envisioned the states north of the Ohio River as “the Promised Land.” Given fugitive slave laws and exclusion acts, however, “the American River Jordan constituted a conduit only to a contested freedom.”<sup>115</sup> Similarly, during the war, black fugitives from Border State masters knew well the hazards and pitfalls which ensued as they carefully navigated complicated political and military terrain.

Shifts in federal policy might result in a sudden exodus of slaves. John C. Fremont’s 1861 proclamation of martial law and the confiscation of the slaves of disloyal households, for example, allegedly resulted in the flight of “many thousands” of Missouri slaves, who departed, according to the German-language organ *Anzeiger des Westens*, “as soon as they knew of their rights.”<sup>116</sup> Slaveholder James Moffett of Bath County, Kentucky, had observed several discreet exoduses of slaves from his vicinity in the last months of the war—“so many” had left when

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<sup>114</sup> See Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground*.

<sup>115</sup> Griffler, *Front Line of Freedom*, 6.

<sup>116</sup> “Emancipation Policy,” December 4, 1861, in Rowan, *Germans for a Free Missouri*, 291-293.

black enlistment became a possibility in 1864; another wave in December of that year; more in April and May of 1865 as the war drew to a close.<sup>117</sup>

Flight was a high-stakes test of the widespread belief in the liberating potential of the war. For some, the active intervention, or simply the presence, of federal forces proved a boon of incalculable benefit. Perhaps because both Harriott McClain's husband and her oldest son were soldiers of the U. S. C. T., white federal troops assisted her and her daughter across the river at Henderson, Kentucky, and on to the free soil of Indiana.<sup>118</sup> And the band of fugitives under the protection and leadership of Reverend Hickman of Missouri were eventually transported to the unlikely destination of Minnesota by the Union Navy. The homemade flatboat they had constructed in secret prior to their departure was drifting helplessly in midstream on the Mississippi River when the steamer War Eagle "came upon" them. "Learning of the strange circumstances which had brought them here," according to an article later published by the Minnesota Historical Society, "and being a 'northerner,' the captain of the riv[er] steamer tied a strong towing-cable to the floundering boat and resumed his journey northward. Thus was inaugurated the first record of hitch-hiking by boat on the Mississippi riv[er]."<sup>119</sup>

In terse diary entries jotted down between November of 1861 and February of 1862, in between complaints about the weather and his ongoing stomach problems, Iowa enlisted man John Quincy Adams Campbell deplored the orders which mandated the exclusion of fugitives from army camps. "Oh!" he exclaimed, "when will the blunders of this war cease?" He recorded the escape of several "contrabands" from their masters, one of whom was recaptured but "rescued" again "by the boys of the Ohio battery." And when, ultimately, orders "compelled" his

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<sup>117</sup> James Moffett to James and Martha Sudduth, May 11, 1865, James Moffett Letters, 1859-1878 and undated, KHS.

<sup>118</sup> Ada Isabelle Suggs, Indiana, WPA, Vol. 6, 189-192.

<sup>119</sup> M. Potekin, "Negroes in Minnesota," WPA, Supp. 1, Vol. 2, 108-111.

regiment to expel the fugitives from their lines, they sent the men on their way only “after giving them instructions for getting into Illinois.”<sup>120</sup> In the autumn of 1862, slaveholding daughter Frances Peter reported that when a Lexington, Kentucky, woman of her acquaintance “went out and demanded” the return of her “servant” from an officer of the Michigan regiment where he had taken refuge, the man calmly asked “how long she had had the negro,” and when told, calmly replied, “well now I think that nigger has served you long enough” and refused to see the man handed over.<sup>121</sup>

Nonetheless, United States policy, coupled with the intransigence of the master class and the endurance of the state slave codes, created a state of radical uncertainty even for those slaves who ventured into federal lines and found shelter there. Orders regarding the balance and interplay of state fugitive slave laws and federal confiscatory policy were not necessarily clear, and, at times, were disregarded entirely. And although some enslaved individuals may have imagined all federal soldiers as potential liberators in much the same way as their predecessors imagined the Ohio River as the demarcation between slavery and freedom, falling into the wrong federal hands could be a disaster. Slaveholder Ellen McGaughey Wallace, inadvertently, perhaps, revealed the disparate fates confronted by those slaves from her Hopkinsville, Kentucky, neighborhood who fled to Union lines. Those who had reached Fort Donelson or Clarksville, Tennessee (secure federal posts in Confederate states and, she suspected, “held by abolitionist[s]”), were “safe.” But when locally enslaved families tried to follow Union forces operating in an ostensibly loyal state rather than crossing into rebel territory, the outcome was quite different. “A great many” Christian County slaves had made a bold attempt to leave their

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<sup>120</sup> Entries November 23, 1861, February 10, 1862, February 13, 1862, February 15, 1862, and February 18, 1862, Grimsley and Miller, eds., *The Union Must Stand*, 17-28. The “blunders” to which he referred were the orders issued by General Henry W. Halleck to exclude all fugitives from federal lines so that the Union forces could demonstrate that their sole intention was to “crush out rebellion” and not to “oppress and to plunder” (quoted in Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 71).

<sup>121</sup> Entry November 15, 1862, Smith and Cooper, eds., *A Union Woman in Civil War Kentucky*, 82.

masters' households in November of 1862. Some were mounted "on horses or mules and in wagons" appropriated from their masters and mistresses, and all likely believed that, in Wallace's words, "they had their escape certain." Nonetheless, they found themselves turned back. "There was a sudden halt, and the pickets refused to let any pass who had not a written permit from headquarters." "There is quite a feeling," she reported smugly, "of consternation and surprise among them."<sup>122</sup> A conversation between the slaves belonging to Robert H. Smith of Missouri, the white man ("a foreigner by birth") who worked in Smith's "steam mill," and members of Company A of the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment of Enrolled Missouri Militia resulted in an aborted escape attempt on the part of one of the enslaved men. During the course of the conversation, the miller advised "the negroes" to accompany the militiamen when they departed, saying that "Smith was a secessionist and it was right to take every Damned negro the secessionist had." When the militiamen galloped off, one of the slaves mounted a spare cavalry horse and galloped after them. Not long after, however, one of the soldiers called his lieutenant's "attention to the Negro on the horse," and as he testified, "asked him if he was going to let the negro go with us." The lieutenant's reply: "of course not." Their "business was not stealing negroes."<sup>123</sup>

Fugitive slaves made various claims when they presented themselves to federal troops, and these initial encounters, recorded in official communiqués, reports, and orders, reveal much about what they both knew and assumed of federal policy at the time. Perhaps knowledge that fugitives could not, according to orders, expect shelter within Union lines was behind the decision of those slaves who took refuge within the camp of the Fremont Hussars to "stoutly

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<sup>122</sup> Entries June 3, 1863, July 12, 1863, and others; also entry November 10, 1862, Journal by Ellen McGaughey Wallace, KHS

<sup>123</sup> Deposition of William G. Carter, August 22, 1863, Guitar, Odon, Collection, WHMC.

[assert] that they were free.”<sup>124</sup> As early as November of 1861, fugitive slaves from the Green River region of Kentucky, when asked the “reasons of their running away,” explained that “there masters are rank Secessionists, in some cases are in the rebel army.”<sup>125</sup> This accusation suggests a yet more sophisticated understanding of federal policy. In the autumn of 1861, of course, these slaves would not have fallen under the rubric of confiscation. The First Confiscation Act, passed by Congress in August of that year, subjected slaves as well as other forms of property used in the service of the Confederacy to federal seizure, and thereby, according to historian Louis Gerteis, “provided the opening wedge for emancipation as a war necessity.” It did not, however, clarify the legal status of the confiscated slave, nor did it encompass those who belonged to the merely disloyal.<sup>126</sup>

Certainly, some federal officers were willing, indeed eager, to take proactive roles in confiscating the property—including the slaves—of the flagrantly disloyal. The passage of the Second Confiscation Act in the summer of 1862, which “declared all slaves held by rebel masters ‘forever free of their servitude’ once they came ‘under the control of the Government of the United States,’” lent legal validity to their zeal.<sup>127</sup> Union officer J. H. Ellis, for example, reported the capture of one Stephen H. Smith, a secessionist prisoner whom he described as “an unmitigated, irresponsible scoundrel”—a former officer under rebel general Sterling Price, and a slaveholder who had “threatened to make the woods stink of abolitionists.” The man was “under bond,” and Ellis observed that the man’s farm was “fine” and liable to confiscation if “a little

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<sup>124</sup> Major George E. Waring, Jr., to Acting Major General Asboth, December 19, 1861, *ORs, Series I, Vol. VIII*, 451-452.

<sup>125</sup> Alexander McDowell McCook to William T. Sherman, November 5, 1861, Berlin et al., eds., *Freedom, Series I, Volume I*, 519.

<sup>126</sup> Gerteis, *From Contraband to Freedman*, 16-17. Steven Hahn, however, warns against the “tempting” conclusion that confiscation was merely “the first of several federal steps leading inexorably to the Emancipation Proclamation” (*A Nation Under Our Feet*, 71).

<sup>127</sup> Quoted in Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 72.

attention” was paid to the matter. With the farm, of course, would go the slaves, whom Smith was known to have “cruelly abused.”<sup>128</sup>

Although the testimony of persons of color would rarely if ever have been taken in civil court cases in which whites were involved, the military, both field officers and provost marshals, proved more amenable. The ability of black household members to bear witness to the truth of their masters’ and mistress’s politics gradually took on ever greater weight. Robbed by Union soldiers, Mrs. Charlotte Bagby of Jackson County, Missouri, evidently relied upon the testimony of James Burton, a free man of color employed within her household, to testify on her behalf in order to obtain redress. Manumitted by his master some thirty years before, Burton worked for Bagby “in the fall of the year 1862.” He was there when a squadron of federal troops, “then stationed at Independence, Missouri,” took from his employer “one set of silver spoons, two bed blankets, one bed comfort, shirts, pillow slips, one silk dress, one coverlet, and a lot of tobacco.”<sup>129</sup>

The records of Union provost marshals also contain extensive testimony by enslaved persons pertaining to the disloyalty of their masters and mistresses. In May of 1864, for example, Peter Turner, an enslaved man belonging to Louis Bryant of Hannibal, Missouri, swore out an affidavit before the Provost Marshal of North Missouri’s Second Sub-district, attesting that while his own son was serving in the Union army, his master had “at different times aided the Rebellion,” particularly by the “loaning of horses for his relations to join the Rebel Army.”<sup>130</sup> In June of the same year, Lucinda Turner (no apparent relation), who belonged to Andrew J. Price of Ralls County, Missouri, outlined the many facets of her own master’s comprehensive disloyalty. She deposed that her master had given forty dollars towards the recruitment of rebel

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<sup>128</sup> J. H. Ellis to Colonel, February 24, 1863, Guitar, Odon, Papers, WHMC.

<sup>129</sup> Deposition of James Burton, May 27, 1864, Provost Marshal Records, M345, NAI.

<sup>130</sup> Deposition of Peter Turner, May 11, 1864, File of Peter Turner, Provost Marshal Records, M345, NAI.

troops in the spring of 1862. He “took no Union paper only the Chicago Times.” Whenever he received news of military affairs, he “said the Union Armies were defeated all the time and rejoiced very much over it,” claiming “it was all a lie” “when Union victories were recorded.” He “hoped Jeff Davis would kill all the abolitionists, and that the federals would be driven out of Missouri.” And finally, he had harbored within his household men later shot for bushwhacking.<sup>131</sup>

Indeed, scattered evidence exists which strongly suggests that some slaves deliberately sought to manipulate the Confiscation Acts in order to unify their family members beyond white reach. As four Missouri slaveholders complained to Governor Hamilton Gamble in 1863, “the negroes say that they be long to secessionists, and the officers believe them.”<sup>132</sup> In June of 1864, the enslaved woman Julia, whose surname was given alternately as Chamberlain and as Underwood, swore out an oath that “Amanda Chamberlain aged 10 years Elizabeth Chamberlain aged 5 years & Isaac Chamberlain aged 3 years are the slaves of Jesse Underwood of St Louis Co, Mo., that said Underwood is an avowed rebel she... having frequently within the present year heard him express himself in favor of the rebellion and she... knows that within the present year & previously he Underwood has given material aid and comfort to rebels in arms.” The charges were investigated and dismissed.<sup>133</sup>

And some eighteen months previously, one James Milton Turner had written to General Samuel R. Curtis on behalf of a “young man of color” of his acquaintance. This young man, John by name, was “an upright hardworking Citizen” with a sister, Betty, who was enslaved in the household of Mrs. Anna Roots of Jefferson City, Missouri. Having fled her mistress, Betty had

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<sup>131</sup> Deposition of Lucinda Turner, June 2, 1864, File of Lucinda Turner, Provost Marshal Records, M345, NAI.

<sup>132</sup> John F. Ryland, Eldridge Burden, Henry C. Chiles, and L. W. Smallwood to Governor Hamilton Gamble, June 5, 1863, Berlin et al., eds., *Freedom, Series I, Volume I*, 457.

<sup>133</sup> Deposition of Julia Chamberlain, June 30, 1864, File of Jesse Underwood, Provost Marshal Records, M345, NAI.

made her way to St. Louis “by some means or other,” evidently to seek shelter and companionship with her brother John. Dispatched to retrieve Betty and return her to servitude, however, one of Anna Roots’s grown sons followed her to St. Louis and took her from the city by force, evidently transporting her to his wife’s father’s household in Calloway County. His sister missing, John and his (likely white) patron and advocate petitioned General Curtis for help, claiming that “the Old Lady (Mrs. Roots) is an avowed sympathizer with the Rebellion” with sons in the rebel service, one the commander of a naval vessel. Following Curtis’s orders, the district provost marshals appear to have done their due diligence in ascertaining the truth of the matter. Those of her sons who had been identified were civilian farmers in Calloway County, “only conditionally” loyal. The loyalty of Roots herself was “exceedingly hard to determine,” as she was “quite [an] old lady” and had “never even expressed an opinion upon any subject since the commencement of this rebellion in any way connected with it.” By late February, federal investigators had been forced to conclude that they could find “no reason for further detaining” Betty.<sup>134</sup>

In addition to navigating federal policy and state law, fugitives were forced to recognize that a blue uniform did not necessarily mean a friend. William S. Harney’s casual observation as early as May of 1861, slaves had begun not only to escape, but to seek refuge specifically “in the camps of United States troops from Northern States and commanded by a Northern General” suggests a keen awareness of the intransigence, in terms of slavery, of Border State Unionists.<sup>135</sup> Indeed, General Samuel R. Curtis went so far as to acknowledge, to his apparent discomfort, that

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<sup>134</sup> James Milton Turner to General Samuel R. Curtis, no date, William H. Howe to Lt. Charles [A? name illegible], Provost Marshal, January 7, 1863, Lt. Col. F. A. Dick to Capt. James S. Minnick, February 20, 1863, James S. Minnick to Lt. Col. F. A. Dick, January 25, 1863, File of Mrs. Anna Roots, Provost Marshal Records, M345, NAI.

<sup>135</sup> William S. Harney to Thomas T. Gantt, May 14, 1861, *ORs, Series I, Volume III*, 372-373.

the Enrolled Missouri Militia, essentially minutemen who could be called out in case of guerrilla attack, were “only citizens” when not actually in the field, and could act “as negro-catchers,” exempt from the restrictions which generally governed the behavior of federal volunteers.<sup>136</sup> Moreover, slaveholders, among them Lexingtonian Frances Peter, drew clear distinctions between the politics of northern boys and those of Border State and lower Midwestern backgrounds.

Border State-born volunteers in federal blue often proved particularly intransigent. And enslaved fugitives struggled to navigate the ongoing hostilities between Missourians and their Kansas neighbors. General Odon Guitar, a Unionist of the most conservative stripe, posted a guard at St. Joseph, Missouri, tasked with “stopping Negroes, who attempt to cross the line into Kansas,” a brother officer complained plaintively. This man reported further that Guitar had “had a negro shot in the river (with free papers) whilst attempting to swim it.” In urging that Guitar be “attended to” by some “reliable man,” Ellis concluded indignantly that if such a one were allowed “to dictate for No[rth] West [Missouri],” he knew that “some people here, would prefer removing to that America whereof Mr. Lincoln is President.”<sup>137</sup> In November of 1862, the Twelfth Kansas Regiment liberated a number of slaves from the vicinity of Greenton, Missouri, in the troubled western counties which abutted the Kansas line. The Kansas men were soon confronted, however, by other federal forces— the First Missouri State Militia Cavalry (Union) under the command of Colonel James McFerran. These troops, operating under orders from Brigadier General Benjamin Loan, surrounded the 12<sup>th</sup> Kansas and ordered them to surrender their “stolen” property. Some “100 horses and mules, 40 negroes, 6 ox-teams, and 1 two horse team, loaded with household goods of great variety” were thus re-confiscated, and the Kansas

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<sup>136</sup> General Samuel R. Curtis to Col. J. T. K. Hayward, December 26, 1862, *ORs, Series I, Volume XXII*, PAGE NO.

<sup>137</sup> J. H. Ellis to Colonel, February 24, 1863, Guitar, Odon, Papers, WHMC.

men sent on their way. “The negroes,” Colonel McFerran reported, “were turned out of the lines, and the property placed in the hands of discreet citizens... to be delivered to the owners, upon application.”<sup>138</sup> Sam Marshall, a Missouri freedman who had taken up residence across the state line in Leavenworth, Kansas, sought to liberate his children from their Platte City, Missouri, master, having been assured that they “would be allowed to come away free.” He traveled in daylight, with a white man to attest to his respectability, and, as Major General Samuel Curtis reassured his commanding officer, “made no demonstration of insolence or disrespect to any body.” Nonetheless, Marshall was picked up by the Unionist Missouri Militia, escorted out of town, and beaten brutally, leaving “marks” that he would “carry to his grave.”<sup>139</sup>

Numerous historians have presumed that the Border States remained loyal to the Union out of a diminished commitment to the institution of chattel slavery. It has been the contention of this chapter that, in fact, the driving force behind the region’s loyalty was an impulse to protect the institution. Fearing that their states would become battlegrounds, their fields routes of invasion, and their property destroyed, Missourians and Kentuckians alike would see to it, albeit not without considerable difficulty, that their states remained within the protection of the Union. Their continued allegiance, as will be seen in greater depth in subsequent chapters, would shape federal policy. But it could not keep the Border State household sacrosanct and immune to disruption. The greatest strains upon the household came from both within and from without. Slaves had their own ideas about what events would follow from a Republican presidency and the onset of war, and federal soldiers, come of age in a moment of sectional controversy, were hardly inclined to treat the master class with kid gloves. Slaves bore witness to the steady and

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<sup>138</sup> Report of Col. James McFerran, November 29, 1862, *O. R., Series I, Volume XXII*, 39-41.

<sup>139</sup> Major General S. R. Curtis to General Commanding Department of the Missouri, March 13, 1864, Berlin, et al., eds., *Freedom, Series I, Vol. I*, 480-481.

often humiliating or violently funny diminution of their masters' and mistresses' authority. They took what chances they could to bring their subterranean politics into the light, and, keeping keen eyes on both the events of the war and the weak points of their masters' power, they took the greatest risk of all, making the hard choice to withdraw themselves and their family members and seek refuge behind federal lines.

## Chapter IV

### “On the terms proposed’: Wartime Local Markets in Enslaved Labor”

Few scholars have considered the endurance of the market in enslaved labor throughout the years of the war. As during antebellum years, the slave market cannot be limited to the auction block and the coffle; the interstate trade was not the only way in which slaves changed hands. The interstate trade constituted a forced migration of extraordinary proportions, and the memory of the practice dominates twentieth-century narratives. Sources closer to the event, however, reveal a different picture. Masters and mistresses sold their slaves within the region as well, much more frequently, in fact, than they sold them “down the river.” And hiring was still more frequent yet.<sup>1</sup> Local transactions kept enslaved people constantly on the move, straining their families and their community ties. And local transactions enhanced the productivity and efficiency of slavery in these regions, allowing slaveholding households to respond flexibly to market stimuli and family needs.

As they did before the war, masters and mistresses continued to both sell and hire their slaves. On the surface less fraught than sale “down the river,” such transactions rarely required the psychological dissembling with which slaveholders distanced themselves from the interstate trade. The Border State master class could and did bring the exchange of human property within a kinship group, a neighborhood, or a district, into rough congruence with their idealized visions of themselves and their society. As it had throughout the antebellum period, this market

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Tadman estimates that the rate of local sales was probably higher than that of interstate sales. (*Speculators and Slaves*). The relative prevalence of intra- versus inter-state sales, however, shifts according to the criteria used. According to Wilma A. Dunaway, “fewer than one-third of all Appalachian slave sales were transacted locally” (*The African-American Family in Slavery and Emancipation*, 36). Seen another way, Frederic Bancroft, estimates that intra-state sales, mostly “private” and “inconspicuous,” probably “involved as many slaves as all the interstate trading, an annual average of at least 19,839” (*Slave-Trading in the Old South*, 404). Jonathan D. Martin observes that a slave’s likelihood of being hired out in a given year was probably “three to five times greater” than the likelihood of their being sold, “and perhaps more” (*Divided Mastery*, 8).

continued to facilitate the formation and re-formation of comparatively flexible households capable of responding to economic and familial pressures alike. Indeed, the market in hired slaves grew in significance. Secession closed off Deep South markets. Prices fell, and new households found the acquisition of enslaved labor within their financial reach. And the strains of occupation, invasion, and insurgency rendered the ownership of human property precarious and its profitability uncertain. The master class turned to the market in enslaved labor as one of the mechanisms by which they would seek to salvage the last value from a collapsing institution.

But the exigencies of hiring, in particular, also rendered the boundaries of the household, in addition to usefully flexible, uncomfortably porous, and the market re-emerged as a site of anxiety, as the slaveholding class looked askance at jobbing slaves and turned a suspicious eye towards hired domestic servants with access to matches and arsenic. Well into the last months of the conflict, and in some sub-regions, even after the war had ended, the market, particularly in hires, provided the mechanism by which the master class salvaged the last value from a collapsing institution. Nonetheless, by mid-war, the actions of hired slaves themselves worked to seriously undercut the economic stability of the master class, as they made use of their increased leverage to exert greater control over their personal and familial lives, shape the terms of their employment, and ultimately, although they likely did not intend this result, to deprive the master class of needed income at a moment of extraordinary social and political strain.

Disturbances in the markets in enslaved labor began early, during the secession winter. When the rest of the states of the Upper South exited the Union in the wake of Fort Sumter and Lincoln's call for troops to put down the rebellion, the Border States would not be among them. Nonetheless, the region was not and had not been immune to the political and with it the economic crisis which convulsed the rest of the nation. Throughout the nation, talk of secession

endangered the prosperity of the previous decade, “touch[ing] off” what Mark Geiger terms “a secondary crisis in the nation’s financial markets.” Foreign commerce halted at seaboard ports. “Merchants and wholesalers” canceled orders, and “new orders plummeted.”<sup>2</sup> Sales were canceled, and worried investors pulled their money out of banks. On business down the Mississippi River, W. H. Johnson informed his brother, future provisional governor of Confederate Kentucky George W. Johnson, that he had been unable to sell any of the slaves whom he had made available for private sale or auction. To settle an associate’s estate, he had “offered 2 negro men for sale,” but “did not get a bid on them.” Neither had he been able to sell George Johnson’s slave woman Harriett, currently “doing nothing in Vicksburg.” Paper money issued by Vicksburg’s local banks sold at such a high rate of interest, he explained, that those who had cash on hand preferred to lend it, rather than invest in “negroes or any other description of property.”<sup>3</sup> Commerce tied Border economies to those of both the Deep South and the northwest. When merchants failed to sell their commodities, which often included slaves, in Deep South markets, Border State households were left short of cash. One Kentucky merchant found that he could not “sell his sugar in N. Orleans for three cents, or any thing,” and had to “store it away.” His wife was left with no money to pay for their daughter’s school tuition.”<sup>4</sup> When New England manufacturing concerns faltered and New England banks called in their debts, Border State banks were drained of specie. As Thomas F. Marshall of Louisville reported, the “distress in the manufacturing and mechanical districts” of New England was horrible. Three thousand workmen had been laid off in New Haven, and how many in Massachusetts, he did not

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<sup>2</sup> See James L. Roark, *Masters without Slaves*, 4. “Anti-secessionists,” Roark observes, “argued that the South’s prosperity rested upon its connection with the rest of the American nation.” Nonetheless, “most planters” believed that the “economic dislocation” attendant upon secession was merely a “temporary” glitch in an otherwise solid economic system (30-31). See also Mark. W. Geiger, *Financial Fraud and Guerrilla Violence*, 13-14.

<sup>3</sup> W. H. Johnson to George W. Johnson, December 2, 1860, Johnson, George W., Papers, KHS.

<sup>4</sup> Susan Fishback to Susan Grigsby, January 10, 1861, Grigsby Collection, Filson.

know. When pressed, he predicted, eastern merchants would “in turn press upon the Western Merchants” and the banks that served their interests.<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, times were tough in the Border States during the secession winter and the first months of hostilities. The *Louisville Journal*'s special correspondent described, likely with a touch of hyperbole, a state “groan[ing] under burdens which are almost insupportable,” with “penury and distress” evident “in former abodes of the hardy workingman” and famine “shriek[ing]” “in the empty grain bins.” He further envisioned manufactory furnaces banked and smoldering, and the “cheerful clack of our mills” “stilled under the upper and nether millstones of impaired confidence and inability to pay.”<sup>6</sup> Private individuals echoed the news of grim and unsettled conditions. In early January, Susan Fishback of Lexington, Kentucky, wrote to her niece of an acquaintance whose debts had all been called in by “the Banks,” to the tune of some seventy-five thousand dollars, as well as of the difficulty of obtaining cash in amounts as small as one dollar. State currency for Kentucky and its neighbors was valueless. “Missouri money wont even buy candy,” she observed. Things were bad enough, Fishback hinted, that perhaps it was a blessing that Susan Grigsby's infant had died so soon after birth.<sup>7</sup> In Paris, Kentucky, “almost no business was done” on court day in February.<sup>8</sup> George Carvill of Union County, Kentucky, far to the north-west of the state, wrote to his sister of “stagnant” commerce and “destroyed” consumer confidence. “Numerous banks stopped payment,” he reported, “individual failures everywhere, thousands of respectable persons thrown out of employment, and different kinds of property... not saleable.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas F. Marshall to Caleb Logan, December 14, 1860, in Margaret R. Caldwell, editor, “A Web of Family,” *Records of Antebellum Plantations*.

<sup>6</sup> Special Correspondent's Report, January 19, 1861, *Louisville Daily Journal*.

<sup>7</sup> Susan Fishback to Susan Grigsby, January 10, 1861, Grigsby Collection, Filson.

<sup>8</sup> “A Dell Court Day,” February 9, 1861, *Louisville Daily Journal*.

<sup>9</sup> George Carvill to Sister, January 28, 1861, Carvill, George W., Letters, WHMC.

Agricultural problems made the matter worse. In Hardin County, Kentucky, pork prices declined, a condition worsened by the failure of the corn crop. In ordinary years, most farmers required for feed only the corn that they raised themselves. With the fall of pork prices in the winter of 1860-1861, however, they kept their hogs back from the market, “feeding all the time,” and waiting for prices to rebound. In so doing, they found it necessary to purchase supplementary feed. When this could not be done, “most of the farmers” rendered their hogs into bacon and hams, which could at least be salted down and held “for some future time” and a more robust market.<sup>10</sup> In Logan County, also in Kentucky, Methodist preacher George Richard Browder recorded a similar state of affairs, with cash scarce, laborers out of work, and manufacturing and public works suspended. Compounding the matter, as in Hardin County, was the year’s poor harvest. “The winter killed the wheat,” Browder lamented. “Cut worms” had damaged the corn, and a dry spell “cut off the hay crop” and “burned the tobacco.”<sup>11</sup>

The Border State economic crisis would continue through the spring, fully resolving only, according to Mark Geiger, when in February of 1862 the Lincoln administration signed the Legal Tender Act, which infused “greenbacks” into the Union economy, remedying the dearth in cash caused by the suspension of specie payments and supplying a relatively more stable alternative to state banknotes.<sup>12</sup> In March of 1861, Missourian James Sudduth importuned his grandfather James Moffett of Bath County, Kentucky, for money, complaining that he and his wife had neither food nor the money to buy it with. Moffett acknowledged that “stern famin and poverty” would be a trial to any man, “even the stupid and indolent,” but urged Sudduth to prove himself a man of “energy and forecast” instead by coming up with “some way to avoid the threatened

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<sup>10</sup> “The Scarcity in Hardin County,” February 9, 1861, *Louisville Daily Journal*.

<sup>11</sup> Entry January 1, 1861, Troutman, ed., *The Heavens are Weeping*, 102-103.

<sup>12</sup> Geiger, *Financial Fraud and Guerrilla Violence*, 93. In the Confederacy, of course, inflation spiraled and shortages of goods and currency worsened as the war went on. See Kirsten E. Wood (*Masterful Women*, 162-164) for an exploration of how widowed women of the slaveholding class grappled with the ongoing economic crisis as they struggled to market crops and subsist households.

calamity.” For his part, though he would send a generous bank draft, Moffett could not give the estimate of his estate’s current value which his grandson had evidently sought. Ever since the fall, he explained, “prices of every thing have gone down beyond all former precedent in this country,” and he could hardly speculate as to what was to come.<sup>13</sup> As late as June of 1861, planter Mildred Bullitt would bitterly observe Louisville’s “empty stores, shut up shops, moving families, auctions, people begging for work,” all overlaid by surreally bright “blooming flowers” and patriotic paraphernalia.<sup>14</sup>

The crisis also affected the market in enslaved labor. Opinions varied widely in the Border States as to the ultimate fate of slavery on the cusp of, and in the wake of, Lincoln’s election. In a seeming paradox, those Border State denizens who resided in the heaviest slaveholding districts often turned most strongly against secession. As scholar Edward Conrad Smith observes of Missouri, the value of property held in slaves—some \$45,000,000 on the eve of war—would diminish if the state found itself surrounded on three sides by what would have become foreign territory overnight. “Ownership of slave property,” he contends, “exerted a greater influence for the Union than for the Confederacy.”<sup>15</sup> As for Kentucky, the *Louisville Daily Journal* informed its readership in January of 1861 that to follow South Carolina out of the Union would result in the loss of, for Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland and Virginia at least, “all they have” in terms of enslaved and other forms of property, and bring upon them “bloodshed, conflagration, and ruin besides.” Indeed, the *Journal* insisted, South Carolina’s fire-eaters had concocted a conspiracy intended to destroy the security of the Upper South and the Border while fostering its own interests. “South Carolina didn’t secede on account of the Personal Liberty Bills,” an issue dear to Upper South hearts, the *Journal* declared bluntly, but rather “for no other

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<sup>13</sup> James Moffett to James Sudduth, March 11, 1861, James Moffett Letters, 1859-1878 and undated, KHS.

<sup>14</sup> Mildred Bullitt to Tom Bullitt, June 18, 1861, Bullitt Family Papers—Oxmoor Collection, 1683-2003, Filson.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, *The Borderland in the Civil War*, 153-154.

reason under heaven than that she wants... the African slave trade,” which was “directly at war with the opinions and the interests” of “her” slave-exporting neighbors to the north and to the north-west.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the best efforts of Border State slaveholders to buffer the institution, the crisis took its toll. The sale of slaves, in particular, slackened markedly during the secession winter, and belied the master class’s confident predictions about the security of their institution. There were a few cheerful reports—the *Louisville Daily Journal* observed that in Bardstown, five slaves belonging to the estate of Martin Yewell had sold for very strong prices indeed. Clay, twenty-eight, had brought a thousand dollars. So had seventeen-year-old Dave. Forty-five-year-old Silas had sold for \$600, and forty-two-year-old Jack for \$700. Finally, Harriet, fifty-five, had brought \$433.<sup>17</sup> These prices would have been robust, especially for the elder slaves, even for the pre-war period, however, and the reports of others contradicted their positive implications. Some potential buyers found that the money to fulfill promised transactions simply could not be found. Mr. Overton of Louisville, Kentucky, had sold “a family of negroes” for two thousand dollars, expecting to “give possession & get the money” on the fifth of November, 1860, only to find that the other party could no longer “comply” with the set terms. Overton was left, in turn, with his own debts unfulfilled.<sup>18</sup> At the end of 1860, slaveholder John Madinglay sent some eighty slaves to the market at Bardstown, site of Martin Yewell’s successful estate sale, hoping thereby to evade responsibility for provisioning them during the slack winter season. The slaves failed to sell, however, and he was forced to bring them home. As Isaac Johnson, himself a slave of the household, explained, “slave property was at a discount and he bought no more.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> January 7, 1861, and January 8, 1861, *Louisville Daily Journal*.

