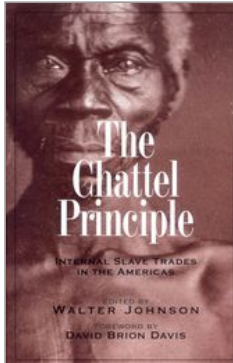


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The Chattel Principle: Internal Slave Trades in the Americas

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Introduction

The Future Store

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[–] Abstract and Keywords

This chapter presents the idea, which was commonplace among nineteenth-century opponents of slavery in Great Britain and the United States, that slavery's future ran through the slave market. Regulating or entirely closing the internal trade was seen as a way to cut off the flow of slaves between declining and emerging regions of slavery in the British West Indies and the United States, thus throwing the expansion of slavery into reverse and the system of slavery into decline. By controlling slavery spatially, they hoped to control it temporally as well. When the fugitive slave James W. C. Pennington wrote that “the being of slavery” lay in “the chattel principle,” he meant to trouble the boundary between “the slave trade” and the “rest of slavery.” He did so by arguing that even slaves who lived good lives would inevitably be drawn into the worst abuses of the system.

Keywords: slavery's future, slave market, internal trade, fugitive slave, James W. C. Pennington, being of slavery, chattel principle

When, in 1849, the fugitive slave James W. C. Pennington wrote that “the being of slavery” lay in “the chattel principle,” he meant to trouble the boundary between “the slave trade” and the “rest of slavery.” He did so by arguing that even slaves who seemed for the moment to live good lives would inevitably be drawn into the worst abuses of the system by the price that was on their heads and the trade it represented. Sale from “the mildest form of slavery” to “the worst of which the system is possible” and from “the comparatively favorable circumstances” of slavery in the Upper South to the desperate abuses of slavery in the Lower South was, he asserted, “the legitimate working of the great chattel principle.”¹ Pennington, that is, figured the relation of

the slave trade to the rest of slavery in a way that was both spatial and temporal: the trade was a means of spreading slavery over space and (adversely) transforming it over time. The trade, he argued, was a passageway from slavery's present to its future.

The idea that slavery's future ran through the slave market was commonplace among nineteenth-century opponents of slavery in Great Britain and the United States. They saw regulating or entirely closing the internal trade as a way to cut off the flow of slaves between declining and emerging regions of slavery in the British West Indies and the United States, thus throwing the expansion of slavery into reverse and the system of slavery into decline. By **(p.2)** controlling slavery spatially, they hoped to control it temporally as well. The trade, of course, had its defenders, too, and their estimation of its importance to the future of slavery was similar to that of its opponents, but their hopes rested on the continuation rather than the contraction of the trade. As Robert Slenes suggests, prices offered for slaves in the Brazilian market reflected slaveholders' expectations for the value of slave property over time—they were, that is, speculations on the future of slavery in Brazil. Many of the futures imagined in the slave market, of course, were of a more quotidian sort. As Daina Ramey Berry suggests, many buyers hoped to secure their own future by buying women, who would bear more slaves. Others, sugar planters in particular, bought many more men than they did women, relying on the continued availability of slaves in the market to replace, in essence, the foregone children of the women they widowed by refusing to buy them along with their husbands. In its capacity to sell both the hope of a self-reproducing slave force and its replacement—its capacity, that is, to reformulate (or negate) over time the gendered meanings and reproductive capacities of the bodies of enslaved men and women—to produce a slaveholding legacy from the broken pieces of a slave family and to broaden slavery's hold over space and extend its history through time, the trade was, most of its opponents and many of its defenders would have agreed, the market of slavery's future.²

But if it might have been easy for defenders and opponents of slavery to agree that its future was, one way or another, going to be shaped in the slave market, it might have been harder to get them to agree on exactly where “the slave trade” began and where it ended. In the United States, at least, slaveholders often argued that their participation in the trade was limited to the time they spent within the physical premises of the slave market or to those who adopted a posture of “speculation” in the way they thought about their property. They applied, as Adam Rothman argues, a sometimes evanescent distinction between slave trading and slaveholding to their daily practice. As several of the essays suggest, slaves often had a very different definition of the parameters of the slave trade—where it began and ended, when they were in it and out of it, who was responsible for it and who was not—than did their owners. As the fugitive slave Lewis Hayden put it, “The trader was all around, the slave pens at hand, and we did not know what time any of us might be in it.”³ These opposed perspectives, rooted in the property and power relations of a system in which an action that took a slaveholder a matter of minutes to conclude would have a lifetime's consequences for a slave, were reflected in debates between opponents, defenders, and reformers of slavery, all of whom defined the relation of the slave trade to the rest of slavery in a way that reflected their moral universes and suited their political goals.

