CHAPTER THREE

MAKING A WORLD OUT OF SLAVES

SHUT IN by herself on a dreary day in 1850, Miriam Hilliard found herself daydreaming about slaves. Hilliard's daydream was not about real slaves; it was far removed from the slave pens that were clustered on either side of the French Quarter in New Orleans, from the dusty coffles and cramped boats that carried the slaves southward to the market, from the brutal threats, the stripping, and the questioning hidden behind the walls of a yard into which no white woman of her position would ever pass. Instead, her daydream was about imaginary slaves: "It is raining so furiously this morning that even the belle of the ball's wish ('Oh that I had a million slaves or more, To catch the raindrops as they pour') would be of no avail."[1] This scrap of verse marks a common turn in the fantasy life of the antebellum South: Miriam Hilliard found a solution to her own problems—a fulfillment of her own desires—in the slave market.

For slaveholders like Hilliard, the slave market held dreams of transformative possibilities. Before they entered the slave market or inspected a slave, many slaveholders had well-developed ideas about what they would find there. These ideas had less to do with the real people they would meet in the market, however, than they did with the slaveholders themselves, about the type of people they could become by buying slaves. As they talked about and wrote about buying slaves, slaveholders mapped a world made of slavery. They dreamed of people

arrayed in meaningful order by their value as property, of fields full of productive hands and a slave quarter that reproduced itself, of well-ordered households and of mansions where service was swift and polished. They dreamed of beating and healing and sleeping with slaves; sometimes they even dreamed that their slaves would love them. They imagined who they could be by thinking about whom they could buy.

MEN MADE OUT OF SLAVES

Traveling up the Red River in 1854, Edward Russell got into a discussion about slaveholders with a southerner. The southerner claimed to know how well the people of the North lived and assured Russell that in the South people did not live "half so well." "Planters," he continued, "care for nothing but to buy Negroes to raise cotton & raise cotton to buy Negroes." Russell would have been hard pressed to disagree. It was early February, the height of the slave-buying season; he had seen slaves sold at auction only a few days before. On either side of the boat he could see fields now barren of the cotton and sugar that slaves had harvested, packed, and shipped to market in the preceding months.[2] On the geography of those fields was imprinted the landscape of class and masculinity in the antebellum South—lesser men worked the sandy spits of infertile land between the river and joining creeks, greater men cultivated the more fertile land along the banks.[3] Among the white men who owned those fields, many were living lives of constant motion, moving west, gaining a stake, building it into a legacy, dreaming of growing old in a place far removed in space and class from the place of their origin.[4] As they grew up and moved on, these white men marked their progress by buying slaves, slaves whom Russell might have seen along the shore as he and his companion passed upward along the languid river.

Despite the tight circularity—Negroes, cotton, Negroes, cotton—outlined by the man on the boat, it would be a mistake to assume that "Negroes" (or even cotton) meant the same thing to every slaveholder. In the same way that a single automobile today might have vastly different personal meaning to a teenager, a wealthy suburban lawyer, or an isolated elderly person, in the nineteenth century, agricultural slaves (and their produce) had vastly different meanings to the white men of the South. According to their stage in life and social position, slavehold-

ers had a number of ways to talk about slave buying. Imagining that they divined the hidden imperatives of "the market"—anticipating trends, seizing opportunities, and avoiding pitfalls, buying slaves to plant cotton and planting cotton to buy slaves—was indeed one way that white men thought about buying slaves.[5] But there were other ways of buying slaves and other dreams to be bought in the slave market. For many slave buyers, the dream of a never-ending cycle of purchase and profits was more than they could allow themselves to think of when they bought a first slave.

Take John M. Tibeats, for example. In the winter of 1842, in Rapides Parish along the Red River, Tibeats bought a man who was then called Platt but who turned out to be none other than Solomon Northup, the kidnapped free person of color from New York who recorded his experiences in *Twelve Years a Slave*. As Northup remembered him, Tibeats "was a small, crabbed, quick-tempered, spiteful man. He had no fixed residence that I ever heard of, but passed from one plantation to another, wherever he could find employment. He was without standing in the community, not esteemed by white men, nor even respected by slaves."[6] In Tibeats, Northup was describing the mobile and marginal nonslaveholding white men who lived all over the slaveholding South—figures of uncertain reputation and imperfect respectability. For men like Tibeats, buying a first slave was a way of coming into their own in a society that had previously excluded them.

Northup was probably the first slave Tibeats had ever bought, and so the sale marked Tibeats's passage from nonslaveholder to slaveholder. The market in slaves held the promise that nonslaveholders could buy their way into the master class, and the possibility that they might one day own slaves was one of the things that kept nonslaveholders loyal to the slaveholders' democracy in which they lived.[7] But Tibeats remained the holder of an incomplete share in the society of slaveholders—Northup's old owner still held a mortgage on the unpaid portion of Tibeats's new slave. Thus Tibeats was a man suspended in the midst of passage: the mortgage he owed extended his transition from nonslaveholder to slaveholder in a way that allows us to examine in detail the meaning of his movement into the master class.

Tibeats proved to be a hard master: he drove his new slave mercilessly from the break of the day and was still unsatisfied with his progress at its close. The progress Tibeats imagined—his own passage

into independence and full citizenship perhaps—may have been more than any slave could have produced, but what finally brought things to a head was a dispute over a keg of nails. Tibeats had a contract to build a corn mill, kitchen, and weaving house for Northup's old master and had put Northup to work helping him (in all probability Solomon Northup was building the building that represented the final portion of his price). One night after work, Tibeats instructed Northup to get a keg of nails from the plantation overseer in the morning and start work on the last building. When Tibeats awoke he found Northup hard at work, but was not satisfied with the size of nails he was using. Northup tried to explain that the overseer had provided the nails, but Tibeats cursed him and went to get a whip. When Tibeats returned, he ordered Northup to strip for a beating. Northup refused, Tibeats attacked him, and Northup fought back, wresting the whip from Tibeat's hand, pinning the white man to the ground, and flogging his owner until his arm ached. And there they stood when the plantation overseer arrived: Tibeats, the owner, picking himself up off the ground; Northup, the slave, warily standing over him with whip in hand. Tibeats rode away to gather a gang, and when he returned he bound Northup—wrists, elbows, and ankles—and prepared to murder him. He would reassert his authority, his property right, over Northup by hanging him.[8] And Northup expected to die: he was a slave on the wrong side of his master, alone, easily disposed of.

Northup, however, did not die that day, for the plantation overseer intervened, reminding Tibeats that Northup was mortgaged to another man: to kill the slave would be to rob that man of his property. While this may have been merely a financial matter for Northup's former owner, for Tibeats it was a matter of the greatest personal urgency. When Tibeats prepared to murder Northup, he was staking his claim to full participation in the regime of racial slavery. He was a white man and a slaveholder: no slave should be allowed to attack him and survive. But Tibeats's assertion of the rights of mastery was constrained by his incomplete transition from nonslaveholder to slaveholder: although he was a white man, he could be publicly beaten by a slave under his command and still find himself on the wrong side of the law, because he was not the slave's owner. For nonslaveholding white men like Tibeats, buying a slave was a way of coming into their own in a society in which they were otherwise excluded from full participation, in which

even the independent exercise of the privileges of their whiteness was constrained by the property regime of slavery.[9]

For Jefferson McKinney, a man who inhabited the same world as Tibeats, buying a first slave was an act of conscious self-transformation. In 1856 when he sat down to write to his brother about slave buying, McKinney had spent most of his life as a Red River overseer. He confessed that he had agreed to pay "a big prise," much of it yet to be paid, for the woman he had bought, but he went on to describe what he thought he had gained: "I have bin trying for seberel years to lay up money and find at the end of ebery year that I have sabed but little and probably being in debet will cause me to do without many things that I would otherwise buy and can do without."[10] For McKinney, the purchase of a slave was not the result of past frugality but the guarantor of such in the future. Buying a slave was a question of personal responsibility, and Jefferson McKinney was buying his way into the class of men who were responsible for themselves rather than to others. Jefferson McKinney had bought a slave in the hope of effecting the capitalist transformation of himself. McKinney's was a fantasy of economic independence and bourgeois self-control.

As McKinney transformed himself from dependent laborer to independent debtor, he was making a direct connection between the bodily capacity of the woman he bought and his own happiness that was ordinary by the standards of the antebellum South. "She is sixteen years old in May and is verry wel grone," he wrote to his brother, and on that growth he staked his own future: "If she should breed she wil be cheap in a few years and if she does not she wil always be a deer Negro besides it is getting time that I should begin to think of old age as my hed is past silvering and if eber I can get her paid for and then git a boy I intend then to quit Red River and return to St. Helena or somewhere East up the Mississippi Ribber and settle myself for life . . . Ower years of boyhood was spent together, the bloom of life far distant apart, but I hope it may be gods will for us to spend our aged years together."[11]

Like most first-time slave buyers, McKinney chose a lower price and the promise of reproduction when he decided to buy a young woman instead of a man.[12] The account he gave of his reasons, however, went well beyond the economic. The young woman's body was McKinney's future: he had made a match between her life cycle and his own; her purchase was to underwrite his happy old age; her reproduction—her

"breeding" he would have said—held the promise that he and his brother might once again live like a family. For McKinney, the family he had left behind when he had followed his fortunes to the Red River could be put back together in the slave market.

As they made their way upward in southern society, slaveholding white men began to figure their slave buying as an investment, a choice. And as they put it (writing usually to older male relations), their choices were considered ones. "For a young man just commencing in life the best stock in which he can invest capital is, I think, Negro stock." That was Sam Steer in 1818 explaining to his uncle that "prudence" dictated a course apart from the older man's recommendation to buy stock in the Mississippi State Bank. He went on to include a proof of the theorem he proposed: "White Cotton can command from 2[0] to 30 cts per lb: Negroes will yield a much larger income than any Bank dividends."[13] Steer was making an account of himself before his rich uncle, accepting the terms of the older man's advice but revising the conclusion. Yet he was also a calculating young man, estimating his options, figuring the slaves he would buy into a first crop, cashing the crop in on an income. Steer's account of his slave buying to his uncle was also an account of his own financial coming of age.