<sup>17</sup> “Sale of Negroes,” January 12, 1861, *Louisville Daily Journal*.

<sup>18</sup> W. N. Haldeman to Sister, November 28, 1860, Haldeman Family Papers, 1843-1985, Filson.

<sup>19</sup> Johnson, *Slavery Days in Old Kentucky*, 36.

Even hiring, with its lower price points and shorter-term flexibility, was not unaffected. William D. Swinney was one of the Glasgow, Missouri, region's wealthier planters. President of the Western Bank of Missouri, he also owned tobacco factories, the large plantation he called Sylvan Villa, seventy-nine slaves, and "total property," as of 1860, "worth over a half million dollars." Throughout the war, he also hired extra slaves from fellow planter Abiel Leonard, and in December of 1860 he wrote to Leonard regarding the two slave "Boys" who were currently members of his household. He would hand over the previous year's wage (\$375 for both, a price which suggested that they were not boys at all, but well-grown young men) via a messenger on the first of the year. He supposed that sum to be "fair as things were this year," but also took care to point out that "Boys fully as old & stout Physically as George" sometimes hired for less than what Leonard charged. And he could make no guarantees regarding keeping either for the upcoming year, even at a bargain. "I know not what is to befall us," he confided, and he could make no firm promises.<sup>20</sup> George Richard Browder of Logan County, Kentucky, hired the enslaved man Horace at \$105 for the year, but noted in his journal that he "could have gotten a boy cheaper by waiting—negroes are 25 pr cent lower."<sup>21</sup> Missouri farmer Thomas Conyers noted in his journal that on the first of January, 1861, his son had gone to Paris, Missouri, and found there "more Negroes offered for hire than there was demand for, even at reduced rates or prices."<sup>22</sup>

Slaves too paid keen attention to the state of the market. Reduced hires, canceled sales, and bankrupt masters could hardly have escaped their notice. Indeed, perhaps William Swinney's anxiety about his work force for the upcoming year spurred the hired slave Warren's decision to

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<sup>20</sup> William D. Swinney to Abiel Leonard, December 29, 1860, Leonard, Abiel, Papers, WHMC. Mark W. Geiger profiles Swinney in *Financial Fraud and Guerrilla Violence*, 45-46.

<sup>21</sup> Entry January 1, 1861, Troutman, ed., *The Heavens are Weeping*, 102-103.

<sup>22</sup> Entry January 1, 1861, Conyers, Thomas, Diary, WHMC.

run, leaving Swinney in early April and heading for the Iowa line.<sup>23</sup> And Madinglay's return from Bardstown with eighty unsold slaves in the early spring of 1861 convinced Isaac Johnson and his fellow bondsmen that "we would soon all be free." This awareness primed Johnson to actively seek an opportunity to run. When "the Yankee soldiers began to appear in the state," he acted, daring the fate of his slain friend Bob, murdered some years earlier following an aborted escape.<sup>24</sup>

Throughout the South, slaveholders at the outset of the secession crisis saw the control of "slave behavior" as the most important facet of protecting slavery. In the service of this goal, masters secured the boundaries of their households. Slaveholders "buttressed their slave patrols," "called home slaves on hire in the cities," and canceled passes.<sup>25</sup> Authorities re-deployed vagrancy laws already on the books to "retard the movement of blacks."<sup>26</sup> In the Border States, the ongoing, indeed, heightened salience of the market in enslaved labor may have rendered this endeavor more vexed. Slaveholders continued to hire out their slaves. Indeed, it seems likely that they could have scarcely afforded not to. Following antebellum custom (albeit in contravention of the state slave codes) a few slaves even continued to arrange their own hires. In May of 1861, Alfred Bibb, owned by John Bigger Bibb, was offered a job at Grayson Springs, Kentucky, for twelve dollars per month plus overwork. Bibb's previous hirer, Dr. Moorhead of Louisville, permitted him to take the job, notified his master, and forwarded on his wages. In September, Alfred Bibb himself informed Moorhead that he had been offered a still better position, and that he intended to "make the bargain."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> William D. Swinney to Abiel Leonard, April 7, 1861, Leonard, Abiel, Papers, WHMC. See Geiger, *Financial Fraud and Guerrilla Violence*, 136.

<sup>24</sup> Johnson, *Slavery Days in Old Kentucky*, 36.

<sup>25</sup> Roark, *Masters without Slaves*, 70-71, 74.

<sup>26</sup> Lucas, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky*, 147.

<sup>27</sup> Moorhead & Co. to John Bigger Bibb, May 28, 1861, and Alfred Bibb to Dr. Moorhead, September 12, 1861, Bibb Family Papers, Filson.

Nonetheless, the exigencies of hiring left the Border State household more porous than many masters and mistresses would have liked. White people, as historian Marion Lucas observes of Kentucky, “increasingly noticed a change” in the deference and “work patterns” of hired slaves.<sup>28</sup> And many had good reason to fear that more sinister schemes were also afoot. The market in enslaved labor, particularly in hired slaves, stood as one of several foci for the slaveholding class’s considerable anxiety. It was no coincidence that the *Louisville Daily Journal* took care to name the master or mistress of each hired slave bound over for trial in an April, 1861, arson case. Hiring a domestic staff had introduced into Captain Silas F. Miller’s household the possibility of its own destruction. Miller and his wife had awakened in the wee hours of the night “by a sense of suffocation from smoke.” Fleeing their second-storey bedroom, they discovered that their home was in flames. Miller evacuated the other members of his household and alerted the night watchman at the neighboring Galt House hotel. After the watchman and “a party of servants” extinguished the flames, it was discovered that the fire had been deliberately set, with three separate points of origin in the basement. Subsequent investigation suggested strongly that “Captain Miller’s negro servants had fired the premises.” Authorities arrested the four hired slaves, and “Phoebe, slave of Mr. Timberlake; Jerry, slave of Mrs. Owens; Susan, slave of Mr. Robb Floyd, and Phillip, slave of Mr. Cotton,” were bound over for trial on the strength of Phoebe’s confession.<sup>29</sup>

Following “prewar precedent,” slaveholders across the South struggled mightily to “keep the slaves in and abolitionist ideas out.”<sup>30</sup> Henry Clay Bruce, who had been a slave in the Missouri River county of Chariton, recalled vividly that during the secession crisis, “the slaves

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<sup>28</sup> Lucas, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky*, 147.

<sup>29</sup> “Attempt to Burn the Residence of Capt. Silas F. Miller,” April 29, 1861, *The Louisville Daily Journal*.

<sup>30</sup> Roark, *Masters without Slaves*, 70-71. As Ira Berlin et al observe, although “slaveholders had long feared that abolitionists or their emissaries would stir bloody insurrection by awakening the slaves to the possibility of liberty,” “most slaves learned about the deepening sectional dispute” from their masters and mistresses themselves ( “The Destruction of Slavery, 1861-1865,” in *Slaves No More*, 11.

had to keep very mum and always on their masters' land," out of fear of a beating by the newly reinvigorated slave patrols.<sup>31</sup> The threat of arson and murder were merely the worst of a host of dangers. Throughout the secession crisis, Mildred Bullitt worked hard to defend her household against the endeavors of nefarious "abolitionists" and others who brought with them dangerous ideas about "freedom, & equality." She sought to ensure that the slaves under her supervision were constantly mindful of her mastery, reminding the enslaved woman Tinah that "Lincon hadn't the power to free negroes that I had because he owned none." Tinah acknowledged that she remembered Bullitt's having explained to her that the antislavery advocate Cassius Clay could not set her free either. Indeed, she reassured her mistress, she had in years since been "seein all the time what you said was so." Bullitt was both "amused" and comforted by Tinah's reply, which she evidently took at face value. Her response confirmed for Bullitt that although emancipation was "discussed" in the cabins of the Bullitt household, the Bullitt slaves remained skeptical of its promises. Indeed, Bullitt observed hopefully, "the majority" were "very much afraid of the abolitionists." In this area at least, her mastery was secure.<sup>32</sup>

Bullitt's ongoing observation of the market in enslaved labor confirmed this conclusion. Her keen attentions to hiring, in particular, worked to bolster her sense that, firstly, intrusive and self-righteous Yankees had nothing good to offer Border State slaves, and secondly, that enslaved people agreed with her assessment of the situation. "When negroes are hired," she told her son Tom, "I'm told it is a common thing for them to refuse to be hired to northern people, because they require so much more work of them, than the southern people do." The market, however, also supplied the mechanism by which the troubled times had begun to penetrate the boundaries of her household. In the autumn of 1860, the enslaved man Wallace had tried to

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<sup>31</sup> Bruce, *The New Man*, 96.

<sup>32</sup> Mildred Bullitt to Tom Bullitt, November 6, 1860; August 28, 1859; February 20, 1861; January 18, 1861, Bullitt Family Papers—Oxmoor Collection, Filson.

orchestrate his own sale to a new master, one who promised greater privileges and mobility (via a steamboat job) as well as the possibility of pay for overwork. The notion was likely not his own. As Bullitt suspected and others confirmed, he had been “tampered with.” Overseer Mr. Bright, bastard born and “a mighty bad man,” as Mildred Bullitt had recently concluded, stood accused of doing the tampering. Surely, she told herself, Wallace would have made no such efforts without white influence.<sup>33</sup>

The economic crisis compounded and intensified existing fault lines, not only within, but between slaveholding households. As it had before the war, the traffic in the bodies of enslaved laborers bound white households together across class lines, simultaneously reinforcing networks of sociability, neighborhood, kinship, and sometimes hierarchy among the master class and those on the margins of slaveholding. Slaveholding women, in ways which have been largely ignored by scholars, used their power to transfer black bodies from household to household as a tool with which to discipline labor, as well as to clarify and reiterate their own social and personal identities. The shortage of cash and the straitened business climate which attended the secession crisis and the early weeks of the war, however, truncated previously brokered transactions and reduced the margin of error, threatening not only the finances of slaveholding households but the identities of their members and their standing relative to others of their kind.

In the spring of 1861, one of the hires which Susan Grigsby had negotiated for the labors of her enslaved women faltered, and one hire failed entirely. Among other transactions, she had some months earlier authorized the hire of Florence, who had previously lived with Grigsby’s cousin Sue Alexander in Nelson Furnace, Kentucky, to the Gordon household in Louisville. In May of 1861, however, the Gordons wrote to Grigsby, requesting permission to send Florence

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<sup>33</sup> Mildred Bullitt to Tom Bullitt, November 6, 1860; August 28, 1859; February 20, 1861; January 18, 1861, Bullitt Family Papers—Oxmoor Collection, Filson.

back and pay only her hire to date. Times were hard and uncertain, they explained. Florence could not be blamed for the cancellation of her hire and the loss of income to the Grigsbys. She was a “good servant” and not at fault. But the Gordons also hinted at another motive for sending Florence home. Months before, Sue Alexander had strongly warned Susan Grigsby, her cousin and confidant, against hiring Florence to the Gordons, citing Mrs. Gordon’s harsh and unkind treatment of her domestic servants as the reason. Rumor had it she worked the young women so hard they had no time to look after their own clothing and personal hygiene. Grigsby had completed the transaction nonetheless. In March of 1861, Sue Alexander had sent a kinswoman to discreetly investigate the situation, who reported back that she found it lacking. Florence was miserable, and her material needs were not met. Given the close-knit character of slaveholding society, the Gordons must certainly have at some point become aware of the nature of Alexander and Grigsby’s observations about the conditions of servitude within their household and under Mrs. Gordon’s direct supervision. It seems likely that this awareness, coupled with their financial troubles, shaped their decision to, in the interests of what they termed “justice” between her household and Grigsby’s own, send Florence back.<sup>34</sup>

The second hire was Mary’s. In late 1860, she too had been hired to a Louisville household of modest means. There, however, her troubles challenged both the already precarious financial base of her mistress’s household and the white woman’s understanding of the household itself and of her own role as mistress within it. The combined forces of “very great & daily increasing” “excitement” in Louisville, perhaps as the majority Unionist citizens of the area began preparations to place the city on a defense footing in case of attack by the nascent Confederacy, and the “cut off” and “very much reduced” income of the master of the household,

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<sup>34</sup> Sue Alexander to Susan Grigsby, March 28, 1861, and A. A. Gordon to Susan Grigsby, May 10, 1861, Grigsby Collection, Susan Preston (Shelby) Grigsby, Filson.

had driven the mistress and her children from the city. They moved to Elizabethtown in Hardin County, some miles to the southwest. Renting rooms in a hotel, they took steps to make ends meet. In May of 1861, this entailed an appeal to Susan Grigsby, requesting to send Mary home and, as the Gordons had requested for Florence, to pro-rate her year's hire. The mistress explained that Mary had, inexplicably it seemed, suddenly become unwilling to "wash her own clothes," much less to wash hers or the children's. And if Mary would not launder, then the laundry would have to be contracted out, and she could scarcely afford to pay for both Mary's hire and a laundress's wage. In addition, she reported, Mary had become "cross and disagreeable with the children" whom she was expected to supervise. She refused to "sew or do anything pleasantly," and she "really [did] not seem to care." Although she does not seem to have made the connection herself, she likely hit upon the reason for the change in Mary's disposition when she "very reluctantly" revealed that Mary would "be confined before long." Mary was "quite large," she observed, "& I think from her appearance at least five months perhaps more." She had liked Mary from the outset, but now she was baffled, and she was angry. She had taken care to treat the younger woman "like one of my own children." Mary's actions—in inexplicably becoming pregnant (she slept in the room with her mistress's children), and in the clear suffering which drained her ability and willingness to work—stood, in her mistress's worldview, as a rejection of that familial kindness and a deliberate withholding of the docility expected in return. Mary literally embodied, in her pregnancy and in her anguish, the betrayal of the white woman's expectations as mistress and slaveholder. In order to ensure the material and ideological survival of the mistress's household, already disrupted and threatened with dissolution by the war, this troublesome woman would have to go.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> M. J. Alexander to Susan Grigsby, ca. May, 1861, Grigsby Collection, Susan Preston (Shelby) Grigsby, Filson. See Edward Conrad Smith (*The Borderland in the Civil War*, 264-271) for a discussion of Louisville society during

Within the first months of armed hostilities, the danger of secession in either western Border State had been largely forestalled. Kentucky's neutral stance, described by historian Mark Grimsley as both "desperate" and "shaky," fell apart in the wake of a "witless Confederate incursion." Rebel general Leonidas Polk, fearing that federal troops were about to gain the upper hand, had ordered General Gideon Pillow to occupy Columbus, Kentucky.<sup>36</sup> Kentucky's "aroused legislature," in historian James Lee McDonough's words, swiftly "denounced the Rebels and invited the Federal government to drive them out." Federal forces moved quickly to claim Louisville, as well as Paducah and several other Ohio River towns, thus situating themselves in a position to outflank the Confederate post at Columbus.<sup>37</sup> In Missouri, after the capture of St. Louis's Camp Jackson, site of a major encampment of the pro-Confederate state militia, and the rioting which ensued, "hundreds of southern families" fled the city, "taking with them their slaves and what valuables they could most easily carry."<sup>38</sup> Union forces under Nathaniel Lyon drove Missouri's elected government, as well as the secessionist militia, out of St. Louis and Jefferson City, chasing them down the Missouri River and bringing them to battle at Boonville. In so doing they began to secure the river counties, also seat of some of the state's highest slave populations and most prosperous plantation agriculture, for the Union.<sup>39</sup>

Slavery in the Border States, nonetheless, began to show signs of serious strain. Part of the issue, but only part, was the presence of federal troops and the exigencies of compelling the

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the early months of the war.

<sup>36</sup> Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War*, 62; Harrison, *The Civil War in Kentucky*, 12-14.

<sup>37</sup> McDonough, *War in Kentucky*, 65.

<sup>38</sup> Sarah Jane Full Hill, "Mama's Book: Reminiscences of the Civil War," Part I—1861-1863, Papers of Sarah Jane Full Hill, LoC. See Michael Fellman, *Inside War*, and Louis S. Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis*, among others, for a fuller discussion of the coup d'état which secured Missouri for the Union. See Edward Conrad Smith, *The Borderland in the Civil War*, 221-240, for an extended discussion of the controversy over the arsenal and Camp Jackson.

<sup>39</sup> See Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones, *How the North Won*, 39, 59-60. See Allen C. Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*, 45.

loyalty of the border region. In this region, federal policy rather quickly shifted away from what historian Mark Grimsley terms “conciliation,” or an attempt to woo secession’s defenders back into the Unionist fold, to what he describes as “the pragmatic approach,” in which the federal army would keep civilians strictly “on the sidelines,” with harsh measures, if need be, and the war would be “won militarily.”<sup>40</sup> Federal policy as pertained to slavery operated as an adjunct to this goal, geared towards minimizing social disruption and maximizing slaveholder loyalty.<sup>41</sup> The First Confiscation Act, passed in August of 1861, supplied the mechanism by which property, including slaves, then in use “to aid the rebellion,” might be confiscated. Slaves who fell under this rubric would be “discharged” “from any service they owed to their rebellious owners.”<sup>42</sup> Outside of these limited parameters, however, soldiers were to remain strictly disinterested. In early November of 1861, William T. Sherman reiterated the standing policy to subordinate Alexander McDowell McCook, warning him that “the laws of the state of Kentucky are in full force.” Given the survival of the state codes in this loyal region, he explained, runaway “negroes must be surrendered on application of their masters,” the masters’ agents, or the county sheriff. Above all, they must not be permitted to “take refuge in Camp.” To do so, Sherman warned, “forms a source of misrepresentation by which Union men are estranged from our cause.”<sup>43</sup> General Samuel R. Curtis, commander of the Department of the Missouri, ordered that “state authorities” must be allowed to retrieve fugitives from behind Union lines “if they do not disturb the peace of Camp.” Though vexing, the problem of slavery was none of the army’s concern, and Curtis urged that “the civil authorities” be allowed to “dispose of the question.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War*, 51.

<sup>41</sup> See Ira Berlin et al, “The Destruction of Slavery, 1861-1865,” in *Slaves No More*.

<sup>42</sup> Siddali, *From Property to Person*, 3. See also Ira Berlin et al, “The Destruction of Slavery, 1861-1865,” in *Slaves No More*, 21.

<sup>43</sup> W. T. Sherman to Alexander McDowell McCook, November 8, 1861, Berlin et al, *Free at Last*, 15.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted in Berlin et al, “Missouri,” in *Freedom, Series I, Volume II*, 554.

By the end of 1861, some planters expressed the sense of caution which had carried over from the secession winter. Although major cities such as Lexington, Kentucky, and St. Louis in Missouri were securely held by federal forces, overall, the situation in each state was far from stable. In Missouri, following the death of Nathaniel Lyon at Wilson's Creek, as one historian puts it, "everything seemed to spiral out of control."<sup>45</sup> The rebel forces, once they had "recovered from the effects of the battle," followed up the advantage, driving on the Missouri River and eventually compelling the surrender of Lexington, Missouri. And there they remained, "for a time," gathering recruits to their standard and reinforcing the position.<sup>46</sup> During the rush to reinforce the beleaguered garrison at Lexington, and then to retake the city, Glasgow, Missouri, in Howard County, served as a staging point for the deployment of federal troops. In September, John Pope reported optimistically that "a large part of the ruffians and bridge burners" who had plagued federal forces and local civilians had withdrawn from the district.<sup>47</sup> But those insurgents who remained and the main force units of the Confederate Army stationed in the region remained highly troublesome. The correspondence of the Union officers garrisoned in and around Glasgow there reveals ongoing skirmishing as both sides struggled to control and access the river crossings just outside and across from Glasgow, and as regiments of federal soldiers headed to the front via the steamers *War Eagle* and *Iatan*, and by overland routes.<sup>48</sup> The military struggle through the autumn took its toll on the slave-driven agriculture of the district, and on the market in enslaved labor. By the end of 1861, William Swinney told Abiel Leonard that slaves near Glasgow generally brought between twenty-five and fifty dollars less in their annual hires

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<sup>45</sup> See Hattaway and Jones, *How the North Won*, 39, 59-60. See also Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*, 45.

<sup>46</sup> Smith, *The Borderland in the Civil War*, 259-261.

<sup>47</sup> John Pope to Major General John C. Fremont, September 12, 1861, *ORs, Series I, Volume III*, 487.

<sup>48</sup> See especially the correspondence between Colonel (later Brigadier General) Jefferson C. Davis and Major General John C. Fremont, September 12, 1861; September 13, 1861; September 14, 1861; September 18, 1861; and September 21, 1861, in *ORs, Series I, Volume 3*, 170-182.

than they had in 1860. He confirmed his previous year's prediction that he would "hire very few," but expressed willingness to retain the "boys" George and Warren, the latter of whom had been recaptured after his escape attempt in April. He would, he promised, pay "whatever" price "may be thought right all things considered."<sup>49</sup>

But late 1861 also reveals that the market continued to function both as a stage upon which the master class enacted their paternalist sensibilities, and as the mechanism via which they recouped their considerable investments in the peculiar institution. For the Bodley clan of Lexington, such strain was not enough to force a change in what appeared to be their usual policy toward those slaves whom they hired out. In December of 1861, Charles S. Bodley, whose extended family was strongly Unionist in convictions and, as the war progressed, increasingly willing to countenance emancipation for both humanitarian concerns and as the price of saving the republic, authorized his brother to have the next year's hires arranged for the slave women Emily and Lucy. Lucy had worked for the W. K. Thomas household during the previous year, and Bodley directed that she should remain there throughout 1862, as both she and the Thomas family evidently preferred. Emily's wishes, Bodley insisted, must be consulted before any arrangement could be finalized for her labors, and for each woman, "good homes" ought to be prioritized over "good pay" in making the selection.<sup>50</sup> John Bigger Bibb's slaves, too, continued to participate in the arrangement of their own hires, although the correspondence between Bibb and the business agents who brokered hires for his human chattel also rhetorically located these individuals as rightful dependents within white households or "homes." Cornelia, who suffered from chronic health problems which would plague her throughout the war, had not been hired as

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<sup>49</sup> William D. Swinney to Abiel Leonard, December 25, 1861, Leonard, Abiel, Papers, WHMC.

<sup>50</sup> Charles S. Bodley to Brother, December 25, 1861, Bodley Family Papers, Filson.

of the end of May, 1862. But as T. A. Frazer, Bibb's man in Russellville, Kentucky, informed his boss, he was actively "trying to get a home for her, and also instructed her to try herself."<sup>51</sup>

Though falling prices reflected the troubled times, the endurance of the market acted as a cushion for slavery as an institution, providing the mechanism by which slaves sold by an insolvent or fed-up master were reabsorbed into other slaveholding households. Henry Moore turned to the market to resolve the violent conflict between his wife, Jane, and their enslaved woman, the formidable Liza Rudd. Having spent a day's labor in the household's corn fields, Liza Rudd had returned to the smoke house to prepare the household's supper. She was "'jes' standin' in the smoke house that was built back of the big kitchen when Mistress walks in,'" her son John explained in later years. The mistress "'had a long whip hid under her apron and began whippin Mamma across the shoulders, 'thout tellin' her why.'" Rudd was not willing to accept such treatment. Butcher knife in hand, she charged her mistress. "'Ole Missus run so fas' Mama couldn't catch up wif her,'" John Rudd recalled, "'so she threwed the butcher knife and stuck it in the wall up to the hilt.'" When Henry Moore inquired about the whereabouts of his wife, Liza Rudd calmly informed him that "'she up stairs with the door locked.'" Employment with a Louisville hotel removed Liza Rudd from the household.<sup>52</sup>

Repeated penetration of the household by soldiers of either army drove a few masters and mistresses to despair. But the market allowed them to salvage at least a portion of their investment, and to attempt to secure political control over the enslaved population by bringing the politics of mastery into rough congruence with the politics of the occupying forces. Regulations aside, the presence of federal troops proved hugely disruptive to slave society. Military correspondence, the diaries and letters of men in the ranks and among the officer corps,

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<sup>51</sup> T. A. Frazer to John Bigger Bibb, May 27, 1862, Bibb Family Papers, Filson.

<sup>52</sup> John Rudd, Indiana, WPA, Vol. 6, 169-172.

and the recollections of slaves themselves are replete with incidents of escape, sometimes abetted by those officers and enlisted men unwilling to countenance personal complicity with the slave code.

In addition to aiding and abetting escape, soldiers penetrated the boundaries of the household. Ultimately, the actions of “rogues,” soldiers, and “trifling people” wore at the slaveholding household, disturbing the regular order of its daily function, opening space for slaves to engage in resistance which could range from sassing back or slowing the pace of work to violence or *maroonage*, and causing serious disruption before the end of the first year of the war. Indeed, disruption came to districts occupied not only by the federal army, but by the Confederates, as well. As the war in the Border States progressed, some slaveholding households collapsed, but slavery did not. The relatively robust character of the market during this phase of the war meant that while individual masters sometimes found themselves forced to liquidate their households and contract or minimize their investment in the institution, their slaves were not necessarily freed.

Near Louisville, Oxmoor farm was often disrupted by the “rogues” who, Mildred Bullitt griped, were “helping themselves” to the farm’s produce. The region was so disordered that it had become nigh unto impossible to “manage” their slaves to “get any work done.” Although they would not officially vacate Oxmoor until 1863, by October of 1861, William Bullitt had given serious thought to dissolving the bulk of his household and dispersing most of its members to far-flung parts of the state. He speculated on the possibility of taking at least a few of “the negroes,” his wife Mildred explained, to Cottonwood, the household’s secondary farm in Union County, “as soon as he can move them.”<sup>53</sup> As suggested by the anguished correspondence of the

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<sup>53</sup> Mildred Bullitt to Tom Bullitt, October 22, 1861, and William Bullitt to Tom Bullitt, November 23, 1861, Bullitt Family Papers—Oxmoor Collection, Filson.

Carvills and other federal-sympathizing residents of the region, Union County was scarcely a haven of peace. The region, in the northwest of the state, trended Confederate in sympathies. As historian Edward Conrad Smith points out, western Kentucky in general depended on “the commerce down the river,” and their allegiance generally lay with the South.<sup>54</sup> Catherine Carvill wrote to her sister in November of 1861 that “armed bands of ruffians” roamed the district, “pillaging the property of those who remain loyal to their country,” driving Unionist women and children from “the sanctity of their own firesides,” and menacing “young girls” with sexual violence.<sup>55</sup> But it was a Confederate region, and the Bullitts were a Confederate household. Mildred Bullitt carefully kept silent about this scheme, as she herself was undecided as to “what would be best” for her husband to “do.” But for his part, William Bullitt optimistically predicted that once he had sent “a mixed force 6 men & boys, & 3 or 4 women” to be bossed by his son Henry Massie Bullitt in Union County, neighbors outside of Louisville would rent the majority of the acreage at \$1,800 for five years’ tenancy. He himself would retain mastery of the remainder of the land, “with about 3 Hands,” “in the management of such stock (say Sheep & Mules) as are least liable to be stolen.” Five enslaved men would be hired out for a total of \$600 per year. Finally, he and Mildred would move to the city “for the sake of society,” taking two slaves with them. Ultimately, he predicted optimistically, the household’s income would be greater than it had been when the Bullitts themselves ran Oxmoor farm.<sup>56</sup>

Josie Underwood, daughter of a Unionist slaveholding household near rebel-occupied Bowling Green, also reported frequent depredations by no-account people in and out of uniform. Rebel troops under the command of Simon Bolivar Buckner had arrived in the city in September,

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<sup>54</sup> Smith, *The Borderland in the Civil War*, 221-223.

<sup>55</sup> C. M. Carvill to Sister, November 27, 1861, Carvill, George, W., Letters, WHMC.

<sup>56</sup> Mildred Bullitt to Tom Bullitt, October 22, 1861, and William Bullitt to Tom Bullitt, November 23, 1861, Bullitt Family Papers—Oxmoor Collection, Filson.

creating “consternation among the town’s Union population,” many of whom fled the region.<sup>57</sup> Months of insults, theft, and interference with labor eventually culminated in Warner Underwood’s decision to dissolve his household. Rebel troops, according to Josie, had drained the family milk cows dry, then laughed at Aunt Liz, the enslaved woman tasked with milking them; they had stolen a skillet full of breakfast from underneath Aunt Damsel’s watchful eye; and worst of all, they had burned down elderly Uncle Todd’s hilltop cabin to use the site for their own defenses. The enslaved and free children of the household, according to Josie, appointed themselves lookouts, “all day rushing in” to report that ““The *solgers* are digging taters at the bottom of the garden”” or that ““Theys got one of we’all’s pigs—cause I heard it squeal.”” These intrusions into the physical confines of the household (even if only the barn, the kitchen, and an old slave’s cabin on the hill) had the household in an uproar. Worse, Warner Underwood had been utterly unable to obtain redress for either the loss of his property or the insults to his dependents. As Josie observed, “the darkies can’t yet understand that it is possible for their ‘Marster’ to be so ‘run over.’” She believed them to be just as sad as she was to witness the collapse of her father’s authority. This steady undermining of Warner Underwood’s social and political prerogatives as master shaped the household’s market decisions. In December, the Underwoods declined to purchase Wilse, a “negro boy” who, having followed his rebel master up from the Deep South, came highly recommended as “a fine fellow and a splendid butler.” As Josie observed, “with the place so overrun with soldiers,” it was “hard enough to know what to do with our own negroes.” They could not productively add more. Within weeks her father had taken further steps, turning in part to the market in enslaved labor to resolve his conundrum. After much agonizing, he hired “Aunt Sis and family and other negro women,” as well as “most of the negro men,” to neighboring farmers, and packed up his family and a few domestic slaves

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<sup>57</sup> Harrison, *The Civil War in Kentucky*, 16-17.

and beat a retreat to a more secluded and secure district. Those slaves who remained on the Underwood land to work for their subsistence would do so under the supervision of the Westerns, Underwood's daughter and son-in-law, both known Confederate sympathizers, and thus able to compel respect from the occupying forces.<sup>58</sup>

Throughout 1862 and into the first weeks of 1863, the market endured, but prices varied widely. Estate appraisals seem to have hewed to pre-war quotes. When George W. Johnson bled to death from a gunshot wound received at Shiloh, he left behind a Scott County, Kentucky, household full of slaves. Old Davy, sixty years old, was appraised at only fifty dollars, and 50-year-old Gabriella and two-year-old Llewellyn at one hundred dollars apiece, with Harry, three, and Vincent, four, bringing \$150 each. Of the others, who ranged in age from Loyd, aged six, to Tom, aged nineteen, and Mary Ann, aged 35, prices spanned from two hundred (Loyd) through \$550 (Mary Ann), to \$800 (Tom).<sup>59</sup> But appraisals were one thing, and actual sales likely another. In order to settle John W. Hughes's estate in federally-occupied Louisville in February of 1862, "one negro girl," between twelve and fifteen years of age, was sold for two hundred and fifty dollars.<sup>60</sup> In Daviess County, Missouri, Louisa Boggs purchased the "negro Woman slave for life, called and known by the name of Evaline," forty years old and "of a black or dark complexion," for the sum of three hundred dollars.<sup>61</sup> And by the end of the year, things were worse. The "old family residence" of J. H. Irvine, one of Susan Grigsby's neighbors and business advisors, sold in late 1862 for \$6,300. Irvine, a conditional Unionist, relayed the news to Grigsby as a means of demonstrating "the price of [Servants], after 18 months hard fighting," and illustrating his "honest convictions" that "the South has set more negros free, and depreciated the

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<sup>58</sup> Entries September 30, 1861, October 15, 1861, October 16, 1861, November 30, 1861, and December 28, 1861, Baird, ed., *Josie Underwood's Civil War Diary*, 105-136.

