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RACE RELATIONS IN SLAVE SOCIETIES

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The roughly 10 million Africans transported forcibly to the Americas between 1500 and 1850 were thrust headlong into a bewildering variety of different environments. Some cleared the jungles of South America, others grew sugar on small Caribbean islands, while a smaller number laboured in rice fields and tobacco farms, or on the wharves of ports on the North American mainland. In all these locations, enslaved Africans added to a pre-existing mix of Native Americans, immigrant Europeans and their descendants. Enslaved Africans were never completely isolated from these other populations, although in several Caribbean islands and in the coastal regions of South Carolina and Georgia nine out of ten individuals were enslaved (Goveia, 1965: 203). Historians writing on slavery have scrutinised the lives of the enslaved in detail, carefully documenting, amongst other things, religious experiences, family formation, cultural expression and resistance. Where historians have studied how slaves interacted with other people, they have concentrated on the master/mistress–slave relationship, exploring themes such as paternalism, hegemony and capitalism. The importance of the interaction between owners and the enslaved cannot be underestimated, since the master determined the amount of work required from slaves, the amounts of food and clothing dispensed, and how punishment would be determined and delivered. Trevor Burnard, in Chapter 11 of this volume, explores this relationship in depth.

Yet such approaches make it easy to overlook the encounters that enslaved people throughout the Americas had with people who were neither fellow slaves nor owners. The number of non-slaveholding whites was particularly large in North America, and even in the southern states they outnumbered slaveholders by three to one. Elsewhere in the Americas, Kingston, Havana, Bridgetown and Rio de Janeiro all had an artisanal class that encountered slaves on a daily basis. The 1834 census of Rio de Janeiro, for instance, documented *c*. 8000 white men of "lower status", including *c*. 4000 artisans, 900 street sellers and 1000 servants. A further 500 white women with low-status occupations were recorded in the Rio census. In Savannah, Georgia, more than 1500 white women were recorded as working in the 1860 census, including nearly 300 servants and 45 washerwomen, occupations they shared with free black and enslaved women (Karasch, 1987, 69–73; Lockley, 2002: 102–120). Poorer whites were often concentrated in urban environments since port cities were not only the point of arrival for new European immigrants. Ports also had the critical mass of population required for

artisans to find sufficient work, as well as being favoured locations for factories and shipyards that offered employment.

Outside towns, a small number of whites continued to work their own farms on a subsistence basis. George Pinkard, visiting Barbados in the early nineteenth century, documented the existence of white farmers "who obtain a scanty livelihood by cultivating a small patch of earth, and breeding up poultry, or what they term stock for the markets".[1] These white Barbadians were also known as "Redlegs" and were descendants of the original indentured settlers of the island in the seventeenth century. By the time of the abolition of slavery in 1834 an estimated 8000 "Redlegs" lived in Barbados, working as servants or artisans or on small subsistence farms. In Antigua, by contrast, one visitor in 1774 noted that "everybody in town is on a level as to station", while in Jamaica the number of poor white farmers was very small since the strong demand for white overseers resulted in high wages that enabled most overseers to purchase their own slaves fairly quickly. Not without reason was it known as the "best poor man's country" (Goveia, 1965: 213; Burnard, 2004: 247–48). In Brazil, non-slaveholders constituted more than half of the white rural population, and on the North American mainland non-slaveholding farmers dominated certain parts of the southern United States, especially in the mountainous regions of western North Carolina and Virginia and eastern Tennessee and Kentucky. In these parts, only about 10 per cent of whites owned slaves. Yet even in the coastal lowcountry of the American South, where some wealthy planters counted their enslaved property in the hundreds, poor whites continued to subsist "on other men's land, or government districts – always the swamp or the pine barren", eking out a miserable subsistence on poor-quality lands (Klein and Luna, 2000: 937; Inscoe, 1989; Lockley, 2001: 26–27). In areas with large slave populations, such as coastal areas of North and South America, and the larger Caribbean islands, these poorer whites had numerous opportunities to interact with enslaved people. This chapter examines the significance and importance of these unofficial, and often clandestine, interactions.

Overseers

For the vast majority of plantation slaves, the non-slaveholding white they most frequently encountered was the overseer. The job of the overseer in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had been relatively respectable, and sometimes was taken by young men in order to learn the planting business. Those such as Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica, or Roswell King in Georgia, perhaps started overseeing as men with modest means, but were able to earn sufficient money to buy their own land and slaves. By the nineteenth century, however, it was more common for overseers to be men of relatively low social status, willing to work on short-term contracts for comparatively little money in the heat of the plantations, while owners retreated to more comfortable coastal or mountain homes. John Luffmann, visiting Antigua in the 1780s, noted that the overseers were "generally poor Scotch lads" who had originally come over as indentured servants. Some slaves accurately described their overseers as "poor white trash" (Lockley, 2001: 32).[2]

Overseers had an awkward role: their position depended on their ability to deliver a crop that could be sold. So long as they did that, few owners concerned themselves with how it was done. In pursuit of this end, overseers would use the whip to get the most work out of the slaves, and the accounts of former slaves are replete with stories of the

abuse regularly meted out by brutal overseers. Yet enslaved people were not completely powerless in the face of a brutal overseer. Excessive violence by an overseer, particularly when it led to the death of a slave, could land the overseer in court and even in jail, at least in the antebellum United States, and on occasion courts were prepared to support slaves who defended themselves from unprovoked attacks by overseers. In 1847 an Alabama slave was sentenced to death following a fight with his overseer that ended with both bloodied and bruised. The case went to the Alabama supreme court, where the death sentence was overturned on the grounds that a "defenceless" slave could offer a "self-defence" plea despite the law clearly stating that he was "forbidden to resist". The court ordered that the slave be re-tried on a lesser charge of "mayhem" that would not have merited a death sentence.[3]