So, too, for J. H. Lucus, who described his slave buying in a letter he wrote to his father in St. Louis from the South Bend of the Arkansas River. Lucas began with a summation, "I have been quite successful in the investment I made with the money you gave me." The letter continued, detailing how the younger Lucas had "bought five Negroes and entered a small tract at the land office with the view of improving that," how he had parlayed his investment in land and slaves into gain by selling the land and two of the slaves who had cleared it. With the money he had bought a plantation. His account of himself continued: "Since then I bought at auction a boy of 17 years of age for $1100, which makes me including a girl I got by my wife six likely slaves between 14 and 22 years of age all either natives of the country or acclimated by several years stay in this country, all trained to the culture of cotton."[14] "Which makes me," Lucas wrote—a figure of speech perhaps, but a revealing one. These masters of small worlds were men made out of slaves. Writing to older male relatives about the start they had made in the slave market, they translated the productive and reproductive labor of their (bought and imagined) slaves into images of their

own upward progress through slaveholding society. These young men were writing themselves into the history of the antebellum social order—the lineal and patriarchal story of how their fathers' world would be reproduced over time and space.[15]

As they did so, they were able to distance themselves from the abject dependence upon their slaves that was so obvious in Jefferson McKinney's hopes that the woman he bought would "breed." The rising white men of the antebellum South wrote about slave buying in a way that showed they had the ability to wait or the wherewithal to move, depending on the deal they could make. They were not the type of men who got caught paying a "big prise." Rather, they bided their time and kept track of the market. They speculated. When James Copes was thinking about buying slaves, for example, he wrote to his brother to find out whether New Orleans would be a good place to buy in the spring. "There is a prospect of getting some this winter," he wrote during another year's speculation, "but they are not all young . . . and they will come very high, for the traders have been after them some time ago." Similarly, W. H. Yos wrote to his business partner that he had decided to buy only after careful consideration: "it seems to be a universal opinion here that they will be considerably higher this fall & entertaining a similar opinion myself I finally concluded to go it at a venture." Opinion was "universal," Yos concluded "finally," and then he moved quickly, "at a venture." Or Richard Tutt: "Negroes are selling very high here and I think by next fall will be much higher, specially if cotton keeps up at the present high prices."[16] As they bought, these men asked about season, city, and market; they went about their business with self-conscious rationality—asking others, explaining themselves, advising their friends, making sure they got it right.

The grammar of economic speculation, however, was not the only way that market-minded slaveholders talked about buying slaves. There was also the grammar of imagined necessity. "Will you be good enough to inform me candidly whether the present force will be enough to manage the crop and put up the buildings?" J. D. Conrad Weeks wrote to his brother David Weeks. If the logging was to be done, Robert Beverly informed his father, it would be "absolutely necessary" to have six or seven more men to do it. John Knight put it this way when he was trying to buy a carpenter, a blacksmith, and a midwife for the plantation he was building: "I must have them, and

cannot get along without them, unless at considerable loss of time and money, and at a great inconvenience." Wealthy Thomas Butler similarly imagined slaves as the necessary solution to an objective problem when he wrote to his wife about his business in New Orleans: "I find it necessary to have a few hands more on my plantation to enable them to get on with the crops and carry on the brick yard at the same time."[17] According to the account he made of himself in the slave market, he was a rational man, a planter following the dictates of good sense. There was nothing else he could do.

In the planter's world of well-reasoned decisions, innumerable slaves could be bought to solve endless problems. More acres could be cleared and more cotton or sugar produced. Ditching and draining, clearing and fencing, hoeing and planting, cutting and packing—these tasks could be expanded infinitely. What could not be achieved through expansion might be done through intensification. Having coopers, carpenters, and bricklayers on the plantation could provide labor at just the moment it was needed and could solve problems as quickly as they arose, eliminating the time it took for outside laborers to be contacted and contracted. As men like Thomas Butler described their business, they objectified their desires into necessities—the crops and buildings themselves demanded that their owners buy more and more slaves. The exigencies with which they explained their choices were located not in the rising and falling prices of the slave market but in their fields and on their farms. Their self-explanations highlighted the productive rather than the consumptive aspect of their business. They were planters responding to necessity rather than slave buyers responding to opportunity.

There was, of course, nothing necessary about these choices except the language that described them: these men did not *have* to buy slaves. But to say that these invocations of necessity were imaginary is not to say that these planters misrepresented their motivation in their letters. Rather, it is to read the letters as if they were written by people who chose words carefully. The meaning Thomas Butler gave to his buying could not be encapsulated by the calculated speculation on the slave market that made W. H. Yos "go it at a venture," or the breathless optimism with which Sam Steer and J. H. Lucas solicited the approval of the older men in their families, still less with the chastened pride with which Jefferson McKinney paid his big price. As they explained the

choices they made in the slave market, men like Butler were explaining themselves—giving cultural meaning to the economy in people upon which their lives (or at least their livelihoods) depended.

Another set of cultural meanings that slaveholders gave to their slave-market business dove-tailed well with the paternalist homiletics with which they increasingly defended slavery from its critics: managerial benevolence. A. G. Alsworth, an up-and-coming young man who was trying to negotiate a complicated bargain in which he would sell an old man in order to get enough money to buy some cattle and a young woman, described his business this way: "unless I can get a hundred head and a good girl that will make a wife for some of my boys in a few years I will not sell Spencer." In spite of the hard-headedness of his plans, Alsworth was making a tentative claim on the language of paternalism: he was doing it for his slaves, buying a wife for some of his boys. Likewise W. H. Yos, describing his decision to buy only men from a New Orleans slave trader: "I concluded in as much as he had a good selection of men to buy no women at all with hopes that we may buy them wives next year," Yos reported to his business partner.[18] Yos reached toward an account of his business that emphasized the needs of his slaves, not his own.

The synthesis of humanity and self-interest toward which these men groped was forged into a genre in the agricultural journals of the antebellum South. The "Management of Slaves" section of *DeBow's Review* included specifications for housing and provisioning slaves and arguments that neatness of dress was important in fostering "the health, comfort, and pride of a Negro, which should be encouraged by the owner." The immediate results of good treatment would be apparent to the slaves and to any neighbors who looked at them; the economic results apparent at harvest time; yield might be measured in cash or (public) credit. The "Duties of an Overseer" section put it more bluntly in 1856: "In conclusion, bear in mind that a fine crop consists first in the number and a marked improvement in the condition and value of the Negroes."[19] And *DeBow's*, as well as magazines like the *Southern Agriculturalist* and the *Southern Planter*, provided slaveholders with detailed instructions about diet, housing, work routine, and proper discipline which would make them successful slave farmers as well as slaveholders. These articles encouraged slaveholders to imagine themselves through the eyes of their fellow subscribers, to imitate the exemplary

conduct described in the magazines in the hope that their actions might one day be thought worthy of public notice. Indeed, many of these articles were written in the first-person voice of a subscriber turned writer—the voice of an experienced planter passing on his practice to other men, pressing upon them the importance of scientific and humane management and establishing a shared public understanding of what it meant to be a leading slaveholder.[20] That was the type of slaveholder Thomas McAllister was, according to his overseer, "a very good master . . . a humane and indulgent man to his Negroes & careful of his Negroes," a planter whose virtues were expressed in his treatment of the people he bought in the slave market: "[he] don't want his new hands worked hard."[21]

And that was the type of slaveholder John Knight desperately wanted to be. In 1844, as he made plans for a plantation he had just bought, John Knight appended an exegesis of his intentions to one of the long lists of ages, sexes, and body parts that he sent to his father-in-law, who was buying slaves for him in Maryland. "This number (say 60)," he wrote, "will enable me to make a full crop on my land now in cultivation by working them very moderately and giving them every necessary indulgence." Knight was no stranger to the language of commercial necessity; his slave-market order seemed to grow up out of the land's need to be cultivated. But there was more to Knight's plans than simple planting. In subsequent letters Knight lovingly detailed his plans for his new slaves: their lodging ("I am now having built a number of first-rate additional Negroe quarters . . . where they can keep themselves clean, comfortable, and I hope Healthy"), their working conditions ("during the heat of the day, say from 11 O' Clock A.M. to 4 O'Clock P.M. they must be in their quarters or in the shade"), health care ("there is a good physician residing . . . on a removed but very convenient part of my plantation"), and oversight ("I derive much satisfaction from the knowledge that I have a humane and just manager to take charge of them").[22] With the exception of hiring the overseer, all of these plans were made and publicized before John Knight had even chosen or, still less, bought the slaves he was planning to treat so well. Along with an age-tiered and self-reproducing labor force to till his open land, John Knight was buying a fantasy of just and scientific management, of humane treatment and reciprocal benefit. There is no reason to doubt his sincerity; no reason to doubt, either, that by telling his father-in-law about the

personal satisfaction he derived from his plans he intended to exchange his dream for a substantial reputation.

The distance between John Knight, with his lofty language of managerial benevolence, and John Tibeats, with his frustration at not being able to claim a full share of the brutal prerogatives of whiteness and mastery, measures the breadth of meanings that buying agricultural slaves had for white men. None of these men ever lost sight of the bottom line of their slave-market speculations: they were buying slaves to clear and till their fields, to plant and harvest their crops, to build their houses and their holdings. They bought more slaves to plant more cotton, and planted more cotton to buy more slaves. But their economic choices had broader cultural meaning. Some were outsiders buying their way into full participation in the political economy of slavery and white masculinity. Some were old men planning for the end of their lives or young men plotting their future. Some bought as brothers and fathers, sons and husbands. Some bought with the savvy of men on the make, others with the measured purpose of men long made. Some bought as businessmen, planters, or managers. As they narrated their upward progress through the slave market, slaveholders small and large were constructing themselves out of slaves. Whether slave buyers figured their independence as coming of age or coming into their own, as investment, necessity, or benevolence, it was embodied in slaves.