<sup>59</sup> Assessment of estate, Johnson, George W., Papers, KHS.

<sup>60</sup> Settlement of the estate of John W. Hughes, February 2, 1862, Hughes Family Papers, KHS.

<sup>61</sup> Bill of Sale, John and Phoebe Hopkins and Louisa Boggs, July, 1862, Hopkins, John and Phoebe, Bill of Sale, 1862, WHMC.

price of those who are not yet free, in the 18 months than the Abominable Abolitionist have done in 18 years or could have done in 18 years to come.” In support of his argument, he listed off the prices brought by four of the slaves who had gone with the estate: “No. 1 Man, \$250, No. 1 cook, 35 years old, \$175, Old Billy \$50, little girl 9 years old \$125.”<sup>62</sup>

Hiring proved more resilient. As Missouri unionist J. H. Holdsworth informed the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, he doubted that any slave “would sell for over \$175 on the average at this time.” The highest recent price he could recall had been brought by “one likely man a miller,” who sold for \$305. This man, however, had regularly hired by the year for a comparable sum. Holdsworth explained that rates for a year’s worth of a slave’s labor were no longer coupled to the value in a slave’s person. Indeed, he observed, “the hiring of [a] negro at this time is no criterion for what he would sell for.” Indeed, many households “wanting help” preferred to hire rather than to purchase, and were willing to “give almost as much for the [services] for one year as they would for life.” The likelihood of the slave’s running away meant that buying a slave was too risky an investment, and to hire had proven safer, as by local custom hirers only paid for “the time” an escaped slave “was with them.”<sup>63</sup>

The resilience of the market in hires, however, varied across region. In January of 1863, William D. Swinney and Abiel Leonard once again came to an agreement for the hire of the enslaved men Warren and George. The Glasgow region, at the heart of Missouri’s plantation belt, was plagued by guerrilla warfare which would only become more brutal through the end of the year and into the next. But as hires were renegotiated in the first days of 1863, affairs remained comparably stable, although not without hints of trouble. Leonard asked around in Fayette and other towns and concluded that “first class hands” were hiring for \$150 each.

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<sup>62</sup> J. H. Irvine to Susan Grigsby, December 17, 1862, Grigsby Collection, Susan Preston (Shelby) Grigsby, Filson.

<sup>63</sup> J. H. Holdsworth to Senate Committee on Military Affairs, February 16, 1863, Berlin et al, eds., *Freedom, Series I, Volume I: The Destruction of Slavery*, 446-448.

Although he and Swinney had been in the habit of setting a price for their hire only after the year's term was up, both men were in poor health, and as Leonard proposed, "this year, if we wait to the end of it, the great probability is that it will devolve upon our representatives to settle it." They concluded that \$300 for the hire of both young men was a fair price, and Leonard noted in his account books that Swinney would continue to clothe, feed, and "[take] care of them."<sup>64</sup> In February, he issued instructions to his son Reeves, clearly seeking to resolve his household's outstanding debts in order to leave his family financially solvent. Reeves Leonard, Abiel wrote, was to sell the household's scrub horses and some of the other stock, but to keep the thoroughbreds and the purebred hogs, cattle, and sheep. He advised that the fattening of this stock would bring cash into the household "about equal to the hire of the servants" Mrs. Leonard "must keep."<sup>65</sup> And as Glasgow tobacco merchant James L. Morgan would write to a friend in Virginia during the summer, he "at present" had "servants enough to wait upon" his household's guests. "Don't know how long we will have them, however," he acknowledged, "we had 8 to run off last week."<sup>66</sup>

Heavily Confederate western Kentucky was plagued by the antics of rebel partisan rangers, operating as an adjunct to Braxton Bragg's conventional invasion of the state, and by the ruthless but not entirely effective federal response. Attacks on Union provost guards, travelers waylaid, and other misdeeds designed to "foster the impression that various large and organized bands of Confederate partisans existed all over the western part of the state" brought swift Union retaliation. Federal cavalry quickly arrived in the region, riding with authorization to burn the

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<sup>64</sup> Abiel Leonard to W. D. Swinney, January 2, 1863, W. D. Swinney to Abiel Leonard, January 3, 1863, and January 2, 1863, memo, Leonard, Abiel, Papers, WHMC.

<sup>65</sup> Abiel Leonard to Reeves Leonard, February 23, 1863, Leonard, Abiel, Papers, WHMC.

<sup>66</sup> James L. Morgan to James M. Nash, July 30, 1863, quoted in Fellman, *Inside War*, 69.

homes of those who gave aid and comfort to the partisans. Skirmishing continued throughout the fall, with the federals failing to dislodge Confederate partisan and local son Adam Rankin Johnson's men, who emerged as folk heroes among the southern-sympathizing members of the community, and mere outlaws among the rest.<sup>67</sup>

Despite this considerable unrest, the market in enslaved labor flourished there, with some sources indicating greater stability than that seen in federally-occupied districts farther to the east. Optimistic reports came from there that slaves hired well, at prices which held steady to pre-war rates. R. J. Bowerly of Henderson, Kentucky, reported that John Bigger Bibb's "negroes" had "hired very well this year." Several slaves, namely "Betsy & children Robertson & Peyton" had hired at "last years prices," and "the Factory hands" had hired at the hearty price of thirty-five dollars per month, likely in the region's thriving tobacco industry. T. A. Frazer's report from Russellville, Kentucky, formerly the capitol of the rebel shadow government, also revealed fairly stable prices, compared to pre-war rates. By February, he had hired Charlotte and her child to a hotel for fifty dollars for the year, and hired Sarah, who had recently given birth, to one Joshua Knowles, also for fifty dollars, only five dollars less than her previous year's hire, a discount more than accounted for by the birth of her child.<sup>68</sup>

The politics of the region give a clue as to the reasons behind the apparent relative stability of slavery there. By the fall of 1862, the Lincoln administration had taken a firm stance against slavery with the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, "serving notice," in the words of Ira Berlin et al, that on the first of the year the slaves of rebellious states would become free in

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<sup>67</sup> See Cooling, *Fort Donelson's Legacy*. See also Harrison, *The Civil War in Kentucky*, 20-23, for a description of the formation of the Confederate shadow government at Russellville.

<sup>68</sup> R. J. Bowerly to John Bigger Bibb, January 22, 1863, and T. A. Frazer to John Bigger Bibb, February 5, 1863, Bibb Family Papers, 1760-1887, Filson. See also Lowell H. Harrison, *The Civil War in Kentucky*, 20-23, for a description of the formation of the Confederate shadow government at Russellville.

perpetuity.<sup>69</sup> This shift in Union policy, though it deliberately excluded the loyal Border States from its provisions, drove many among the region's master class into the arms of the Confederacy. The journal entries of planter matron Ellen Kenton McGaughey Wallace of Hopkinsville, also in western Kentucky, reveal that despite numerous and repeated breaches of her household by Confederate regulars and "gurillars" alike, in the weeks following the President's proclamation, she found herself more comforted by their occupation of the town than by that of the federals. Hopkinsville changed hands numerous times during the war. When Union cavalry retook the town in early November, 1862, Wallace, formerly a staunchly conservative Unionist, confided to her diary that she felt "a little nervous," there being "no man on the lot, and the town full of northern soldiers." "I must say," she acknowledged, "I do not feel that sense of security that I would if they were southerners."<sup>70</sup> Perhaps the slaveholding households of Henderson and Russellville, Kentucky, responded similarly, greeting the Confederate irregulars who patrolled their region as forces of relative stability.

Things were different in Union-occupied central and north-central Kentucky as 1862 became 1863. Federal troops in and around Danville, in Lincoln County, cut timber, confiscated livestock, and impressed civilian homes. In the late summer of 1862, John Warren Grigsby, a colonel of rebel cavalry then serving under John Hunt Morgan, had reminded his wife that if federal troops should "press houses or any thing," she must get a receipt for reimbursement and the receipt must be in her name alone.<sup>71</sup> In December, neighbor J. H. Irvine warned Grigsby that some three thousand federals occupied nearby Danville, and had been "cutting Miss Faulkners

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<sup>69</sup> See Ira Berlin, et al., "The Destruction of Slavery, 1861-1865," in *Slaves no More*, 42.

<sup>70</sup> Entry November 6, 1862, Journal by Ellen Kenton McGaughey Wallace 1849-1865, KHS. See also numerous entries for the year 1862.

<sup>71</sup> John Warren Grigsby to Susan Grigsby, August 7, 1862, Grigsby Collection, Filson.

timber for wood greatly to her annoyance.”<sup>72</sup> Many residents complained, not only of the depredations to their property, but of Union Brigadier General Jeremiah T. Boyle’s determined—some would have said harsh—crackdown on disloyalty.<sup>73</sup>

For the Grigsby household and its dependents, the troubled times were complicated by multiple personal tragedies. Late in the year, a bout with diphtheria tore through the Grigsby household, and Susan watched four of her children die. Reeling from this unimaginable loss, Susan Grigsby left her plantation in the hands of two trusted men—Judge J. H. Irvine, a near neighbor, and one Mr. McFerran—and rode southward in search of her husband. It is the copious correspondence she received from these two men which reveals the crisis which confronted the Grigsby household, their neighbors, and their class as 1862 became 1863. It was a letter from Judge Irvine, for instance, which informed Susan Grigsby that loss was not limited to the white members of the household. The young enslaved woman Mary, whose hire had been canceled in the spring of 1861, had some time since given birth to her child. 1862 found her hired to a new household, a change which may have brought, for her, a loss of occupational status. Previously, she had been employed primarily, it seems, in domestic tasks. These tasks, particularly laundry, could be physically arduous, but with her new hire, to the Russell household, she found herself and all other “hands” on the place set to work killing hogs. And it was while she was thusly occupied, leaving her child wrapped in a cradle near the stove, that a spark ignited the child’s bedding and Mary’s son or daughter (the documentary record gives no clue) died.<sup>74</sup>

In this setting, Grigsby’s agents set about renegotiating the annual hires for her enslaved property at the end of the year. Some households in the Louisville area abruptly canceled their hires of enslaved women and girls. Far from the elaborate justifications submitted by the

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<sup>72</sup> J. H. Irvine to Susan Grigsby, December 2, 1862, Grigsby Collection, Filson.

<sup>73</sup> See Cooling, *Fort Donelson’s Legacy*.

<sup>74</sup> J. H. Irvine to Susan Grigsby, December 2, 1862, Grigsby Collection, Filson.

Gordons and by Mary's mistress in an earlier year, two "girls" were sent back to the Grigsby household, according to McFerran, "with out any explanation at all."<sup>75</sup> Middling households struggled to pay prices for enslaved labor which, while reduced, often dramatically so, remained beyond the means of many. Others skimped on the clothing and other subsistence to which a hired slave was customarily entitled. The Allens, who hired an enslaved woman and her two children from Susan Grigsby, "grumbled" so vigorously about the cost of their subsistence, that McFerran canceled the hire entirely and moved the enslaved family to a different household.<sup>76</sup> It had been customary for masters and mistresses to draft the subsistence to which a hired slave was entitled into the terms of the contract, although the recollections of slaves and occasional outrage from the master class itself suggests that the entitlement was often honored only in the breach.

In light of the situation in the Border States at mid-war, however, this minor squabble assumes new significance. In this situation, to guarantee that this woman and her children were appropriately clothed served a potentially disciplinary function as well as what may have been simply humane. The Grigsby household itself was under strain from without and within, and neighbor Irvine had, only weeks before, taken the "liberty" of warning Grigsby that "at this particular time" she must make sure not to "fall off, or come short, in annual supplies" to those slaves who resided under her own roof, lest her work force depart en masse.<sup>77</sup> The loss of laborers could have been catastrophic. Grigsby herself was absent from home, and unable to exert her formidable will in household management, and production was already declining. Her hogs were badly attended to, and Grigsby received reports that the quantity of lard they yielded was pitiful indeed. Despite Irvine's assertion that the household's resident slaves "all seemed to

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<sup>75</sup> McFerran to Susan Grigsby, January 17, 1863, Grigsby Collection, Filson.

<sup>76</sup> McFerran to Susan Grigsby, January 17, 1863, Grigsby Collection, Filson.

<sup>77</sup> J. H. Irvine to Susan Grigsby, December 17, 1862, Grigsby Collection, Filson.

be contented” and that he could “manage” the most troublesome among them, discipline needed to be tightened. McFerran, after a visit to the farm, promised that he would lay one hundred lashes on the “first man who rides a horse without orders.”<sup>78</sup> In January of 1863 Mary Savage complained to her husband, Frank, of the ill treatment her enslaved girl Fanny had received at the hands of Frank’s kin. Nancy Savage had hired Fanny under the assumption that she would supply the girl with “comfortable clothing,” but sent her back to Mary dressed in rags. Fanny, Mary Savage reported with dismay, had “no clothing at all scarcely,” only a “dirty old summer bonnet” and “two dresses one old cotton and a calico up to her knees.” Mary Savage herself made Fanny’s new dress, and revealed with her description of the act a host of positive feelings directed towards herself and her bondswoman. “She is very fond of her dress,” she observed, and decided that the young woman ought to have a woolen hood and some other winter garments to go with it, which she asked Frank Savage to buy. But supplying Fanny with new garments was not merely kind—it served, Savage hoped, as a guarantee of Fanny’s continued good behavior. If not “dressed decently,” Mary Savage predicted obliquely, Fanny would “soon resort to foul means to get nice things.” Her aside that “she is quite large, has almost got her growth,” hinted at the likely sexual nature of the “foul means” she feared.<sup>79</sup>

As real incomes dropped for households on the margins of slaveholding, sites of conflict opened between those households and planter households such as Grigsby’s. Nonetheless, transactions in which enslaved laborers were shuttled between white households continued to serve as one tool by which the master class carried out their formidable determination to extract value from the institution and to secure as much control as they could over the enslaved population, even in the face of occupation, insurgency, and declining production. As before the

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<sup>78</sup> J. H. Irvine to Susan Grigsby, December 17, 1862, McFerran to Susan Grigsby, January 22, 1863, Grigsby Collection, Filson.

<sup>79</sup> Mary Savage to Frank Savage, January 4, 1863, Savage, Frank A. and Mary, Filson.

war, the hiring out of even small children meant that few slaves had to be a “total loss.”<sup>80</sup> In the winter of 1862-1863, McFerran hired a slave described only as a “little girl” to the Hicks household for “\$9 and to be well clad.”<sup>81</sup>

Slaves fled white households at high rates during this season, many of them seeking freedom, protection, and employment with the occupying federal forces. And white households fled the federal occupation itself. The market in enslaved labor, which, while faltering, did not collapse entirely, worked to preserve—or to reestablish—the incorporation of enslaved women and men into white households. In late 1862, the Gordons left Louisville. Their correspondence with John Warren Grigsby, Susan’s husband, reveals that they had evidently managed to reconcile their household honor with the enslaved woman Florence’s continued employment. Perhaps the reduced rate for her hire—forty dollars rather than the earlier sum of sixty—played a part. Whatever the reason, they had retained her services through the end of 1861 and through 1862 as well, sending their “note” of credit to John Grigsby via an intermediary. Before the year was up, however, they had refuged for points elsewhere. They did not take Florence with them. But neither did they permit her to seek her own liberation. Rather, they saw to it that she was reabsorbed into another white household through the mechanism of hiring. They placed her into the “care,” as they understood it, of W. B. Bold, who swiftly dispatched a note to Susan Grigsby, reiterating the Gordons’ assessment that Florence was “a good servant,” and inquiring of Grigsby the terms of her hire.<sup>82</sup>

And when Grigsby’s enslaved woman Jennie took her own freedom, she did not keep it long. Picked up by the Lexington, Kentucky, police, and jailed under the provisions of the state

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<sup>80</sup> Martin, *Divided Mastery*, 13.

<sup>81</sup> McFerran to Susan Grigsby, January 22, 1863, Grigsby Collection, Filson.

<sup>82</sup> W. L. Breckinridge to John Grigsby, January 4, 1862, Grigsby Collection, Grigsby, John Warren, ; W. B. Bold to Susan Grigsby, December 8, 1862, McFerran to Susan Grigsby, January 17, 1863, Grigsby Collection, Susan Preston (Shelby) Grigsby (1830-1891), Filson. But by mid-January of 1863, he had yet not fulfilled the terms set—forty dollars for the year, with “sixty approved by the teller in the Bank.”

laws that continued to encompass fugitive slaves, within weeks of her detention, both the arresting officer and McFerran himself had found potential new masters and mistresses for her, heads of households who no doubt desired to acquire enslaved labor at a bargain price.<sup>83</sup> Slavery was fraying at the edges, and that unraveling would only accelerate in the months to come, but the master class, by law, custom, and a near-monopoly on violence, continued to hold the upper hand. Nonetheless, running away, even a failed attempt, took its toll on the finances of the master class. John Bigger Bibb's slave Marion evidently fled the Roberts household, to which he had been hired prior to February of 1863. He didn't get far, but his escape came with a steep financial penalty for his master. It had cost \$31.10 in fees to get him out of the Bowling Green jail, and hirer Roberts refused to "have anything to do with him." A new hire had to be arranged, at a reduced rate which would endure into 1865.<sup>84</sup>

In both western and central Kentucky, regardless of occupying forces, some slaves took action to thwart their masters' and mistresses' interests. In January of 1863, George Richard Browder hired Henry from his master for another year, at the cost of seventy-five dollars. He had already had trouble with the young man. In December, Henry "was very insolent, insulting--& defiant" when Browder undertook to discipline him for "running about at night." Henry, Browder complained to his journal, "refused persistently to be corrected," and Abram, another hired slave of the household, "refused to give" Browder "any assistance" in beating the boy. Not until a young (white) neighbor arrived to help could Henry be punished. Hands tied before the whipping, however, Henry "begged piteously, confessed his fault & promised never to do so again, said he would pray to the Lord for help to do better." A good Methodist, Browder

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<sup>83</sup> Willis True to Susan Grigsby, February 11, 1863, McFerran to Susan Grigsby, February 23, 1863, Grigsby Collection, Susan Preston (Shelby) Grigsby Filson.

<sup>84</sup> T. A. Frazer to John Bigger Bibb, May 27, 1862, and T. A. Frazer to John Bigger Bibb, February 5, 1863, Bibb Family Papers, Filson.

accepted his repentance and “untied him & forgave him—as I hope to be forgiven.” As he concluded, “this trouble is the result of Lincoln’s war.” Nonetheless, he believed the trouble to be short-lived. Threatened with a whipping, Henry had backed down. And after their annual Christmas holiday, the neighborhood’s slaves, according to Browder, had gone back to work “as cheerfully & readily as if there were no rumors of emancipation.”<sup>85</sup>

Indeed, across the Border States, and largely regardless of the stability of hiring prices, slaves pushed back, seeking to control the terms of their labor and to solidify their family bonds. Long before the war, the market in enslaved labor had emerged as a terrain of struggle, over which slaves contended with their masters and mistresses. The struggle was reinvigorated, and gained in significance, in the face of the intensified strain on the slaveholding household. In years prior, John Bigger Bibb had allowed his slaves a considerable degree of latitude in arranging their own hires. This practice continued, but the commentary supplied by both Frazer and Bowerly, Bibb’s western Kentucky agents, suggests that the Bibb slaves also had by early 1863 begun to make demands which ran counter to and frustrated the needs of their master and his agents. In a few cases, the slaves’ personal and familial priorities coincided relatively well with the commercial needs of their master and his agents. Two slaves, both in poor health, were able to leverage their illnesses in order to remain with or near their spouses. The enslaved man Frank’s complaints of rheumatism and insistence that “it was necessary that he should be with his wife to be well nursed” evidently resulted in a hire in the neighborhood he sought. T. A. Frazer hired him to one Thomas J. Lyon, along with fellow slave Henry. Cornelia, who had been ill the previous year, was ailing again, with “a falling of the womb, and asthma.” No hire had

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<sup>85</sup> Entry January 19, 1863, December 17, 1862, December 30, 1862, Troutman, ed., *The Heavens are Weeping*, 140-141.

evidently been arranged for her, and Frazer agreed to permit her to live “to herself, her husband with her,” for the minimal cost of twenty-five dollars for the year.<sup>86</sup>

Frank’s insistence on remaining near his wife, and Cornelia’s desire to live with her husband, were likely not incompatible with the fiscal and managerial priorities of their master. Frank’s health would probably improve if he was near his wife rather than away from her, and for Cornelia, the twenty-five dollars she paid for the privilege of living “to herself, her husband with her,” surely outweighed what many potential hirers would have been willing to bid for the labor of a woman with her physical disabilities. Self-hiring had been illegal in Kentucky since the state’s founding, but it seems likely that Cornelia’s situation did not pose the sort of security risk contemplated by the law. In their insistence on sustaining their own romantic and communal relationships, other slaves managed to throw a wrench into the master or the mistress’s priorities. Of more concern than either Frank or Cornelia was Louisa’s obstinacy. Frazer had procured two potential hirers for Louisa, but she, having recently begun a new romance with the enslaved man Wesley, who had in turn recently separated from his wife, Martha, “positively refused to go with either,” and Frazer warned that the potential hirers “would not take her unless she was willing to go.”<sup>87</sup> For Jim, another of the Bibb slaves, to hire his own time, however, was apparently beyond the pale. The circuit court had fined Bibb for “suffering ‘Jim’ to go as a Free Man,” R. J. Bowerly explained. Jim would have to pay the fine he had incurred for Bibb, “& not suffer [him] to be annoyed,” but Bowerly predicted difficulties to come, as Jim was “very head strong” and it was “difficult to get” him to “do right.”<sup>88</sup> And in late January of 1863, Mary, the slave of Susan Grigsby, had apparently had enough. After one or two false starts, McFerran, her mistress’s

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<sup>86</sup> T. A. Frazer to John Bigger Bibb, February 5, 1863, Bibb Family Papers, Filson.

<sup>87</sup> T. A. Frazer to John Bigger Bibb, February 5, 1863, and R. J. Bowerly to John Bigger Bibb, January 22, 1863, Bibb Family Papers, Filson.

<sup>88</sup> T. A. Frazer to John Bigger Bibb, February 5, 1863, and R. J. Bowerly to John Bigger Bibb, January 22, 1863, Bibb Family Papers, Filson.

agent, had managed to hire her to the Dollins household at a minimal sum, only a fraction of the pre-war price for the year's labor of a skilled, childless, domestic. The struggling prose and handwriting of the master and mistress of this household, as well as the mistress's offer to sew Susan Grigsby's "servents clothes" and to "doe it very cheep" suggest their household's location on the far margins of slaveholding. Dollins had offered \$20 for Mary's hire for 1863, but hesitated before he agreed to McFerran's counter-offer of \$30. Eventually the white men closed the deal for Mary's labors. But on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January, when Dollins showed up at the Grigsby plantation to collect Mary and take her to her new home, Mary refused to go. Judy, an elderly slave whose job it was to cook for the plantation hands, had fallen ill, and Mary had taken over her duties. She would not go to the new hire—McFerran quoted her as saying that "they could not do without hur on the farm." "They must have some cook," McFerran acknowledged, and her hire was accordingly canceled.<sup>89</sup>

As the war moved into its final phases and federal victory became inevitable, the market in enslaved labor would reveal both continuity and collapse. Complicated by conservative federal policy and by a civil slave code which worked to re-route fugitives from the Confederate South as well as the Border States back into enslavement, the balance nonetheless began to shift in the struggle between master and slave. In many districts, hired labor would come to overlap with free labor. As will be explored in subsequent chapters, hired slaves as well as those who had labored strictly within the households of their masters and mistresses would turn to the market as well as to the occupying federal forces to (re) unite their families and plant the roots of the free black household. For their parts, masters and mistresses navigated complicated, and shifting, terrain, as they and their households weathered the departure of enslaved laborers. In the face of

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<sup>89</sup> McFerran to Susan Grigsby, January 17, 1863; McFerran to Susan Grigsby, January 22, 1863, Grigsby Collection, Susan Preston (Shelby) Grigsby, Filson.

labor shortages and what they understood as deeply personal betrayal, some would lash out, while others adapted, in ways which did not necessarily correspond to an expressed political stance.

But at the same time, the master class continued to profit from the institution. Through the end of the war and even afterward, particularly in Kentucky, masters and mistresses hired, swapped, and sometimes sold and purchased enslaved workers. The “Negro trader,” who bought slaves for sale in the southern markets, had according to ex-slave Henry Clay Bruce been put out of business “due to the want of a market. He could not get through the Union lines South with his property.”<sup>90</sup> But local markets endured, and even prospered, likely gaining in importance as the institution as a whole frayed at the edges.

The master class kept a careful eye on the state of the market in enslaved laborers, gauging the health of the institution by what they observed. In the vicinity of Lexington, Kentucky, a close observation of the market convinced slaveholding daughter Frances Peter that emancipation was truly nigh as of late 1863 and early 1864. In October of 1863 she observed that “at the present writing it is considered nearly if not quite as cheap to buy negroes as to hire them. Clothing and food being so much higher than in former times,” and the slaves themselves so much more determined to resist. Her convictions strengthened in the following spring, by which time the purchase price of a “servant” had fallen to approximately equal the “hire of a servant for one year.” Border State white folks were still investing in enslaved labor, but only in the short term. “People do not care to risk buying a species of property which if it does not ‘take wings and fly away,’ like riches, at least of late years, often makes good use of its legs and runs off.”<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Bruce, *The New Man*, 102.

<sup>91</sup> Entry October 9, 1863, February 8, 1864, Entry March 14, 1864, Smith and Cooper, eds., *A Union Woman in Civil War Kentucky*, 167-168, 190, 197-198.

In the Confederate South, the apparent robustness of the slave market was frequently taken not only as an index of confidence in the rebel cause, but as proof positive that the institution remained economically viable. Prices dropped, Bell Irvin Wiley has observed, when labor markets became glutted, often at moments of controversy or trauma, as during the Richmond-mandated transition from cotton to food production, as well as in the wake of refugee planters' arrivals in interior districts.<sup>92</sup> In Texas, for example, Drew Gilpin Faust cites the experience of the executor of an estate who in 1864 found that he could not find a hirer for the estate's slaves "for any price."<sup>93</sup> And prices boomed after rebel victories. The optimistic predictions launched by many Confederates, however, elided the fact of the Confederacy's spiraling inflation, which drove slave prices into the several thousands while real value plummeted. In the Border States, by contrast, although real incomes diminished, they did not do so as catastrophically as in the Confederacy. And slave prices, particularly for hirelings, remained comparatively stable.

In western Kentucky, slaveholder John Bigger Bibb continued to receive annual accountings of the disposition and price of his hired slaves. "Your negroes hired very well this year," R. J. Bowerly reported from Henderson, Kentucky, in January of 1864. Betsy and her children, Robertson, and Peyton had all hired, evidently to private households, "at last year's prices," and "the Factory hands," likely employed in the region's thriving tobacco industry, "at \$35 dollars per month." In Russellville, the enslaved men Polk and Marion hired for \$150 and \$100 respectively—prices fully comparable to pre-war trends.<sup>94</sup> And hiring continued to offer a mechanism by which the master class ensured that almost no slave was a complete loss.

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<sup>92</sup> Wiley, *Southern Negroes*, 86-87.

<sup>93</sup> Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 71.

<sup>94</sup> R. J. Bowerly to John Bigger Bibb, January 22, 1864, and T. A. Frazer to John Bigger Bibb, February 4, 1864, Bibb Family Papers, Filson.

Cornelia, aging and unwell, had contracted to pay for her own hire in 1863 so that she might live with her husband, but had been “sick most of the time,” and T. A. Frazer had concluded that she would never be able to pay the minimal sum. And he compelled her to leave her husband’s home, hiring her instead to one “Mr Thomas for \$20 & he takes all liabilities for sickness &c.”<sup>95</sup>

But the terrain of the hiring market began to shift beneath the feet of the master class. Struggles over the terms of hiring contracts opened new sites for conflict both within the household and between white households. Correspondence between members of the Savage family of Germantown, Kentucky, reveals that as of December of 1863, the enslaved boy Henry still hired for one hundred dollars a year.<sup>96</sup> The income he brought to the Savage household therefore remained notably stable. But Savage, who had not long before obtained considerable satisfaction and positive feelings about herself from sewing new frocks for the enslaved girl Fanny, and from bestowing her husband’s castoff clothing upon the enslaved boys Henry and Billy, by the end of 1863 expressed disgust at the necessity of continuing to subsist her slaves. “To think that what little Father left to us was in such a form as to prove a curse & annoyance and at last a clear loss,” she raged in a letter to her husband. She had known for some time that her investment in the institution was losing value, and fast, but something had recently changed. Far from taking personal satisfaction in meeting the needs of her enslaved dependents, she now found herself “very much worried when the negroes come to me with complaints.” Henry, it seemed, had told his younger brother to “come straight” to Savage and have her “make” his hirers “give him a coat.” She believed herself to be stoic, trying not to “think of it,” but she had been forced to conclude that she “never was intended to have anything to do with negroes.” She located the source of her revulsion and despair in the presence of black bodies within the

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<sup>95</sup> R. J. Bowerly to John Bigger Bibb, January 22, 1864, and T. A. Frazer to John Bigger Bibb, February 4, 1864, Bibb Family Papers, Filson.

<sup>96</sup> B. W. Wood to Frank Savage, December 20, 1863, Savage, Frank A. and Mary, Mss. C/S, Filson.

household, as well as in the demands they seemed to make upon her. “I despise it,” she raged, “I don’t even like negroes at all,” she complained, and she had come to find their presence actually sickening.<sup>97</sup>

Not all masters went so far. James Bryan of Barren County, Kentucky, a “Batchelor” who did not maintain an independent household of his own but rather boarded out, allegedly permitted “his negro woman Slave Amelia to go at large, and hire her self out.” He was brought up on charges and found guilty of the crime. The verdict was unjust, his friends explained in a petition to Governor Thomas E. Bramlette. Never had Amelia been permitted to act autonomously, even to procure her own hire. She lived “in a House with another family Some 30 Steps from the boarding House of her owner,” and moreover was “an exceedingly good, orderly, and obedient old woman.” As the petitioners continued, “No person has been injured, no nuisance has been created, and no family annoyed or interrupted by Said Slave; she was purchased by her owner as an act of charity to her husband, a good and honest old negro man to prevent a separation of man & wife.”<sup>98</sup>

In this increasingly fluid labor market, the state took action to regulate the actions of white households as well as the behavior and mobility of the enslaved themselves. In districts where the civil courts continued to function, the slave code remained in full force. Court cases and military complaints pertaining to self-hiring slaves, or slaves who acted as free men and women, may have risen during the latter years of the war, suggesting that more and more enslaved individuals simply disregarded the legal strictures which bound their lives. The anomaly of the self-hiring slave had always proved troublesome, both legally and ideologically, in southern society. Often expedient, as some masters and mistresses preferred to permit greater

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<sup>97</sup> Mary Savage to Frank Savage, December 15, 1863, Savage, Frank A. and Mary, Mss. C/S, Filson.