There were other, less violent, methods used by slaves to undermine the overseer's position. Plantation tools could be "accidentally broken", rice fields could be drained or flooded at the wrong time, and the sugar harvest could proceed slowly with a portion of the crop lost to the first frost. All of this damaged the profitability of the plantation and endangered the position of the overseer. Some slaves would even risk a personal appeal to the benevolence of the owner over the head of the overseer. Since slaves represented an economic asset, it was not unknown for owners to protect those "assets" at the expense of the overseer's job. If an overseer wished to keep his position, he had to tread a fine line between using sufficient coercion to produce a crop, but not enough to lead to a complete breakdown of plantation discipline. Where overseers were permitted to use a portion of the plantation for their own crops, paying the slaves to work the land on Sundays, there was an even greater incentive for them to treat the slaves relatively well. In Antigua, John Luffmann saw overseers using "the ground of their employers" to raise "stock of every kind. … they also grow exotics as well as vegetables natural to the climate" and crucially "they employ the slaves belonging to the plantation to vend such produce". Similarly, in South Carolina, Charles Ball's overseer hired 20 slaves on Sundays to work on his own land, "for which he gave them fifty cents each".[4] This economic dependency would have acted as a further check on the behaviour of overseers.

Economic relations

Away from the plantation, slaves working on hire regularly found themselves labouring alongside whites. One particularly experienced slave in Tennessee was hired out as a farm-manager by his master, and to his surprise found himself in charge of white labourers, recalling that "'Bossing' white hands and working with them, so as to make their labors profitable for my employer, was no easy task".[5] Cotton mills, iron forges and construction projects normally employed white labour in managerial or supervisory positions, though Irish immigrants in North America often did exactly the same work as the slaves, especially when it involved digging canals and laying railroads. Industrial work like this did not occur in every part of the Americas, and the scope for bi-racial interaction was limited by the managerial roles often taken by whites, that effectively recreated the racial divisions on the plantation. More widespread were the shops and other service industries in towns and cities that employed black and white workers on the same terms. Far from all chambermaids, shop assistants or artisans were black, and despite a widespread belief among elite whites that menial work would not be done by

white people, there is sufficient evidence that poorer whites did a considerable amount of labouring work.

Poorer white residents often complained loudly about the competition they experienced from enslaved labourers, carpenters and blacksmiths. Slaves who were permitted to hire their own time by their owners in return for a weekly fee could afford to undercut white workers, since they did not have to support their enslaved family from their wages. In 1760, the South Carolina Grand Jury presented "as a grievance, negroes being allowed to make and sell bread, cakes, and many other articles, which prevents poor white people from getting a livelihood by such employment".[6] In 1793, the Master Coopers of Charleston complained to the South Carolina legislature "that at present as well as considerable time past the slaves of Charleston have been priviledged (although illegally) to sell, traffick, and barter, as well as to carry on different trades and occupations (free from direction or superintendence of any white person whatever) to their own emolument, and the great and manifest injury of the mechanical part of the community, selling their commodities and working at their trades much lower, and at much cheaper rates, than those persons who are priviledged by their citizenship and qualified from their former apprenticeship to exercise the different mechanical branches can possibly afford". The subsequent bill that would have protected the rights of white workers was ultimately voted down in the legislature.[7] The shoemaker's guild in Rio de Janeiro protested about exactly the same competition in 1813, but also to no avail (Karasch, 1987: 201). Since masters earned an easy income from the hire of surplus slaves, and since other whites benefited from the downward pressure on prices this competition engendered, the concerns of white artisans were rarely heeded. Laws that granted monopolies to white workers, for instance a 1770 Barbados law granting whites exclusive rights to sell goods on the street, and a 1758 Georgia law excluding slaves from all artisan trades, only ever operated for a set period and invariably were not renewed (Jones, 2007: 17; Lockley, 2001: 68–69). The competition between white and black artisans was a chronic problem, and it was only after the abolition of slavery removed the self-interest of slaveholders that white workers found their position receiving legislative support.

Only some of the economic interaction between slaves and non-slaveholding whites involved competition. As numerous scholars of the "informal" slave economy have established, slaves had some time to themselves in the evenings and on Sundays, time that was often spent growing crops, making items for sale, or hiring themselves out for wages. These activities created many opportunities to meet non-slaveholding whites. Slaves with items to sell often found that poor whites were willing trading partners, bartering alcohol, tobacco or other small luxury items in return for milk, eggs, chickens and fresh vegetables. The Rev. Richard Bickell described those selling at the marketplace in Kingston, Jamaica as "Jews with shops and standings as at a fair, selling old and new clothes, trinkets and small wares at a cent, per cent, to adorn the Negro person, there were some low Frenchmen and Spaniards and people of colour, in petty shops and with stalls; some selling their bad rum, gin, tobacco, etc.; others salt provision and small articles of dress, and many bartering with the slave or purchasing his surplus provision to retail again."[8]