And as slaveholders moved upward through the social hierarchy, they gained access to ever more rarified fantasies of what it meant to be a white man and a slaveholder in the antebellum South. First-time slaveholders—Jefferson McKinney waiting for the woman he bought to breed, for example, or even J. H. Lucas accounting for the family money he had spent in the slave market—could not hide their reliance upon the people they bought. But as they bought ever more slaves, slaveholders were able to displace their reasons for buying slaves—the market, the land, and even the slaves themselves became the animating features of slaveholders' choices. That those who were most invested in the slave economy were best able to give alternative meaning to their dependence on slavery seems at first a curious paradox. On closer view, it becomes apparent that one of the luxuries that could be bought in the slave market was access to the master languages of slave buying, languages which transmuted the reality of dependence on slaves into the conventions of slaveholders' self-willed independence.

THE HOUSEHOLD AND THE SLAVE MARKET

Slaveholding white men relied upon slaves to do more than produce and reproduce the masculine economy of the antebellum South. Slaveholders relied on slaves to produce and reproduce slaveholding households. The outward face of a slaveholding household—the driver of the carriage, the greeting given at the door, the supervision of the child, the service at the table—was often a slave. And no less than their outward form, the internal lives of these households, the relations between their white slaveholding members, were shaped by slavery. By purchasing slaves for their wives and children, male slaveholders—for it was only men who went to the slave market—gave both a form and a function to their patriarchal authority. And yet the households over which these men presided were continually being transformed by the slaves they bought, and not always in ways that they could predict or control. Different imagined slaves answered different needs within any household, and the process of choosing what kind of slave to buy was a process of tallying and balancing the needs of various white family members against one another. In both their outward aspect and their inward character, the social relations that defined slaveholding households—between a household and the outside world and between the various white members of that household—were made material in the shape of a slave.

By law and by custom white women had little business being in the slave market. In Louisiana, a married woman had no right to buy or sell immovable property (slaves, under Louisiana law, were real estate) unless she had done one of three things: obtained her husband's permission to trade the property she had brought into the marriage; declared herself separate in property from her husband, thus gaining the right to trade in her own name and insulating herself from her husband's debts, though not necessarily physically separating herself from him; or, finally, gained the right to buy and sell freely without pulling shared property out of the marriage by getting a license to do business as a corporation. Even those few women who had the legal right to buy slaves did not go to the slave market to buy them: when women bought slaves, they found ways to participate in the market without going to the marketplace. Sarah Ann Allen, for example, did not go to the slave yard of the New Orleans dealer Walter Campbell when she bought a

slave in 1849. Instead, her husband, Young D. Allen, from whom her property apparently was separate, went and bargained with Campbell, drew up the contract, and took it home (this was explicitly noted in the contract) for his wife to sign. Similarly, when Azelie Zerigue purchased an "axe-man" for her family's St. Bernard Parish plantation in 1850, it was not she who negotiated with New Orleans slave dealer John Buddy but her husband, Joseph Lombard, who was acting in a legal capacity as her agent.[23] The slave market was a site of perceived sexual and social disorder, not any place for a white lady to be. No less than for slaveholding men, however, the slave market was full of transformative possibilities for slaveholding women.

One of the many miraculous things a slave could do was to make a household white. Of course there were many white households in the antebellum South that subsisted without slaves, relying instead upon the labor of family members—husband, wife, and children working together in the fields. But there was something that made many white southerners, or at least white slaveholding southerners, uncomfortable about such households. J. D. B. DeBow, for example, could allow that nonslaveholding white households existed, but he could see them only as temporary steps in a natural commercial evolution toward slaveholding: "The non-slaveholder knows that as soon as his savings will admit, he can become a slaveholder, and thus relieve his wife from the necessities of the kitchen and the laundry and his children from the labors of the field."[24] DeBow did not allude to the possibility that his hypothetical nonslaveholder's wife might have been working in the field along with her husband and child, though such labor was as customary among nonslaveholding whites as it was customarily unmentionable among white slaveholders like DeBow.[25] By liberating them from work their slaveholding neighbors did not do, slave ownership promised nonslaveholding white women as full a transformation as it did their husbands and fathers. A slave could wash away the unspeakability of a woman's work in the field and bring a white household into being where previously there had been a conspicuous public silence. When Samuel Patterson wrote to his son about setting up housekeeping, he advised him that three things were necessary to make a household: a wife, a house, and a slave to work in it.[26]

Thus households—slaveholding and white—were conjured into being through slave-market speculations that were as personal as they

were commercial. Edward and Lucy Stewart, living near Ponchatoula, Louisiana, in the 1850s, had just struggled through their first harvest on a new farm (they had been unable to get their potatoes out of the ground for want of a mule to pull the plow) when they turned their attention to buying a slave. Edward Stewart began by informing John Gurley, his friend and New Orleans agent, that he and his wife wanted "an orphan girl of eight or nine years of age . . . Lucy thinks she would prefer a girl to a boy."[27] With a slave to tend to gardening, drawing water, and chopping wood, Lucy Stewart would have been able to spend more time inside; her skin would no longer be darkened by the sun, her hands no longer roughened by the tools, her hair no longer blown into knots by the wind.[28] With a slave like the one she imagined, Lucy Stewart might be able to transform herself into a proper white lady.

But before Edward had time to seal the letter to his agent, the Stewarts had thought again: "we have decided that if a boy can be had at as low a price as a girl it will be better to get the former as he can be of equal service in the house while young and be of much more value out of doors as he gets older."[29] In contrasting the benefits of buying a boy to a girl, Edward Stewart made a distinction between the "service" promised by a domestic slave and the "value" promised by one who would eventually work in the fields. And the peculiar combination of value and service desired by him and his wife, the balanced demands of market and home, was to be found in a male body. The hopes the Stewarts had for their slave (and themselves) were keyed to the changing meanings they assigned his or her gender over the course of time: either a boy or a girl could help Lucy Stewart in the house, but a boy would grow into a man who would help Edward Stewart on the farm. Four days later, however, the Stewarts were at it again. "You will think we do not know our mind exactly," Edward projected, "as we have now concluded that it will be best to have a girl instead of a boy. Lucy quotes Christine [a slave woman] with her six or seven children as an example and I think that in after years a girl would prove most valuable."[30] So now, either a boy or girl could help Lucy Stewart in the house, but only a girl could eventually produce more slaves. The Stewarts were posed on the doorstep of their own future, unable to choose between sets of seemingly endless possibilities contained within the body of an eight-year-old child.

The slave the Stewarts imagined was to be a helper for Lucy; they could not yet afford to imagine buying slaves who would relieve Lucy

entirely of her duties around the house, who would transform her from a mate into a mistress. And yet there were such slaves to be bought in the slave market: nurses, cooks, carriage drivers, spinners, seamstresses, servants, weavers, waiters, washers, and on and on. Amidst the public celebration of white male equality, it was difficult for slaveholding white men publicly to declare their superiority to their social inferiors, but the mark of distinction embodied in their slaves was unmistakable.[31] When a slave broker said of a customer "he is a man of means—he is well off," he was speaking from the experience of seeing the man buy slaves, referring to a type of social knowledge that was acted out every day in the finer households of the antebellum South. Another broker made the same point when buying for John Buhler: "Mr. Buhler wanted a good cook, but an indifferent one would not suit him." Buhler was saying of himself what another man said of John Baron: "[he] lives well and would not keep a bad cook." That was a reputation in a single sentence, an estimation of the man built out of the tone of his household and the service of his slaves—a reputation dependent upon the greeting given at his door and the slave-driven carriage that carried his family to church services and parties, a reputation dependent upon the washing and ironing, the cooking and cleaning, the slaving and serving.[32] Baron's gentility, like that of all of the slaveholders who bought domestic slaves, was made visible in the actions and abilities of his slaves. For the prosperous slaveholders of the antebellum South, domestic slaves were a necessity; one might compare the benefits of hiring or buying such a slave, but one could not do without.[33] Indeed, in a social sense, one could not *be* without.

The most perfectly turned performances of slaveholding class distinction were, of course, those of slaveholding ladies. The purchase of ever more slaves provided access to ever more rarified possibilities of feminine delicacy for the white women who watched over them. With a household full of domestic slaves, a white woman could skate lightly across the surface of daily exigency, her own composure unscathed by the messy process required to produce the pleasing tableau of her own life. Of course, these women were as much a part of that pleasing tableau as were the fine dinner parties, well-governed children, and crisply ironed shirts produced by their slaves—the leisure of these women was a part of the show as much as were the slaves who had been bought to create it. As they were replaced by slaves in the fields and

moved inside to elaborate ever more accomplished performances of gentility and domesticity, these slave-made ladies perhaps more than anyone else marked out the class hierarchy of the antebellum South.[34]

The leisure and gentility of white women (itself produced by domestic slaves) was, in the public record of the antebellum South, credited to the reputations of their husbands. Male slaveholders often advertised to their correspondents and fellows in the slave market that they were buying slaves for their family members. By so doing they added a patina of patriarchal generosity—the ability to determine and provide for the needs of their dependents—to the social distinction they were buying in the slave market. John Knight, for example, made a public accounting of his slave buying in the following terms: "We find that we require another *female house servant*," he began his letter, "having to keep Jane exclusively as a nurse." The slave he imagined would be "of infinite advantage to Frances, who has necessarily been entirely too much confined (having the care of John B. and a pretty large family)."[35] Knight used the language of necessity, but the needs he described were domestic rather than economic. And they were Frances's: a house servant was "required" to relieve her confinement (itself necessary). He would provide.