<sup>98</sup> Petition to Governor Thomas E. Bramlette, December, 1863, Office of the Governor, Governor Thomas E. Bramlette, Petitions for Pardons, Remissions, and Respites, 1863-1864, Folder 179, KDLA.

liberty in exchange for being relieved of the trouble of brokering contracts or supplying housing and subsistence, the issue had arisen again and again throughout the late antebellum period, suggesting both its inherent controversy and the impossibility of stamping it out.<sup>99</sup>

In many instances, in both peace- and war-time, the slave code operated as an adjunct to the power of the master, reigning in difficult slaves. But the law also worked to discipline those masters who did not or could not maintain adequate control over those whom they were legally bound to restrain. As R. J. Bowerly reported to John Bibb in January of 1864, Bibb had been fined by the local circuit court “for suffering ‘Jim’ to go as a free man.” Bowerly had spoken to Jim himself about the matter, warning him that he must pay the fine and “not suffer [Bibb] to be annoyed.” But he had no doubt that this was not the end of the matter. “It is difficult to get ‘Jim’ to do right,” he concluded. “He is very head strong & I fear will get you into other troubles.”<sup>100</sup> The slaveholder Emily Barnes of Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, pled guilty to the same charge pertaining to her slave Alfred in order to avoid the social disgrace of a public trial.<sup>101</sup>

Even in local hiring markets where prices held steady, the market in enslaved labor showed signs of strain. The terrain of the hiring market and the balance of power between slaveholder and enslaved had begun irrevocably to shift. Hired slaves had long navigated the market in their bodies and their labors with whatever tools they had at their disposal. And, as seen in previous chapters, as the war rendered hiring ever more crucial to the independence of white households, greater leverage accrued to the hireling. As Henry Clay Bruce recalled, the slaves of his neighborhood had increasingly compelled masters and mistresses to acquiesce in a new system which was a hybrid of the old tradition of hiring. “They would leave home in search

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<sup>99</sup> Jonathan Martin, *Divided Mastery*; Richard C. Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*.

<sup>100</sup> R. J. Bowerly to John Bigger Bibb, January 22, 1864, Bibb Family Papers, 1760-1887, Mss. A B851, Folder 23, Filson.

<sup>101</sup> J. S. [Derry?] to Governor Thomas E. Bramlette, March 11, 1864, Office of the Governor, Governor Thomas E. Bramlette, Petitions for Pardons, Remissions, and Respites, 1863-1864, Folder 199, Petitions March, 1864, KDLA.

of work,” Bruce explained, “and usually found it, with small pay, with some Union man.” Even as they collected a wage, however, these hirelings also continued to draw upon their masters for the customary subsistence.<sup>102</sup>

Some masters offered nominal sums of cash to compliant slaves. Evidently seeking to supply a labor need in the vicinity of Henderson, Bibb had directed his Russellville agent to “send over” any enslaved men willing to go, with the promise of fifteen dollars paid to each man on arrival. Always stubborn, two enslaved men had insisted upon remaining with their previous year’s hirers, a resolve which had palpable fiscal consequences for their master. Frank’s hire for 1864 remained unsettled as of February, and Henry, T. A. Frazer complained, “was equally obstinate as Frank & said he would live with no one but Mr F. Green & Mr Green would give only \$110 for him. I could have obtained \$150 as easy.” A third slave, Phil, had parlayed an old injury into leverage with which he managed to thwart every attempt to dispose of his year’s labor, telling each potential hirer “his back is so weak he can’t labor.” “I’ll try & hire him to some kind man who wont work him too hard,” Frazer proposed.<sup>103</sup>

Slaves continued to be sold and hired over the next two years, and indeed, in some districts, even after the end of the war. On the second day of January, 1865, Moses sold to George McRoberts for \$360, and Thomas to John McRoberts for \$75, with the notation that Moses had hired for “a part of the year 1864” for \$105.<sup>104</sup> In early 1865, however, T. A. Frazer confessed that he had succeeded neither in hiring out all of Bibb’s slaves, nor in collecting as much money as Bibb was owed. Henry had hired for \$125 and Marion for \$100, and one of the

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<sup>102</sup> Bruce, *The New Man*, 103.

<sup>103</sup> R. J. Bowerly to John Bigger Bibb, January 22, 1864, and T. A. Frazer to John Bigger Bibb, February 4, 1864, Bibb Family Papers, 1760-1887, Mss. A B851, Folder 23, Filson.

<sup>104</sup> Andrew McRoberts, Slave Bill of Sale, 1865, Mss. 2002005x, KHS.

women, Sarah, had hired for sixty. But cash was scarce, and many of Bibb's debtors remained in hock. Frazer had done what he could, notifying each indebted household that they "must close up their indebtedness as soon as possible, or I should resort to legal process." He remained pessimistic. "A man who will not pay his debt now, I think never intend doing so," he observed. More alarming still, the slaves' hand was strengthened. "The negroes," he reported, "generally are of the opinion that the hire for this year will be ordered by the military authorities to be paid to them & yours among the number." In order to ensure that their labors remained at his disposal, he had had to offer cash sums—five dollars each—to Frank, Henry, and Polk "to induce them to get home for this year." The proffering of cash went hand in hand with the diminution of whatever subsistence obligations slaveholder and agent had toward slave. He would try to "save the amount out of the allowance you may make them this year."<sup>105</sup>

Frazer's final, frustrated, beleaguered reports reached John Bigger Bibb in early 1866. "This year I suppose," he concluded, "closes up the hire of slaves." Henry had gone, but not before he collected eleven dollars from Frazer. Phil had gone in early 1865, and Marion in January of 1866. Both men, in Frazer's estimation, were "loitering about town doing nothing." Sarah and Sylvia remained with their wartime employers, but fellow hireling Aunt Venus had gone and was "now without a home & a beggar, annoying [Frazer] every day." Frank had gone only recently. Charlotte, Frazer's warnings to the contrary notwithstanding, had been "working about all the year. Nothing more had been heard from soldier Polk. Cornelia had rejoined her husband, and the couple had moved to Louisville. Before moving on to other business matters,

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<sup>105</sup> T. A. Frazer to John Bigger Bibb, January 12, 1865, Bibb Family Papers, 1760-1887, Mss. A B851, Folder 23, Filson.

Frazer told Bibb to let him know if he wished “those negroes who remained faithful to have anything more.”<sup>106</sup>

The economic crisis of the secession winter disrupted but did not destroy the market in enslaved labor. The failure of individual transactions as incomes plummeted and investors lost confidence, correspondence among the master class revealed lines of tension and areas of conflict both within and between households. The market rebounded over the next year. Detachments of both armies moved into the Border States, occupying key districts and jockeying for control over the region’s fate. Their presence breached the boundaries of slaveholding households, as soldiers confiscated goods, harassed civilians, and sought to compel loyalty. As a few households collapsed under the strain, household heads turned to the market to recoup a portion of their investment and to divest themselves of less productive human property while ensuring that these individuals remained subject to white authority. As the prices for enslaved labor gradually dropped, the market was reinvigorated as a site of struggle between master and slave. Slaves continued to navigate the market in order to meet their own needs so far as possible, seeking to maintain valuable familial and social ties and to shape the conditions of their labor. Simultaneously, the master class leveraged subsistence, privilege, raw force, and the power of the state as tools of discipline in order to extract maximum profit from an institution threatened with dissolution.

Despite their expressions of despair at the future of slavery as a profitable institution which would endure in perpetuity, the master class continued to extract profit from hired and sold slaves through the end of the war, and indeed, in some districts, even after the war had

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<sup>106</sup> T. A. Frazer to John Bigger Bibb, January 5, 1866, Bibb Family Papers, 1760-1887, Mss. A B851, Folder 23, Filson.

ended. In the slave South, markets and households were interlinked, transactions in the exchange of enslaved bodies inextricable from the everyday exigencies of mastery. The war shed new light upon and imparted new meanings to the operation of power within the slaveholding household, and also of necessity upon the market. As it had before the war, the exchange, by hire, sale, or informal transactions, continued to smooth over, to clarify, and sometimes to deepen friction between slaveholding households.

## CHAPTER V

### **“The consequences of it are too awful to contemplate’: The Master Class Navigates the Decline of Slavery”**

Ideologically and materially, the Border State household had much in common with households across the slave South. Like their counterparts elsewhere, Border State masters and mistresses conceived of their households as productive as well as reproductive units, within which all members contributed, voluntarily or under coercion, towards household independence. The household, recent scholars have made clear, grounded the social and personal identities of all members. The ways in which the identities of southern women hinged upon their positions within the household and their relations to individual men have attracted considerable scholarly attention. White men, at the apex of power in southern society, laid claim to a unique status as “independent and autonomous,” and to a considerable extent, historians have taken them at their word. Nonetheless, male identities too were in some measure dependent upon the many intersecting and overlapping relationships contained within the household. According to LeeAnn Whites, men, too, were “socially constructed by and dependent upon their relationships to others” Laura F. Edwards, for example, observes that all southerners “acquired formal legal identities through their relations to other household members, as husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, parents and children, masters and slaves, and household heads and dependents.”<sup>1</sup>

The Civil War, Thavolia Glymph and other scholars have observed, was the proving ground of the principles which had undergirded the slaveholding household, and the ground on which they fell radically short. Slaveholders clung, as seen in previous chapters, to dearly-held

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<sup>1</sup> Whites, *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender*, 7; Edwards, *Gendered Strife and Confusion*, 6.

beliefs in black “loyalty” and the privacy of the household even as the nation penetrated household boundaries and upended the relations of power and authority within them; even as black dependents abstracted themselves physically and ideologically from white households and began the laborious process of forming their own households. But white people of the slaveholding classes could not remain entirely blind. Eugene D. Genovese describes a moment of truth that came when slaveholders were finally forced to confront the reality of their slaves’ desire for freedom.<sup>2</sup> Glymph herself observes that in the “bright glare” of the war, “the public character of the plantation household stood fully exposed,” its “core antagonisms” “laid bare.”<sup>3</sup>

Border State slaveholders took steps both to forestall the eventuality of emancipation and to weather its course in ways which would allow them to salvage both their financial investments and the prerogatives of mastery. Despite large secessionist minorities, Missouri and Kentucky would both be among the four slave states to remain loyal to the Union. For the white men of the Confederate South, the household lay at the heart of their decision to secede and to defend that decision with armed force. The southern household, according to Peter Bardaglio, was the birthplace of the “distinctive variation of republicanism” which “planters and yeomen sought to defend in 1860.”<sup>4</sup> Secession, LeeAnn Whites agrees, was an extension of white men’s commitment to the defense of their position as heads of household and thus as “free men.”<sup>5</sup> Conversely, however, the refusal to secede was not, as some have presumed, a sign of declining loyalty to the institution of slavery. Rather, refusing to secede served the priorities of household defense and the defense of white men’s rights. In short, it served to defend the security of slavery.

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<sup>2</sup> See Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*.

<sup>3</sup> Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, 99-100.

<sup>4</sup> Bardaglio, *Reconstructing the Household*, xi-xii.

<sup>5</sup> Whites, *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender*, 11.

But as seen in previous chapters, the household could not remain inviolate under the strain of war, insurgency, and occupation. A special correspondent for the Unionist *Louisville Journal* claimed in January of 1861 that secession was a threat to the independent manhood rights of white Kentuckians, and accused secession's advocates of active complicity with a "preconcerted conspiracy, to... force [Kentucky] into a position of the most abject and debasing 'submission' to South Carolina."<sup>6</sup> Moreover, war would bring economic destruction, disrupting commerce and potentially severing the western Border States from markets both to the south and to the north-east. As W. E. B. Du Bois observes, the market for slaves and other commodities offered by the Deep South, and the increasing "profit of trade" with industrial New England and the mid-Atlantic were both too valuable to be jeopardized.<sup>7</sup> Such disruption, many feared, would inevitably menace the security of Border State households. The *Louisville Journal's* special correspondent pointed to the interiority of households as proof of secession's destructive potential. Already, even before the outbreak of hostilities, "the hardy workingman" was paying the price, "penury and distress" having penetrated his formerly secure, if modest, household domain.<sup>8</sup> Although he would within weeks be unanimously elected the governor of Confederate Kentucky, George W. Johnson as of October of 1861 "thank[ed] God" that he "had done every thing possible" to prevent his state's secession. As he had feared, the war had undermined the foundations of his prosperous household. "I am inclined to think, my Dear Ann," he wrote to his wife, "that at the close of this war, I will be ruined in Kentucky."<sup>9</sup>

Though they had remained loyal in large part to safeguard the institution of slavery, the master class would be forced, very early, to grapple with the prospect of a future without slavery.

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<sup>6</sup> Special Correspondent's Report, January 19, 1861, *Louisville Daily Journal*.

<sup>7</sup> Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 56.

<sup>8</sup> Special Correspondent's Report, January 19, 1861, *Louisville Daily Journal*.

<sup>9</sup> George W. Johnson to Ann Johnson, October 10, 1861, and October 20, 1861, KHS.

As early as 1862, a scant year into the war, Border State slaveholders began to consider how emancipation would reshape their households. Progressive-minded agriculturalists called for the improvements which free labor would bring, and claimed that emancipation was no more than a necessary sacrifice. A few evangelical Christians praised God that a nation's sin would be redeemed. But not all could afford to be so sanguine. Mary Savage, a Kentucky slaveholder, hired two enslaved boys, Henry and Billy, to households in the district, and their labors brought nearly two hundred dollars a year in income for the Savages. In April, she met with Henry in town and had "a long talk" with the young man. She speculated about his character and physical maturation, informing her husband that Henry would likely "make an excellent work hand." He was "quite a good looking boy—growing large—seems to want to do what is right—thinks he has the best master & mistress in all the world." She teased him in a friendly way that he and his younger brother Billy must "be sure & not stop growing" until they were tall enough to wear her husband's cast-off suits. But Mary Savage's satisfied assessment was bittersweet. "How valuable they would be to us had not times changed so terribly," she lamented. The war, fought for only a year, had drained the value which would ordinarily have accrued to the Savage household from Henry's pleasant demeanor, solid physique, and reliable work habits.<sup>10</sup>

The prospect invited reflection, sober or hysterical or sentimental by turns. Slaveholding remained central to the personal and social identities of masters and mistresses alike, and the prospect of its loss of necessity caused a reevaluation of those identities. Missouri slaveholder Elvira Scott congratulated herself that any kindness she expressed toward the enslaved of her household now confirmed her own essential worth, since there was no longer any profit to be gleaned thereby. Although the slave patrol had been "out every night" in an ongoing attempt to forestall "trouble with the Negroes," she thought that her neighborhood's interest in the

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<sup>10</sup> Mary Savage to Frank Savage, April 13, 1862, Savage, Frank A. and Mary, Filson.

institution was waning. Numerous slaves had fled to Lexington, Missouri. The federal post commander had “given orders for the masters to come for them if they want them,” but as she herself observed, “people are indifferent on the subject.”<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, she herself continued to uphold her obligations to those under her authority, attending her enslaved woman Margaret in childbirth. “We had a wearisome time of it,” she told her diary, “up day & night. Taking care of Negroes is a matter of humanity, not of profit any more.”<sup>12</sup>

William C. Bullitt appears in the 1860 slave schedule as master of forty slaves. Emancipation, to him, meant the loss of “four fifths of my Estate,” as he explained to his son in March of that year. But Bullitt also found in Lincoln’s “Emancipation message” of March, 1862, probably the March 6<sup>th</sup> message to Congress in which he urged the legislature to “co-operate with” and fund “any state in which may adopt gradual abolishment of slavery,” an opportunity to reflect on the human condition. The end of slavery would “take off four fifths of my Estate,” he explained to his son. “But yet I do not repine at Providence for bestowing on Men the wicked passions, which bring those evils upon us—It is a part of man’s nature It is a duty we owe to ourselves to bear up against adversity with unflinching courage, to make our fall as light as possible—In a very few years I must die—or perhaps like many, drag out a miserable old age, yet if I was to brood over it & make myself unhappy in anticipation, every body would say I was a simpleton—tell your Mother, this is my religion.”<sup>13</sup>

The prospect of emancipation forced Border State slaveholders to reposition themselves within a national political system and within a political economy, as well as within an individual household. Indeed, the prerogatives of whiteness, manhood, and womanhood were steadily

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<sup>11</sup> Entry December 22, 1862, Scott, Elvira Ascenith Weir, Diary, WHMC.

<sup>12</sup> Entry February 4, 1863, Scott, Elvira Ascenith Weir, Diary, WHMC.

<sup>13</sup> William Bullitt to Tom Bullitt, March 9, 1862, Bullitt Family Papers, Oxmoor Collection, 1683-2003, Filson; see Abraham Lincoln’s message to Congress, March 6, 1862, excerpted in Andrew Delbanco, ed., *The Portable Abraham Lincoln*, 231-233.

undermined by occupation, forcing masters and mistresses alike to grapple with their shifting relationship to the nation-state. Women in particular saw their relationship to the nation-state dramatically reconfigured. In the Border States as well as in the Confederate South, women played vital political roles in supplying soldiers and managing slaves. And through the experience of trauma and conflict, women were drawn into a more individual relationship to the nation-state.<sup>14</sup>

Many found themselves held accountable for speech which in times of peace might not have carried very much weight at all. As in the Confederate South, soldiers on either side of the war entered civilian homes in occupied districts, sometimes by force. In the summer of 1862, federal soldiers arrived at Elvira Scott's Missouri household. They demanded that she feed them and supply them with entertainment. Scott complied, albeit with obvious reluctance, serving the men a meal and playing her piano for them. As scholar Jacqueline Glass Campbell has observed of Georgia in the path of Sherman's men, "forcing Southern women to play [music] for them was a favorite pastime of soldiers." The act also held deeper and more ominous meaning. Demands for entertainment at the very least called upon white women to bestow upon strange men who had entered private sanctums by force, the favors reserved for friends and family, and often smacked of the sexual violence most soldiers dared not perpetrate. The incident with Scott and the federal volunteers was freighted with yet more meaning. Elvira Scott did not take the disruption of her household without comment. During the course of the soldiers' sojourn in her

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<sup>14</sup> Some indeed may have turned over the course of the war, as scholar Drew Gilpin Faust suggests, from attitudes of self-sacrifice in service to the nation, to a new subjectivity in which they "began to acknowledge and defend their own interests apart from those of their families and their nation" (*Mothers of Invention*, 242).

home, eating her food and enjoying the music they had coerced from her, she vocally vented her frustrations upon them. And they, in turn, reported her to headquarters as a traitor.<sup>15</sup>

Other women would, at various times and places throughout the war, lay claim to the prerogatives of household privacy in order to evade discipline for their politics. And sometimes they would be successful. St. Louis secessionist Anne Lane, for example, had reason to believe that her status as ersatz mother for her small nieces and nephews continued to mean that, in the words of scholar LeeAnn Whites, “she was ‘protected’ as a woman and household dependent” and could not be held responsible for her vocal secessionist politics.<sup>16</sup> And a young Saline County, Missouri, woman named Bettie Jackson, on trial alongside her mother and sister for sheltering and feeding the rebel insurgents whose wanton violence plagued the region, would claim that “her being a lady and unaccustomed to being held responsible for anything she might say, she really did not know what was loyal or disloyal.” For this girl, what historian Michael Fellman terms “retreat into helpless, apolitical womanhood” proved an effective political strategy.<sup>17</sup>

Elvira Scott, however, learned the hard way that such things were done with, at least for the present. As 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Adam Bax of the 7<sup>th</sup> Missouri Cavalry observed in the orders which required Scott to report weekly to headquarters lest her husband be arrested and detained in her stead, “the time has past when treasonable language goes unpunished.” No longer did the household shelter women’s political speech within a rubric of domesticity. “Home,” Scott mourned when she received this missive, “was no longer a safe asylum a sacred place.” Armed men had violated her domestic privacy and appropriated her domestic resources, prompting her

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<sup>15</sup> Entry July 9, 1862, Scott, Elvira Ascenith Weir, Diary, WHMC; Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North from the Sea*, 88-89. See also Michael Fellman, *Inside War*, for an exploration of what he terms the “dialectic of restraint and rage,” “gentility and menace,” exhibited by men on both sides.

<sup>16</sup> Whites, *Gender Matters*, 49.

<sup>17</sup> Fellman, *Inside War*, 195-196.

to react with ire and indignation, making statements, while at home, for which she was now being held publicly responsible.<sup>18</sup>

But women were not the only ones to reevaluate their relation to the state. The emancipationist turn taken by the federal government (as well as other troublesome federal policies) caused some Border State whites to reconsider—radically so—their conceptions of nationhood, of Union, and of their own places within it. As late as August of 1863, the *Cape Girardeau Weekly Argus* could reprint the *St. Louis Daily Union*'s satisfied assessment that secession had brought to the South only “a frightful war,” the costs of which had been “the loss of one-third of their territory,” the “desolation of their homes,” the deaths of their young men, “the bereavements, the mournings, the woes, the sufferings of two years,” and eventually “the ultimate humiliation” of defeat and perhaps of slave insurrection. The Confederate South's hold on slavery, strong before within the Union, had been rendered terribly insecure outside of it.<sup>19</sup> But among the many who had believed that loyalty to the nation offered the best security to slavery and to slaveholding households, others swung, in a seemingly futile reaction, towards the secessionist camp. In doing so, these individuals helped to confirm Confederate predictions that emancipation would “have exactly the opposite effect to that for which it was designed,” proving to the Border States that the Confederacy had not, in fact, been “hasty and wrong” in seceding, but indeed, that secession had been wholly necessary.<sup>20</sup>

Lincoln's preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, issued in the autumn of 1862 after the nominal federal victory at Antietam, proved a watershed even in those states where it explicitly had no legal binding. Visiting his son, sick in a Louisville military hospital, Andrew Phillips

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<sup>18</sup> Entry July 9, 1862, Scott, Elvira Ascenith Weir, Diary, WHMC.

<sup>19</sup> “What We May Expect,” *St. Louis Daily Union*, reprinted in the *Cape Girardeau Weekly Argus* (August 13, 1863).

<sup>20</sup> The *Savannah Republican* (March, 1862), quoted in Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 87.

reported to the folks at home that “since the emancipation proclamation the people of Kentucky are all secesh except at Louisville & along the river at Covington.”<sup>21</sup> An erstwhile Unionist (albeit of the most conservative stripe), Kentucky slaveholder Ellen Wallace found that the emancipatory turn taken by federal policy shifted her own priorities, and by the end of 1862 she had concluded that the Confederacy offered greater stability and protection for her household.<sup>22</sup> Even some of those who continued to deplore the secessionist impulse began to wonder whether the Confederacy must, in the end, win its separate nationhood. In early 1863, Kentuckian George B. Kinkead wrote to a friend that he too could no longer see any “prospect of adjusting matters so as to save the Union and restore harmony to all its parts, and as to giving up the Union and allowing a division of the country, watered by the Ohio & Mississippi & Missouri,” he would “almost as soon it were desolated by fire.” But he could see no real alternative. The South would surely not “get back” into the Union, “at any rate during the administration of Mr. Lincoln.”<sup>23</sup>

The ground shifting beneath their feet, Border State men, and perhaps women as well, reevaluated not only their relationship to the nation-state, but to the world at large. Household roles grounded their public identities, and when household prerogatives were breached, they turned to global affairs in order to make sense of the change. “No community of interest” existed between the Border States and the nascent Confederacy, Carvill had insisted in January of 1861, “except the common slaveholding.” Secession itself amounted to no more than lunacy, and ranked among a litany of evils, among them “vainglory, ...socialism, Mormonism, Fillibusterism, and all the abominable ‘isms’ that distract the world, which indeed appears to be drunk generally, and can’t get sober.” In this he identified himself with thousands of northerners

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<sup>21</sup> Andrew Phillips to Family, October 19, 1862, Andrew Phillips Letter, 1862, KHS.

<sup>22</sup> Entry September 29, 1862, November 26, 1862, Journal by Ellen McGaughey Wallace, KHS.

<sup>23</sup> George Kinkead to William S. Bodley, January 26, 1863, Bodley Family Papers, 1773-1939, Mss. A B668e, Folder 70, Filson.

who had “harried” the Latter Day Saints from New York, Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois, and who would have concurred with the Republican Party’s 1856 platform which had condemned polygamy. And if the Mormons at mid-century had been seen as a threat to the United States, filibustering had stood as another. Bands of southern mercenaries and adventurers, seeking to fulfill their own understanding of Manifest Destiny and build a Caribbean and Latin American empire for slavery, had launched several abortive incursions into Cuba and elsewhere.<sup>24</sup>

Indeed, Carvill concluded, the South could not hope to stand alone, and southerners were ungrateful fools to have rejected the protections offered by the Constitution. “I can imagine how excessively sorry,” he observed sarcastically, “certain European Potentates must feel at the state of affairs in the Model Republic.” Here too, his views fell well within the northern mainstream. Yankee enlisted men and officers, as well as United States politicians, including Abraham Lincoln himself, commonly “invoke[d] the larger international liberal movement of their time” in justifying the Union cause. As nationalist movements across the European continent and revolutionary impulses in Latin America sought to topple old empires, many Americans envisioned themselves as the hope of global liberty. Indeed, they predicted that should the Union cause fail, as James McPherson phrases it, “the dis-United States would fragment into several petty, squabbling autocracies, proving the contention of European monarchists and reactionaries that this harebrained experiment in democracy could not last.”<sup>25</sup>

Not much more than a year later, however, Carvill sang a different tune. He had concluded that it was “best for the south to sustain its separate nationality. They differ from the North altogether,” he explained. “It is an unnatural, and unhealthy, alliance, and they can never

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<sup>24</sup> George Carvill to Sister, January 28, 1861, George Carvill to Sister, April 15, 1862, Carvill, George W., Letters, Mss. 2697, Folder 6, WHMC. See McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 43-45, 104-107.

<sup>25</sup> George Carvill to Sister, January 28, 1861, George Carvill to Sister, April 15, 1862, Carvill, George W., Letters, Mss. 2697, Folder 6, WHMC. See Bender, *A Nation Among Nations*, 122-130, and McPherson, *What They Fought For, 1861-1865*, 30.

again act in unison, and legislative fraternity.” And after federal soldiers “ransacked” his farm in 1864, Carvill declared angrily that he wished European liberals might witness what had resulted from federal tyranny. Strikingly, he described the men who had raided his household in terms which would have been familiar to any educated mid-century American. Among the foraging party, he complained, were “drunken carefree runaway niggers,” as well as “thieves from Illinois, Michigan, [and] New Jersey.” But also present were “the scum of Europe Dutchmen & Garibaldians, Mazzinians, and Kossuthites.” Giuseppe Garibaldi, Giuseppe Mazzini, and Lajos Kossuth, of course, were Italian and Hungarian heroes of the nationalist revolutions of 1848—the very men who had fought against the “certain European Potentates” whom Carvill had castigated in the spring of 1861. His views had undertaken nearly a one-hundred-and-eighty degree turn.<sup>26</sup>

Nor was he the only Border State citizen to grapple with his household and his region’s fate in global terms. In the face of what Missouri judge and slaveholder William Barclay Napton understood as the “revolution” of slavery’s collapse and the newly augmented power of the wartime and postwar federal government, he too located these developments as something fundamentally un-American. As was typical of revolutionary affairs, he concluded, it was too late to turn back. The war had been won, and slavery destroyed, “upon the ruins of the Constitution which protected it and of the Union which that Constitution created.” Significantly, however, the result was not the proletariat run amok deplored by Carvill. Instead, he cited two autocracies, one of them an Islamic caliphate. Napton asked his journal whether “we have such a government here as that of Turkey or Russia, or... of Lola Montez when she controlled that of

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<sup>26</sup> George Carvill to Sister, April 15, 1862, December 25, 1864, Carvill, George W., Letters, WHMC. See Bender, *A Nation Among Nations*, 122-130, among other scholars, for an exploration of this topic. Interestingly, George M. Frederickson suggests that after the war, northern intellectuals commonly associated European revolutionary fervor with the *Confederate* cause, rejecting the “unconditional right of a people to choose its own government” (*The Inner Civil War*, 185).

Bavaria.” Neither Turkey nor Russia had emerged in 1848 as actively “revolutionary” nations, although in both empires ethnic minorities in border regions caused trouble enough and in the 1830s Turkey had made tentative gestures toward liberal reform. Of the three referents, only Bavaria had experienced actual revolution, and this was out of the mainstream of events in other European states. Lola Montez, the mistress of the king, had dabbled in liberal reforms before being driven into exile in California; following her ouster, scholar Priscilla Robertson observes, “Bavaria returned to its earlier, peaceful, conservative ways.”<sup>27</sup>

The ground thus shifting beneath their feet, slaveholders searched the faces, bodies, and demeanors of household members for evidence that old values still endured. What scholar Drew Gilpin Faust terms “‘faithful slave’ stories” worked to “calm white fears,” perhaps those of women in particular, as they found themselves increasingly dependent upon “slaves’ labor, competence, and even companionship” even as those same slaves laid claim to greater independence.<sup>28</sup> The slow collapse of the slave regime and the departure of enslaved laborers heightened masters’ and mistresses’ gratitude and satisfaction at what evidence they could discern. Mildred Bullitt told her son Tom in the autumn of 1864 that although the “men” had long since departed, house servant Tinah and Tom’s “mammy” had both decided to “stick” and had promised that they would “hang on.” She had told them, she said, to “go if they feel like it,” but had concluded when they did not that “those who remain are more affectionate & obedient than before.”<sup>29</sup> Sue Alexander expressed sorrow, and, perhaps, a hint of *schadenfreude*, that so many of her cousin Susan Grigsby’s “servants” had caused “such trouble.” Observing that “‘tis

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<sup>27</sup> Entry May 1, 1866, Phillips and Pendleton, eds., *The Union on Trial*, 250-251. See Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution*, and Priscilla Robertson, *Revolutions of 1848*, 280-281.

<sup>28</sup> Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 60-61.

<sup>29</sup> M. A. Bullitt to Tom Bullitt, September, 1864, Bullitt Family Papers, Oxmoor Collection, Filson.

what we may all expect tho' at this time," she also took care to inform Grigsby that her own "woman, Sallie, still continues 'faithful, among the faithless.'"<sup>30</sup>

Confederate soldier J. L. Hughes clung to the notion of faithfulness and loyalty among the slaves of his modest household. In letters written first from the vicinity of Overton, Tennessee, and later from Fort Delaware, where he was held as a prisoner of war, he issued repeated instructions to his wife and to the slaves under her supervision. Echoing the directives of thousands of husbands, both North and South, "you must do the best you can," he told her in an undated letter probably written in 1864. Enslaved men Moses and Kye must look after the livestock and be "ready for planting in the spring." When the spring came, Hughes was a prisoner. "Tell Moses to do his best," he instructed his wife in April. "Tell Kye that I think more of him than I ever did and he will be remembered by [me] for the course he has pursued with you." In May, he reiterated that he had "moore confidence" in Kye than he had ever had before, and that he believed confidently that all the household's slaves would "remain faithful until the last." Moses and Kye eventually defied his wife's authority, earning Hughes's enmity and rejection. But the house servant Mary had continued in her obedient habits, and Hughes clung to the notion that she remained "a good Negro" who deserved his continued affections.<sup>31</sup>

And those who, backed into corners and forced to witness the departure of their slaves for the fraught security of federal lines, could not afford the luxury of that hope, fought a rhetorical, political, and private rear-guard action to delimit the extent of possible change. Slaveholders reassured themselves continually that black families could not survive outside the protective enclosure of the white household. As of April, 1862, Kentucky slaveholder Mary Savage acknowledged that those slaves whom she had inherited from her father had just about lost the

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<sup>30</sup> Sue Alexander to Susan Grigsby, August 19, 1863, Grigsby Collection, Filson.

<sup>31</sup> J. L. Hughes to Wife, undated letter, and letters December 30, 1864, April 6, 1865, May 22, 1865, July 12, 1865, Hughes, James L., Filson.

monetary value which had inhered in their bodies, psyches, and talents. In a conversation with Henry, a young boy whom she hired out, she seems to have tentatively broached the matter of Henry's future life as a free man. He would make "an excellent work hand," she knew, and she urged him to "try to earn a good name and deserve it too," so that he could thereby "always get a good home." Though her assessment of his abilities and character was favorable, she seemed unable to conceive of Henry as one day having a household of his own, envisioning him as simply a "work hand" with a "home" in a white household.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, Border State white folks denigrated black fugitives' first attempts to form free families and free households of their own. Elvira Scott complained in December of 1862 of a neighbor's "woman," who "had been sick all summer & had been a great care to her mistress." Leaving "three small children behind, one of them almost an infant," this woman "started off" with "one of the black men that she had lately taken for a husband." Mounted on their respective mistress's and master's saddle horses, they made their escape without babies to slow them down. "It would have been a great crime," she observed with bitter irony, "in the eyes of the Northern abolitionists if her master had parted her from her children."<sup>33</sup>

Missouri slaveholders Henry Bodley and his wife evidently welcomed the prospect of emancipation. Even so, Henry predicted, black people might not survive to see its fulfillment: "the longer the Rebellion is continued the more certain is Slavery to be wiped out of the whole Country; and that probably in blood," he explained. "If the present state of things continues much longer you will find the south itself, killing their slaves through apprehension."<sup>34</sup> Reports of the grim conditions confronting black refugees in army camps and in over-crowded cities lent credence to slaveholders' expectations that former slaves could not long survive their liberation.