Slaves living on plantations near towns such as Kingston, Savannah and Charleston established Sunday markets where they almost monopolised the sale of fresh foodstuffs. Some white urban residents complained about the high prices charged by enslaved vendors in these markets. In Savannah in 1818, the Grand Jury cited "as an evil of great

magnitude the ordinance granting badges to colored and black women, for the purpose of hawking about articles for sale. These women monopolise in divers ways, many of the necessaries of life, which are brought to our market, by which the price is greatly enhanced, and the poor inhabitants of our city, proportionately distressed". Since masters themselves, however, rarely went to the market, preferring to send their domestic slaves instead, little was done to regulate prices.[9]

Criminal relations

The economic freedom afforded to slaves provided them with the opportunity to undermine the system that enslaved them. Slaves resisted their enslavement in numerous ways, some subtle and almost unnoticed, others overt and violent. Theft, for example, was a frequent form of slave resistance. Several scholars have described the moral economy whereby slaves rationalised these acts as a "redistribution" of goods among the master's property, or by claiming that since masters were guilty of stealing slaves from Africa, they could hardly complain when their own property was purloined. Stolen consumable items were most likely eaten quickly by the culprits, or shared among friends, thus disposing of the evidence. Other items, such as plantation tools or cotton, rice or sugar, that were obviously part of the main cash crop, had to be sold or bartered, and this proved to be a crucial nexus of interaction between slaves and poor whites.

The customary trading activities of slaves in the Sunday markets of town and cities throughout the Americas provided a suitable cover for a trade in stolen goods. Typically, slaves would receive either small amounts of cash, or goods such as alcohol or tobacco, in return for the goods they had stolen. The shopkeepers and traders who purchased these items would almost certainly have known they were stolen, but they were willing to collude with the slaves for two reasons. First, they paid a fraction of the true value for the stolen items, and thus would be able to sell them on at a significant profit. Edward Long said Jewish shopkeepers in Jamaica profited from slaves "by giving but a trifling value of their goods".[10] Second, the chances of shopkeepers getting caught were negligible. Since slave laws in the Americas rarely afforded slaves the right to testify in court against a white man, masters had great difficulties in proving any offence had taken place, unless they had witnessed it themselves. The *Charleston Standard* bemoaned the fact that "the negroes will steal and trade, as long as white persons hold out to them temptations to steal and bring to them. Three-fourths of the persons who are guilty, you can get no fine from; and, if they have some property, all they have to do is to confess a judgment to a friend, go to jail, and swear out".[11] Since slaves often traded such items at night, and via "secret" back doors, the chance of being observed by a white man was small. The economic incentives for shopkeepers, who rarely owned slaves themselves, easily outweighed any sense of racial duty to keep slaves in subjection. If a slave went home drunk and incapable of work, it was the master's problem, not the shopkeeper's.

The illicit trade between poor whites and slaves was not only confined to the urban markets. French officials in Saint Domingue complained in 1697 about various "bad-intentioned individuals" who purchased items from slaves "without troubling to find out where the slaves could have obtained these goods". This trading most often took place at night and in secret, and was so commonplace "that the public markets were poorly attended" (Hall, 1971: 67). Henry Bibb recalled that in rural Kentucky, local

poor whites encouraged "slaves to steal from their owners, and sell to them corn, wheat, sheep, chickens, or anything of the kind which they can well conceal".[12] In Louisiana and coastal South Carolina and Georgia, white boatmen would use the network of rivers and creeks to land on a remote part of an estate in order to trade with slaves. The Georgetown, South Carolina Grand Jury singled out "the traffic carried on by negroes in boats upon our rivers, under the protection of white men of no character" as a matter of public concern in 1818. There was little chance of such traders being caught by the plantation owner and, if challenged, any incriminating evidence could swiftly be disposed over the side of the boat (McDonald, 1993: 71).[13] Where slaves traded key parts of plantation machinery used in the processing of cotton, sugar or rice, they disrupted production and ultimately hurt the master where it most mattered – in his pocket.

Masters made various attempts to control the illicit trade between white shopkeepers and slaves. Some attempted to limit the trading activities of their slaves, but soon found that dissent increased markedly on the plantation. Attempts were made to close Sunday markets, often cloaked in Sabbatarianism, though this just shifted trading activities to Saturday afternoons. Some local authorities even altered the law to permit the testimony of a slave against a white shopkeeper, declaring "it shall be taken for granted, (such probability appearing) that such persons are guilty". One shopkeeper in Charleston, South Carolina appealed his conviction for illegal trading to the state supreme court. After hearing evidence that "one Sunday morning there was a concourse of negroes about defendant's shop; that they continued in and about it during nearly two hours ... Defendant kept his gate closed and, from time to time, opened it to let negroes in or out", the court upheld his conviction stating "a presumption against the defendant, as imposed on him the necessity of proving that the negroes ... were not there unlawfully". Laws presuming the guilt of white defendants went against the very ethic of a slave society: consequently, few juries of their peers were willing to convict shopkeepers on slave testimony alone.[14]

Despairing of legal and official channels, some masters turned to extra-legal methods, banding together to destroy the homes and businesses of those "known" to be trading illegally with their slaves. One poor white man, living near Charles Ball's plantation in South Carolina, was suspected of purchasing stolen cotton from the slaves since "the overseer regarded the circumstance, that black people often called at his house, as conclusive evidence that he held criminal intercourse with them". When a search of the man's cabin revealed nothing, "the few articles of miserable furniture that the cabin contained, including a bed, made of flags, were thrown into a heap in the corner, and fire was set to the dwelling by the overseer". Ball's master proclaimed that "he had routed one receiver of stolen goods out of the country, and that all others of his character ought to be dealt with in the same manner".[15] In 1836, Mississippi newspapers reported that "there has lately been some *lynching* of some shop keepers ... for selling whiskey to and harbouring negroes. Each of the lynched received about one hundred lashes".[16]