A slave dealer remembered a buyer invoking his female family members in a similarly public accounting of his motive for buying a domestic slave: "I recollect that when plaintiff came to purchase her he stated to me that he wanted to buy her for one of his female relations."[36] Bruckner Payne framed a purchase in similar terms: "Mr. Payne said he wanted a little girl . . . to wait on his wife and do the sewing for a small family."[37] By publicly framing their purchases in terms of the needs of their white dependents, these men reframed the leisure of their wives as evidence of their own virtue—*their* wives would not have to wash or wait or nurse, they would see to that.

And, as they publicly went about providing for their wives and relatives, many slaveholders were buying for themselves a fantasy of provision that would amplify itself over time—even, perhaps, after they had themselves passed on. D. W. Breozeale's mind was on his own legacy when he wrote to his friend John Close about the slave market: "For my own part," he wrote, "should I ever get imbaressed it will be in purchasing Negroes as I wish to have a few more settled on my wife before I am carried off so that no future husband can spend them."

Breozeale was thinking about the frailty of his legacy and calming his fears about the future by thinking about buying slaves. He was going to the slave market to buy life insurance—a legacy that would insulate his family from the effects of his own death. For Breozeale, the slaves he bought in the market were a self-perpetuating part of an intergenerational chain of patriarchal provision: when he was gone, his slaves would take their place alongside those provided to his wife by her father: "I have saved all the slaves for her that I found with her (except one that died at very considerable expense)," he confided to his friend. Like the older man, he would be present in the bodies of his slaves long after he was dead and gone.[38]

A link between the generations of his family was something that J. F. Smith, like Breozeale, hoped to buy in the slave market. When he sat down to write to one of his friends, Smith had just—by his wife's "directions," he said—sold three women and their children. Perhaps their price was to help him pay for the farm he had recently bought and the house he had recently built, the sale of one type of future to pay for another. But as soon as the sale of the slaves was done, Smith was looking to the slave market for more. "If I can procure one or two good servants," he wrote, "we may expect to live in a little more satisfaction." He went on to explain what satisfaction he took from buying slaves: "I intend to purchase a girl of 18 or 20 years of age or a woman and children so that if I should be called away from my family they will at least have a comfortable home with servants sufficient without hiring and that will bring if sold double the original cost." While he made clear enough that he was acting on behalf of his family, Smith detoured around saying exactly what he meant by emphasizing the sunny results of his slave buying—"a little more satisfaction," "a comfortable home"—rather than the means by which such feeling would be produced. But his meaning was probably clear enough to the man who received the letter. The choice Smith posed was between a woman of childbearing age and one who already had children. J. F. Smith was buying a self-renewing slave force for his family; his provision would be perpetually embodied in the reproduction of the slaves he bought. Through the remarkable alchemy of the slave market, a legacy of white patriarchy could be passed on in the promise of black reproduction.[39]

No less than slaveholding men, slaveholding women experienced and expressed transitions in their own lives in relation to slavery. The

dependence of slaveholding women on their slaves was expressed in a commonplace Isaac Jarratt passed to his cousin Betty: "I do think you and Sarah stand a chance to marry since Euclinda Wall has done so, but I fear it is . . . a bad chance without a show of some Negroes and Beauty, both of which is lacking with Sarah and unfortunately for you, you lack the Negroes."[40] Jarratt was a slave trader, a man well-acquainted with the way in which the traffic in slaves underwrote the traffic in (white) women, which in turn underwrote the reproduction of slaveholding patriarchy. Jarratt's recognition of the interrelation of the white marriage market and the black slave market, however, implied no identity of interest between slaves and slaveholding women. Far from it. Whatever their relation to slaveholding patriarchy, he implied, slaveholding women were like slaveholding men—made out of slaves.

As much as their external identities as ladies of distinction or suitable wives depended upon slaves, the internal lives of white women could also be reshaped in the slave market. For Miriam Hilliard, for example, thinking about what it meant to be a mother involved thinking about what it would mean to buy a caretaker for her child. "Isaac Henry kept me awake almost the whole of last night," she wrote shortly after the birth of her son. "I cannot conceive how a mother can rest satisfied to put her tender and helpless babes out to nurse. Who but a mother would patiently undergo the fatigue and sleepless nights which most generally have to be encountered?" Who but a slave, she found herself asking while visiting the family of Bishop Leonidas Polk two weeks later. "She has a faithful nurse (Negro) to whose care she abandons her babes entirely," Hilliard wrote of Mrs. Polk, "only when she has a fancy to caress them does she see them. Eight children and cannot lay to their charge the loss of a single night's rest. She is equally fortunate in having a housekeeper who . . . is everything she ought to be."[41] Mrs. Polk's caretaker filled Miriam Hilliard with wonder, if not with admiration. The well-rested Mrs. Polk, it seems, was leading Hilliard down the path from the household to the slave market.

Had Miriam Hilliard bought a slave, the transaction would likely have entered the public record under the same heading as John Knight's purchase of a nurse for his own wife and son: "patriarchal provision." Her husband would have gone to the slave market, advertised his beneficence by announcing that his intention was to buy a slave for his needy wife, and set about inspecting those available for sale. In the

privacy provided by her diary, however, Miriam Hilliard could imagine a different set of meanings for her imagined slave. Still at the Polk's: "Our 'piece of perfection' kept us up the entire night. Mr. Hilliard got terribly out of patience—vowed this breaking of rest would kill him."[42] Can it have failed to occur to Miriam Hilliard, sitting in the house run by Mrs. Polk's slaves, stealing a moment for herself away from her crying child and raging husband, that buying a slave would emancipate her as a mother and a wife, that the inner life of her household (as well as its outward reputation) might be remade in the slave market? As useful as the patriarchal provision script was in describing slave sales in a way that knit together the authority of white men over both the political economy and the household economy, it could not fully contain the possibilities that a white woman like Miriam Hilliard might discern in the slave market—possibilities that might be subversive of domestic patriarchy, if not of slavery itself.

So it was with Kitty Hamilton. Hamilton had just been married when she asked her brother to buy her a slave. "I want a competent maid," she wrote to Louisiana from her new home in Vicksburg in 1856, "but do not wish to be in too great a hurry." A few months later, when Hamilton wrote to her father, action seemed a bit more to the point; her brother was sending a seamstress, but Hamilton was in the market for more than a seamstress. "Before long," she wrote, "I shall require two servants. Mrs. Lane is bad off for a washer & I should feel much better if I had some one who could do my washing."[43] Mrs. Lane was Kitty Hamilton's new mother-in-law, the mistress of the household in which she was living. It is not clear whether Hamilton was looking for a washer she could use to distinguish herself within the older woman's household or one she could offer as her own contribution to the greater good. What is clear is that Kitty Hamilton was relying on her father to help her renegotiate the terms under which she lived in her husband's household—she was buying a slave to do more than wash her dirty laundry.

If Kitty Hamilton bought slaves to help her define her relations with her in-laws, she was also using the slave market to help her define her relationship to her new husband. In November 1856 she wrote to her brother that the draft he had sent her had not arrived in time and she had been forced to borrow money from her husband. She did not dwell on the fact of the draft but sent it back with a request: "If Josh is sound & well send him up to Vicksburg for me. I am not going to trust him to a Negro trader, but will sell him myself."[44] Hamilton's hope was that her father-in-law might be looking for a slave like Josh. Kitty Hamilton was trading furiously within a tightly bounded set of household economies. Worried about relations with her husband's relatives, she bought through her own family. In debt to her husband, she had her slave sent from her old home to her new one and tried to sell him to her father-in-law. Hamilton accepted the terms of the patriarchal-provision script: she did her slave buying through men, relying on the financial and practical support of her father, brother, and husband, and she stayed out of the slave pens and sold to a family member. But she also tried to dictate the terms of enactment for these pre-scripted roles. As well-grooved as was the process by which domestic patriarchy was reproduced out of chattel slavery, as axiomatic as was the rhetoric of masculine provision to the purchase of household slaves, buying a slave was still a social process, subject to the contrary inclinations and occasional subversions of all those involved.

Some white women went a step further than did Miriam Hilliard or Kitty Hamilton: they used slavery to dismantle patriarchy. The story of Polyxeme Reynes, a white woman of moderate means who lived in antebellum New Orleans, provides a view of the slippery capacity of some slaveholding women to fabricate independent identities in the slave market. Sometime after November 1843, Reynes used a few empty leaves at the beginning of her account book to write her commercial autobiography, "How I started to Work."[45] What followed was a chronicle of twenty transactions made between the end of 1833 and November 1843. The transactions were carefully indexed—First Sales, Sales made by Line, Jackson bought, Second acquisition on Congress Street, Jackson Sold, etc.—and described in loving detail.

As she remembered it to herself, Reynes began in 1833 by selling some of the clothes in her closet for forty dollars. With that money she bought muslin, lace work, and other articles out of which she made kerchiefs, dresses, and bonnets. These were sold in the street by her slave, Elyza. In the meantime, she had her slave Line selling beer and cakes (the cakes, she noted, she had made herself). By the end of the year her savings were considerable—she called them her "panier," her basket. Through 1835 Reynes expanded her enterprise. In August she bought, through an agent, a piece of ground on the Rue de Congres. In

November she paid for a formal accounting of how the $3080 she had brought to her marriage had been spent: "Reynes bought for me Elyza $1000, Betsi $300, Hemmok $1200," and they had, together, bought furniture for $460. The accounting may have meant that Polyxeme Reynes was being legally separated from her husband, a sign either of her commercial independence or of his insolvency. But Joseph Reynes remained active in her affairs. He had done the family's slave buying even when the money being spent was his wife's, and he continued to do so as her business grew beyond the bounds of his household. Also in November, Reynes later remembered, with the remaining $100 of her dotal money, "my husband bought in my name and with my promise to pay the Negro Jackson." Joseph Reynes paid the money down and brought the slave home, but the name on the note that promised the balance in eighteen months was Polyxeme Reynes. At the end of the month her husband gave her a gift—a horse and dray with which Jackson could "help me pay the $900 I paid for him." The money made by Jackson's work as a drayman went directly to pay her loan from the bank, which, she noted, as on every occasion when she borrowed money, was "paid before term."