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<sup>32</sup> Mary Savage to Frank Savage, April 13, 1862, Savage, Frank A. and Mary, Filson.

<sup>33</sup> Entry December 22, 1862, Scott, Elvira Ascenith Weir, Diary, WHMC.

<sup>34</sup> Henry Bodley to William Bodley, December 3, 1862, Bodley Family Papers, Filson.

Elvira Scott told her diary that the numerous slaves who had fled to the federal post at Lexington, Missouri, were dying at the rate of “several a day.”<sup>35</sup> Others had found quickly that the conditions of free labor were not conducive to their survival. She had heard that in Kansas, “they could not get but five & ten cents a day for their work.” “The Northern people” had done a “terrible wrong” in liberating them. In eighteen years as a slaveholder, Scott had come to the conclusion that black folks were “a helpless, dependent, improvident race” and could not “come in competition with the white race” and not “suffer & starve.”<sup>36</sup> Kentuckian George Carvill agreed. Never at ease with the institution of slavery and its incongruity in a republic of free men, he nonetheless could not conceive of widespread black freedom as a viable option. Indeed, he contended, what he termed “the nigger crusade,” carried out by “the old women of both sexes in this country & Europe,” had proven to be a great sin against those whom it was intended to benefit.<sup>37</sup>

And others envisioned in the collapse of slavery not simply casting future freedpeople into conditions of ultimately fatal chaos and disorder, but of menacing the survival of the household itself. George B. Kinkead relayed alarming rumors that “in some neighbourhoods” of the Confederate South, “the negroes have broke loose and are with savage ferocity claiming their freedom.” Affairs were not so dark in Kentucky, but, he complained, they were “still annoyed here by the soldiers enticing our slaves and that too manifestly without the condemnation of the officers.” The “political skies” were as “gloomy as midnight,” and it had become “very manifest” to him that “the repulse of the Federal army only tends to inflame more & more the passions of the Administration, which they will gratify by inciting the slaves to insurrection.

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<sup>35</sup> Entry December 22, 1862, Scott, Elvira Ascenith Weir, Diary, WHMC.

<sup>36</sup> Entry March 9, 1862, Scott, Elvira Ascenith Weir, Diary, WHMC.

<sup>37</sup> George Carvill to Sister, September 12, 1863, Carvill, George W., Letters, WHMC.

They seem inclined to make up for their shortcomings in whipping the army of the South in emancipating the slaves and imprisoning Non Combatants.”<sup>38</sup>

As they took their freedom, black refugees disassembled the household, claiming ownership of productive property and some of the symbols of status which defined white identity. Slaveholding matron Elvira Scott reported in horror that when slaves fled Jackson County, Missouri, in the wake of Jennison’s troops, they left at the reins of their masters’ carriages, carrying away “everything in the shape of bedding and clothing” that they had been able to gather. Many of the women, she had heard, were clad “in their mistresses best clothing.” Such an appropriation, which “violated the South’s unwritten sumptuary laws,” historian Drew Gilpin Faust observes, was “an enactment of the eroding power of the South’s master class,” and an assault against “the hierarchies of race.” And, in a further reversal previously unimaginable to women such as Scott, many of the fugitive men were armed.<sup>39</sup>

When Kentucky slaveholder Ellen Wallace got word of Lincoln’s Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, she responded with horror. “The consequences of it are too awful to contemplate,” she exclaimed in the tightly scrawled pages of her diary. “The blood of women, children, and helpless aged will flow in torrents if it is carried into effect,” and “black monsters who would walk in human shape” took vengeance on the “women and helpless infants” placed at their “mercy.” Wallace and her neighbors in Christian County had been witness to a tremendous insurrection scare some years before, during the 1856 election cycle. Information had been tortured out of slave suspects, contributing to the climate of fear and suspicion, and although life soon got back to normal, Wallace and others like her could not have forgotten the sudden, shattering realization that potential rapists, arsonists, and murderers resided within their

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<sup>38</sup> George B. Kinkead to William S. Bodley, December 18, 1862, Bodley Family Papers, Filson.

<sup>39</sup> Entry March 9, 1862, Scott, Elvira Ascenith Weir, Diary, WHMC; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 223.

household walls. Before the war, and even after the scare of 1856, she had understood slaves, safely enclosed within white households, to be trusted helpmates, companions, even exemplars of Christian virtue and humility, as well as sources of profit and social rank. Loosed from white control, they became “monsters in human form.” Perhaps she wondered, as Mary Boykin Chestnut famously did, whether they had been faking it all along.<sup>40</sup>

As early as 1862, then, and continuing throughout the war and into its drawn-out aftermath, slaveholding men and women struggled to adapt to swiftly changing circumstances. Paradoxically, even as the war disrupted production, enticed away laborers, and opened space for slaves to take truly revolutionary action on both the small and the large scale, it also offered certain opportunities to the master class. Loyal masters and mistresses, as well as those who could believably claim to be so, laid claim to all the concessions they could extract from the federal government. For years after they had first begun to reconcile themselves to the notion that nothing would ever be the same, indeed, even after the war had ended, they took what steps they could to conserve their investments in valuable human property, to control the terms of labor, and to preserve the independence of their households.

The manpower needs of the Confederate and Union armies were immense, and the exigencies of occupation would drastically shift the terrain of labor, opening new opportunities for short-term and long-term profit, even while they continued to erode slaveholders’ control over their chattel. As historian Steven Hahn has observed, “there could be little doubt” on the part of the Confederacy, in particular, that the labor of slaves in numerous capacities would prove “necessary for the prosecution of the war,” although many among the master class would come to resent the loss of their slaves and the blatant interference by government agents in their

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<sup>40</sup> Entry September 29, 1862, November 28, 1862, Journal by Ellen McGaughey Wallace, KHS.

domain of authority. Ultimately, thousands of black laborers would be set to work at “military and industrial sites across the South.”<sup>41</sup> For the Union as well as the Confederacy, the impressment of slave labor was bound up with questions of the limits and nature of the war, the right of the central government to seize private property, and the need to retain the support of wavering population sectors. As in the Confederacy, such arrangements would emerge as “uncharted terrain,” bringing a host of new issues to light.<sup>42</sup>

To offer a slave for military labor, voluntarily or under coercion, was to run the risk of that slave’s loss. Slaves in the rebel service were liable to capture and confiscation by Union forces. In early February of 1862, a battalion of federal cavalry under the command of one Lieutenant Colonel Wright routed and pursued “a small party of the enemy’s force” which had been occupied in “running the mill” at Marshfield, Missouri, grinding wheat for rebel use. A Captain Montgomery “overtook” the fleeing Confederates, “killing 2, wounding 3, taking 3 prisoners, several slaves, 3 Government mule teams, 2 common teams, all loaded with wheat designed for the enemy.”<sup>43</sup> Even the ordinarily cautious Henry Halleck urged Brigadier General Samuel Curtis to exploit a prime opportunity. The rebels, he observed, had “about 100 negroes engaged in the saltpeter works in Marion County,” guarded by a single company of soldiers. The guards could easily be overwhelmed, Halleck observed, by “a detachment of cavalry,” the works demolished, and the “negroes” freed under the provisions of the First Confiscation Act.<sup>44</sup> The rebel outfit for which Bill Simms, born a slave in Osceola, Missouri, toiled as a teamster, sent him home to his master when the Yankees “pressed in” and the rebels “moved back.” But Simms would not remain a slave for long. “When the Union army came close enough,” he explained, he

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<sup>41</sup> Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 68. See also Berlin, et al., “The Destruction of Slavery, 1861-1865” in *Slaves No More*, 14-15, 54-55.

<sup>42</sup> Blair, *Virginia’s Private War*, 41.

<sup>43</sup> Report of Brig. Gen. Samuel R. Curtis, February 10, 1862, *ORs, Series I, Volume VIII*, 58-59.

<sup>44</sup> Henry Halleck to General Samuel R. Curtis, March 23, 1862, *ORs, Series I, Volume VIII*, 637.

“ran away from home and joined the Union army.”<sup>45</sup>

At mid-war, in the Western theater, Major General Jeremiah T. Boyle, already known as a stern opponent of disloyalty in all its many forms, undertook a massive infrastructure construction project. “A network of wagon roads had to be constructed over which military supplies should go; fortifications had to be built,” historian E. Merton Coulter writes, “and by the middle of 1863, Boyle was calling for 6,000 slaves to extend the railroad from Lebanon to Danville,” Kentucky.<sup>46</sup> The coordination of the project would be handled by an innovative partnership between the military and civilian railroad executives, and the Second Confiscation Act would provide the parameters under which the necessary laborers could be obtained. General Orders No. 25, dated February 26, 1864, would expand the project still further, calling for the impressment of “all male negroes” between sixteen and forty-five years of age, from twenty-four Kentucky counties, almost all located in the rich heart of the state.<sup>47</sup>

Supplying labor to the combatant forces emerged as a politically vexed matter. Slaves must be hired from the loyal but could be taken by force from rebel sympathizers. The question of loyalty, however, proved inextricable from broader issues of economic justice and the exigencies of the crop cycle. The impressments of enslaved men to build railroads, turnpikes, and fortifications diminished the number of hands available to carry out agricultural routines, posing a dire problem to central Kentucky’s slave-driven farming—one so pressing that some officers wondered whether agricultural priorities ought to at least temporarily trump the punishment of treason. Lt. Col. Henry Pleasants reported the concerns of Kentucky’s slaveholding households up the chain of command in the summer of 1863. Nearly two hundred enslaved men had been impressed by the soldiers stationed at Lexington from six surrounding

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<sup>45</sup> Bill Simms, *Kansas*, WPA, Vol. 16, 8-13.

<sup>46</sup> Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 157-158.

<sup>47</sup> General Orders No. 25, February 26, 1864, *ORs, Series I, Vol. XXXII, Part II: Correspondence*, 479.

counties. “Harvest is at hand and there is not labor sufficient to cut the grain and take it in,” he reported. The men were “the property of persons who sympathize with either the South or the Rebellion.” Nonetheless, he wondered whether they should be “returned until the Harvest is over.”<sup>48</sup>

Impressment also raised concerns that the withdrawal of enslaved laborers would overburden households of modest means. Here, too, some officers expressed concern that federal policies not oppress the poor in the name of disciplining the disloyal. In the summer of 1863, one Kentuckian wrote to federal General Jeremiah Boyle to inquire whether the owners or the hirers of eligible slaves were responsible for reporting them to the federal post. He thought it best that those who only hired but did not own slaves not be required to hand them over. As he warned, “hirers of negroes” in his district were “almost without an exception poor men.”<sup>49</sup> At least some officers tried to adjust impressments accordingly. Many “negro-holding rebels,” both “male and female,” caused considerable difficulty for the federals in the vicinity of Bowling Green during the summer of 1863. Nonetheless, one Colonel Maxwell explained that while he did indeed impress the “negroes of rebels” as per his orders, he thought it “but an act of justice” to take them “for a short time only.” By adjusting “the time we keep the negroes,” he tried to cushion the burden on modest households, rebel or not.<sup>50</sup> It seems that an effort was made to respond to these concerns. In orders dated February of 1864, Boyle clarified that “in order that the cultivation of the crops may not be materially interfered with,” citizens owning only “one male

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<sup>48</sup> Letter of Lt. Col. Henry Pleasants, June 27, 1863, U. S. Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Part I, RG 393, Part I, Department of Kentucky, Box 2, NAI.

<sup>49</sup> M. Polk to Gen. Boyle, August 31, 1863, U. S. Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Part I, RG 393, Part I, Department of Kentucky, Box 2, NAI.

<sup>50</sup> Col. Maxwell to Gen. Boyle, September 22, 1863, U. S. Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Part I, RG 393, Part I, Department of Kentucky, Box 2, NAI.

negro” would be exempt, and those in ownership of more than four would be liable to the impressment of only one third.<sup>51</sup>

And perhaps paradoxically, slaveholders found that the presence of the federal army also opened new opportunities for profit. Slaveholders in the vicinity of Lexington, Kentucky, for example, brought “their negroes to work on the roads pretty fast,” Frances Peter reported. “Of course the union people get paid for the use of their negroes while secesh and sympathizers dont.”<sup>52</sup> In the vicinity of Danville, Kentucky, in the autumn of 1863, slaveholding households drew a distinction between having their slaves impressed for government service, and having them impressed for labor under the supervision of civilian contractors. Local householders turned over their slaves “cheerfully” to agents of the federal government, most of whom were civilian men “appointed from this County, who would not only look to the interest of the Government, but would also feel interested in behalf of the owners of Negroes” and who would make it their business to care for their neighbors’ chattel “properly.” Handing valuable slave men over to agents of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad, however, was another matter entirely. Danville’s slaveholders feared that these men, northern-born and guided solely by the profit motive, would not only neglect “the welfare of the impressed negroes,” but, being Yankees and unfamiliar with the “habits” of black Kentuckians would allow them to “become demoralized and dissatisfied & run off.”<sup>53</sup>

Many slaveholders hated the loss of their slaves to federal labor projects. But far more disturbing was the prospect of black service in the actual federal ranks. Even among northerner

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<sup>51</sup> General Orders No. 25, February 26, 1864, *ORs, Series I, Vol. XXXII, Part II: Correspondence*, 479.

<sup>52</sup> Entry August 28, 1863, Smith and Cooper, eds., *A Union Woman in Civil War Kentucky*, 156-157.

<sup>53</sup> Reuben Gentry to General J. T. Boyle, September 8, 1863, U. S. Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Part I, RG 393, Part I, Department of Kentucky, NAI.

anti-slavery advocates, the question of black enlistment had long been highly controversial, even anathema. Indeed, when the enlistment of black men was finally authorized in 1862 and the process begun in earnest in 1863 (in Kentucky, however, black recruitment would not begin until 1864 out of deference towards the sensibilities of the master class), many understood it to be the doom of slavery itself. Indeed, as historian Steven Hahn observes, by 1864 “the status quo antebellum was beyond resurrection.” Black military mobilization had made emancipation an inevitability, and, moreover, embodied the newly-forged linkages between emancipation, the war, and the ongoing “redefinition of civil and political society.”<sup>54</sup> Also bound up in the matter were questions of masculinity and manhood, race, property ownership, and the future of the nation itself. Black military service, historian Aaron Astor observes, “mocked the conservative social basis of the Union,” challenging, in the minds of white Border State citizens, both their regional and their personal honor as free men. In the zero-sum game of nineteenth-century race relations, Astor continues, “every gain for African Americans signified a loss in honor and power for whites.”<sup>55</sup>

Many Border State whites, like many other Americans, rejected the concept of black military service out of hand. The white reaction to the enlistment of black men into the federal service in Missouri, in 1863, and in Kentucky the year after, was vexed indeed. William Bullitt of Kentucky had been succinct in his assessment. “As to arming the slaves,” he had told his son in late 1861, “that is a matter of no moment. They can never be made Soldiers of.”<sup>56</sup> “Congress is about to pass an act to arm Negroes & employ them to fight their masters,” Missouri slaveholder Elvira Scott noted in her diary in July of 1862. She thought that this radical step was

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<sup>54</sup> Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 89-90.

<sup>55</sup> Astor, “Black Soldiers and White Violence,” in Cimballa and Miller, eds., *The Great Task Remaining Before Us*, 31, 33.

<sup>56</sup> William Bullitt to Tom Bullitt, December 31, 1861, Bullitt Family Papers, Oxmoor Collection, 1683-2003, Filson.

dishonorable in the extreme. “It is certainly a brave act for twenty millions of men to bring on a servile war to conquer a third of their number of southerners,” she observed. “But it will not avail. It is just as likely that the Negroes will fight for as against their masters.”<sup>57</sup> Lexingtonian Frances Peters also rejected the possibility out of hand, insisting in a February, 1863, diary entry that “the negro regiments that have been raised at Port Royal and elsewhere have proved a failure, the negroes refusing to work and deserting on every occasion.” “Some of the papers” had contradicted these negative reports. “I doubt it,” she snapped. “From all I have observed of the negro he is much too adverse to work, too timid to make a good soldier, and has got it into his head that liberty means doing nothing.”<sup>58</sup> Even Abraham Lincoln himself, born a Kentuckian, had expressed concern that “if we were to arm them,” within weeks the guns issued “would be in the hands of the rebels.”<sup>59</sup>

Pro-slavery ideology rested on the presumption that black people could survive only encompassed within the protection and control of the white household. “What have these... puritanical Yankees to answer for to the Great Judge,” adopted Kentuckian George W. Carvill raged in an 1865 letter, “for kidnapping these... fat & fiddling simple minded laborers, from comfortable homes, to want, misery, and prostration by disease.” Upon his return to Union County, Kentucky, from Canada West, to which he had repaired with his family, he found a wretched state of affairs. “I find here no able bodied black man,” all of whom had evidently joined the federal army. “I enquire for this, and that, and the other negro man, and the answer is dead, dead, dead.”<sup>60</sup> Conditions in U. S. C. T. army camps and in the makeshift refugee facilities available to the families of black troops could indeed be woefully grim. But these observations

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<sup>57</sup> Entry July 21[?], 1862, Scott, Elvira Ascenith Weir, Diary, WHMC.

<sup>58</sup> Entry 4, 1863, Smith and Cooper, eds., *A Union Woman in Civil War Kentucky*.

<sup>59</sup> Quoted in Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, 67.

<sup>60</sup> George W. Carvill to Sister, August 22, 1865, Carvill, George W., Letters, WHMC.

served to confirm the master class in the rightness of their own cause and the futility, indeed, the heartless criminality, of northern emancipatory schemes.

Even while they rejected the idea of armed black men in federal blue out of hand, white Border State citizens took concrete action to oppose their enlistment with every tool at their disposal. As Brutus Clay urged Governor Bramlette of Kentucky, “every legal way” should be employed to resist “the recruiting of Negroes,” particularly those who were “the property of our Citizens in the Military service.”<sup>61</sup> And at first their endeavors brought forth fruit. In Kentucky, black recruitment was postponed a full year after it had begun in the rest of the slave states. They forced the federal administration to weigh “the value of slaveholder unionism against the army’s manpower needs,” and for a time, slaveholder unionism carried the day. This was no small matter. As Ira Berlin et al have observed, “the largest number of black men within reach of army recruitment resided” in the Border States.<sup>62</sup>

Federal troops stationed in the Border States—at least at first—stepped carefully around the issue. The superintendent of colored troops explained to an inquiring senator that “slavery being still an ‘institution in Kentucky, and recognized by the civil law—the people of the state and the State Government being opposed to the system of employing black men as soldiers, the question of Negro enlistment has been a delicate and difficult one to manage.” “The recruiting of Colored men began in Ky as early as May 1864,” the federal brigadier in charge of organizing the state’s black enlistments explained to Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts. “Numbers” of black men left their masters “and claim[ed] the protection of our troops.” But public opinion was against it from the start, such that the first camps had to be organized across the line at Gallatin, Tennessee, “to prevent trouble,” and subsequent camps “along the border of the state in close

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<sup>61</sup> Brutus Clay to Governor Bramlette, January 15, 1864, Office of the Governor, Thomas E. Bramlette, Military Correspondence, KDLA.

<sup>62</sup> Berlin et al, “The Black Military Experience,” in *Slaves No More*, 202.

proximity to the free states.” After initial successes—the organization of the 107<sup>th</sup>, 108<sup>th</sup>, and 109<sup>th</sup> infantry and three regiments of heavy artillery at Camp Nelson, enlistments dropped off, however. The governor of Kentucky made “much complaint,” and white citizens and Kentucky federal soldiers alike launched “one or two attacks” on “recruiting parties.”<sup>63</sup> In Shelby County, Kentucky, white citizens had been “so much opposed to Negro soldiers” that the recruiting party dispatched to the region “could do but little good” and had to be recalled.<sup>64</sup> In Boyle County, raging white men “pretty severely injured” a group of departing recruits. Around Lebanon, a gang of whites detained and whipped—to the tune of one hundred lashes per man—seventeen or more recruits. In Hancock County, black Union volunteers had to be locked in jail to protect them from the white mob—which itself included Union soldiers.<sup>65</sup>

Nonetheless, this seems to have been a futile endeavor. Protest though they might, the slaves of Kentuckians would indeed enlist. Federal soldiers and enslaved men themselves found ways of working around the proscription from above. The citizens of Hopkinsville, Kentucky, near the Tennessee line, complained in a petition dated January 23, 1864, (some twenty signatures were appended; among them was that of the husband of Ellen McGaughey Wallace) the recruiting stations just across the state line at Clarksville and Fort Donelson, Tennessee, had lured entirely too many of the district’s slaves away.<sup>66</sup>

Border State masters exercised the right of petition. They complained to the Union officers at the nearest post. They wrote angry letters to the President and to their representatives in Congress. They lashed out with atrocious violence. But they also turned inward to their own

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<sup>63</sup> To Senator Henry Wilson, February 6, 1865, U.S. Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Part I, RG 393, Part I, Department of Kentucky, Organization of U.S. Colored Troops, Letters & Telegrams Sent & Received, NAI.

<sup>64</sup> To George F. Green, March 17, 1865, U.S. Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Part I, RG 393, Part I, Department of Kentucky, Organization of U.S. Colored Troops, Letters & Telegrams Sent & Received, NAI.

<sup>65</sup> Lucas, “Black Families and Soldiers,” in Dollar et al, *Sister States, Enemy States*, 196.

<sup>66</sup> Petition to Governor Thomas E. Bramlette, January 23, 1864, Office of the Governor, Thomas E. Bramlette, Military Correspondence, Box 5, Folder 98, KDLA.

households to forestall black enlistment, particularly at critical moments in the crop cycle. Slaveholders and the enslaved expanded upon the array of customary privileges and entitlements which had been hashed out long before. In some households, new privileges of family and of fatherhood were granted. The Missouri tobacco planter Lewis, for example, desperate to save his crop, promised that his head man, Spotswood Rice, that if “he would stay with him and ship his tobacco for him and look after all his business on his plantation,” he would be rewarded by the privilege of having “a nice house and lot for his family right on his plantation.”<sup>67</sup> The Kentucky slave Peter Bruner was also temporarily enticed by his master’s offer. “Our owner did not want us to leave him,” he explained in a post-war memoir. Every “grown person” on the place was given “a free pass,” and Bruner himself the wage of fifteen dollars a month “with board and clothing.”<sup>68</sup> Significantly, both attempts failed. After Rice had time to think it over, he concluded that his master’s promises could not be trusted, and, as his daughter explained in later years, he took “eleben of de best slaves on de plantation, and went to Kansas City” to enlist in the federal army.<sup>69</sup> As for Bruner, he gave serious thought not only to staying through the spring and summer of 1864, but to “induc[ing] others to do so,” which would have enabled his master to have “made the crop.” Ultimately, however, he decided that the year’s crop, if “made,” would only have been “spirited away” by the neighborhood’s marauders.” There was no point in staying behind.<sup>70</sup>

Deny and negate as they might the mere possibility of black military service, the master class was deeply and profoundly unsettled. Historian Leon F. Litwack quotes one Border State congressman as exclaiming that “to confess our inability to put down this rebellion without

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<sup>67</sup> Mary A. Bell, *Missouri*, WPA, Vol. 11, 28-30.

<sup>68</sup> Bruner, *A Slave’s Adventures Toward Freedom*, 107-108.

<sup>69</sup> Mary A. Bell, *Missouri*, WPA, Vol. 11, 28-30.

<sup>70</sup> Bruner, *A Slave’s Adventures Toward Freedom*, 107-108.

calling to our aid these semi-barbaric hordes' would prove 'derogatory to the manhood of 20 millions of freedmen.'"<sup>71</sup> Kentuckian A. Bradshaw wrote to Governor Thomas E. Bramlette for clarification of the standing policy in February of 1864. "No one here seems to know the extent of authority given by the Sec of War to the officer recruiting this sable regiment," he complained. The matter of "whose slaves shall and whose shall not be taken" stood forth prominently. If loyal men found themselves compelled to witness their male slaves inducted into the federal service, what meaning did their own loyalty hold?<sup>72</sup>

In many ways, the master class would have their noses rubbed in their growing inability to secure the boundaries of their households. Enslaved men defied the violent threats of their masters and the slave patrols. William Emmons left his Nicholas County, Kentucky, master when he was eighteen, in the company of some forty neighboring men. The young men assembled and set off "down a dusty road," only to be confronted by "three white fellers we knowed," who demanded to know where they were headed. "We tole em we wuz goin' to wah," Emmons recalled, "an 'dey tried to mek us go back to de plantation. We tole em we'd kill em sho' ef dey kep' on meddlin' wid us, an dey got skeered an' let us 'lone."<sup>73</sup> George Roberts, a slave in Chariton County, Missouri, knew well that he might be "hurt" if his intention of enlisting in the Union army was known. Nonetheless, he did exactly that, leaving "secretly," and paying a last, surreptitious, visit to his wife to let her know that "several of the boys were going to leave for Iowa and join [the] U. S. Army and [to] bid [her] good by."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, 66.

<sup>72</sup> A. Bradshaw to Governor Thomas E. Bramlette, February 9, 1864, Office of the Governor, Thomas E. Bramlette, Military Correspondence, Box 5, Folder 99, KDLA.

<sup>73</sup> William Emmons, Ohio, WPA, Vol. 5, 326-331.

<sup>74</sup> Deposition of Margaret Lewis, July 18, 1881, Benecke Family Papers, Mss. 3825, Box 80, Folder 2619, War Claims and Pensions, Blacks—George Roberts, WHMC.

Some households turned to the market in order to forestall black enlistment, using their ability to shuffle black bodies from household to household in an attempt to withdraw young men beyond federal reach, and here too, their stratagems often failed. Ary Ann Gray testified some three decades after the war that she had sent two sons to fight for the Union, Elijah in the infantry, and Anthony in the cavalry. The boys had gone to enlist along with their uncle Adam Gray, who was ultimately to be retaken by his master and would not “get to go in the army.” Elijah’s master too tried to prevent his enlistment. He had belonged to a slaveholding woman named Eliza Ray, who had been raised as the ward of Ary Ann Gray’s master, having been gifted to her as a young man, but lived with his family on the Gray farm. When she learned that he had joined up, Eliza Ray hired Elijah Gray to “old Dr. Smith who lived at Owensboro,” evidently hoping that this would thwart his plans. In this she guessed wrongly. “The soldiers,” Ary Ann Gray testified, “went there and got him.”<sup>75</sup>

The rage of the master class resonated across state lines. When white citizens of Cincinnati, Ohio, got word that “the free colored people” of the city had “made great preparations” to welcome a black regiment slated to pass through with a generous supper and “a very handsome flag,” they took action. As Kentuckian Frances Peter reported with satisfaction, the white Ohioans threatened to “demolish” the store where the flag was displayed and informed the “market house where the supper for the regiment was to be set out... that if the supper was set out it should be the last that that regiment would ever eat.” The reception was accordingly canceled, and “the officers of the black regiment smuggled it through during the night.”<sup>76</sup>

And if it seemed nearly blasphemous for black men to arrogate to themselves the honor due to a soldier, it must have seemed equally so for black women to lay claim to the esteem due

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<sup>75</sup> Deposition of Ary Ann Gray, July 2, 1894, File of Elijah Gray aka Elijah Ray, Co. F, 109<sup>th</sup> Regiment, U. S. C. T., Mother’s Cert. 400,144, Box 40,960, Folder 14, NAI.

<sup>76</sup> Entry June 17, 1863, Smith and Cooper, eds., *A Union Woman in Civil War Kentucky*, 135.

to a soldier's wife. Anne Hughes of Louisville, Kentucky, raged at what she termed the "shameful celebration" she had witnessed upon the "88<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the declaration of American independence." On the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, 1864, black Louisvillians had hosted members of what she sarcastically referred to as the "gallant 'colored regiment' recruited hereabouts." This celebration had explicitly mirrored similar celebrations held in honor of white volunteers, and its scheduling for Independence Day contained multiple layers of meaning. Capping it all off, a flag had been presented by one "Mrs. Bland Ballard." This woman, presumably a black matron of the city, had presumed to adopt the honorific of "Mrs.," as well as her husband's first and last names. This woman's assumption of the rhetorical privileges of wifely *coverture*, along with the assumption of the status and role of respected lady in gifting a flag to the recruits of her own community, crystallized Anne Hughes's ire.<sup>77</sup>

Opposition to black enlistment had a more pragmatic root as well. The withdrawal of labors at critical moments of the crop cycle could very well prove disastrous. The petitioners from Christian County complained even before black recruitment had been formally begun that the citizens of their border community had suffered "serious losses" by the flight of the youngest and healthiest workers to posts in Kentucky, and that the "evil" was "rapidly on the increase. Some of our largest farmers & best citizens (loyal men) are losing all except the helpless ones."<sup>78</sup> "They are going off all through Ky & enlisting by scores," Kentuckian Lucy Hughes reported. "It is excessive hot & vegetation is parched to death & if it does not rain soon, we will have famine added to our list of woes."<sup>79</sup> As George Carvill complained, "the number of negroes in Kentucky" had never been as high as in other slave states. Now that what he called "the order...

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<sup>77</sup> Anne Hughes to Sister, July 5, 1864, Hughes Family Papers, Mss. 97mo2, Folder 18, 1864-1865, KHS.

<sup>78</sup> Petition to Governor Thomas E. Bramlette, January 23, 1864, Office of the Governor, Thomas E. Bramlette, Military Correspondence, Box 5, Folder 98, KDLA.

<sup>79</sup> Lucy Hughes to Sara Hughes, July 24, 1864, Hughes Family Papers, Mss. 97mo2, Folder 18, 1864-1865, KHS.

to conscript ‘black volunteers’” had been issued, he feared famine would be the end result.<sup>80</sup> “We have but few Negroes in our county now,” James Moffett complained of Bath County, Kentucky, not quite a year later. “Many farmers have hard times in getting along, so many [enslaved men have] left...”<sup>81</sup>

The presence of black men with guns in their hands frightened white folks for other reasons as well. Their self-satisfied assumptions that black men would fight for, not against, their masters, and that their soldiering was a categorical and military impossibility, fell to ruin in the face of reality—or, perhaps, had never been more than a hedge against fear. The addition of black troops to the already volatile situation in Missouri and in parts of Kentucky loomed large in the anxieties of individuals who had already suffered through years of raids by rebel insurgents and Unionist counter-insurgents alike. The notion that some of the Unionist Jayhawkers who raided through her Missouri neighborhood might be black proved deeply threatening to Elvira Scott. “The bill for Army Negroes has passed Congress,” she reported. “General Jim Lane has offered a brigade to the service.” This brigade (actually a regiment), made up in large part by runaway Missouri slaves, had been recruited, organized, armed, and drilled even before the bill had passed. Her experience with Lane and other Kansans had not been good, and her fear was palpable: “We shall have Jennison in the field again. Merciful providence hides from us what is before.”<sup>82</sup> Frances Peter suspected that “now that the negroes have got arms in their hands, and so many notions of freedom in their heads that before the war is over it is not improbable that we may have to fight them as well as the secesh.”<sup>83</sup>

As seen in previous chapters, the penetration of household boundaries by armed men in

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<sup>80</sup> George W. Carvill to Sister, March 1, 1864, MSS. NO., Folder 7, WHMC.

<sup>81</sup> James Moffett to James and Martha Sudduth, May 11, 1865, James Moffett Letters, 1859-1878 and undated, Mss. 98sc196, KHS.

<sup>82</sup> No Date, 1862, Scott, Elvira Ascenith Weir, Diary, Mss. 1053, Folder 5, pp. 140-141, WHMC.