Some poor whites went from being passive recipients of stolen goods to become more active participants in criminal activity with slaves. One young white sailor in colonial New York was quick to tell "some Negroes of very suspicious characters" with whom he had a "familiar acquaintance ... where they might have a fine booty, if they could manage cleverly to come at it" (Zabin, 2004: 47–48). In Savannah eighteenth-year-old Henry Forsythe and a slave, George, conspired together to steal more than a $100 from their employer, Savannah cabinet-maker Isaac Morell. Apprehended 135 miles away in

Augusta, Forsythe spent three years in jail for his part in this particular inter-racial conspiracy (Lockley, 1997: 57–72). Once caught and imprisoned, black and white prisoners were not above plotting joint escapes. One fugitive slave lodged in Georgetown jail escaped with a white prisoner "through a hole in the roof". The fact that the pair "had the range of the jail and were not locked up a night" certainly made their escape easier.[17] These marginalised whites evidently had few qualms about joining forces with slaves.

Much of the criminal interaction between slaves and poor whites was opportunistic and motivated by personal financial gain, but some might be classed as altruistic. Some whites wrote passes for slaves, that were subsequently used in an attempt to escape slavery. Others offered food and shelter to runaways out of sympathy for their plight, though if caught such individuals were often charged with "slave stealing", as it seemed incomprehensible to courts that someone would voluntarily help slaves escape. Those convicted of "harboring" a slave faced fines and possible jail sentences: a study of such individuals in North Carolina concludes that the only common factor they shared was their poverty (Forret, 2006: 137). For these poor whites, we can speculate that friend-ships, perhaps built up over a long period of time via a trading relationship or by working alongside each other, acted to break down racial barriers and stereotypes. Such individuals understood that their respective situations were not dissimilar and that they were both exploited by the white elite. It should be stressed that only a minority of poor whites came to this conclusion. Few, however personally sympathetic, genuinely desired to see all slaves freed.

At the most extreme end of the spectrum of bi-racial resistance were whites who joined together with slaves in violent opposition to the established regime. In 1663, slaves and white indentured servants in Virginia planned a joint revolt, and after Bacon's Rebellion in 1676 a mixed force of slaves and white servants held out longest against royal troops sent to restore order (Phillips, 1918: 472; Morgan, 1975: 269). While it was perhaps predictable that servants and slaves experiencing similar conditions would make common cause, less understandable were instances when free white people plotted with, or were suspected of plotting with, slaves to murder owners and destroy property. A white publican, John Hughson, and his wife were executed in New York in 1741 for supplying arms to slaves for an aborted rebellion. The plotters had used Hughson's pub, where whites and blacks freely intermingled, as the place to plan their rebellion. It was for this disregard for racial boundaries, as much as for the plot itself, that Hughson lost his life. The judge remarked that Hughson and his wife were "guilty not only of making Negroes their equals, but even their superiors, by waiting upon, keeping with, and entertaining them with meat, drink and lodging" (Hoffer, 2003: 62–64, 113). In 1821, a Virginia woman reported an "elderly white man … who she understood was a gardener" to the state authorities after overhearing him telling a slave "that you all ought to be free, that a little time after three o'clock was the time" (cited in Johnston, 1932: 162). In the decades leading up to the American Civil War, nervous slave owners saw abolitionist agitators behind every corner and lashed out against suspicious characters. Whites who were recent immigrants, who had weak ties to the community, and who may have been involved in clandestine trading activities with slaves were lynched with increasing reg-ularity. Several white men were lynched in Mississippi in 1835, accused of plotting a large slave rebellion, while in 1860 "local farmers and artisans" in Texas had to endure a bout of lynching directed at covert abolitionists.[18]

Planned inter-racial violence did not always need to be writ large, striking against the system of slavery; it could also be personal, aimed at a particular slaveholder. In Georgia, a 31-year-old white carpenter, William Howell, attempted to persuade his enslaved "paramour", Sarah, to poison her master, and provided her with strychnine and arsenic to accomplish the task. After Sarah refused to do it, William took it upon himself to add the poison to the water used to make morning coffee for the master and his family. The dosage was not fatal, and suspicion quickly fell upon Sarah. In order to save his lover, William confessed to the crime, but the court determined that even her small part in "the most diabolical crime known" merited execution. As for Howell, he was jailed for seven years for "attempting to induce a slave to crime", and died in prison the following year (McNair, 2009: 142–43).[19]

Sexual relations

The relationship between William Howell and Sarah is just one example of a much larger issue of inter-racial sexual relationships in the Americas. Attitudes towards inter-racial relationships differed noticeably between North and South America. In Latin America and the Caribbean, it became accepted that white men would take black or Native American women as wives or concubines. Thomas Thistlewood lived in Jamaica for more than 30 years in the second half of the eighteenth century, yet never married a white woman despite his wealth, preferring instead a long-standing, though not exclu-sive, relationship with a slave woman, Phibbah (Burnard, 2004: 228–40). In North America such inter-racial unions faced public opposition and official sanction as early as the seventeenth century (Degler, 1959: 56). Of course, it was an open secret that white planters on the North American mainland, especially in South Carolina and Virginia, took sexual advantage of their female slaves and fathered mulatto children, thereby adding to their own wealth, but such relationships (if they can be so termed) were often coerced and almost never publicly acknowledged. As Mary Boykin Chesnut commented acidly in 1861, "Like the patriarchs of old, our men live all in one house with their wives and their concubines; and the mulattoes one sees in every family partly resemble the white children. Any lady is ready to tell you who is the father of all the mulatto children in everybody's household but her own. Those, she seems to think, drop from the clouds" (Chesnut, 1949: 21).