Through the following years Reynes bought, sold, and rented land; prices and profits were detailed in the diary. And in those years she bought and sold slaves. Nina was purchased on February 17, 1836; again, Joseph Reynes did the slave buying and gave Polyxeme Reynes's promise to pay. This time no money changed hands; Polyxeme Reynes gave only her promise, which was partly backed by Nina herself: "The rent from my two small houses, and the work of Nina were designated to pay this sum."[46] Later in the same year she sold Jackson for one thousand dollars. "I gained at this affair a little less than three-hundred and fifty dollars, that is to say the fruit of his work during eight months," she later wrote.

At the back of the same volume in which she later wrote her commercial autobiography, Polyxeme Reynes kept her running accounts. It is in this list of receipts and expenditures that the depth of the meaning that the slave market had for Reynes is apparent. Much of her money was made into more money: by the end of 1836 she was no longer recording any income from work done by her slaves; money came instead from a rental property, the purchase of which had been underwritten by the sales her slaves made in the streets. But not all the money

she made was reinvested. In May 1835 she recorded a small sum with the notation "expenditures for my children"; in November 1836 she bought presents for her children and clothes for herself; in January 1839 "a gold reliquary for my girl"; in 1841, amidst the growing depression, she gave her three children money to put in "their strongboxes."[47] As prominent as Joseph Reynes is in his wife's commercial autobiography, he is absent from her account book. Polyxeme Reynes had apparently established a separate economy within her husband's household.

Indeed, by the 1840s, hers may have been the only economy in the household. In the beginning, Joseph helped his wife get a start, fronting for her in slave purchases, giving her the horse and cart, and apparently lending her some money. In the twelfth entry of her diary (which, though undated, falls between those for June and August of 1836), Polyxeme Reynes recorded that she had repaid him the money he had advanced her for the purchase of Nina. That entry, like those before it in which Joseph Reynes appears, suggests a posture of patriarchal facilitation: he did not interest himself too deeply in her affairs but did what he could to help her out.

Rather than being the last of the entries detailing her husband's stewardship of her business, however, the twelfth entry may have marked the beginning of her support of him. Three months after she had repaid the outstanding debt, she was lending him money. When Reynes wrote her commercial autobiography, she did not include much about the years after 1836, years of depression. In March of 1843, she later recorded, "my husband having lost his position I began again to make sweets for my domestic to sell on the streets."[48] Polyxeme Reynes was beginning "her work" all over again, only this time it was she who headed the household. The fact that the money she gave her children was earmarked for their "strongboxes" provides a disquieting suggestion of the internal life of the Reynes household during the depression. But it is perhaps more telling that we cannot tell much at all about Joseph Reynes from the book left behind by his wife: long before she became the head of household, Polyxeme Reynes was using the slave market and her slaves' marketing skills to build herself an independent life within a household nominally headed by her husband.

The last entry in Reynes's autobiography marked the end of her enterprise. "In November 1843," she wrote, "I lost my slave Betsi."[49] The loss of Betsi was the occasion that seems to have spurred Reynes

to write a narrative of her career. With Betsi, Reynes had lost her business and everything that slaves and the market had meant to her: her "work," her pride in paying her debts before term, her gifts to her children and herself, her support of her husband. And yet the entry is unclear. Did Betsi die or was she sold for the debts that had begun with Joseph and eventually engulfed his wife? Again, Reynes's silence is telling: it did not matter *how* Betsi was lost to Polyxeme Reynes, simply that she *was* lost. Any biographical interest Reynes might have had in Betsi the woman was apparently occluded by the desperate importance to her own biography of Betsi the slave.

Because even women as economically successful and legally independent as Polyxeme Reynes did not go to the slave market, the process by which they participated in slave buying was itself a renegotiation of the terms of domestic patriarchy. White women who chose slaves did so by a process that was as much a social relation with the man who bought for them as it was a commercial one with the man who sold to them. Recall the back-and-forth decision made by Edward and Lucy Stewart and Edward Stewart's sheepish admission to his agent that they had changed their mind again: he was a man who could not make up his mind on his own. Compare that to Isaac Jarratt, writing to his wife: "If you see Mr. Carson tell him I have left money and get him to buy such a girl as you want if he can get such a one."[50] Both families were smallholding white households, building class distinction out of domestic slavery, and in both families it was a man who would go to the slave pens, pay the money, and bring the slave home. The differences in the process, however, are as striking as the similarities: where Stewart could not conceal the fact that he was being told what to do, Jarratt told his wife that he was too busy and that she would have to find someone else to get her a slave.

Marriage was not the only patriarchal relationship that took daily shape through the process of buying slaves. When elderly Sidney Palfrey wrote to her brother-in-law, John Palfrey, she began by scolding him for returning to their seller two slaves she thought would have "suited" her. "I have," she added, "seen none that I like as well since." Palfrey, however, had not been going to the market herself: "The boys have not been able to procure me a servant," she wrote. "Alfred has been very kind and attentive to me and has been trying his best to procure me some servants. Charles is trying but both have failed so

far."[51] Those sentences stretched the social process of slave buying all the way from the "boys" in the marketplace to the old woman who compared their efforts (Alfred, very kind; Charles, trying) to the patriarch who was nominally overseeing the whole business. Tangles of obligation—between the "boys" and the old woman, between the patriarch and his brother's wife, between the man who got the letter and the "boys" of whom it spoke—were sorted, allotted, and discharged in the slave market.[52]

Twenty years later John Palfrey received a similar letter from his son, Edward. At issue was a joint purchase of slaves with a man called Tupper, who was the father-in-law of John Palfrey's daughter Sidney. Edward Palfrey wrote that he had passed on his father's slave-buying instructions, and noted that even before the purchase had been sealed the deal had afforded a small return: "It appears to afford Mr. Tupper great pleasure to think that his father and Sidney's had at last become acquainted."[53] Generation after generation, the Palfrey family was reproducing itself—lineally and laterally—in the slave market. How many slave families were being sacrificed to sustain this slave-buying genealogy is not mentioned in the family record. Of course, not every slaveholding family reproduced itself in the slave pens: gifts and inheritance were equally important means by which slaveholders used slave property to bind families and generations together. And so the point can be made about slavery generally: the links between the members and generations of slaveholding families often took the material form of a slave passed from one family member to another.

Built out of people who could be bought in the market, slaveholding households were advertisements for their masters, for their gentility and distinction, for the delicacy of their women, the tone of their lives, and the quality of their service. In the market, slaveholders could buy the slaves who could make a white woman into a lady by relieving her from work, who could give shape to white men's claims of social distinction by answering the door politely, polishing the silver table service, serving the right wine at the right time, by driving the carriage straight when the road was rough, ironing the shirts properly, and keeping the children quiet when there were guests in the house. In the slave market, male slaveholders could demonstrate their solicitude by buying slaves for their families, and they could provide for their own legacy by insuring that those slaves would be around to take care of their families

even after they had passed on. And in the slave market some slaveholding women, through the agency of a man, could renegotiate the terms of domestic patriarchy itself.

PAYING FOR MASTERY

The Old South was made by slaves. The fields cleared from the forests and the crops with which they were planted, the fine dinner parties and leisured white women, the expanding black population and the living legacies through which slaveholders reproduced their society over time, all of the things that made the South the South were accomplished through the direct physical agency of slaves. Yet through the incredible generative power of slaveholding ideology, the slave-made landscape of the antebellum South was translated into a series of statements about slaveholders: about their manly independence, their able stewardship of a family legacy, their speculative savvy, or their managerial skill, about their planter-class leisure and their luminous good cheer, about their well-ordered households and well-serviced needs, about their wise and generous provision for their families and their futures. Slaveholders became visible as farmers, planters, patriarchs, ladies, and so on, by taking credit for the work they bought slaves to do for them. Sometimes, however, it was not in the slave-made world that the slaveholders sought to make their virtues visible to everyone else but in the slaves themselves—in the fiber of their form, the feelings in their hearts, and the fear that the slaveholders could sometimes see in their eyes.

Usually, slaveholders bought slaves to do their work for them, but sometimes the slaves themselves were to be the slaveholders' work. John Brown, for example, remembered being traded to a doctor who had cured him of a mysterious illness. The doctor's intention was to use Brown for "a great number of experiments" concerning remedies for (forcibly induced) sunstroke, the effects of bleeding, and the depth of black skin (raised layer by layer by blistering). As Brown told it, the result for the doctor was quite a success: he made his reputation as a healer of sunstroke into a fortune by selling pills made of flour.[54] Dr. Robert Dawson was another man who thought he could buy a reputation for medical skill in the slave market. When Dawson first examined fourteen-year-old Martha in June 1858 he was being paid by the man who was trying to sell her. After Dawson had examined the girl—in the

kitchen, out of the sight of the other men—he reported that she had syphilis. "He said it was very bad—a pretty bad case," the prospective buyer remembered. The buyer was still willing to pay a thousand dollars "country paper" for Martha if the seller would guarantee her health, thus taking upon himself the risk that her condition would deteriorate, but the seller refused: he had bought Martha without guarantee and would sell her that way. Later on, the prospective buyer thought that Dr. Dawson had tried to extract a bit of cash from the expertise his examination demonstrated: "I think Dr. Dawson proposed that if I bought the Negro he would cure her for $50. I am not sure of this but think he did."[55] His offer rebuffed, Dawson bought Martha himself and spent the next three months trying to cure her. Dawson was gambling—and quite publicly, since a number of people knew she was sick—on his ability to heal her. Martha's body became the site of Dawson's demonstration of his confidence, and, when she died, the site of his failure.