<sup>83</sup> Entry June 23, 1863, Smith and Cooper, eds., *A Union Woman in Civil War Kentucky*, 136-137.

federal blue had proven deeply disruptive to the orderly exercise of a slaveholder's authority, opening space for slaves to sass back, slow down work, run off, lash out, and feed vital information to the their masters' enemies. How much more disruptive, then, when the soldiers themselves were black! Federal colonel John Williams lodged a complaint loaded with the same sense of outrage as expressed by Elvira Scott (although perhaps with less actual fear). "The condition of things is unbearable," he reported of the Missouri district under his command. "Honest men cant stand it. Negroes go to Kansas, get arms & uniform & come back & demand & steal or rather just take what they want & threaten every white man in the country with extermination that dont applaud them. Jennison is collecting his force all along the border."<sup>84</sup> Mary Nelson of Mayfield, Kentucky petitioned the government for redress for the loss of considerable property. White federal troops had in the summer of 1864, she contended, confiscated several of her steers and heifers. And black troops, under the command of one Colonel McArthur, "kill[ed] and destroy[ed]" thirty head of "stock hogs," six sheep, twenty geese, and "burned up about one hundred pannels of her fencing."<sup>85</sup>

Slaveholders, women and men alike, complained vigorously of intrusions by black troops into their households. Some fled in the face of it. George Carvill told his sister in July of 1864 that due to the quartering of "some 400 nigger troops" in the vicinity of Paducah, Kentucky, "the country round about is pretty much deserted." He gave no specific indication of what the four hundred black men were accused of, but suggested that if "puritanical" abolitionists could witness the prevailing state of affairs there and in "West Tennessee," "they might then understand the 'massacre of Fort Pillow,'" where rebel troops under the command of Nathan Bedford

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<sup>84</sup> Col. John Williams to General Odon Guitar, September 29, 1863, Guitar, Odon, Collection, Mss. 1007, Folder 7, Western Historical Manuscript Collection, Columbia, Missouri.

<sup>85</sup> Affidavit of Mary Wilson, September 20, 1864, Department of Kentucky, 1864, Record of Claims upon Government, Record Group 393, National Archives I, Washington, D. C.

Forrest had murdered hundreds of Union soldiers, many of who were black, as they tried to surrender.<sup>86</sup> The affidavits sworn out by ostensibly loyal citizens of the district offer some clues. William L. Pryor, lessor of a house and yard on Grant Street in Paducah, complained to the federal command that a provost marshal had in April of 1864 demanded the keys to the rearmost four rooms of his home, installing therein two families, one white, and one “negro.” Pryor and his family withdrew from the home entirely, as he explained, “because he could not live there without the use of his back rooms, especially when occupied by negroes.” In his absence, white families had moved into the front portion of the house, and he attested to his willingness to accommodate these people in a subletting arrangement. “The two negro families,” however, he could “do nothing with.” And yet they refused to depart, explaining to him that “the military put them there and they are going to stay.”<sup>87</sup>

Black recruiters, foragers, and those charged with confiscating the household goods of the disloyal for military use behaved boisterously indeed. They marched boldly into white households, dragooned hesitant young men into the service, liberated their wives, mothers, and children, and took evident glee in the authority bestowed upon them by their uniforms and their guns. The former slave Peter Bruner recalled with evident amusement that some of the young men whom his comrades had forcibly recruited into the service “cried... like babies and we had to let them go.”<sup>88</sup> Captain J. M. McKenzie reported to the governor of Kentucky, that “when armed negroes are permitted to go with impunity into the Dwellings of true and loyal men use

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<sup>86</sup> George W. Carvill to Sister, July 21, 1864, Carville, George W., Letters, MSS. NO.? FOLDER NO.? Western Historical Manuscript Collection, Ellis Library, Columbia, Missouri. See Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm so Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), 90-91. To black Americans, and to many white northerners, the event inspired outrage; to the men of the U. S. C. T., it stood as stark proof that surrender was futile.

<sup>87</sup> Affidavit of William L. Pryor, October 11, 1864, Department of Kentucky, Record of Claims upon Government, 1864, Record Group 393, National Archives I, Washington, D. C.

<sup>88</sup> Peter Bruner, *A Slave's Adventures Toward Freedom: Not Fiction, But the True Story of a Struggle* (Oxford, Ohio), 45-46.

insolent language to the family and take by force the only servant of the family in opposition to the expressed wish of that Servant—it is not very encouraging to Union men.”<sup>89</sup> Additional letters fleshed out the event at the center of McKenzie’s complaint. The man whose “only servant” had been recruited complained that his house and kitchen had been roughly searched by the black recruits before the young man in question had been tracked down at his master’s “business house.” Once located, he was allegedly “approached on the market square while engaged in his ordinary duties by several armed negro soldiers and forced into the encampment against his will and consent and there compelled to take the necessary oath as an enlisted soldier, and if he did not take it voluntarily, he would be compelled.”<sup>90</sup>

To some Border State whites, the assertive and sometimes rowdy demeanors of black recruits in gathering others to their cause permitted them to retain, for a little while longer, the comforting illusion that their slaves and other dependents did not wish to leave their households. One slaveholder in Harrison County, Kentucky, suspected that the only reason Nancy Buck, a free woman of color who had grown up a member of his household, had fled out of state was that she had been “forced to leave by some negro soldiers who were very active about that time in sending off contrabands.”<sup>91</sup> Kentuckian A. Bradshaw suspected that, indeed, black men could not give informed consent to their own enlistment in the federal service. Those who had been first to go were “the most vicious” among the enslaved population, “semi-baboons” who “in the

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<sup>89</sup> J. M. McKenzie to Governor Thomas E. Bramlette, February 10, 1864, Office of the Governor, Thomas E. Bramlette, Military Correspondence, Box 5, Folder 99, Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.

<sup>90</sup> S. P. Cope to Governor Thomas E. Bramlette, February 8, 1864, A. Bradshaw to Governor Thomas E. Bramlette, February 9, 1864, Office of the Governor, Thomas E. Bramlette, Military Correspondence, Box 5, Folder 99, Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.

<sup>91</sup> Petition to Governor Thomas E. Bramlette, No Date, Office of the Governor, Governor Thomas E. Bramlette, Petitions for Pardons, Remissions, and Respites, Box 13, Folder 292, Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.

most insolent manner” proceeded to employ “artifices” including “threats, promises, &c &c, toward an ignorant and timid class.”<sup>92</sup>

Ultimately, however, faced with the intransigence of federal policy and with the determination of enslaved men themselves, many Border State masters and mistresses were forced to acknowledge which way the winds were blowing. In a letter to Colonel John H. Ward, who was evidently giving serious thought to resigning his commission over the issue of black enlistment in Kentucky, James Speed acknowledged that slavery “is a relation in society and an important one, yet not the most important & sacred.” Though a crucial support for the household, it paled in comparison with the other relations of power to which it was often compared. “The relations of husband & wife, parent & child,” and even “master & apprentice,” Speed insisted, were “all more important & sacred.” “The government takes the husband from the wife, the parent from the child, they child from the parent, the master from the apprentice, & the apprentice from the master, and thus sundering these higher & more sacred relations. Why not take the slave from the master? Is the relation of master and slave a greater pet with our law than any of the other relations of life?”<sup>93</sup>

Some took steps to exploit the situation in whatever way they could. When the federal government passed its initial authorization for the recruitment of black troops, Kentucky’s representatives, particularly Senator Davis, proved so intransigent that the bill “finally was amended,” according to W. E. B. Du Bois, “so as to pay the black soldier’s bounty to his owner, if he happened to be a slave!”<sup>94</sup> Masters and mistresses applied for whatever compensation could be had for the enlistment of their chattel property, again thereby recouping a portion of their

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<sup>92</sup> A. Bradshaw to Governor Thomas E. Bramlette, February 9, 1864, Office of the Governor, Thomas E. Bramlette, Military Correspondence, Box 5, Folder 99, Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.

<sup>93</sup> James Speed to Col. John H. Ward, February 21, 1864, Ward Family Papers, 1847-1940, Mss. C/W, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

<sup>94</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (1935; reprinted New York: Atheneum, 1992), 96-97.

investments. R. M. Simmons, formerly a Kentuckian, had fled or been exiled south to New Orleans during the war. In November of 1865, he wrote to his business agent alerting him that he had “been informed that some of the negroe men” belonging to his former household had joined the army, and requesting that the man file application immediately to obtain whatever “remuneration” could be had. He would not do it himself, he explained, as his “loyalty could not be proven.” But he thought that his agent might have better luck.<sup>95</sup>

Black enlistments counted towards county quotas, the federal brigadier in charge of organizing Kentucky’s colored troops warned an inquirer in March of 1865. Shelby County’s “quota in the coming draft” was two hundred and two men, and the general urged the enlistment of “your negroes” to meet the demand. If they were prevented from doing so, he cautioned, “your white men will have to go and fill up the quota.”<sup>96</sup> Many whites took such warnings seriously, and the procurement of black substitutes for white draftees became a relatively common, and frequently corrupt, practice. Awareness of, and complicity in, the practice went all the way up the chain of command. “I do not know what they cost here,” the superintendent of black troops for Kentucky confessed to Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts, the Republican who had introduced legislation to ban slavery in the District of Columbia some two years before, referring to the price of black substitutes. He had “frequently heard that Masters put in their slaves as substitutes paying the slave from one to four hundred dollars.”<sup>97</sup> Nor was the practice limited to Border State whites. Brutus Clay complained to Governor Thomas Bramlette of

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<sup>95</sup> R. M. Simmons to Thomas Gooch, November 2, 1865, Gooch, Thomas G., Papers 1827-1885, Mss. A/ G645, Folder 3, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky

<sup>96</sup> To George F. Green, March 17, 1865, U.S. Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Part I, RG 393, Part I, Department of Kentucky, Organization of U.S. Colored Troops, Letters & Telegrams Sent & Received, National Archives I, Washington, D. C.

<sup>97</sup> To Senator Henry Wilson, February 18, 1865, U.S. Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Part I, RG 393, Part I, Department of Kentucky, Organization of U.S. Colored Troops, Letters & Telegrams Sent & Received, National Archives I, Washington, D. C. See Ira Berlin, Barbara J. Fields, Steven F. Miller, Joseph P. Reidy, and Leslie S. Rowland, “The Destruction of Slavery, 1861-1865,” *Slaves No More: Three Essays on Emancipation and the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 30, for background on Wilson.

Kentucky that “agents” had been dispatched from “other states” for the purpose of recruiting black Kentuckians to fill their own states’ quotas.<sup>98</sup> Border State slaves, it appears, constituted a pool of potential cannon fodder available to informed draftees and their well-connected kin across the nation. The Kentucky superintendent himself promised to investigate, and if possible, to procure a substitute for Senator Wilson’s nephew.<sup>99</sup> And ex-slave Henry Clay Bruce recalled the arrival of Iowa recruiting agents in Brunswick, Missouri, “to enlist Colored men for the United States Army, who were to be accredited not to Missouri, but to certain townships in Iowa, in order to avoid a draft there.”<sup>100</sup>

In sending black men to war in their place, Border State slaveholders accomplished several ends. Some, in offering nominal compensation to an eligible enslaved man, escaped the draft far more cheaply than they otherwise could. John Wells, a Grayson County, Kentucky, slave, went as a substitute for his master in exchange for one hundred dollars, eighty of which he requested be given to his mother “if he never got back.” He never returned. She never saw the money.<sup>101</sup> White Kentuckian Lucy Hughes wrote to her brother in September of 1864 that “the draft falls pretty heavy here. A neighbor, one Mr. Davidson “was drawn” and the Hughes, secessionists all, were “glad of it,” but “very sorry for many of our kind that have been drawn” to fight for the Union. The price of white substitutes had spiraled well beyond the reach of middling households, but a few slaveholders had arrived at a solution, in which Hughes took snide satisfaction. In addition to obtaining affordable substitutes, these men managed to punish enslaved men for their Unionist, emancipationist politics. “Brock Smith was drafted,” Hughes

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<sup>98</sup> Brutus Clay to Governor Bramlette, January 15, 1864, Office of the Governor, Thomas E. Bramlette, Military Correspondence, Box 5, Folder 97, KDLA.

<sup>99</sup> To Senator Henry Wilson, February 18, 1865, U.S. Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Part I, RG 393, Part I, Department of Kentucky, Organization of U.S. Colored Troops, Letters & Telegrams Sent & Received, NAI.

<sup>100</sup> Bruce, *The New Man*, 107.

<sup>101</sup> Deposition of Augustus Akers, June 30, 1888, Deposition of Sam Heyser and Belle Heyser, June 30, 1888, File of John Wells, Co. D, 122<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, U. S. C. T., Mother’s Cert. 271,106, Box 36780, Bundle 3, NAI.

reported, “& put in one of his negro boys who are so patriotic.”<sup>102</sup> Still others used the potential of black military service as a tool of labor discipline and as a means of recovering the investment in potential or actual runaways. “Uncle Isaac had recovered four negroes,” Kentuckian Ann Bodley reported to her father, “& was trying to get Willis back. He intended to put them in the army, but they begged him to retain them on his farm, promising to do their work more faithfully than ever.”<sup>103</sup>

As the war entered its final months, and slavery unraveled ever faster, slaveholders and former slaveholders began the painful process of adjusting agricultural and domestic production routines. A kinsman of Susan Grigsby wrote to her in December of 1864 that he had been keeping busy with what he termed “the regular routine of scrap farming,” but had recently hired “a well recommended & steady” young man “as an Overseer.” The young man had no experience in labor management, but had grown up a farmer’s son, and Hart Grigsby thought that he (and his brother in law, whom he hired for a neighboring woman) would “watch our farms if Lincoln says we shall have no slaves which I anticipate either in his message by Act of his Congress or by Constitution furnished us as per Maryland.” He had been unable to sell his hogs, of which he had “100 surplus,” there had been no sale of “beef cattle nor Barley.”<sup>104</sup>

In August of 1865, during the liminal period after the war but before emancipation in Kentucky, slaveholding matron Anne Fall sent a fairly optimistic report to her daughter Carrie. The local population seemed to “think the Negroes will be freed,” she explained. “Farmhands are leaving in numbers.” But the crop was not lost. “Farmers Sons are taking their places in the

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<sup>102</sup> Lucy Hughes to Brother, September 26, 1864, Hughes Family Papers, Mss. 97mo2, Folder 18, 1864-1865, Special Collections, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, Kentucky.

<sup>103</sup> Ann J. Bodley to Father, August 26, 1864, Bodley Family Papers, 1773-1939, Mss. A B668e, Folder 73, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

<sup>104</sup> Hart Grigsby to Susan Grigsby, December 7, 1864, Grigsby Family Papers, FOLDER 180?, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

fields,” apparently to good results. “The corn crop is very fine,” she wrote, “and there is such an abundance of Fruit.”<sup>105</sup> The predictions of others were far grimmer. In Missouri, Judge William Barclay Napton speculated that there seemed “to be for the first time a real danger of starvation in the interior of Missouri—in the midst of the most productive agricultural region in the world.” The destruction of slavery, coupled with a severe drought, was the culprit, and many of the farmers who remained on the land had “diminished the amount of land in cultivation three fourths.”<sup>106</sup>

There were also households to be built and rebuilt. Many returning veterans and civilian refugees found that in their absence, stock had died, slaves had claimed their freedom, fields had gone fallow, and houses had been burned. In the early months of the war, as federal forces chased Missouri’s rebel militia and secessionist government towards the Arkansas line, journalist Thomas W. Knox had encountered a “country doctor,” also the “proprietor of the hotel where we breakfasted,” and who, he observed mockingly, “passed in that region as a man of great wisdom.” This gentleman, “intensely disloyal” and infuriated by the presence of “an Abolition army” on Missouri soil, had nonetheless taken the oath of allegiance in order to “protect himself from harm.” Six months later, however, he had taken a different tack, fleeing southward, as Knox put it, in search of “his rights.” By this action, he lost everything. His slaves fled northward. Arsonists burned his house. His stables were “stripped of every thing of value, and the whole surroundings formed a picture of desolation.”<sup>107</sup>

Wartime animosities had taken their toll. Kentucky matron Anne Fall told her daughter that a man of their acquaintance had been forced to leave town due to the “danger” he faced from

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<sup>105</sup> Anne A. Fall to Carrie Fall, August 2, 1865, Fall Family Papers, Mss. 84mo1, Correspondence and other papers, 1862-1865, Special Collections, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, Kentucky.

<sup>106</sup> Entry October 15, 1864, Christopher Phillips and Jason L. Pendleton, editors, *The Union on Trial: The Political Journals of Judge William Barclay Napton, 1829-1883* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005), 218.

<sup>107</sup> Thomas W. Knox, *Camp-Fire and Cotton Field: Southern Adventures in Time of War. Life with the Union Armies and Residence on a Louisiana Plantation* (New York: Blelock and Company, 1865), 89-90.

“men he had arrested while he was an Officer.”<sup>108</sup> When the war ended, Elvira Scott found that her husband, who had been arrested and imprisoned several times by the Union forces which garrisoned their Missouri neighborhood, had entirely lost his nerve. Plagued with paranoia and other neuroses, he left her to “be very determined & do things very gradually” as she put their household back together.<sup>109</sup>

Lingering animosities between and among white households of differing politics threw up barriers to the reestablishment of ordinary life. William and Bettie Hill had taken their small son and fled the vicinity of Keytesville, Missouri, for fear that their household would be targeted for retaliation for William’s evidently secessionist politics. When William Hill returned to the district to salvage what he could, he found that not only had several families of “negros” taken up residence in his house, but that several of the household’s slaves had departed entirely. “Jane I did not see, is living near Bucklin,” he reported. “Bet Lize Cinda & all the children are going up there to live.” He had tried to get possession of Tom, possibly Bet’s son and likely of a working age, but “was affraid to go up to house as the dutch who live there have a great many of our things & threatened to kill me if I came up there again.” He thought Bet herself wanted Tom’s services as “a Plowboy, as they are going to farming,” and when he met her “on the street & told her to send Tom down I wished to see him,” he “did not come.” This former slaveowner, fearing trouble with his German neighbors (and likely with good cause) could no longer countermand Bet’s wishes and plans for her own son and thereby lay claim to the young man’s labor.<sup>110</sup>

Some Border State whites expressed dismay and revulsion at the social, economic, and political situation in which they had found themselves. Many located the source of their

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<sup>108</sup> Anne A. Fall to Carrie Fall, September 24, 1865, Fall Family Papers, Mss. 84mo1, Correspondence and other papers, 1862-1865, Special Collections, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, Kentucky.

<sup>109</sup> Undated entries 1865, Scott, Elvira Ascenith Weir, Diary, Mss. 1053, Folder 9, pp. 244-247, Western Historical Manuscript Collection, Columbia, Missouri.

<sup>110</sup> William Hill to Bettie Hill, March 3, 1865, Hill, William E. and Bettie, Letters, Mss. 3831, Folder 3, Western Historical Manuscript Collection, Columbia, Missouri.

revulsion in the bodies of black folks, whose radically shifting status in Border State society proved intolerable. Kentuckian R. M. Simmons, exiled or fled to New Orleans, received word in the early days of 1865 that “the Negroes formerly of my wifes estate” had, in his absence, begun to build homes and to work the land on their own account. Simmons wished to return to the land himself, and he could or would not do so if black members of his former household, who as of January remained legally enslaved, were there too. “I don’t want a single one of them about the premises in any capacity; & as tenants I am determined they shall not stay there,” he informed his business agent. “I hope you will proceed at once to drive them off.”<sup>111</sup>

Confederate veteran B. F. Broaddus wrote to his sister in August of 1865 from Lexington, Missouri and informed her of his intentions not to return home, where he believed he could not enjoy the rights to which he believed, as a white man, he was entitled. “I dont think Ky is any place for a poore man like me,” he confessed. He was farming in Missouri, planning to “put in a crop of hemp hear next year,” and thought that if he was successful he could “make more money than I could make in Ky in five years.”<sup>112</sup> In November he elaborated on his thinking. Rumors had reached him that “the people are not allowed a gun thair” in Kentucky. Nor was he thrilled with the concept of “negro Soldiers & the like.” In Lexington, by contrast, there were “no soldiers of any kind” and “every thing” was “peaceable like old times.”<sup>113</sup>

But other returning refugees clung to whatever sense of normalcy they could. When George W. Carvill returned from Canada West, to which he had repaired with his wife, their children, and the enslaved man Peter, he reported to his sister in Great Britain that Union County, Kentucky, “just out of civil war, or rather active hostilities laid aside, is seething with

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<sup>111</sup> R. M. Simmons to Thomas Gooch, January 25, 1865, Gooch, Thomas G., Papers 1827-1885, Mss. A/ G645, Folder 3, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

<sup>112</sup> B. F. Broaddus to Sister, August 29, 1865, Hosken Family Collection, Mss. 95mo6, Box 1, Folder 4, Special Collections, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, Kentucky.

<sup>113</sup> B. F. Broaddus to Sister, November 12, 1865, Hosken Family Collection, Mss. 95mo6, Box 1, Folder 4, Special Collections, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, Kentucky.

rancor, hatred, and all uncharitableness. The rails, poor at best, have not been repaired in 4 years, bridges rotten & carried away by patrols, schools upset, and children disperse, farms covered over with weeds and subject to the visitation of wild animals or ‘varmints.’” The region was “most melancholy, most lonely,” and he missed his wife and family. But there was a gleam of hope. When he returned to his homestead, he found that his own household was in just as bad shape as the neighbors. His dog barked at him as a stranger. But the noise of the dog “brought out our negro woman Susan, who has been faithful among the faithless thus far, and from her I received a hug, and was soon overwhelmed with inquiries about ‘old Missus’ and all the little and big ones left behind.” Sue and the dog, which quickly recognized him again “tended somewhat to cheer” him up. The friendly welcome was one thing. But Susan had also “managed to hide the blankets, comforts, and sheets left for the two beds.” Susan had clearly stood up to occupying Union troops, who had stolen everything else, with what must have required a fair degree of cleverness and courage. In her enduring presence in the household, in her heroism in salvaging household comforts, and in her warm welcome to her erstwhile master, she...No clue is given as to what may have motivated her. But to George Carvill, never at ease with the peculiar institution, Susan literally embodied whatever remained of the household.<sup>114</sup>

Under the strains of war and occupation, the slaveholding household in the Border States could not long remain inviolate. Federal policy pertaining to the Border States remained expressly conservative; even so, as early as 1862, many among the master class began to grapple seriously with the prospect of emancipation. The increasing likelihood of the old regime’s collapse prompted a host of reactions, not all of them consistent. Slavery had been central to the

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<sup>114</sup> George W. Carvill to Sister, August 22, 1865, Carvill, George W., Papers, MSS. NO., Folder 7, Western Historical Manuscript Collection, Ellis Library, Columbia, Missouri.

identities of the master class, and its actual or threatened decline forced the renegotiation of those identities. And even as the ground shifted beneath their feet, masters and mistresses alike clung to old values, lashed out in fear and betrayal, and sought to deny and negate the revolutionary change which was already underway. They also took steps to secure as much control over their enslaved labor force as they could, and when they could not, to extract whatever profit was still to be had from black bodies. In two main realms—the impressment of enslaved laborers and the recruitment of black soldiers, masters and mistresses fought a rear-guard action. Federal forbearance only went so far. Eventually, the Union's manpower needs outweighed what political leverage the Border States could wield. Masters and mistresses would be forced to confront, particularly with regards to the recruitment of enslaved men for military service, the negation of their authority and what they understood to be their rights. They would not capitulate without a fight.

## Chapter VI

### “No trouble findin’ work to do’: The Making of Freedom in the Border States”

In the Border States, the line between slavery and freedom was unclear indeed. In neither Missouri nor Kentucky did emancipation conform neatly with the end of hostilities. Missouri brought an end to slavery with the ratification of its 1865 state constitution. But Kentucky staunchly refused to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment, although it did declare itself willing to abide by the amendment’s provisions. For Border State slaves and freedpeople, the struggle to unify far-flung family members, to control the terms of labor, and to forge free households would prove an uphill battle. Moreover, the peculiar combination of small-holdings, mixed agriculture, and a flourishing market in enslaved labor which endured even, in some districts, after the war was over, coupled with an asymmetrical experience of warfare and occupation, meant that the collapse of slavery in fact as well as in law was an ad hoc, deeply contingent process.

The making of freedom began well before the war was over, in some districts, as early as its first and second years. Those slaves who took their liberty in the face of the often violent resistance of the master class, the enduring state slave codes, and the unpredictability of federal policy navigated complicated terrain. They drew from the experience of bondage as well as dreams of freedom in order to do so.<sup>1</sup> The particular terrain of their wartime and post-war struggle would be shaped by the experiences of mastery and enslavement, in ways which worked

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<sup>1</sup> See Susan Eva O’Donovan, *Becoming Free in the Cotton South*, Julie Saville, *The Work of Reconstruction*, and numerous other scholars for explorations of the ways in which slavery shaped notions of freedom across the South.

both for and against them. The pre-war and wartime household of the Border States, as seen in earlier chapters, had flexed and contracted in close response to familial needs, market stimuli, and the exigencies of occupation. The ongoing re-distribution of enslaved bodies from household to household facilitated the efforts of the master class as they struggled to maintain their independence, to extract profit from their troubled investments, and to discipline labor and remove laborers from federal reach.

But it had another, perhaps unexpected, significance as well. As masters and mistresses hedged, negotiated, traded, swapped, and refugeed, their authority collapsed proportionately. And the mobility, albeit coercive, of Border State slaves likely endowed the region's fugitives and freedpeople with a degree of facility in navigating the market in free, waged labor which many of their Deep South counterparts lacked. Even as freedmen and –women navigated the market in free labor, however, they found that it required of them hard, often cruel choices. Largely free from the federally-sponsored and –disciplined coerced labor contracts prevalent in plantation districts, which proved so vexatious to Deep South freedpeople, Border State fugitives and freedpeople often worked out new free labor relations on their own, in individual transactions with those households who sought to hire them.

Family unification stands at the center of most narratives of emancipation, and this was the case for many in the Border States as well, particularly in farming districts. In memory, many former Border State slaves produced a strikingly uncomplicated narrative of emancipation, the making of freed households, admirable upward mobility, and the attainment of modest but undeniable respectability. Dulcinda Baker Martin, born near Winchester, Kentucky, told her interviewer that “when freedom come dey wuz” such a “demand fer carpenters dat father had all de wuk he wuz able ter take keer of.” The family soon saved “a little money, en bought er little

piece of land in Winchester, en built us er nice place.”<sup>2</sup> In Nicholasville, Kentucky, after leaving their master’s Bath County farm, Thomas McIntire’s family “wuked roun’, some of us on farms. Father done blacksmithin’,” he recalled. “Mother saved money fum sellin chickens en eggs, en pretty soon we had ‘nough ter buy en build a nice six-room house.”<sup>3</sup>

But a counter-narrative also emerges from twentieth-century interviews, the protests of white military officers of the abuses suffered by the men under their command, Freedmen’s Bureau papers, and pension depositions. In the alternate narrative, family separation rather than unification was the dominant motif. This is not to say that Border State black families were necessarily less stable or emotionally sustaining than those forged elsewhere in the slave and post-slave South. But the particular demographic, agricultural, and other factors forced Border States freedpeople to make hard, often agonizing, choices in order to ensure the survival of all family members.

An earlier chapter briefly touched upon Border State fugitives’ careful and perilous navigation of the terrain of federal policy as they fled their masters’ households and turned to Union army encampments for succor. Federal policy, however, coexisted uneasily with state laws until 1865 in Missouri and until the ratification of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment in Kentucky. Numerous slaves found that their liberty under the federal policies which freed those slaves who fell under the parameters of the Confiscation Acts, who belonged to masters in the Confederate South, or who were the dependents of enlisted men in the United States Colored Troops became moot should they fall within the reach of the state. Missouri’s slave code would be overturned by the passage of the state’s 1865 constitution, but in Kentucky, the laws would endure until the

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<sup>2</sup> Dulcinda Baker Martin, Ohio, WPA, Supp. I, Vol. 5, 414-417.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas McIntire, Ohio, WPA, Supp. I, Vol. 5, 408-413.

ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment. Although many slaves, of course, had fled their masters and mistresses since the first days and weeks of the conflict, seeking asylum behind Union lines, slipping across the river to free states, or, following pre-war precedent, finding employment—in quiet contravention of the law—in Border State villages and towns, in doing so they ran the risk of coming afoul of the apparatus of the civil law, including the slave code.

The war itself and the presence of the Union Army, coupled with the diversifying economy and mineral resources of the Border region opened opportunities for fugitives and freedpeople to seek employment outside of white households. Freed at some point after “de wah bruk out,” Samuel Lyons and his family traveled to the river city of Covington, Kentucky, “en wuked en er terbacker factory en done whatever wuk us cud git ter do.” He remained an employee in the tobacco factory for about six months before leaving his parents and moving on, finding work in a nearby village “en de powder mills.”<sup>4</sup> Cooking for the soldiers stationed at Auburn, Kentucky, would provide employment for two of W. G. Haden’s slaves. As a federal lieutenant from the post would report, one of the slaves, the husband of the other, left the household first, secured the job for himself and his wife, and then returned, two federal soldiers in attendance, in order to (if Haden had “no objections,” he was careful to note) “moove his wife” out of the white man’s household.<sup>5</sup>

Women who had freed themselves or been freed extra-legally often found that domestic service supplied ready employment. And individual white households often proved willing to hire such laborers, or to employ known fugitives from slavery. Kitty Ray left her master’s Hardin County, Kentucky, household in the spring of 1864, traveling to nearby Grayson County and

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<sup>4</sup> Samuel Lyons, Ohio, WPA, Vol. 5, 405-407.

<sup>5</sup> Lt. A. Reed to Col. Carey, April 20, 1865, U. S. Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Part I, RG 393, Box 5, NAI.

finding employment for herself in the household of W. R. Baker, “doing the family work.”<sup>6</sup> The Kentucky hireling Charlotte, who belonged to John Bigger Bibb and whose annual hires were renegotiated by business agent T. A. Frazer, assured Frazer that she was trying to procure her own hire for the upcoming year, but had said something rather different among her own associates. The rumor reached Frazer that Charlotte had declared her intention to ““set up for herself.”” He had sternly ordered her not to do so, he told John Bibb, but there was little else that he could do. Charlotte would do as she pleased. In addition, Frazier had essentially lost control of the labor of at least one of his other charges. The enslaved woman Louisa steadfastly refused to comply with the hire brokered on her behalf, and instead was “working around generally making enough to support herself.”<sup>7</sup>

Some slaves, even as they enjoyed their de facto liberty and began the arduous process of establishing freed families and freed households, were well aware of the precariousness of their situation. Millie Scott, informally freed in 1862, for example, testified in later years that she “never considered herself free until the Proclamation of the lamented Mr. Lincoln & that she now (as she verily believes) would be a slave, if the result of the war had been otherwise than it was.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the state slave codes posed grave problems. Evacuated from Missouri to California by her rebel master, a nameless enslaved woman simply went about the business of living as a free woman after the man died on the road. For some nine months she worked and “supported herself and children,” until “a distant relative” of her dead master “claims and takes her, putting one of her children in one part of the country and taking her and the other to another

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<sup>6</sup> Deposition of Joseph White, October 1, 1889, Deposition of W. R. Baker, November 4, 1889, Deposition of Kitty Ray, November 5, 1889, File of John Wells, Co. D, 122<sup>nd</sup> U. S. C. T., NAI.

<sup>7</sup> T. A. Frazer to John Bigger Bibb, January 12, 1865, Bibb Family Papers, Filson.