On rare occasions, white women took enslaved or free black men as lovers or partners, thereby posing a far more serious challenge to the social order, since the mixed-race children who resulted from such unions were free. In Barbados, authorities responded to such matters by removing the children from their mothers and binding them out as indentured servants (Jones, 2007: 34). In the early seventeenth century inter-racial marriage was still technically possible in many places, but during the late seven-teenth and early eighteenth centuries laws were passed banning such unions, for instance in Maryland in 1692, in North Carolina in 1715, and in French Louisiana in 1724.

Despite the increasing level of official disapproval of inter-racial relationships, whether formal or informal, and the shame associated with illegitimacy, some individuals defied social conventions to continue such relationships regardless of the consequences. In 1809, a white man in Barbados was fined for living with a "woman of colour" and father-ing six children with her. His defence, that he was only trying to "do a fatherly and Husband's part", was a bold statement against the prevailing social ethic, but ultimately

did not mean he avoided a fine (Jones, 2007: 61). In Charlottesville, Virginia, David Isaacs and his free coloured wife-in-all-but-name, Nancy West, were together for 40 years in the early nineteenth century and had seven children together. The local Grand Jury indicted them for this arrangement, but only after they had abandoned the fiction of living apart after nearly 20 years together and made their relationship more public (Rothman, 2003: 57–87).

Another form of consensual bi-racial sexual relationship common in the Americas was prostitution. Brothels in port cities throughout the New World catered to the needs of visiting sailors, many of whom were black (Bolster, 1997: 186–87). In Antigua, James Adair reported that the "trulls who ply for the accommodation of the sailors" were often white. Thus it was not unknown for white prostitutes in the British West Indies to have mulatto babies by enslaved clients (Hoffer, 2003: 64).[20] White prostitutes were often poor immigrants from Europe, who realised only after arrival that life in the New World was harsher than they expected. Job opportunities for women were often limited to seamstressing or servile positions, neither of which paid enough money for rent and food. The Ladies' Benevolent Society in New Orleans lamented that "the stinted pittance, granted as the reward of woman's labor, is soon exhausted by the unceasing demand for food and shelter" and therefore it is not surprising that some white women turned to prostitution just to survive.[21] Black prostitutes were more likely to be free than enslaved, but not universally so, since some owners saw profit in pimping their female slaves in this manner. One slave trader in New Orleans observed that two young girls he was due to sell would "soon pay for themselves by keeping a whore house" (Baptist 2001: 1619). Local authorities were often highly critical of the "houses of ill-fame" that existed in their cities, especially when they were believed to be facilitating inter-racial sex, but it was difficult to entirely stamp them out. In truth, many people cared little that poor white women had sexual relations with black men, and rape accusations against black men were far less likely to result in a conviction or execution in the era of slavery than they were after abolition. As several scholars have now established, rape accusations against black men were relatively rare in themselves, and even when these cases came to court, it was by no means certain that a conviction would result. Slave owners had a financial vested interest in the lives of their slaves, meaning that they often opposed the execution of slaves except when absolutely necessary. Moreover, rape cases have always had low conviction rates due to lack of witness evidence and the issue of consent. When slave owners weighed the value of a slave against the word of a poor, perhaps "loose", white woman, it became possible to believe that consent had been willingly given and to acquit black men of what otherwise would have been a capital crime (Lockley, 2000: 230–53; Sommerville, 1995: 481–518).

Inter-racial sexual relationships most often occurred in the poorer parts of town, where black and white lived in close residential proximity. Cheap rents and poor-quality housing inevitably attracted those with least to spend, regardless of skin colour. The shops and other businesses in these neighbourhoods usually attracted a racially diverse clientele. In addition, most towns throughout the Americas had bars and gambling dens, often near the docks, where polite society would not venture. These places were frequented by working men, sailors, loose women and slaves, all attracted by the cheap alcohol and the prospect of easy money. Racial boundaries were blurred in such establishments, and we know that they were not racially exclusive, as tavern owners were often cited by grand juries for permitting slaves to enter their premises and to gamble.

The South Carolina Grand Jury, for example, complained in 1760 about "the evil practice of sailors, soldiers, and other disorderly persons and negroes, assembling, gaming, rioting and committing other disorders on the Sabbath-day".[22] Henry Bibb recalled that poor whites in Kentucky "associate much with the slaves; [and] are often found gambling together on the Sabbath".[23] Perhaps some element of segregation existed inside the bar itself, with blacks limited to certain areas and denied a chance to play certain games, but more likely whites and blacks drank side by side or gambled at the same table. When authorities in Chatham County, North Carolina jailed poor white farmer Archibald Campbell in 1840 for playing cards with slaves, his friends petitioned the Governor, stating that Campbell "lives in a section of the country where the same thing is often done [and] he knew no difference between playing with a white man or sporting with a coloured one" (cited in Bolton, 1994: 45). Such socialising might be understood to weaken the basis of racial slavery, since whites were interacting with slaves and free blacks as people rather than as chattel, but in reality the servile status of blacks was not threatened by such encounters. Of course, mixing alcohol and money often incited violence between players over accusations of cheating or inability to pay debts, and some poorer whites ended in court accused by an owner of harming a slave and thereby reducing both his value and his usefulness.