Of course, these experiments were also speculations: a doctor like Dawson stood to make some money if he could buy sick slaves on the cheap and sell them for a greater sum (or figure out a way for others to do the same). But they were also claims on one of the most precious commodities in the antebellum South: the language of honor. Many historians have argued that the white male culture of the antebellum South was suffused by the idea of honor, the idea that appearances and reputation mattered above all else, even truth. When contradicted or "given the lie," slaveholders sometimes backed their reputations and opinions with their own lives, issuing a challenge and fighting a duel.[56] And in the slave market—as in the cock pit or the race track or the countless other sites where slaveholders contended with one another for precedence of reputation—slaveholding honor was daily measured out in cash as slaveholders put down their money to back their stated claims of expertise. Listen to a slave-market doctor named Johnston describing a disagreement with the slave dealer who had employed him to diagnose Critty and Creasy in Waterproof, Louisiana, in 1856: "Told Chadwick . . . that one or both of them were Consumptive. Chadwick would not believe it . . . Witness offered to bet in order to back his Judgment but Mr. Chadwick declined."[57] That, as much as any duel, was an affair of honor. Southern slaveholders may indeed have been willing to back their stated opinions with their substance, but those

opinions were often about slaves and the substance ventured was often financial. It should go without saying that southern slaveholders spent a great deal more time buying and selling slaves than they did choosing seconds and choreographing duels; "affairs of honor" were more likely to be played out in the slave market than on the dueling ground.

Physicians were not the only white southerners who used slaves' bodies to advance their fantasies of mastery and potency. After Dr. Johnston had diagnosed Critty and Creasy, a man named Thomas R. Dixon bought them, though he had seen for himself that they were ill. It was "universally known in Waterproof" that Critty and Creasy were sick, and so in buying them Dixon was making a public statement: in the words of a pharmacist who questioned the wisdom of the purchase, "Mr. Dixon said that he could cure them."[58] His mastery, his ability to read their bodies, was not to be questioned. He backed it with his public promise to cure them and eight hundred dollars paid in cash.

The bargain Dixon was making, it turned out, was even more complicated than that, for he himself had no idea whatsoever how to cure Critty and Creasy. According to the report of a witness to the sale, he was counting on the skills of his wife: "They were speaking about their trade. Dixon said that one of the Negroes, the younger one, he knew to be unsound at the time of the purchase. That Mrs. Dixon had examined her previous to the purchase and thought that she could cure her. Mr. Dixon said that he had more faith in Mrs. Dixon's skill than he had in most of the doctors. Said that he knew what was wrong with her. That she had the stoppage of her monthly sickness that Mrs. Dixon could cure it without any difficulty . . . Said that the old one he did not consider worth much money but if the young one should live she would be worth 1000 dollars but there was some risk in curing her, but, for the fact of Mrs. Dixon's knowledge, he thought he had done well."[59]

Dixon was buying Critty to let her die and Creasy for his wife to cure. And he was bragging about it—about his savvy and his wife's ability, about the money he would save by buying a sick slave on the cheap (and not wasting his effort on a dying one), about a speculation that made him sharper than the slave trader and the knowledge that made his wife more reliable than the doctor, about the specialized knowledge of a woman's body he had gained from his wife, and about "the peculiar virtues of some kind of bark," which, made into tea, would bring back "the monthly courses . . . sometimes in twenty four hours" (though, as

he knowingly confided, "it would be more prudent to bring on the courses more slowly by degrees").[60] Dixon was making sure that everybody in earshot knew that he knew what he was doing when he went in the slave market; he was tacking between "honor" and "the market," building his business into a reputation and backing his reputation with his business.

It soon became apparent how sick Critty and Creasy really were. And the Dixons started calling doctors, gradually expending the public credit they had hoped to gain in trying to save the people upon whom it depended. The diagnoses the Dixons got from the doctors were insults to their abilities wrapped in evaluations of their slaves. From Dr. McIlheney, who was asked to examine only Creasy: "Would not give anything for her." From Dr. Wilson, who examined both women: "Would not have given the funeral expenses as consideration for the two Negro women." With the brutal thrift of a slaveholding commonplace, the doctors spun reputation and speculation into a single evaluative economy: the Dixons could be judged by the way they bought slaves, and the judgment was not flattering. Still, even as Mrs. Dixon admitted to the doctors that "Mr. Dixon had been very badly swindled or rather Mrs. Dixon had been," the Dixons did not back out of the deal. Two weeks after the trade, after the Dixons had given way to the doctors, Chadwick offered to take the slaves back. "Mr. Dixon," a witness remembered, "said he did not think he could do it."[61] There was no legal reason, nor any discernible economic reason, why he could not, and yet the phrasing suggests an imperative. Dixon was being driven by the logic of the specific bargain he had made—by the investment of his reputation in his speculation, by the "honor" he had expended in the slave market—to stick with his purchase at any cost. For Dixon, apparently, reputation and speculation could be sundered only by the slaves' death; and when that eventually happened, rather than losing money along with face, Dixon sued, and the Supreme Court of Louisiana gave him his money back. He had not, after all, got what he had paid for.

If healing slaves' bodies was one way that slave buyers tried to extract reputation and honor from the people they bought, breaking their spirits was another. Solomon Northup wrote that Edwin Epps, to whom he was sold in 1843 after beating up his previous owner, John Tibeats, was known as a "'breaker,' distinguished for his faculty of

subduing the spirit of a slave, as a jockey boasts of his skill in managing a refractory horse."[62] By putting the word "breaker" in quotation marks, Northup highlighted the recognizably social character of Epps's role, and by making the comparison between the breaker's reputation and that of another man's "boasts," Northup pointed to the pride with which Epps inhabited that role. Being a breaker was less a profession than a pose—a way of treating slaves and of talking to and about them, a way of building a reputation for indomitability out of brutality.[63]

How else can we understand Charles McDermott—who was told by the dealer who sold him Billy that the slave would "run and play off from his work," who had seen the scars on Billy's back inflicted by previous owners, who whipped Billy a dozen times for running away without thinking about returning him to the dealer—than as a man buying a reputation as a breaker?[64] How else can we understand Andrew Skillman—who "frequently" inquired about purchasing Henry, though the slave's character, "which was bad," was generally known, who said at the time of sale that he knew "the Boy had stolen goods and run off" but that he would not blame any Negro "for so doing when allowed the same liberty" as Henry had been allowed, who bought Henry though the slave was sold in chains from the jail, who asked Henry "if he would live with him" and removed the slave's chains "as soon as he bought him," who told Henry in the hearing of other white men "if he ran away from him once he would not run away again"—but as a man who sought honor among whites by publicly threatening his slave?[65] These men were demonstrating that they were not afraid of scars or chains or bad character, that the common caution of the slave market was expendable for men as forceful as themselves: they were buying the chance to match their will against that of a slave.

More than that: breakers were buying the chance to match their ability as masters against that of their neighbors. Skillman's comment that Henry's bad behavior had been due to his "liberty," his public removal of the chains applied by the previous owner, and his equally public threat to murder Henry if he ran away all drew rhetorical force from a slaveholders' commonplace: that the behavior of slaves reflected the ability of their owners.[66] Attributing Henry's bad behavior to his prior owner's lax management and proclaiming his ability to break Henry's spirit, Skillman was buying the chance to show that he was a better master—more discerning, more confident, more formidable,

more *honorable*—than any other man around. At least he was so up to the point that Henry ran away, taking with him three of Skillman's other slaves. After that he was simply angry; and when he sued and the Louisiana Supreme Court ruled that he had got what he deserved, out of luck.

If healers tried to wring honor from their slave's bodies, breakers tried to wring it from their souls. Moses Roper remembered that his eventual buyer tried to inscribe his authority in Roper's mind long before he ever beat him: "Previously to his purchasing me, he had frequently taunted me, by saying 'You have been a gentleman long enough, and, whatever may be the consequences I intend to buy you.'"[67] Peter Bruner was similarly threatened when, after having run away and been captured, he was addressed by his owner's sister: "She said she wanted to buy me for the sole purpose of whipping me; she said if she could whip me and break me in she could stop me from running off."[68] A final example comes from William Wells Brown, who remembered that Robert More purchased John after a carriage the slave was driving had splashed him with mud with the "express purpose . . . to '*tame him.*'" This he did by chaining and beating John until the slave's limbs hung limp at his side. At that point, John had no value left but as a symbol of More's power. These slaves were bought to be broken, to be turned from unruly subjects into perfect symbols of their owners' will. Indeed, they were bought to be the embodied registers of the indomitability of that will, for the slaves themselves were the ultimate audience for their buyers' brutal performances.[69]

These slaves, then, embodied a type of public recognition—a type of honor—that could be beaten out of their backs. In buying them, slaveholders boasted that their own mastery would inhabit their slaves' every action. Their slaves would be extensions of themselves, the actions of the enslaved indistinguishable from the will of the enslavers. Slave breaking was a technology of the soul. Buying slaves to break them represented a fantasy of mastery embodied in the public subjugation of another, of private omnipotence transmuted into public reputation. In that way, it was not so different from paternalism.