<sup>8</sup> Deposition of Millie Scott, November, 1881, File of Anthony Curtis aka Anthony Courts, aka Anthony Scott, Co. B, 109<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T., NAI.

part.”<sup>9</sup> In some districts, women slaves who had fled or been driven from their masters’ households were barred from employment at all. As federal officer Major Marsh acknowledged, the contraband women at his post could “command” the “considerable wages” which were their due if only “permission were given” and the state slave code countermanded.<sup>10</sup>

As it did in urban areas across the South, “the influx of slaves, soldiers, runaways, military laborers, military officials, and refugee slaveholders” caused population booms in Border State cities and towns and an attendant problem with social control.<sup>11</sup> A federal officer stationed in Warrensburg, Missouri, outlined a rough plan for reshuffling the bodies and the labors of black refugees:

As soon as the weather becomes warm they may be ordered away from the posts and towns, and when they distributed about the country will be able to make a subsistence by their labor, which is much needed. Some of them may be sent to the western border, where they can join their friends who have escaped into Kansas, and by these means and by discouraging them from gathering about the villages and military posts, the evil will in a measure correct itself.<sup>12</sup>

As a Louisville citizens’ committee complained to General John Palmer in May of 1863, “large numbers of Negroes, Most of them Women & children” had “flocked to the city all claiming to be free & looking to the military authorities for Protection and Assistance in Securing their right to Liberty.” Neither the military nor the city, however, was prepared to accommodate them, and the fugitives had “crowded together in numbers so great at each place as to render disease among them almost certain.” Rumors of smallpox epidemics had arisen, and the citizens begged that

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<sup>9</sup> Asst. Provost Marshal A. A. Rice to Col. J. P. Sanderson, March 31, 1864, *ORs, Series I, Vol. XXXIV*, 799.

<sup>10</sup> Major A. C. Marsh to Col. J. P. Sanderson, April 5, 1864, Berlin et al., *Freedom, Series I: Volume I*, 482.

<sup>11</sup> Hunter, *To ‘Joy My Freedom*, 8.

<sup>12</sup> General E. B. Brown to Major O. D. Greene, March 19, 1864, *ORs, Series I, Vol. XXXIV*, 660-661.

hospital facilities—staffed by military surgeons and nurses, not by civilians—be established outside the city limits to care for them.<sup>13</sup>

Brevet Brigadier General James Brisbin reported the extent of the refugee problem to the governor of Kentucky in early 1864, suggesting that the sheer numbers of black fugitives had placed the state in the position of having to give legal meaning to their de-facto freedom. “Evils,” he explained, had grown out of the nominal freedom of the state’s slaves “while unsanctioned by state legislature.” “The Master,” he continued,

can no longer hold his slaves or depend on their labor for a single day, so that producers cannot calculate their crops or pursue agriculture with any degree of certainty. Having become restless and dissatisfied, the slaves leave their homes and setting their faces towards Louisville journey for days over long miles to these Headquarters as the Mecca where freedom may be found, when that freedom should reach them in their houses and they not forced to become outcasts and wanderers to enjoy it.

Private charity could not cope with the problem of meeting the physical needs of these refugees. Brisbin called upon the state to fill the breach. Kentucky, he argued, must announce a program of emancipation in order to reassure the fugitives and encourage them to return home. Placing black liberty on a legally secure platform, he insisted, was the only way to stem the hemorrhage of workers. For its own good, Kentucky must join the march of progress and begin the painful process of readjusting its labor organization.<sup>14</sup>

And there were graver perils as well. Civic restrictions upon the free travel of black people still endured, often leaving them stranded. Black fugitives found themselves barred from the use of public transportation, such as the ferry boat which crossed the Ohio River above the Kentucky line. Several of the extended Bodley clan’s slaves sought to escape in the summer of 1864. Julia, it was reported, had made it safely to Springfield, Ohio. But others were not so

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<sup>13</sup> Citizens’ Committee to Major General John M. Palmer, May 9, 1863, Palmer, John McAuley, Papers, Filson.

<sup>14</sup> Brevet Brigadier General James Brisbin to Governor Thomas E. Bramlette, April 14, 1864, Office of the Governor, Thomas E. Bramlette, Military Correspondence, KDLA.

lucky. Sally and “all her children” left their mistress’s Louisville household and made it to the river, only to be detained by the police, who “brought [them] back saying that negroes were not allowed to run across the river now.”<sup>15</sup> And another member of the family managed to, his niece reported, “[recover] four negroes,” and had high hopes of recapturing a fifth.<sup>16</sup>

Fugitives often found themselves captured as runaways and held for reclamation or sale through the war and even for months after the war had ended. As of May, 1865, those Louisville black folks who hired their own time as free men and women, a breach of the pre-war slave code which threatened to undermine the already fraught mechanism of hiring,<sup>17</sup> and who did not have what city court judge George Johnson termed “any claim whatever to freedom,” found themselves imprisoned in the workhouse. In Lebanon, Kentucky, as late as October of 1865, several “colored citizens” were arrested as runaway slaves. And in November, “two men of Color” were “taken up” and put in jail “BeCause thay would not Return to their homes.”<sup>18</sup> The pre-war slave code mandated that runaway slaves be detained and held for either retrieval or for eventual sale at auction. As had been reiterated up and down the chain of command almost since the war began, Union officers were to permit the lawful functioning of the civil government in loyal states—including the laws which dealt with fugitives from slavery. In December of 1861, one of the slaves who had taken refuge within the ranks of the Fremont Hussars was evidently “delivered” over to his master’s son-in-law in an apparent misunderstanding of orders.<sup>19</sup>

And even labor for federal forces was not always “free,” nor did it offer complete surety against re-enslavement. Henry Halleck conscientiously saw to it that sixteen slaves imprisoned in

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<sup>15</sup> Martha Bodley to Father, August 23, 1864, Bodley Family Papers, 1760-1887, Mss. A B668e, Folder 73, Filson.

<sup>16</sup> Ann J. Bodley to Father, August 26, 1864, Bodley Family Papers, 1773-1939, Mss. A B668e, Folder 73, Filson.

<sup>17</sup> See Jonathan Martin, *Divided Mastery*.

<sup>18</sup> George Johnson to General Palmer, May 15, 1865, James M. Fidler to S. G. Gray, October 20, 1865, and Dick Douglass to Mr. Marish, November 7, 1865, U. S. Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Part I, RG 383, Part I, Department of Kentucky, Boxes 5 and 6, NAI.

<sup>19</sup> H. W. Halleck to Gen. Asboth, December 26, 1861, *ORs, Series I, Volume VIII*, 465.

illegal contravention of the confiscation act were released. The men had been given “certain articles of clothing required for their immediate and pressing necessities,” however, leaving them in debt to the quartermaster’s department. He therefore mandated that “they will be turned over to the chief of the quartermaster’s department in this city for labor till they have paid the United States for the clothing and other articles so issued to them at the expense of the Government.” And they would remain vulnerable to being retaken by their masters, should it be proven “through the loyal civil tribunals” of Missouri, that “his legal rights to the services of these negroes” remained valid.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to confronting the possibility of recapture by their own masters, Border State fugitives were liable to kidnapping and sale to new white households. Michigan Congressman H. W. Kellogg deplored the plight of fugitives in transit northward through the federally-occupied city. In a strongly worded letter to General Ambrose Burnside, he explained that he had witnessed “colored men from Arkansas, Tennessee, Miss[issippi], and other Rebel states who have certificates of their freedom signed by Generals in the field” being “seized—imprisoned—and sold for costs, &c.” These men, far from home, had “no friends to help them.” Their vulnerability was heightened by the “very great” “temptation to kidnap them” and reap not only their sale prices but the bounty evidently warranted for the capture of a fugitive.<sup>21</sup> Evidence may also be found that federal soldiers themselves participated in the duplicitous trade in fugitive bodies. Frances Peter, daughter of a slaveholding household in Lexington, Kentucky, and all too willing to believe the worst about northern-born federals, noted in her diary that the Cairo, Illinois, federal adjutant general had “reprobated” the behavior of the troops garrisoned there. Some of the fugitives who had crossed over from Kentucky, she observed, had allegedly been

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<sup>20</sup> H. W. Halleck to Col. B. J. Farrar, December 18, 1861, *ORs, Series I, Volume VIII*, PAGE NO.

<sup>21</sup> Congressman H. W. Kellogg to General Ambrose Burnside, May 4, 1863, RG 393, E3514, Department of the Ohio, Letters Rec’d, Box 4, NAI.

“returned to Slavery (some of the soldiers when they get ahold of a negro have been in the habit of selling them).”<sup>22</sup>

Even in the cities, both Border State slaves and those liberated by the Emancipation Proclamation from the Confederate South found themselves liable to reclamation. Louisville and St. Louis, in particular, had stood as pre-war bastions of free labor. Culturally both southern and western, both centers of vigorous interstate commerce, both cities had seen their enslaved population decline precipitately during the late antebellum period. Scholar Richard C. Wade has concluded that the development of urban areas, particularly in the Upper South and the Border States, “produced conditions which first strained, then undermined, the regime of bondage.” As he quotes one Kentuckian as observing in the decade and a half before the war, “slavery exist[ed] in Louisville and St. Louis only in name.”<sup>23</sup>

Even in St. Louis, pre-war bastion of free labor and Republican politics, slaves remained vulnerable.<sup>24</sup> Colonel B. G. Farrar, Provost Marshal General for the Department of the Missouri, reported in December of 1861 that some sixteen contraband slaves were held in city jails, advertised for collection by their masters or for sale as runaways. Henry Halleck, apprised of the matter, carefully considered its various repercussions. Ultimately he concluded that as “most of these negroes came with the forces under Major General Fremont from Southwestern Missouri, and have either been used in the military service against the United States or are claimed by persons now in arms against the Federal Government,” the spirit, if not the absolute letter of the First Confiscation Act applied to them, and they must be released from confinement.<sup>25</sup> But by March of 1862, Farrar continued to complain, dispatching a sternly worded message to the city’s

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<sup>22</sup> Entry March 31, 1863, Smith and Cooper, eds., *A Union Woman in Civil War Kentucky*, 118.

<sup>23</sup> Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 3-4, 14-15.

<sup>24</sup> See Louis Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis*. See also Michael Fellman, *Inside War*.

<sup>25</sup> H. W. Halleck to Col. B. G. Farrar, December 18, 1861, *ORs, Series I, Volume VIII*.

police commissioners. “The city policemen,” he explained, were “in the habit of arresting negroes ‘as runaways’ and frequently arrest, or attempt to arrest, the servants of the army officers.” He found himself compelled to “request that hereafter the city police be confined in their arrests of negroes as ‘runaways’ strictly to such negroes as may be in a legal manner claimed by his or her owner,” and only with “a writ issued from a court having jurisdiction of the case.”<sup>26</sup>

Some evidence suggests that under these volatile wartime conditions, even those born free had reason to fear. In February of 1863, Lexingtonian Frances Peter observed that the free black population of the city “were very much frightened when they heard of the rebels Coming,” and “crowded” to the courthouse to “get possession of their free papers.”<sup>27</sup> Perhaps this fear prompted Martha Doram and her father, Dennis, to present themselves at the Boyle County Court in Kentucky to obtain a certificate of Martha’s freedom in the same month. Martha, a petite twenty-one-year-old of “yellow” complexion, was the daughter of free (and remarkably prosperous) parents and the granddaughter, it was widely accepted, of Revolutionary War general Thomas Barbee.<sup>28</sup>

For Border State slaves prior to January of 1865 in Missouri and prior to the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment in Kentucky, the only legally binding route to emancipation was via military service, and for many families, the enlistment of the husband and father in the federal service was the first step in the making of a free household. In this region exempt from the Emancipation Proclamation, an enslaved man’s enlistment in the federal service legally freed his wife, children, and if she was living, his mother. And for many men previously isolated on

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<sup>26</sup> Bernard G. Farrar to the Police Commissioners of St. Louis, March 3, 1862, *ORs, Series I, Volume VIII*, 584.

<sup>27</sup> Entry February 23, 1863, Smith and Cooper, eds., *A Union Woman in Civil War Kentucky*, 100.

<sup>28</sup> Deposition of Martha Doram, February 3, 1863, Doram-Rowe Family Collection, KHS.

small farms, historian Aaron Astor observes, enlistment may well have been “the most vital political statement” that they had ever made. Black enlistment in the Border States, Astor suggests, may have carried greater weight than it did in the Confederate South. Both Kentucky and Missouri contributed a number of new recruits disproportionate to the states’ black populations and considerably greater, in both proportion and in number, than that number contributed by rebel states.<sup>29</sup> In Kentucky, historian Marion Lucas observes, the largest slaveowning regions proved to be the most fertile ground for recruitment. Enslaved men from the bluegrass counties “flowed into Lexington from all directions,” in numbers described as “throng,” “droves,” and “trainloads.” Western Kentucky, too, formerly a Confederate stronghold and still highly ambivalent about the Union presence, sent its share.<sup>30</sup>

In October of 1863, Harriet Bird and William Jordan Abernathy left their respective masters’ households and traveled to Cape Girardeau, Missouri. On the fourth of that month, they were married in the home of Levina Russell, who had known Harriet Bird since childhood. Franklin Russell, who had “usually married colored people in this vicinity, for many years,” performed the ceremony. Although there would be no written record of their marriage, all agreed that a marriage had taken place. The customary practices of slavery carried forth into the future, defining the couple’s free marriage. William Abernathy acknowledged Harriet as his wife via letters home from the army. But their marriage, and William’s enlistment, also marked a breach with the past. When William enlisted, two friends testified, he “dropped the name Abernathy and enlisted by the name of William Jordan.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Astor, “Black Soldiers and White Violence,” in Cimbala and Miller, eds., *The Great Task Remaining Before Us*, 35.

<sup>30</sup> Lucas, “Black Families and Soldiers,” in Dollar et al., eds., *Sister States, Enemy States*, 195.

<sup>31</sup> Deposition of Franklin Russell, January 8, 1868, and Deposition of John Avery and Levina Russell, January 9, 1868, File of William Jordan Abernathy, COMPANY, REGT., NAI.

Border State couples, as well as their counterparts across the slave South, often marked this momentous shift by renaming themselves, assuming new identities separate from those of their masters. Ewing Cox enlisted in Co. B of the 109<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T. under his master's surname of Donovan, but, as his comrade and friend William R. Rabold later testified, when he returned home he took up his father's name of Cox.<sup>32</sup> George Montgomery took his father's name of Alexander after "slave time" had ended.<sup>33</sup> Henry Clay took his father's surname of Miller, which he used socially, although he continued to sign "Government papers" with the name under which he had enlisted.<sup>34</sup> Some women did the same. Millie Scott explained that "while she was a slave & the property of Mr. Scarce, she was called Scarce, after she became the property of Mr. Courts, she was called Courts." But once freed by the military service of her son, she assumed the name of her deceased husband, August[us] Scott, who had been killed in an accident some years before.<sup>35</sup> And Amanda Fowler took her husband's name of Bush following their liberation.<sup>36</sup>

But military service did more. It placed the tools of violence, and the masculine prerogative of their use, in black hands. William Emmons left his Nicholas County, Kentucky, master when he was eighteen, in the company of "bout forty of us fum de plantation[s] on roun'." The young men assembled and set off "down a dusty road," only to be confronted by "three white fellers we knowed," who demanded to know where they were headed. "We tole em we wuz goin' to wah," Emmons recalled, "an 'dey tried to mek us go back to de plantation. We

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<sup>32</sup> Deposition of William R. Rabold, January 28, 1892, Pension file of Ellen Donovan, No. 349,746, Box No. 39,281, Bundle No. 17, National Archives I, Washington, D.C.

<sup>33</sup> Deposition of Lizzie Alexander, February 15, 1906, File of Lizzie Alexander, No. 610,083, Can 51206, Bundle 14, National Archives I, Washington, D. C.

<sup>34</sup> Deposition of Henry Clay aka Henry Miller, June 27, 1887, File of Jerry Young aka Robert Armstrong, No. 176,383, Box 164, Bundle 20, National Archives I, Washington, D. C.

<sup>35</sup> Deposition of Millie Scott, November, 1881, Pension File of Anthony Scott, COMPANY, REGIMENT, No. 207,154, Box 34,722, Bundle 28, National Archives I, Washington, D.C.

<sup>36</sup> Deposition of Henry Fowler and Benjamin Fox, no date, Pension File of Isaac Embry, aka Isaac Bush, Mother's Cert. 314,573, Box 38221, Bundle 26, National Archives I, Washington, D. C.

tole em we'd kill em sho' ef dey kep' on meddlin' wid us, an dey got skeered an' let us 'lone."<sup>37</sup>

The vexations of Border State white people, soldier and civilian alike, reveal the further impact of such actions. Union Colonel John Williams, posted at St. Joseph, Missouri, complained up the chain of command that conditions in his district were "unbearable." Enslaved men found it all too feasible to "go to Kansas, get arms & uniform & come back & demand & steal or rather just take what they want & threaten every white man in the country with extermination that dont applaud them."<sup>38</sup> And in the vicinity of Glasgow, Missouri, black enlisted men returned to the district "with some white soldiers" and set about "hauling off Tobacco from their former owners taking their wives & children, reclaiming both their families and the products of their unpaid labor."<sup>39</sup>

The documentary record is replete with instances of armed black men withdrawing their wives, mothers, and children beyond the reach of former masters and mistresses. Samuel Bowmen, laid up in a Missouri military hospital, sent a letter to his wife in care of her master. He promised her that he had already arranged her liberty with the Provost Marshal at Tipton, Missouri, and issued detailed instructions as to how to claim that liberty. First, if she wished to join him at the Tipton army post, she must "tell Mr Wilson in a decent manner" that she did not want to remain a member of his household. Bowmen then addressed Wilson himself, demanding that he permit Mrs. Bowmen to depart peacefully, with a pass to reach federal lines. He insisted that Wilson read the letter to Mrs. Bowmen, and assured him that he would find out "whether this has been read to her in a full understanding with her or not." If he should "find out that she has never heard her deliverance," he would "undoub[t]edly punish" Wilson. If Wilson

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<sup>37</sup> William Emmons, Ohio, George P. Rawick, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography, Vol. 5, Indiana and Ohio Narratives* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977), 326-331.

<sup>38</sup> Col. John Williams to General Odon Guitar, September 29, 1863, Guitar Collection, Mss. 1007, Folder 8, Western Historical Manuscript Collection, Columbia, Missouri.

<sup>39</sup> John H. Lewis to General Odon Guitar, March 6, 1864, Guitar Collection, Mss. 1007, Folder 12, Western Historical Manuscript Collection, Columbia, Missouri.

cooperated with Bowmen's demands, however, and facilitate the formation of this black household (and, moreover, remained unruffled by Bowmen's peremptory tone and assertion of masculine prerogative), free by virtue of Bowmen's military service and protected "under the Stars & Stripes," he would prove himself to be "as good a Union man" as Bowmen had heard.<sup>40</sup>

Military service also supplied the capital necessary to plant free households. Upon Henry Snyder's return from the army, he reunited the nuclear family that had been scattered by the slave market. Years before, Snyder himself had been sold at auction to settle his master's estate. His mother, Liza Rudd, and two younger brothers had remained together until a violent altercation between Rudd and her brutal mistress had resulted in the enslaved woman's being hired to a Louisville hotel. With his wages in his pocket, Snyder rented seven acres of land near Owensboro, Kentucky, and there, kid brother John Rudd's interviewer explained, "the mother and her three sons were reunited."<sup>41</sup> In the awkwardly-written letters home which sometimes accompanied a soldier's wages, black men began to articulate the parameters of marriages marked both by reciprocity and, perhaps, by the "personal dominion and dependency" which characterized nineteenth-century unions in general.<sup>42</sup> Richard Pullam, a freedman from Chariton County, Missouri, and a soldier in the U. S. C. T., sent his love to his wife, Jane, and their children in numerous letters written in different hands. Until he seems to have become functionally literate some time in 1864, the lack of "any one to write for me" frustrated him and meant that he could not keep in as close contact as he would like. His letters arrived roughly once every two or three months, in which he sent his love to their family and friends, asking Jane to "keep a large portion of the same yourself," sent small sums of money and news of the health

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<sup>40</sup> Samuel Bowmen to Mr. Wilson, May 10, 1864, Ira Berlin, Barbara J. Fields, Thavolia Glymph, Joseph P. Reidy, and Leslie S. Rowland, editors, *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867, Series I, Volume I: The Destruction of Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 483-484.

<sup>41</sup> John Rudd, Indiana, George P. Rawick, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography, Vol. 6, Alabama and Indiana Narratives* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973), 169-172.

<sup>42</sup> See Amy Dru Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract*, 47-50.

of their friends, many of whom were his comrades in the service, and urged her to rely for assistance in going to town, marketing garden truck, and other matters, upon a friend named Willis.<sup>43</sup>

Private Walker Shope of the 114<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T., stationed in Brownsville, Texas, in the autumn of 1865, gives a tantalizing glimpse into the making of a free soldier's household. As did Pullam and countless other married men, northern and southern, black and white, Shope took steps to arrange male guidance and assistance for his wife in his absence.<sup>44</sup> Shope wrote to Dennis Doram, a free man of color and a prosperous businessman and landowner in Danville, Kentucky, explaining that he had had two hundred and ten dollars expressed home, "inshoured and paid for," saved up from his pay and from that of another soldier. He enclosed a careful accounting. One hundred and seventy dollars was to be allocated to his own wife, Margit. Of the remaining forty, Margit should see that Henry Miller's mother received fifteen, and Miller's wife the remaining twenty-five. Walker Shope asked Dennis Doram to escort Margit Shope to the bank and assist her in making her first deposit. "I wish you would bee a gardeen for her and see that she dont get Cheeted out of it," he explained. Despite his concern that Margit might be victimized by dishonest men, he also expressed guarded trust in her judgment. He was willing that Margit should "git it out as She needs it," but warned that she mustn't waste the money, "for when I get out of the Survice we will need it." Aware that his instructions might possibly be mistaken for tightness or mistrust in his wife's abilities, he clarified himself further: "I dont

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<sup>43</sup> Richard Pullam to Jane Pullam, January 11, 1864, February 17, 1864, May 25, 1864, and July 10, 1864, Benecke Family Papers, Mss. 3825, Folder 2514, War Claims and Pensions, Blacks—Henry Fleetwood, WHMC.

<sup>44</sup> See extensive discussion of women's independent roles during wartime; for example, George Rable, Drew Gilpin Faust, Nina Silber, etc.

want her to think that i am stinger but i want to save plenty to get a place for we will bee out of dores but i dont want to hender her from buying any thing she needs.”<sup>45</sup>

Although military service gave black men the tools to claim their wives and children, and black women the legal rationale to liberate themselves, enlistment also pulled families apart, often forever. Of the nearly seventy thousand black soldiers reported dead or missing, less than three thousand had been killed in combat. As Leon F. Litwack observes, “despite the claim that blacks were less susceptible to diseases which felled whites, the death rate from disease was nearly three times as great for black soldiers as for whites.”<sup>46</sup> Corporal Jacob Mimms of the 122<sup>nd</sup> U. S. C. T. would never meet the daughter whom he had conceived during his few brief weeks of marriage, and who would bear his name—Martha Jake, known among her Kentucky neighborhood as Jakie.<sup>47</sup>

Men knew well the hardships that their families would face, should they never return. When the Kentucky slave Jerry Powell left home to enlist in Co. C of the 109<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T., “he said that he hated to leave his little child for she was too young to take care of herself for he did not know when the war would end.”<sup>48</sup> John W. Fultz was sick with pleurisy when he was mustered out of the service. Unable to reach his own home in Missouri, he turned to Martha Washington’s family for help. As she later testified, Fultz had been “acquainted” with her father because “his White Folks and our White Folks were Cousins.” Whatever the degree of friendship or fictive kinship, the Washingtons took Fultz into their Leavenworth, Kansas, home and cared for him. His disease worsening, John Fultz “was very anxious about getting home to his Wife,”

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<sup>45</sup> Walker Shope to Dennis Doram, September 25, 1865, Doram-Rowe Family Collection, Mss. 2005m15, Folder 4, Documents from the 1860s, KHS.

<sup>46</sup> Litwack, *Been in the Storm so Long*, 98.

<sup>47</sup> File of Jacob Mimms, Co. C, 122<sup>nd</sup> U. S. C. T., Minor Child’s Cert. 563,528, box 48654, bundle 5, NAI.

<sup>48</sup> Deposition of Henry Hocker, no date, File of Jerry Powell, Co. C, 109<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T., Cert. 173,171, Box 33,964, Folder 10, NAI.

Miss Washington recalled. “After he got so bad that he found he could not get to his Wife, my brother Paul Jones was going down to Brunswick and bring his wife up.” Before the young man could start on the road, however, John Fultz died. Later, Paul Jones saw to it that “certain paper, a revolver and some other things” were delivered to the widow.<sup>49</sup>

Black recruits knew well that to leave their families behind was to leave their families unprotected against white abuse. Masters and mistresses confiscated soldiers’ correspondence with their wives and children, and often the tiny sums of money enclosed therein, as well. Jerry Young of Barren County, Kentucky had “had some trouble with the family” who owned him in the spring of 1864 and escaped mounted on a horse stolen from a neighbor. After his departure, he sent his wife Mariah several letters, telling her of the fate of their friends and of his own health, in care of her master Ferguson. But Ferguson burned the letters and never told Mariah of their arrival. The last contact between the married couple came one night when Young slipped away from his regiment and visited his wife and children, staying “only a few hours” and leaving her “before day.” Afraid that “other people... in the adjoining room” would hear, he was “afraid to talk much” during the visit. It was the last she ever saw or heard of him.<sup>50</sup> Stationed at Rock Island, Illinois, in May of 1865, the men of the 108<sup>th</sup> U. S. Colored Infantry sent their wages home to their wives and children in Kentucky, only to learn that the money had never reached them. The lieutenant colonel of the regiment agreed with the enlisted men’s suspicion that the money had “fallen into the hands of their former masters and [been] retained.” In a strongly worded complaint up the chain of command, the Lieutenant Colonel requested that a “plan” be “adopted” “during the transition state of society in Kentucky” whereby “the colored soldier be

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<sup>49</sup> Deposition of Martha Washington, January 16, 1882, Testimony of Bettie Bruce, March 23, 1882, Dept. of Interior Pension Office to Louis Benecke, March 31, 1882, Benecke Family Papers, Mss. 3825, Box 94, Folder 2519, War Claims and Pensions, Blacks—John Fultz, WHMC.

<sup>50</sup> Deposition of George C. Young, April 12, 1886, Deposition of George C. Young, April 13, 1887, Deposition of Mariah Young, December 19, 1885, Pension File of Jerry Young aka Robert Armstrong, Claim No. 176,383, Box 164, Bundle 20, NAI.

enabled to support his family, and no longer that of his master.”<sup>51</sup>

Such fears on the part of black recruits were hardly exaggerated, and they would not end with the end of the war. In the two months Colonel Charles Bartlett of the 119<sup>th</sup> U. S. Colored Infantry had been stationed at Camp Nelson in Kentucky, during the last weeks of 1865 and into the new year, he reported that “almost daily cases have been brought to” his notice “in which the former owners of the wives and children of men who have been soldiers, refuse to give them up upon the application of the husband and father for them and threaten him with violence and death if he attempts to go for them.” At least one enlisted man and one recently discharged veteran had been shot and killed, and “the child of Mary Campbell wife of a soldier” in Colonel Bartlett’s own regiment had been kidnapped by the former master and taken, it was believed, to Arkansas.<sup>52</sup>

The nature of the abuses slaveholders levied upon soldiers’ wives and children suggests something about the family politics of black enlistment. In many cases, enslaved soldiers’ dependents were hardly passive victims. Rather, they had taken an active role in making the fateful decision to send a man to the war, and slaveholders, it seems, were well aware of the fact. Martha, a Mexico, Missouri, slave woman told her husband that her erstwhile master and mistress tormented her on account of his service. She had warned him that this might be so. “They abuse me because you went & say they will not take care of our children & do nothing but quarrel with me all the time and beat me scandalously the day before yesterday,” she lamented.

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<sup>51</sup> Lt. Col. John Bishop to Captain Watson, May 11, 1865, U. S. Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Part I, RG 393, Part I, Department of Kentucky, Box 5, Letters Received January-October, 1865, NAI.

<sup>52</sup> Col. Charles G. Bartlett to Captain Greer, January 16, 1866, U. S. Army Commands, 1821-1920, Part I, RG 393, Part I, Department of Kentucky, Box 6, NAI.

“You need not tell me to beg any more married men to go,” she informed him. “I see too much trouble to try to get any more into trouble too.”<sup>53</sup>

And concern for wives and children in some cases prevented enslaved men from enlisting at all. Many, among them the Missouri slave Ed Peyton, hesitated before enlisting out of concern for their families. As Peyton told Kansas officer Lewis F. Green, “he feared” that his wife, Martha, and their two small children “might be sold or ill used as things often threatened by slave owners to intimidate them from Volunteering.” Green stepped into the breach. After persuading Peyton to volunteer, he dispatched a sternly-worded letter to Martha’s Clay County master, informing him “in the spirit of Calmness” that he must “furnish” Martha and the children with “Clothing and transportation to the Mo river at Kansas City immediately.” If he failed to comply, the captain would deal with the situation accordingly, and the slaveholder’s “life or property” would be “but a small Consideration when opposed to the March of freedom.” As he instructed, “When that black man Ed Peyton enlisted here yesterday, he purchased his wife & Children from You and from all he is fighting for the Government, and is Entitled to the priviledge it now gives freedom to all.”<sup>54</sup> Not all, however, could count on such an ally. As historian Marion Lucas suggests, the abuses perpetrated on wives and children, coupled with the naiveté of federal officers who “reassured potential enlistees by telling them that their masters were honor ‘bound’ to take care of families of volunteers” resulted in a marked slackening of enlistments, at least in Kentucky, by the fall of 1864.<sup>55</sup>

Freedwomen emerged as pawns in the struggle for profit and social control between masters and mistresses, the federal army, and the state. Federal officers issued optimistic reports

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<sup>53</sup> Martha to Husband, December 30, 1863, Berlin and Rowland, eds., *Families and Freedom*.

<sup>54</sup> Capt. Lewis F. Green to Alexander Calhoun, February 14, 1864, Guitar, Odon, Collection, Mss. 1007, Folder 11, WHMC.

<sup>55</sup> Lucas, “Black Families and Soldiers,” in Dollar et al, *Sister States, Enemy States*, 197.

of the progress made in supplying the needs for shelter and subsistence of those women and children who fled their masters for the dubious asylum of army posts and urban areas. But the complaints of white observers, and of the freedpeople themselves, often reveal a much grimmer situation. The “encampment” in the vicinity of Paducah, Kentucky, one white citizen complained in early 1864, was “fast filling up with women, babies, boys and girls of all ages, the wives children kindred &c of the enlisted soldiers, all of whom living in squalor and idleness are to be supported from some quarter.”<sup>56</sup> The federal policy intended to remedy such a situation, historian Marion Lucas observes, was to return hundreds of soldiers’ dependents to their masters’ households. Although the post commander directly disobeyed the order and made an effort to provide for the refugees, many who remained in the camp continued to suffer harsh conditions.<sup>57</sup>

While their men fought, Border State freedwomen confronted a struggle of their own—that of securing subsistence for their families in the absence of a male breadwinner and in the face of tremendous intransigence on many fronts. The Bath County, Kentucky, slave woman Marth left her master’s household in May of 1865, taking “her babe” and traveling to “Maysville, to hunt freedom, & her husband in the army,” as her erstwhile master complained in a letter to his grandson.<sup>58</sup> There she disappears from the documentary record, but the frustrated report of a federal officer stationed there suggests the sort of difficulties she may have encountered. Numerous households in Maysville, Kentucky, complained to the federal post that after hiring some fifty freedwomen and their children, the spouses and offspring of men enlisted in the U. S. C. T., they had been informed that they were “liable to a heavy fine for doing so under the State decisions.” They would have to fire their servants or face legal repercussions.

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<sup>56</sup> A. Bradshaw to Governor Thomas E. Bramlette, February 9, 1864, Office of the Governor, Thomas E. Bramlette, Military Correspondence, Box 5, Folder 99, KDLA.

<sup>57</sup> Lucas, “Black Families and Soldiers,” in Dollar et al, *Sister States, Enemy States*, 199.

<sup>58</sup> James Moffett to James and Martha Sudduth, May 11, 1865, James Moffett Letters, 1859-1878, Mss. 98sc196, KHS.