Religious interaction

A completely different kind of social environment where slaves and poorer whites were able to mix was church. The religious lives of the enslaved varied markedly throughout the Americas. In Latin America, Catholicism was universal and imposed on newly arrived Africans without their consent or any understanding of what it meant. Slaves were encouraged to attend mass, be married by a priest, have their children baptised, and be buried according to custom. The Catholic church in Brazil "insisted on the slave's right to equal access to the Church, its sacraments, and its code of morality", and masters were unable to prevent the Catholicisation of their slaves (Ramos, 1986: 439). While the universality of religion meant that no special status was afforded to black Catholics, the power and influence of priests could occasionally act as a check on the unbridled power of masters. In some parts of Latin America, it was even possible for blacks to be ordained as Catholic priests, and in the poorer parts of cities such as Rio de Janeiro they worked alongside white priests, ministering to both white and black Catholics. The higher clerical ranks were not open to black priests, but it was possible for a few slaves to achieve a relatively high social status because of their religious beliefs (Karasch, 1987: 87).

In the Caribbean, and in scattered locations elsewhere in the Americas, magic, *obeah*, *voodoo* and *hoodoo* were popular among slaves. These were belief systems with little or no cross-over to the white population. Even when Christianity began to make inroads among slaves, for example the Moravians in Antigua or the Baptists in Jamaica, the small number of white Christians normally worshipped separately in Anglican churches. In North America, by contrast, a multitude of different Protestant denominations flourished, and several were interested in converting or evangelising slaves, particularly after the American Revolution. The rapid growth of southern Baptist and Methodist congregations in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was in part due to the efforts made to convert slaves. In some regions, enslaved members constituted the vast

majority of Baptist and Methodist congregations. Since the message of spiritual equality espoused by these denominations also attracted poorer whites, evangelical churches became a significant point of contact between the enslaved and non-slaveholding whites. Ex-slave Peter Randolph recalled that "I did not know of any other denomination where I lived in Virginia, than the Baptists and Presbyterians. Most of the colored people, and many of the poorer class of whites, are Baptists." One report of an early nineteenth-century outdoor camp meeting near Sparta, Georgia observed "about 3000 persons, white and black together, that lodged on the ground that night".[24] All members of evangelical churches, regardless of status, were according the title of "brother" or "sister" and were held, ostensibly, to the same code of morality that forbade drunkenness, adultery, gambling and bastardy. Enslaved members were able to make complaints about their owners to the quarterly discipline meetings that regulated the behaviour of members, but only if their owners were co-religionists. In this manner, some owners were occasionally held to account for their treatment of slaves, and slaves were afforded rights that no court would have recognised. Church discipline also served to undermine theories of racial superiority by demonstrating that whites were just as likely as slaves to commit immoral acts. In 1846, the Jones Creek Baptist Church, whose membership was split evenly between whites and slaves, heard a charge against Brother Daniel F. Sullivan "for an attempt to commit adultery with sister Anna Parker", ultimately determining to excommunicate him. Three years later they heard "a charge against Brother W J Gordon for drinking too much ardent spirits, Brother Gordon after some debat said he was sorry for drinking too mutch and for the future that he will not drink any at all".[25] For these white men, membership of the church meant that they were held to account for their personal behaviour in ways that were unusual in the Americas. As the nineteenth century wore on, however, religious organisations became more adept at discriminating between their members. Black members, and especially black women, were held to a higher standard of morality than whites, and were punished more harshly when found to have violated standards of behaviour. An enslaved member might be excommunicated and expelled from the church for drunkenness, whereas a white member, guilty of the same offence, might only receive an admonishment (Lockley, 2001: 153–54; Frey and Wood, 1998: 187–88).

Marronage

Just occasionally, church discipline meetings intervened in the place of the master, punishing slaves for lying, stealing, and even running away. Every society in the Americas had to deal with the chronic problem of slaves who fled from their bondage, and in some regions runaway slaves were so numerous that they eventually formed their own distinct societies in the Amazonian jungle, the mountains of Jamaica and the swamps of South Carolina. More often, however, slaves fled in very small groups, or alone, and lurked in the woods close to their family and friends before being captured and returned to slavery. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when white indentured servants in plantation colonies laboured under similar conditions to slaves, runaway groups could often be bi-racial, finding enough common cause to overcome any nascent racial antipathy. In the mid 1650s, Barbadian authorities sent troops into the sparsely populated centre of the island in search of "several Irish servants and Negroes" who had fled there. A century later, a Virginia planter advertised for "two English convict servant men, both

blacksmiths by trade" who had fled taking with them "a Negro lad, about 18 years of age". All three took horses from their master's stable to speed their escape. Once in the woods, these bi-racial groups of "white persons and blacks" often continued to work together, committing "many outrages and robberys". Even when servants and slaves chose not to flee together, they sometimes aided and abetted each other's escape. In 1693, a white Barbadian servant "counterfeited and set Mr Walker Colleton's hand to a ticket for a negro woman" allowing her to travel freely about the island, while in the same year a slave was charged with "enticing and contriving the sending off of some white servants"[26] (Beckles, 1986: 81, 91; Lockley, 2009: 10). By the nineteenth century, some whites in the antebellum United States were actively helping slaves to escape, either out of personal sympathy or from abolitionist motivations. A ship's cook concealed one slave in his schooner just before it sailed from Alabama to "a northern port, with a view … to secure her freedom". Wrongly charged with slave stealing "there being no intention to convert the slave to his own use", the cook was re-tried on a charge of "harboring".[27]