As slaveholders progressed through stages of social standing by buying ever more slaves, they were able to accomplish another remarkable rhetorical inversion, perhaps one of the most remarkable of all time: they began to say they were acting on behalf of the people whom they

had bought to act for them. That claim, like those based upon brutal subordination, was a reputation wrung from the soul of a slave, but it had a much nicer sounding name than slave breaking: paternalism. Indeed, the slave-buyer-as-paternalist was a recognizable enough figure to become a trope of proslavery fiction: the slaveholder who bought slaves in order to reunite families that had been divided by the disembodied power of the marketplace (often debts to a northern merchant). Buying slaves in these novels was a form of charity, a benevolence extended to the purchased on the part of slaveholders so attached to their slaves that they were willing to enter the unfamiliar and potentially contaminating confines of the slave pen to redeem their loved ones and treasured friends.[70]

An explicit balancing of the needs of master and slave, of commercial and paternal language, animated Richard T. Archer's slave buying as he described it to Joseph Copes. "I consider Negroes too high at this time," Archer began with a gesture of speculative savvy, "but there are some very much allied to mine both by blood and intermarriage that I may be induced from feeling to buy, and I have one vacant improved plantation, and could work more hands with advantage."[71] The vacant plantation was an objective necessity, but what was "feeling" worth? Archer was negotiating a complicated deal in which consideration for his slaves' needs, along with evaluation of the market and the need to work an open field, was tallied and entered into his relationship with Copes. By asking the question (and sharing it with Copes), Archer was figuring the slaves' needs alongside his own as he thought about buying them. Perhaps by sharing the dilemma with Copes he hoped to be better able to judge how another would balance the dictates of necessity and humanity; perhaps to be dissuaded from buying while still gaining credit for "feeling."

Feeling, then, could be bought, but only at a price. For a Louisiana slaveholder named Isett, feeling was behind his "intention to buy" William, the "principal inducement" being that William was "husband to one of his women." And for Isett the price was one thousand dollars. Later, in a courtroom where William was being portrayed as a runaway and a thief, Isett explained what he had been thinking when he had bought the slave. Had he known of the theft at the time the marriage was proposed, he would not have allowed William to marry his slave, "but after he did & had children by her he was willing to purchase him

at $1000." "Had it occurred to him that the boy had been chg'd with that robbery he still would have given $1000 for him," he added to emphasize the tenor of the offer he had made for William.[72] Isett was saying that he did not know that William had been accused of a crime at the time he tried to buy him, but even if he had, it would not have made any difference. As he portrayed himself to the court, Isett was the kind of man who was willing to pay dearly for the satisfaction of keeping William's family together.

It was, of course, possible that, as he went before the court, Isett was still trying to rationalize the fact that he had paid a thousand dollars for a slave whom all of his neighbors thought was incorrigibly malign. But the terms in which he did so—a warmed-over account of his own paternalist generosity—were terms in which plenty of other slave buyers described the spirit with which they went to sale. Consummated, such a sale looked like this: "I am pleased to hear that the sale of the Negroes meets the approbation of yourself . . . not so much on my own account, as on the account of the Negroes, who were very anxious that I should own them, which was one of the greatest inducements to my purchasing, so far they appear perfectly contented."[73] That was slave buyer Thomas Maskell writing to slave seller Samuel Plaisted, getting a rebate—measured out in his slaves' esteem—on the price he had paid. His slaves' (imagined) affection was part of the purchase: he had bought himself a paternalist fantasy in the slave market.

The proslavery construction of slave-market "paternalism" was highly unstable: it threatened to collapse at any moment beneath the weight of its own absurdity. One could go to the market and buy slaves to rescue them from the market, but it was patently obvious even to the most febrile reader of proslavery novels that the market in people was what had in the first place caused the problems that slave-buying paternalists claimed to resolve. Some slaveholders solved this problem the same way they solved other problems: through ever more elaborate fantasies about the slave market. Writing in his private diary, for instance, Matthew Williams described his purchase of "a Negro boy" as "a new responsibility." He continued: "I bought him from a Negro trader. I feel satisfied that however inadequately I may discharge my duty towards this boy that he is better off with me than with the man from whom I bought him."[74] Carried with him into the slave market, Williams's paternalism was redemptive: the slave market was a bad thing

in itself; sale to anyone was therefore better than sale to no one; Williams was doing the slave a favor, saving him from the market by buying him. Of course, Williams was a professor at South Carolina College, a man for whom it was perhaps a vocation to torture logic into self-congratulation. But he was far from being the only slaveholder to bewilder slave buying and paternalism.

John Knight's search for paternalism threatened to lead him into an endless series of trips into the slave market. When he received Jane (one of the people out of whom he was building his household), Knight also received a message from his father-in-law that his new slave had come to him at the cost of her own unwilling separation from her sister. As well as passing on the news, Knight's father-in-law was perhaps passing on the responsibility, for Knight immediately took up the issue: "If she still desires to come to this country, and reside with us in the vicinity of Jane, I authorize you to purchase her for me . . . If she is a faithful servant I will guarantee her a good master."[75] And, a year later: "We find that we require another female house servant . . . If Jane's sister can yet be bought as you advised me sometime since I should be very glad to own her as I could employ her to much profit."[76] Knight moved freely back and forth between considerations of his household's "requirements" and advertisement of his own good will.

It is not clear whether the person Knight's father-in-law eventually sent was Jane's sister. Her name was Ann, and the letter Knight wrote upon her arrival suggests both the father-in-law's bad faith in raising the issue of family separation in the first place and John Knight's dogged intention to do (or at least say—and often) the right thing in the slave market. Noting that Ann had arrived and was "pleased" with Natchez, Knight sent yet another slave-market request: "I wish you could purchase her brother for me for $700."[77] Knight's paternalism was pushing him deeper and deeper into slave buying. It is not clear how Knight's father-in-law would have read this request: perhaps as a reprimand for breaking up the family; perhaps as another effort to establish a reputation for good will. But however it was intended and however it was read, Knight's request was tendered wholly in the language of charity: he did not want a waiter or a hosteler or a carriage driver, he wanted Ann's brother.

To suggest that John Knight was trying to buy a reputation for charity along with his slaves is not to suggest that he did not care for

his slaves' feelings. Indeed, he seems to have cared a great deal: he wanted his slaves to be happy, and he thought their happiness said enough about him that it would prove something to his father-in-law. Like the feelings expressed by Archer and Isett, Knight's feelings were heavily leveraged: he was extracting credit for good intentions out of incomplete purchases, out of transactions that might remain as imaginary as those in the novels. Knight was borrowing against feelings he had himself imagined for his future slaves—the happiness he was granting them—to prove the tenor of his offer. Through their own earnest incantations, practiced slave buyers like Knight portrayed themselves as charitable sojourners in the slave market, redeeming slaves rather than buying them.

Paternalism, then, was something slaveholders could buy in the slave market. Rather than being a prebourgeois social system or a set of rules by which slaveholders governed themselves, paternalism, like speculation, was a way of going about buying slaves, one answer among many that slaveholders gave to the question "What is slavery?" For every "capitalist" who wrapped the purchase of a slave in a detailed account of business cycle and material necessity, there could be a "paternalist" whose self-described motive in buying slaves was to treat them well or save them from the market. The point here is not to try to sort which of these representations were sincere and which were mendacious—slaveholders' real selves emerged only in real time and in confrontation with real slaves. The point, rather, is to emphasize the plasticity of slaveholding paternalism. Because it was a way of imagining, describing, and justifying slavery rather than a direct reflection of underlying social relations, because it was portable, paternalism was likely to turn up in the most unlikely places—in slaveholders' letters describing their own benign intentions as they went to the slave market.[78]

But the magic by which paternalism was produced in the slave market was hard to control. Once the slave market had been mixed in with paternalism, its capacity to produce a universal standard of comparison became indispensable to those who wanted to measure their own good will and attachment to their slaves. Listen to Chancellor Johnson of the South Carolina Supreme Court making a decree of specific performance in a case of disputed slave property (that is, arguing that an individual slave could not be replaced by a cash payment): "Can you go to the market, daily, and buy one like him, as you might a bale of goods,

or a flock of sheep? No. They are not to be found daily in the market. Perhaps you might be able to find one of the same sex, age, color, height, and weight, but they much differ in moral qualities of honesty, fidelity, obedience, and industry, in physical qualities of strength and weakness, health and disease; in acquired qualities, derived from instruction, in dexterity in performing the particular labor you wish to assign him." One like him: Johnson's paternalism bordered on sentimentality. But it resided in the slave market. Johnson's brief on the behalf of the "fidelity, obedience, and industry" of specific slaves took the listener on a tour of the slave mart: the slaves lined out by sex and size around the walls of the pen; the visible differences in age, size, and complexion; the questions to determine moral qualities and intelligence; the inspections for health and tests of dexterity.[79] In Johnson's mind there was no more certain measure of a slave's pricelessness than the slave market, no more certain arena for demonstrating human singularity than that of universal comparison.[80]

The unstable antinomies of price and paternalism posed by Johnson were daily resolved into slaveholding commonplaces. "All those who live are above price," wrote a New Orleans agent to an absent owner who had been worried about the health of his slaves.[81] And here is John Knight expressing (as usual to his father-in-law) his paternalist devotion to Henson: "I need not say to you I never wish to purchase a slave to sell again. All I buy I expect to retain. Henson has proved a most invaluable buy to me, both in my store and house. I could get $1000 or more for him at a word, but, as I assured him, he never leaves me but for bad conduct."[82] Knight measured his paternalism in the slave market: not only could he buy slaves to treat them well, he could measure his attachment in dollars foregone. And he could use the threat of sale to guarantee that he would not have to treat his well-cared-for slaves otherwise. This rhetorical intermixture of market and paternalism could crystallize in an unmistakably material result: "I govern them in the same way your late brother did," Thomas Maskell wrote about the recently purchased slaves whose contentment figured so prominently in his own satisfaction, "without the whip, by stating to them that I should sell them if they do not conduct themselves as I wish."[83] That was a slave buyer's fantasy of paternalist mutuality being forced upon a slave through a disciplinary threat of resale—that was the slave trade as a technology of the soul.

Along with the social distinction, honor, and paternalism that could be wrung from the bodies and souls of the enslaved, slave traders were selling the buyers another fantasy: that other people existed to satisfy their desires. The word "fancy" has come down to us as an adjective modifying the word "girl," an adjective that refers to appearance perhaps, or manners or dress. But the word in its other meaning describes a desire: "he fancies . . ." The slave-market usage embarked from this second meaning: "fancy" was a transitive verb made noun, a slaveholder's desire made material in the shape of a little girl "13 years old Girl, Bright Color, nearly a fancy for $1135."[84] That was how slave dealer Phillip Thomas described a child he had seen sold in Richmond: an age, a sex, a complexion that were her own; a fantasy and a price applied in the slave market.