The exasperated post commander appealed for instructions. “These parties ask, of me protection,” he explained. “How shall I give it. Shall I arrest the party who brings suit. The officer who serves the writ, the jury who give damages, or the Judge who charges the jury to find damages[?]”<sup>59</sup>

Even when freedwomen found employment for themselves, however, their struggles did not end. Freed in 1862, Millie Scott and her grown son Anthony Scott moved from their master’s household in Bowling Green and moved to what may have been one of the city’s black neighborhoods. There they rented two rooms in the home of one Dave Liland and his family, paying three dollars a month for the residence. Anthony went to work at the tan yard and Millie found what work she could. When Anthony Scott enlisted in the 109<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T., however, his mother had to give up even this modest independence. In 1865 she hired herself out to the Ragland household for the wage of eight dollars per month and her subsistence.<sup>60</sup> Soldiers’ families split apart, the minimal wages accruing to children’s labor too essential to be foregone. During the war, after their master reneged on a promise to pay wages, Emma Knight and her mother moved to Hannibal, Missouri. “We put up at the barracks” of the federal post there, Knight recalled, until her mother found employment as a live-in servant. Knight herself, in early adolescence at the time, could not accompany her. Instead, she found a job of her own, hiring out for no cash wages but “for my clothes and schooling.”<sup>61</sup> And when Betty Abernathy and her mother arrived at Cape Girardeau in 1862, they “had no trouble findin’ work to do.” Housed in the barracks, Mrs. Abernathy hired out ten-year-old Betty for twenty-five cents a week.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Lt. Col. W. A. Gage to General Palmer, April 25, 1865, U. S. Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Part I, RG 393, Part I, Department of Kentucky, Box 5, NAI.

<sup>60</sup> Deposition of Ellen Younger, August 31, 1881, Deposition of Millie Scott, November, 1881, File of Anthony Curtis aka Anthony Courts, aka Anthony Scott, Co. B, 109<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T., Mother’s Cert. 207154, Box 34722, Bundle 28, NAI.

<sup>61</sup> Emma Knight, Missouri, WPA, Supp. 1, Vol. 2, 202-204.

<sup>62</sup> Betty Abernathy, Missouri, WPA, Vol. 11, 6-7.

Slavery would not endure forever. Those Border State freedpeople, men and women alike, who left their erstwhile masters' households generally navigated the labor market with admirable facility. The Kentucky freedwoman Margaret indicated to her employers, once her mistress and master, that she was "anxious" to take on the care of the household's toddler son and newborn daughter, as the expanded duties came with higher wages.<sup>63</sup> Even before her master assembled his slaves to inform them of their freedom, Florence Lee's mother had arranged paid employment for herself. Offered the option of remaining on her master's Kentucky farm, she turned him down and moved her three small children to a neighbor's household, where she had been promised the wage of three dollars per week, which her former master could not match, for her cooking.<sup>64</sup>

Freedpeople exercised their right to mobility, sometimes moving from job to job prior to settling down and establishing households of their own. Lizzie and George Alexander had courted for several years before his enlistment in the army. They married, she testified later, "2 weeks before Christmas 3 years after the war," at her father's home on the "Sand Pike." The new couple then "went right on" to the household of Alex Veach, where they had both secured employment. They remained in the Veach household for three years before they moved, staying for roughly two-year stretches in each subsequent job, until they arrived in Louisville, where they settled permanently.<sup>65</sup>

In many cases, experience in having been hired out or in the myriad other ways enslaved people had been moved from household to household may have imparted confidence or

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<sup>63</sup> Anne Fall to Carrie Fall, November 12, 1865, Fall Family Papers, Mss. 84mo1, 1862-1865, Correspondence and Other Papers, KHS.

<sup>64</sup> Florence Lee, Indiana, WPA, Vol. 5, 399-400.

<sup>65</sup> Deposition of Lizzie Alexander, February 15, 1906, File of George Alexander, CO., REGT., No. 610,083, Can 51206, Bundle 14, NAI.

knowledge. Kentucky-born Mary Carey had worked in at least seven white men's households during the years between her arrival in Missouri as a child of twelve or thirteen and her emancipation as a young married woman and mother of two. Circulated by hiring, by sale, and by inheritance, she may have gained valuable experience and confidence in the worth of her own abilities even as she suffered repeated disruptions of her family life. Sold a final time to one Mr. Pemberton of Randolph County, Missouri (with her children in tow) following her husband's enlistment, upon her emancipation in 1865 she left the household and hired herself to Pemberton's brother-in-law, Asa Thompson.<sup>66</sup> Also a former hireling, after her son's enlistment Millie Scott hired herself to the Ragland household of Kentucky, remaining there "nearly 2 years," she later testified. In 1867 she hired to the Paynes for two dollars less. In the years to come, both while she remained in Kentucky and after she departed for better fortunes in Cincinnati, she "worked for so many persons... that she [could not] remember their names" as she fought to support herself and her daughter "by washing, ironing, and sewing."<sup>67</sup>

Indeed, the ways in which freedpeople made their decisions to move on from or to remain in a place of employment seem to have echoed the cycles of annual hiring prior to the war. Gertrude Pettus, the daughter of former slaveholders, indicated in a letter to her brother written in December of 1866 that most of her Kentucky household's "negroes" still resided there. They had told her that they planned to leave around Christmas, being "very much determined to go to housekeeping." But even after preparations had been made for their move, they changed their minds, asking "to stay this year upon the same terms they did last year." Not until the following year, in very late 1867 or early 1868, did they depart the Pettus's household for whatever

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<sup>66</sup> Deposition of Mary Carey, File of George Carey, Co. A, 62<sup>nd</sup> U. S. C. T., Widow's Cert. 205,176, Box 34669, Bundle 13, NAI.

<sup>67</sup> Deposition of Ellen Younger, August 31, 1881, Deposition of Millie Scott, November, 1881, File of Anthony Curtis aka Anthony Courts, aka Anthony Scott, Co. B, 109<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T., Mother's Cert. 207154, Box 34722, Bundle 28, NAI.

opportunities beckoned in Danville.<sup>68</sup>

Mobility and the right to quit, though certainly not uncontested, met other needs as well. Aunt Julia, who had for years “presided over” the Kentucky Hughes household’s “cuisine,” left the household after the war, having decided that to work during the winter would aggravate her rheumatism beyond toleration, but offering to “return in the summer.”<sup>69</sup> More than a hint of mischief is discernable in the Missouri freedwoman Margaret’s employment decisions. Her new mobility gave her a useful tool with which to taunt her former mistress, with whom she had had a long, intimate, and occasionally contentious working relationship, in the way which she knew would cause most consternation. She left Elvira Scott’s household “about the middle of May” in 1865, leaving Scott and her teenage daughter to “do the work.” It was not the first time Margaret’s services had been unavailable to Scott. Nor was it the first time Scott had complained heartily about that fact. “It nearly killed me to cook for such a family,” she griped, “& walk fourteen squares & back to the market daily.” Margaret had promised to return to the Scott household as a waged employee, but in the meantime she delayed, managing to arrive only after Scott and her daughter had already finished the hard work of moving house. She wouldn’t remain long, and when she quit again, she took pains to do it on Christmas morning, leaving Scott with the holiday festivities to prepare and coordinate alone.<sup>70</sup>

One measure of their success at navigating the labor market to their own advantage is the bitterness with which Border State whites complained of their own loss of control. George Carvill told his sister that it had become nigh unto impossible to employ freedwomen to cook and launder. “The women will not work,” Carvill vexed, “and cannot be depended on in this

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<sup>68</sup> Gertrude Pettus to Joe Pettus, December 30, 1866, January 9, 1868, Pettus-Speiden Family Papers, 1838-1971, Mss. A P499, Folders 2 and 4, Filson.

<sup>69</sup> Annie Hughes to Brother, November 22, 1868, Hughes Family Papers, Mss. 97mo2, Folder 21, KHS.

<sup>70</sup> Undated entries 1865, Entry October 15, 1866, Scott, Elvira Ascenith Weir, Diary, Mss. 1053, Folder 9-10, pp. 244-247, 276-277, WHMC.

region. They are fast becoming totally demoralized, & good for nothing.” He cited the example of Susan, who dared prefer to live with her husband rather than with the Carvills, and explained that “for a time, it was a serious matter here to get washing done, for the Dianas & Cleopatras vowed they ‘wouldn’t put their hands in suds to please nobody no how.’ That was the burden of their song,” he complained, all through the summer of 1865. The withdrawal of domestic servants from white households had resulted in a shift in the pattern of employment. Susan’s labors would be replaced by those of a woman whom Susan herself referred to, most rudely, as “that ‘corn field nigger’”—a former field hand, and on whom Susan would frequently check up in order to ensure that she did not “spoil [Carvill’s] dinner.”<sup>71</sup>

Absent from the Border State transition to free labor were the inexorable needs of a staple crop such as cotton or sugar, and this too shaped the parameters within which freedpeople made new households. In thousands of individual interactions, freedmen and –women and their erstwhile masters and mistresses worked out, often not without violence and trauma, solutions to the exigencies of tobacco, hemp, grains, livestock, and domestic production. The vast majority of Border State freedpeople, like the vast majority of freedpeople elsewhere, had little time to leave a written record of what they expected of freedom and what they actually found. But their actions, and the vernacular historiography<sup>72</sup> produced by their later recollections, sheds light. Indeed, the collected evidence provides what scholar Julie Saville terms “an embarrassingly rich documentary record.”<sup>73</sup>

Emancipation and the making of free black workers as well as free black households, Saville contends, was “a dual struggle”—both to repudiate “the personal sovereignty” of masters

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<sup>71</sup> George Carvill to Sister, April 26, 1866, Carvill, George W., Letters, Mss. 2697, Folder 7, Letters 1864-1866, WHMC.

<sup>72</sup> See the Ed Baptist article.

<sup>73</sup> Saville, *The Work of Reconstruction*, 2.

and mistresses, and to challenge the notion that “subjection to landowners’ management and to the discipline of an abstract market constituted freedom.”<sup>74</sup> Indeed, on the proving ground of Reconstruction, “Yankee ideals” of contract freedom contended with “the aspirations of freed slaves as well as with the interests of former masters.” In the matter of “family security,” scholar Amy Dru Stanley observes, the expectations of freedpeople across the slave South cohered with those of emancipation-minded northern whites.<sup>75</sup> Indeed, in the recollections of former slaves, often the first act of freedom was the reunification of far-flung family members. When Joseph Mosely was freed, he “was given the first suit of clothes he had ever owned, and a pair of shoes,” and told “he could go see his mother,” who lived six miles away.<sup>76</sup> Upon Henry Snyder’s return from the army, he reunited the nuclear family that had been scattered by the slave market. With his wages in his pocket, Snyder rented seven acres of land near Owensboro, Kentucky, and there, kid brother John Rudd’s interviewer explained, “the mother and her three sons were reunited.”<sup>77</sup>

Border State freedpeople, as did freedpeople elsewhere across the postwar South, refused to accept white claims to the prerogatives of mastery which they believed went hand in hand with paternalist largesse. Legal marriage, as scholar Amy Dru Stanley observes, “remov[ed] family relations from the direct control of former masters” to the realm of the state.<sup>78</sup> Richard Parrott’s brave and sensible wife successfully thwarted her master’s attempt to apprentice their five children against her will, refusing to depart the household as she had been ordered to do, until her husband returned from his military service. Then she married him again under the law, as protection for the survivor’s custody rights should either die, and together they took the

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<sup>74</sup> Saville, *The Work of Reconstruction*, 2.

<sup>75</sup> Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract*, 35, 39.

<sup>76</sup> Joseph Mosely, Indiana, WPA, Vol. 6, 147-149.

<sup>77</sup> John Rudd, Indiana, WPA, Vol. 6, 169-172.

<sup>78</sup> Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract*, 44.

children to Indiana.<sup>79</sup>

Black men asserted the prerogatives of husbands and fathers, at times at the cost of their own lives. In his analysis of postwar racial violence, historian Aaron Astor contends that Border State whites used violence to reestablish “white dominance in all facets of social, cultural, and political life.”<sup>80</sup> In Hardin County, Kentucky, after the end of the war but prior to the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment, when the state clung fiercely to its institutions but was increasingly forced to acknowledge “the doctrin” of black freedom, “the darkest cloud,” as white Kentuckian D. C. Phillips put it, “that has ever gathered over... our political institutions,” an enslaved man named Peter was shot and killed by his master’s son. The master, one Jo Edlen, had evidently undertaken to whip one of Peter’s children, and in response Peter “knocked” the man “down... with a billet of wood.” Edlen’s son John drew his pistol and “shot Peter the negro thought the Hart,” killing him almost instantly. The younger Edlen, Phillips went on to explain, was “tried & cleared, & justified” for the murder.<sup>81</sup> And indeed, for many freedpeople, full realization of the contours of freedom came only when the power of erstwhile masters was thwarted. Anthony Young, raised a slave on a tobacco plantation near Horse Cave, Kentucky, had never been apprised of his newfound freedom. Full comprehension came to him, in fact, only when he took shelter in the home of a white neighbor to escape his overseer’s threatened beating. The man asked him why he had run, and informed him, as Young recalled it, that “he does not dare to touch you; you are a free man. If he whips you you can have him arrested for assault and battery. You are now a citizen of America. Go home and tell him this and he will not touch

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<sup>79</sup> Richard Parrott, *Indiana*, WPA, Vol. 5, 155-158.

<sup>80</sup> Astor, “Black Soldiers and White Violence,” in Cimballa and Miller, eds., *The Great Task Remaining Before Us*, 33.

<sup>81</sup> D. C. Phillips to W. K. White, July 25, 1865, D. C. Phillips, Reconstruction Letter, Mss. 95c38, KHS.

you.”<sup>82</sup>

Numerous scholars have outlined the innovative and fluid family forms which developed in slave and ex-slave communities across the South. In the Border States, by contrast, such innovations seem to have happened only rarely. In 1870, for example, Jane Pullam signed a sharecropping contract with her friend Elizabeth Fleetwood and Fleetwood’s twenty year old son Simon. The husbands of both Pullam and Fleetwood had served together in the federal army; neither had returned. Between March 7<sup>th</sup> of 1870 and March 1<sup>st</sup> of 1871, they contracted to raise tobacco, corn, and vegetables for the landowner Robert Hooper. One half of the proceeds from ten acres of tobacco, two thirds of the “corn in crib,” and half of “all vegetables &c.” would compensate their labor, and Hooper agreed to supply “team and feed for same Seed and land house room for Tobacco,” with the provision attached that he was to have “full and complete control of Every Thing.”<sup>83</sup>

Generally, however, Border State households seem to have been defined and understood in somewhat more restrictive terms, bound by maternity, paternity, and siblinghood if not by marriage. Perhaps the trend towards small-holdings, as well as high mobility, both within and outside of the region, helped to determine this phenomenon. Siblings occasionally combined their economic efforts with one another, as did grown sons and daughters with their parents. William R. (Billy) Lee and his sister had belonged to, respectively, a sister and her brother in Kenton County, Kentucky, before the war. They had lived near enough each other to visit frequently, and when William Lee returned from service in Co. A of the 109<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T., he moved to live with his sister and her former master, working as a farm laborer until his marriage

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<sup>82</sup> Anthony Young, *Indiana*, WPA, Vol. 5, 238-239.

<sup>83</sup> Labor contract dated March 7, 1870, Benecke Family Papers, Mss. 3825, Box 94, Folder 2514, War Claims and Pensions, Blacks—Henry Fleetwood, WHMC.

in 1873.<sup>84</sup> Charles Hathaway, who had been sold to the Craven household before the war, rejoined his father on the Hathaway farm when he returned. Later, the father and son, as well as others of their acquaintance, moved northward from the Mt. Sterling region of Kentucky to Xenia, Ohio.<sup>85</sup>

In many cases, the contribution of a grown son's labors must have gone far towards ensuring the independence of new and fragile households. Michael Eubanks mustered out and as he explained, for two years "stayed with my father, who was then a free man and had rented a small farm one mile east of Brunswick," Missouri.<sup>86</sup> Demobilized from Co. A of the 62<sup>nd</sup> U. S. C. T. in 1866, the Missouri freedman Frank Eddings paid over to his mother a portion of his wages, and moreover bought her the "clothes and provisions" which she, "too old to support herself," required.<sup>87</sup> In later years, as Eddings was increasingly disabled by the disease (tuberculosis of the bowels, according to one physician) he had contracted in the service, he lived with his mother, and she cared for him. In 1869, when Frank Eddings was "sick in bed and mostly waited on by his mother... and his brother James," Mrs. Eddings took in boarders, newlyweds Robert and Annie Williams, the rent they paid most likely helping her to make up for her son's lost income. In 1870, Frank Eddings died.<sup>88</sup>

But many freed laborers would struggle to establish households of their own and to escape dependence on white employers. Among wage workers, agricultural and domestic, the separation of young children from parents was a common lament. Perhaps for domestic workers in particular, low wages meant that children's labor—at times for subsistence alone—was

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<sup>84</sup> Deposition of Sarah D. Sandford, November 25, 1908, Pension File of Almeda Ashley, Cert. no. 672,922, NAI.

<sup>85</sup> Pension File of Richard Hathaway, No. 355,299, Box 1012, Bundle 30, NAI.

<sup>86</sup> Deposition of Michael Eubanks, Benecke Family Papers, Mss. 3825, Box 94, Folder 2505, War Claims and Pensions, Blacks—Michael Eubanks, WHMC.

<sup>87</sup> Deposition of Sanford Payne, Pension File of Frank Eddings, Co. A, 62<sup>nd</sup> U.S.C.T., Mother's Cert. no. 229627, Box no. 35409, Bundle no. 29, NAI.

<sup>88</sup> Deposition of Robert Williams and Annie Williams, November 19, 1886, Pension File of Frank Eddings, Co. A, 62<sup>nd</sup> U.S.C.T., Mother's Cert. no. 229627, Box no. 35409, Bundle no. 29, NAI.

essential. Even the presence of an adult male household member was not always enough to keep the family together. The disappointment remains palpable in Richard Miller's account of a group of fellow slaves who after the war headed southward, hoping "to buy farms, to try for themselves." Reaching Madison County, Kentucky, however, they "were told if they went any further south, they would be made slaves again." Unable to verify whether this alarming tale was true enough, they determined that it was safer to remain where they were and to seek employment from the district's farmers. There, however, they found that they could earn only "a very low wage," and that they were compelled to labor under conditions which "separated families."<sup>89</sup>

Women, however, seem to have struggled uniquely. The wages of domestic service, coupled, perhaps, with the strictures of living within a household of white folks, meant that both before the war and during the peace, female contrabands, soldiers' wives, and freedwomen struggled to maintain the integrity of their families. Husbandless freedwomen struggled to establish households of their own. After her grown son Anthony enlisted in the federal army, Kentucky freedwoman Millie Scott was left with two younger children to support. Without the money her son had earned at the Bowling Green tan yards, she "found that she could not maintain her self & two children without hiring herself out." Accordingly, she gave up the rooms she had rented and the modest independence they afforded her, and found a series of positions as domestic servant, in which she earned between six and eight dollars a month.<sup>90</sup>

The meager wages attached to domestic service, moreover, continued to mean that the labor of adolescent and preadolescent children was required to ensure family survival. In this

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<sup>89</sup> Richard Miller, Indiana, George P. Rawick, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography, Vol. 6, Alabama and Indiana Narratives* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973), 134-136.

<sup>90</sup> Deposition of Millie Scott, November, 1881, File of Anthony Curtis aka Anthony Scott aka Anthony Courts, Co. B, 109<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T., Mother's Cert. 207154, Box 34722, Bundle 28, National Archives I, Washington, D. C.

narrative of emancipation, the separation of mothers from their offspring, rather than their reunification, is the dominant motif. Betty Smith recalled that as a young girl in the wake of emancipation, she “worked in the fields for 'wittels' and clothes.” A few years older and more experienced, “she nursed children for fifty cents a week, board and two dresses.”<sup>91</sup> William H. Barclay, whose father lit out for California in 1870, leaving his mother with many children to raise alone, recalled that he “began working out when I was quite small,” “helping women folks about the house” and doing other chores.<sup>92</sup>

Some parents turned to indenture contracts to ensure the subsistence of their children. George Jackson Simpson and his mother attained de facto freedom from their Crawford County, Missouri, master even before the war was over. As their legal liberty gained surety, however, they continued to struggle. Mrs. Simpson “worked here and there for others,” but was evidently unable to support her young son. Simpson’s uncle assisted them, arranging an indenture contract for the boy, a fate which bore little resemblance to the freedom to which he knew himself to be entitled. “I wasn’t exactly enslaved,” Simpson recalled, “but when my uncle ‘bound me out,’ he agreed with my boss that I was to work for him until I was twenty one, and then I was to get a horse, saddle, bridle, two suits of clothes and \$40 in money.” He worked for the man for eight years, he explained, and although only a boy of twelve when he began, had “made every rail that fenced in” his boss’s 160 acres, “opened up and cultivated 90 acres,” and left the farm “in good order, improved, and... counted as being one of the best farms in Crawford County,” due largely, he believed, to his own hard and mostly uncompensated work.

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<sup>91</sup> Betty Smith, Indiana, George P. Rawick, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography, Vol. 6, Alabama and Indiana Narrative* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973), 182-184.

<sup>92</sup>Deposition of William H. Barclay, April 18, 1898, Pension file of Harriett Ewing, No. 463,924, Box 43,735, National Archives I, Washington, D.C.

While domestic service provided essential wages and often housing as well, the common terms of such labor left black women subject to day-to-day white supervision and white discipline. Indeed, some whites understood domestic service as providing the mechanism by which a potentially troublesome population might be enclosed and controlled. As a white citizen of Henderson, Kentucky, reported in September of 1865, “parties freed by act of Congress or by their own acts... (particularly females)” had with ease been able to find positions for themselves as domestic servants. These women, the man explained, were thereby securely placed in “good homes” under white control rather than remaining on their own, liable to becoming “wayward and demoralized.”<sup>93</sup>

Ownership of one’s person and the right to sell one’s labor were insistently proffered to former slaves,” historian Julie Saville observes, “as the measure of freedom.”<sup>94</sup> Border State slaves navigated the labor market with admirable facility. But this is not to say that they adopted, as some northern free labor advocates might have wished, contract relations as the sum total of and only guarantor of their freedom. As did former slaves across the South, they had been “bequeathed” “whatever improvements of condition their struggles as slaves had garnered.”<sup>95</sup> Even many years after the war, former slaves expressed lingering bitterness over the meagerness of whatever compensation they had brought with them out of slavery. In their recollections, they expressed dismay that they had been turned free with so little to show for years of hard labor. Dr. Solomon Hicks’s father, for example, had been a slave throughout his youth and middle age in

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<sup>93</sup> Ira Delano to General John Palmer, September 29, 1865, U. S. Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Part I, RG 393, Part I, Department of Kentucky, Box 5, Letters Received January-October, 1865, National Archives I, Washington, D. C.

<sup>94</sup> Julie Saville, *The Work of Reconstruction: From Slave to Wage Laborer in South Carolina, 1860-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 4.

<sup>95</sup> Julie Saville, *The Work of Reconstruction: From Slave to Wage Laborer in South Carolina, 1860-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 4-5.

Woodford County, Kentucky. When he was freed, forty-seven years old, his son recalled, “all he was given was a three-legged horse with which to start life anew.”<sup>96</sup>

Formerly enslaved people carefully weighed the options at hand. For many, the known quantity of residence within a former master or mistress’s household must have seemed solid compared to the unknown quantity of departure. The Kentucky freedwoman Betty Smith’s mother told her later that she had been glad to be free but she had had no place to go or any money to go with.<sup>97</sup> Some remained within the master’s household until they got their bearings, understanding well that, particularly for husbandless women, any shelter was better than none. “After emancipation,” William Quinn recalled, his mother and her children remained with their Hardin County, Kentucky, master “for some time, ‘cause they were good to us and we had no place to go.”<sup>98</sup> Although they skillfully navigated opportunities for more and better wages, many continued, both during and after the war, to lay claim to those customary privileges to which they understood themselves as entitled. As for Matthew Hume’s family, even before the war was out they had embarked on a new mode of labor, working for a share of the crop produced on their master’s Trimble County, Kentucky, farm. With the onset of market relations, however, came the withdrawal of one of the customary privileges of slavery—the commonly accepted, although seemingly paradoxical, ownership of property by those who were themselves property. The cow which had been given to them previously was taken away. And when it was, the Hume family quit.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Dr. Solomon Hicks, Indiana, Rawick, Vol. 5, 84-87.

<sup>97</sup> Betty Smith, Indiana, George P. Rawick, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography, Vol. 6, Alabama and Indiana Narratives* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973), 182-184.

<sup>98</sup> William Quinn, Indiana, George P. Rawick, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography, Vol. 6, Alabama and Indiana Narratives* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973), 155-157.

<sup>99</sup> Matthew Hume, Indiana, George P. Rawick, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography, Vol. 6, Alabama and Indiana Narratives* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973), 107-110.

Peter Neal, by contrast, remained on his former master's land "for several years" after the war, his son recalled. Neal, his wife, and their son Henry all drew wages for their work, but enjoyed in addition the right to independent production. Peter Neal tended "some ground for himself" and also raised "chickens for market." "He was a thrifty sort," Henry Neal explained, and "kept what money he earned until he was able to own a home and furnish it as he desired."<sup>100</sup> Augustus Smith's former master, for his part, told the Smith family to take what they needed from the smokehouse and promised further aid over the next year, as he put it, "until you get a start." They worked out a bargain whereby the Smiths would clear unused timberland, with the right to claim title to one half of the cleared land at the end of five years.<sup>101</sup> These privileges, of cultivating one's own land, consuming the resources produced for the common use of the household, and raising stock on one's own account, may have been critical parts of the compensation owed to freed workers.

The disparate fortunes of two Border State freedwomen, both of whom saw their men come home from the war suffering from terminal diseases, are suggestive of the rubric of calculation involved in instrumentally calling upon former masters and mistresses in an attempt to best fulfill their own maternal and wifely obligations. Lucinda and Charles Adams lived on the Prewitt farm, the home of her former master, until Charles's death of consumption in 1874. Lucinda and her sons worked for the white household, and it seems likely that their long acquaintance with the white family and any remaining sympathies between them were what permitted Lucinda to provide house room and personal care for Charles as he succumbed to his disease. As Lucinda recalled, "at the time his right lung bursted, he hugged me hard, said I had

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<sup>100</sup> Peter Neal, *Indiana, Rawick*, Vol. 5, 148-149.

<sup>101</sup> Augustus Smith, *Missouri, Rawick, Supp. 1, Vol. 2, PAGE NO.*

been wife and partner to him, that he loved every strand of hair on my head, that we would not be man and wife much longer, for me to raise the children as well as I could.”<sup>102</sup>

The counter-example of Jemima and Willis Combs suggests the difficulty of caring for a similarly disabled household member in a situation where an employer had no lingering obligation to provide any assistance outside of the wage relation. After the war, Jemima Combs saw her son Willis come home from the federal service with “an awful cough,” as she recalled some two-plus decades later. He had “got his death of cold in the army,” and had been “in the hospital six months before he came home.” She sent him to see a doctor, who, she reported, “told him to drink whisky.” At the time of his return and rapidly declining health, Mrs. Combs was working as a domestic servant in the Crosswhite household in Athens, Kentucky, for the wage, as her former employer recalled, of ten dollars a month. Although Perry Crosswhite found her to be “a splendid servant, and a very reliable good woman,” the job included house room only for herself. She could not bring her ailing son to live with her. Instead, she was forced to find lodgings for him with Aunt Amy Christian, a neighboring woman, whom she must have paid out of her meager wages to take care of him until he died.<sup>103</sup>

Indeed, whatever reciprocal sense of obligation lingered between the former master class and their former slaves could be leveraged instrumentally for a freedperson’s own ends. In 1868, the freedwoman Mary Marten wrote to her former mistress in terms which could not have helped but touch the white woman’s sympathies. “Dear Mrs Anna,” she wrote, “It has been a longue time since I have seen you and yours And I doo so want to see you.” She had been, she explained awkwardly, “[knocking] around this world Longue [enough], and I am Tired of it If you will

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<sup>102</sup>Deposition of Lucinda Adams, December 11, 1890, Pension File of Charles Adams, CO., REGT., Widow’s Cert. No. 295,499, Box No. 37659, Bundle No. 7, National Archives I, Washington, D.C.

<sup>103</sup> Deposition of Jemima Combs, June 4, 1889, Deposition of Perry Crosswhite, July 22, 1889, Pension File of Willis Combs, Co. H, 116<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. T., Mother’s Cert. 261,011, Box 36435, Bundle 22, National Archives I, Washington, D. C.

send me some money to com home on I will try and pleas you and live and Die with you.”

Likely struggling to earn a living as a domestic servant, perhaps Marten was simply tired. But reestablishing friendly contact with Ann Johnson would also serve to reunite her with kin whom she had left behind when she moved to Louisville in search of work. “I want to Know whither you have my mother or eny of my [relatives] or not,” she finished. “My mothers name was Suckey give my love to aunt Faney.”<sup>104</sup>

But in many cases, to do so also required freedpeople to make hard, often cruel choices. Many former slaveholders, it seems, either could not or would not continue to shelter entire families, and some freedwomen turned to apprenticeship in order to provide a home and subsistence for children too young to look after themselves. Watt Jordan’s ailing mother, for example, was permitted to remain in her former master’s household “till she got well,” but her children were turned out. Mrs. Jordan was left with no choice but to apprentice the younger ones to new households. “Me I went ter Matt Clay, who tuk me ter stay till I wuz 21,” Jordan recalled. “I nebber seen mother ergin.”<sup>105</sup> Marie Askin Simpson’s father “took sick” in the army and was sent home. “He coughed so bad and died in about three months after he was home,” she recalled. “After that

my mother did the best she could. The war ended, everybody was mad or suspicious of each other and it was hard to find places to live. My mother stayed on with her white folks. We made out the best we could to make a living. Then they found me a place to stay with a family in Steelville, taking care of the children, scrubbin floors, and scouring knives and forks. I was only a little girl and got fifty cents a week, with my board.”<sup>106</sup>

There was no single moment of liberation in the Border States. Instead, there were

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<sup>104</sup> Mary Marten to Ann Johnson, 1868, George W. Johnson Papers, Mss. 83mo1, Folder 8, Correspondence, Mrs. George W. Johnson 1865-1875, Special Collections, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, Kentucky.

<sup>105</sup> Watt Jordan, Ohio, Rawick, Vol. 5, 395-397.

<sup>106</sup> Marie Askin Simpson, Missouri, Rawick, Supp. 1, Vol. 2, 230-234.

thousands. Slaves began to take their freedom as early as the first few weeks of the conflict, acting on the expectation that the war would bring about their liberation. They navigated perilous terrain indeed. The intersecting, and often conflicting, realms of federal policy and state law meant that fugitives were liable to be recaptured by their masters, sold into the Deep South by unscrupulous law agents, kidnapers, and even, sometimes, Union soldiers, or barred from employment and vulnerable to starvation and exposure. Missouri ended slavery for good with its 1865 state constitution, but this chaotic state of affairs endured, in Kentucky, through the end of the year. Eventually, liberty would prevail. Kentucky would reluctantly comply with the provisions of the Thirteenth Amendment. But this revolutionary clarification of the status of former slaves ushered in a new struggle. In a pattern begun by 1862 or perhaps even earlier, Border State freedpeople would navigate the labor market with admirable facility. Numerous former slaves recalled a family history of the unification of members scattered across time and distance by the slave market and the war, followed by the arduous accomplishment of modest but secure independence. This, however, was not the only narrative. The fate of many other formerly enslaved families challenges this optimistic trajectory. Small households (and small slaveholdings) had before the war resulted in the co-residence of, often, only partial family groupings. The conditions of free labor in the first years of emancipation, too, required hard, often agonizing choices. The labor of children, which had once meant that few slaves were total fiscal losses to their masters, proved too necessary to be foresworn. Numerous free households (perhaps, in particular, those headed by an abandoned or widowed woman) found it necessary to hire their children apart from the parents or to bind them out in indenture contracts, in order to thereby to secure the survival of all family members. And many freedpeople remained enmeshed in ongoing relations of dependence with the master class. Although they rejected white assertions

of quasi-familial authority, many found it necessary, even indispensable, to call upon whatever lingering sense of obligation former masters and mistresses might feel.

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