Running away was the activity most likely to bring enslaved Africans into contact with Native Americans. The degree of slave interaction with Native American people varied considerably over time and among regions. In the sixteenth century, when the number of Africans in the Americas was small, and the numbers of Native Americans very high, little contact occurred between the two groups, except in locations in Spanish American possessions where both Africans and Native Americans were enslaved. In such places, slaves had to work in whatever position their master ordered, regardless of ethnic origin. The infections brought by Europeans to the Americas, in particular smallpox and influenza, devastated Native American populations by as much as 90 per cent and hastened the import of slaves from Africa, who shared European immunity to old world diseases and who were often more resistant to tropical diseases such as yellow fever and malaria. Native Americans all but disappeared from the Caribbean islands, and were driven from the profitable coastal plantations of Brazil, Surinam and South Carolina into the interior jungles and mountains. However, the persistence of Native American tribal areas in relative proximity to white-controlled regions offered hope to fugitive slaves. Runaways could reasonably expect to find a safe haven among peoples who had also suffered terribly from European colonisation: some of the largest maroon communities in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were a fusion of Native American tribes and fugitive African slaves. For a period in the seventeenth century, Saint Vincent was divided between native Carib inhabitants and escaped slaves from Barbados, while some of the largest *quilombos*, or maroon settlements, in Brazil were populated by escaped African and Native American slaves (Beckles, 1986: 89–90; Lockley, 2009: xiv–xv).

Yet it was not unknown for colonial governments to use Native Americans against slaves, as they possessed the local knowledge that regular troops usually lacked. In North America, a deliberate English strategy of seeking alliances with powerful southern tribes meant that runaway slaves rarely found a welcome among the Cherokee or the Creek. Indeed, some colonial governments employed Native American tribes to hunt escaped slaves, rewarding them with blankets, weapons and food. In 1766, the South Carolina government employed the Catawba to hunt out fugitive slaves in coastal swamps, "and partly by the terror of their name their diligence and singular sagacity in pursuing enemies thro' such thickets soon dispersed the runaway Negroes apprehended several and most of the rest of them chose to surrender themselves to their masters and

return to their duty rather than expose themselves to the attack of an Enemy so dreaded and so difficult to be resisted or evaded for which good service the Indians were amply rewarded" (Lockley, 2009: 32–33). Only in post-Revolutionary Florida did fugitive slaves and Native Americans make common cause against the new American government. In the Seminole wars, fought in the early nineteenth century, US military commanders noted the courage and tenacity of the "black Seminoles", who were often the military leaders.

Creating racial solidarity

The strategy of using Native Americans against runaway slaves successfully avoided the prospect of the two groups joining forces against white authority. In order to prevent a possible alliance between poorer whites and slaves, elites pursued a variety of tactics. Those who traded with slaves illegally or helped them escape bondage were harshly punished, while at the same time efforts were made to make poorer whites part of the policing system of slavery. Poorer whites disproportionately served on patrols that were supposed to be on the lookout for runaway slaves or those who had left their plantations without permission. While theoretically all white males were supposed to take turns at patrolling, in reality wealthy men either paid a fine, or paid a substitute to take their place, leaving men who could not afford the fine as the mainstay of patrols. About a third of patrollers were non-slaveholders, and only a small number among the rest owned more than five slaves (Hadden, 2001: 97). These patrols existed in every slave society as a means of keeping the enslaved population in check, since every slave taken up by a patrol would be beaten before being returned to their owner. The interviews conducted with former slaves in the United States during the 1930s are full of complaints about the actions of the "paddyrollers". Former Arkansas slave Frank Larkin recalled "But I tell you, you'd better not leave the plantation without a pass or them paddyollers would made you shout. If they kotch you and you didn't have a pass, a whippin' took place right there" (Rawick, 1972: II, pt 4: 240). The violent reputation of patrols was entirely justified. Occasionally, elite whites grumbled about patrollers who "maltreat[ed] the slaves", especially those who returned a slave in a condition that resulted in time away from work. Nevertheless, even here not all patrollers acted in such a manner towards slaves on every occasion. In Charleston, the Grand Jury cited "William Garres, one of the officers of the Watch, for entertaining Seamen and Negroes at unseasonable Hours" and in urban environments, where individuals were in regular contact, the normal patterns of interaction between the patrol and the enslaved could be subverted (Lockley, 2001: 41–43).[28] In 1772, Grand Jurors in South Carolina complained about "the licences which are annually granted to watchmen, or their wives, to keep dram-shops, whereby it becomes their interest to encourage Negroes, and others, to frequent their houses, and consequently to protect such disorderly persons in their male-practices".[29]

Perhaps aware that allowing poorer whites to act as patrollers did not create sufficient social distance between the races, elite whites also stressed the privileges of race. These included the right to vote, the right to testify in court, the right to carry weapons, and the right to travel freely, rights that were routinely denied to non-whites even in parts of the Caribbean and Latin America where free black populations were larger than in North America. If these privileges had been extended to free blacks in the seventeenth

and eighteenth centuries, those rights were often removed by the early nineteenth century. Being white earned a disproportionate share of public poor relief and a mono-poly on private benevolence, demonstrating clearly that both the state and elite whites were prepared to help indigent whites with food, clothing, shelter and even employment. For example, the School for Female Industry, founded in St John's Parish, Barbados in 1799, was for whites only, excluding not only the large slave population but also free blacks. Moreover, when universal systems of education started to become popular during the nineteenth century, they too were deliberately reserved for whites. South Carolinian William Henry Trescott made the association between race and access to education explicit: "the white race must preserve its superiority by making its work mental as well as bodily ... and the only way to preserve this distinction, it to give to every workman in the state the education of a responsible citizen [and] to afford that degree of education to every one of its white citizens which will enable him intelligently and actively to control and direct the slave labor of the state"[30] (Jones, 2007: 13–14). Pro-slavery writers used the latest scientific studies to argue that "the brain of the Negro ... is, according to the positive measurements, smaller than the Caucasian by a full tenth; and this deficiency exists particularly in the anterior portion of the brain, which is known to be the seat of the higher faculties", and hence "his want of capability to receive a complicated education renders it improper and impolitic, that he should be allowed the privileges of citizenship in an enlightened country".[31]