Buying slaves for sex or companionship was no less public than any other kind of slave buying. The slave market was suffused with sexuality: the traders' light-skinned mistresses, the buyers' foul-mouthed banter, the curtained inspection rooms that surrounded the pens. But more than anything, there were the high prices. The "New Orleans Slave Sale Sample" shows prices paid for women that occasionally reached three hundred percent of the median prices paid in a given year—prices above $1500 in the first decade of the century and ranging from $2000 to $5233 afterwards.[85] Contemplating prices like that, William Wells Brown wrote in his novel *Clotel*, "We need not add that had those young girls been sold for mere house servants or field hands, they would not have brought half the sum they did."[86]

The scene Brown was describing, the imaginative site of the "fancy trade," was an auction.[87] For, though "fancy" women were sold through private bargaining as well as public crying, the open competition of an auction—a contest between white men played out on the body of an enslaved woman—was the essence of the transaction.[88] The price paid, Solomon Northup remembered, was as much a measure of the buyer as of the bought: "there were men enough in New Orleans who would give five thousand dollars for such an extra fancy piece . . . rather than not get her."[89] The high prices were a measure not only of desire but of dominance. No other man could afford to pay so much; no other man's needs could be so substantially measured; no other man's desires would be so spectacularly fulfilled. And high prices were public knowledge, reported in newspapers and talked about by slaves and slavehold-

ers alike. Lewis Clarke remembered that as a slave he had heard of "handsome girls being sold in New Orleans for from $2000 to $3000." And a Virginia slave dealer wrote to his partner in the 1850s: "There is here the highest field hand that has ever been sold in Richmond . . . he belongs to that man who bought that high priced Fancy at $1780."[90] "That man" had bought a reputation along with his slaves: he was known through the people he bought. His potency was gauged by his buying power.

Whether they were buying these high-priced women to be their companions or simply their toys, these slaveholders showed that they had the power to purchase what was forbidden and the audacity to show it off. To buy a "fancy" was to flirt publicly with the boundaries of acceptable sociability. John Powell, an editor of the New Orleans *Picayune*, for example, entertained his dinner guests at a house inhabited by his "Quadroon mistress" and the couple's child—their presence at the party showed Powell to be a man who was at once civilized and sensational. Theophilus Freeman, a New Orleans slave dealer, received visitors while lying in bed with Sarah Connor, a woman he had once owned. Through this carefully publicized intimacy with his own former slave, Freemen demonstrated his own freedom from convention—his liberation was made evident in her carefully displayed body.[91]

In the public transcript of the antebellum South, however, these performances of potency were often doubled back on themselves. When they stepped into the notary's office to register their stake in the high-priced women they had bought, slaveholders described them not as "mistresses" or "fancies" but as "cooks" or "domestics" or "seamstresses" or, most commonly, not at all.[92] The double discourse of fancy was reflected in the public assessments of those in the know. Joseph A. Beard, a man who earned his money by auctioning slaves, spoke of the child of George Botts, a slave dealer, and Ann Maria Barclay, Botts's former slave, this way: "a young girl who was generally supposed to be Botts' child though called Maria's sister." Louis Exinois preserved the same doubleness when describing a doctor who visited the house of an enslaved woman: "[he] appeared to be her friend or cher amie."[93] "Generally supposed," "appeared to be": both Beard and Exinois drew attention to the fact that they were speaking doubly, to the fact that there was a polite way of describing such things and another way of seeing them.

As with other forms of Victorian politeness, the rudeness lay with people who described things the way they saw them.[94] Asked in public about his relations with a family whom his uncle owned, Pierre Pouche of Pointe Coupée responded in a way that was at once defensive and accusatory: "I have had connexion with most of the females and am not ashamed to confess it, although I do not think the question pertinent, I would blush to steal but not to answer this question." Talk about such things, Pouche implied, was gossip; it reflected as badly upon the knower as the known. As Mary Chestnut put it, sex between slaveholding white men and their female slaves was "the thing we can't name." Thus was patriarchy defended by the silence of politeness, and by a kind of magical denial that allowed a white household to persist in its public performance, though its foundation had disappeared in practice: "Every lady tells you who is the father of all the mulatto children in everybody's household, but those in her own she seems to think dropped from the clouds or pretends so to think."[95] Slaveholders' "fancies" existed in a state of public erasure: they were unspeakable.

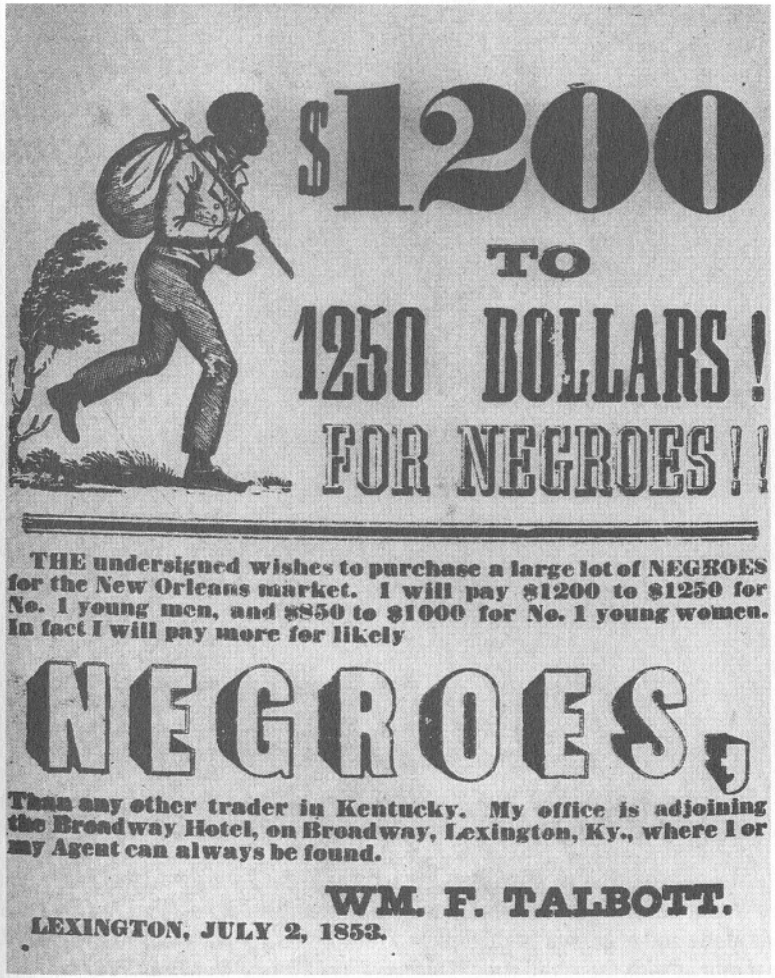
Behind the shroud of patriarchal prerogative, some slaveholders hid fantasies of domination that could be seen only by their slaves. Dr. James Norcom sneaked after his slave Harriet Jacobs, trapped her, and whispered his dirty fantasies into her ear. Robert Newsome bought Celia to replace his dead wife and raped her before they had returned from the slave market. Bruckner Payne, who had announced in the slave market that he was there to buy a slave to do some sewing for his wife, took Ellen Brooks to his plantation on trial and brought her back to the slave market so badly brutalized that she died two weeks later.[96] These secret slaveholders sought victims, not companions. In their most private moments, these men existed only in the slaves whose bodies provided the register for their secret desires and their evident power. By hiding their private desires from everyone but their slaves, they recapitulated the ultimate logic of the slave market: their phantasms of independent agency were built out of practical dependence upon people bought in the market—their selves were built out of slaves.[97]

The slave market was everywhere in the antebellum South. It supplied slaveholders' farms and households; it suffused their fantasies and figures of speech; it was incorporated into their social relations and

their selves. Exigency, want, need, desire, wish, fancy, fantasy: answers to every one of these could be found in the slave market. All of the values associated with the antebellum South—the poses and the posturing, the whiteness and independence, the calculation and mastery, the hospitality and gentility, the patriarchy and paternalism, the coming of age and staging of obligation, the honor, brutality, and fancy—were daily packaged and sold in the slave market. All were embodied in slaves and turned out for display in the fields, farms, streets, and parlors of southern slaveholders. More than that, those values and the slaves bought to embody them were knitted together in countless letters, conversations, and court cases which gave cultural meaning to the economy in people. Sometimes that meaning was public—narrated, remarked upon, advertised. Sometimes it was secret—hushed, investigated, hidden. But always it depended upon the slaves.

As slaveholders became ever wealthier and their slave buying ever more elaborate, they became adept at covering their dependency on their slaves with a variety of very durable cultural languages that emphasized their own agency. They bought slaves to make themselves frugal, independent, socially acceptable, or even fully white; they acted in accordance with the necessities of their business or the exigencies of their households; they covered the contingency of their own identities in the capacious promises of paternalism, buying on behalf of the bought; they obscured the dependency of their fantasies with the brutality of their mastery. Using the ideological imperatives of slaveholding culture—whiteness, independence, rationality, necessity, patriarchy, honor, paternalism, and fancy—they produced, in the classic formulation, freedom out of slavery.

In doing so, however, they brought the slave market into their lives, their plans, and their reputations, for their self-amplifying fantasies could be made material only in the domain of the traders and through the frail and resistant bodies of their slaves.



1. Slave traders all over the upper South gathered slaves in the summer months and shipped them south in the fall. Slave traders' advertisements like this one were a common sight in the upper South, just as those advertising the sale of the slaves the traders transported were common in the lower South. *Courtesy of the University of North Carolina Press.*

SOUL BY SOUL

LIFE INSIDE THE ANTEBELLUM SLAVE MARKET

WALTER JOHNSON

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
LONDON, ENGLAND