Being white thus brought sufficient privileges to put a brake on any genuine threat of inter-racial co-operation to overthrow slave regimes in the Americas. White people of whatever social and economic status benefited from numerous forms of positive dis-crimination: above all, they were part of the so-called "master race", something that could never be taken away from them, however miserable their own individual circum-stances were. When a South Carolina judge stated "a slave cannot be a white man", he was articulating a truth held dear by many impoverished whites (cited in Williamson, 1995: 18). The psychological security that skin colour offered meant that poorer whites could trade with slaves, sleep with slaves, and even plot with slaves, safe in the knowl-edge that their whiteness, and hence their innate superiority, was inalienable and as permanent as the slavery to which their trading partners, lovers and co-conspirators were condemned.

Notes

1 G. Pinckard, *Notes on the West Indies written during the expeditions under the command of the late General Sir Ralph Abercromby* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme 1806), II, 132.
2 J. Luffman, *A Brief Account of the Island of Antigua* (London: J. Luffman 1789), letter 23.
3 See, for instance, the ten-year jail term given to an Alabama overseer in 1843 for beating a slave to death. H. T. Catterall, *Judicial Cases Concerning Slavery* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1968), III: 151, 162 (1847 case).
4 Luffman, *op. cit.*, letter 11; C. Ball, *Slavery in the United States* (New York: John S. Taylor, 1837), 166.
5 C. Thompson, *Biography of a Slave* (Dayton, OH: United Brethren Publishing House, 1875), 63.
6 *South Carolina Gazette*, 25 October 1760.
7 South Carolina Assembly Records: Petition 0010 003 1793 0063 and Report 0010 004 ND 02591 South Carolina Archives.
8 R. Bickell, *The West Indies As They Are* (London: J. Hatchard 1825), 66.

9 *Savannah Republican*, 17 January 1818.

10 E. Long, *The History of Jamaica* (London, 1774), I: 578.

11 *Charleston Standard*, 23 November 1854, cited in F. L. Olmsted, *Journey in the Seaboard Slave States* (New York: Miller & Holman, 1856), 441.

12 H. Bibb, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, an American Slave*, (New York, 1849), 24.

13 Presentment of Georgetown District Grand Jury, 3 November 1818, General Assembly Papers 0010 015 1818 00007 South Carolina Archives.

14 An Act For Ordering And Governing Slaves, 10 May 1770, Sec. 33. R. & G. Watkins, eds., *A Digest of the Laws of the State of Georgia to 1798* (Philadelphia, R. Aitkin, 1800), 175. Catterall, *Judicial Cases, op. cit.*, II: 376.

15 Ball, *Slavery in the United States, op. cit.*: 308, 312.

16 *Haverhill Gazette*, 13 August 1836. Lynching in the antebellum era might involve whipping or tar and feathering, and did not always result in the death of the victim.

17 Catterall, *Judicial Cases, op. cit.*, II, 406.

18 *Richmond Enquirer*, 28 July 1835; *Austin State Gazette,* 27 September 1856, cited in Addington 1950: 416, 433

19 Catterall, *Judicial Cases, op. cit.*, III, 71; State of Georgia, Board of Corrections Records, Georgia Archives, Morrow. North Carolina-born Howell was jailed on 29 April 1859 and died on 12 December 1860.

20 J. M. Adair, *Unanswerable arguments against the abolition of the slave trade* (London: J. P Bateman, 1790), 85.

21 *Annual Report of the Managers of the Ladies' Benevolent Society* (New Orleans: Sherman & Wharton, 1855), 5.

22 *South Carolina Gazette*, 25 October 1760.

23 Bibb, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, op. cit.*, 24.

24 P. Randolph, *Sketches of Slave Life: Or, Illustrations of the "Peculiar Institution"* (Boston: 1855), 33; *Farmer's Gazette*, 8 August 1807.

25 Minutes of Jones's Creek Baptist Church, Mercer University, Macon, Georgia, 25 April, 25 May 1846; 24 February 1849.

26 *Virginia Gazette*, (Rind) 12 May 1768.

27 Catterall, *Judicial Cases, op. cit.*, III, 146.

28 *South Carolina Gazette*, 15 April 1745.

29 *South Carolina Gazette*, 29 October 1772.

30 W. H. Trescott, "The States' Duties in regard to Popular Education", *Debow's Review* 20 (1856), 148.

31 J. C. Nott, *Two Lectures on the Natural History of the Caucasian and Negro Races*, (Mobile: Dade and Thompson, 1844), 35; R. H. Colfax, *Evidence Against the Views of the Abolitionists, Consisting of Physical and Moral Proofs, of the Natural Inferiority of the Negroes* (New York: James T. M. Bleakley Publishers, 1833), 25.

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Part 3

CHANGES AND CONTINUITIES