(p.3) Indeed, as several of the essays suggest, the categories that framed those (mostly nineteenth-century) debates about the boundaries of “the slave trade” are sedimented in the way we define the topic today, making it hard to say with any precision where to draw the boundary around the internal slave trades that are the topic of this collection. All of the authors agree that there were institutions in Brazil, the Caribbean, and the southern United States that

made up a slave trade that was internal to each region, and yet in their own ways almost every essay questions how the boundary around the topic should be drawn: What should be left in and what should be left out? Were imported Africans who were resold after having been purchased by an American slaveholder part of an internal trade or an Atlantic one? What about slaves who were sold at estate sales and state-ordered auctions rather than by professional traders or slaves who were sold between neighbors who never would have identified themselves as slave traders and may never have set foot within the physical perimeter of a place called a slave market? What about slaves who were never actually sold but nevertheless had a price attached to them that enabled their owners to estimate their wealth, secure their debts, and settle their estates? Were they part of the internal slave trade?

The answers to these questions are political ones. One reason is that they boil down to issues of interpretation rather than of economics or demographics. Another is that they are, in fact, framed by the nineteenth-century political boundaries along which so many of the debates about the trade were contested: jurisdictional boundaries between nations, between colonies, between states, and between provinces. Defining an “internal slave trade,” after all, invokes and gives credence to the national or colonial boundaries that supposedly contain it. Seen in that context, the closing of the transatlantic slave trade (acceded to more or less willingly by many slaveholders in the United States and unwillingly by most in the British Caribbean in 1808 and only after years' worth of British diplomatic pressure in Brazil and Cuba, in 1850 and 1866, respectively) becomes visible as a part of the process by which transnational processes—in particular, British imperial policy, which attempted to outlaw the slave trade not only for British subjects but for everyone else in the world—were shaped into the national and colonial histories that succeeded them. The closing of the transatlantic slave trade gave the boundaries of the southern United States, the British West Indies, and, eventually, Cuba and Brazil a novel and important sort of solidity: prices of slaves in Virginia, for example, fluctuated in relation to the prices being offered in Louisiana but not in relation to prices in Havana, Kingston, or Rio de Janeiro. As the repeated references to Atlantic finance and commodity markets, slave smuggling, and international networks of communication and resistance among **(p.4)** enslaved people in the pages that follow suggest, these boundaries remained permeable (and in important ways wholly fictive) long after the closing of the transatlantic trade. And yet they made it possible to identify for the first time and attempt to control something that had not previously been a subject of knowledge or regulation: the internal slave trade.

There had certainly been sales of slaves within various territorially defined jurisdictions as long as there had been slavery in the Americas. As Richard Graham points out, there was a trade in Indians in seventeenth-century Brazil (as well as throughout the rest of the Americas), and as Phillip Troutman suggests, the portability of slave property inhered in the definition of slaves as “chattel” property. The essays in this collection suggest, however, that after the closing of the transatlantic trade such sales became a matter of national and colonial public interest, first in the United States, then in the British Caribbean, and finally in Brazil.

In each case, regulating (or resisting the regulation of) the newly discovered internal slave trade came to be seen as an important way of managing both the future of slavery and the future of the state. In the early nineteenth-century United States, positions in the debate about the future of slavery varied from enthusiastic support for slave trading by expansion-and development-minded slaveholders to outright opposition from humanitarian and political quarters. Perhaps most often overlooked is the vast middle ground, which included qualified support for slave trading from ambivalent slaveholders (such as Thomas Jefferson) who thought that the diffusion

of slaves over space would make them less likely to rebel in the short term and easier to get rid of in the long run. As several of the essays point out, slaveholders' ambivalence about the trade was reflected in the fact that each of the Deep South states (the states most actively engaged in the practice) banned the importation of slaves for some of the time between 1787 and 1840. Although they were generally ineffective, these laws signaled deep anxieties among slaveholders about the inflow of slaves to areas where they increasingly outnumbered whites by large margins and the outflow of specie from an economy overextended by speculation. In the South, these laws soon gave way to buyer-protecting warranty laws, and the argument against the trade, by the end of the 1830s, passed wholly into the hands of abolitionists who saw the closing of the trade as the easiest way to loosen slavery's grip on the South.

The debates about regulating the trade fell out differently in the West Indies, where, after the closing of the transatlantic trade, proponents of regulation saw curtailing the internal trade as a way to ensure that the potentially productive frontier areas of the British Caribbean would not provide a new foothold for slavery by providing an outlet for surplus slaves shipped from the empire's **(p.5)** declining islands. In Brazil, according to Robert Slenes, it was the defenders rather than the opponents of slavery who wanted to close the internal trade: by the beginning of the 1880s they had come to fear that slaveholders in declining regions would dump their slaves onto the market, bank their profits, and head directly to the polls to vote for abolition.

In addition to illustrating the variety of ways in which the arguments of opponents and defenders of slavery twisted together the destinies of slave trade and state, these political histories of the trade highlight the importance of jurisdictional boundaries in defining the problem of the internal slave trade. As Seymour Drescher suggests, it was when sold slaves in transit crossed a political threshold that their condition seemed to become most susceptible of regulation and thus of controversy. Nineteenth-century opponents of the trade had very little to say about slave sales that occurred between neighbors or within regions as large as Caribbean islands, Brazilian provinces, or American states, although these were as disruptive of slave life and emblematic of chattel slavery as intercolony, interprovincial, or interstate trades. Similarly, although the auction block was the metonym that abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison used to highlight the commercial element of their critique of slavery, they most often used it as a symbol of the interstate trade (where, in fact, most sales were sealed in private bargaining) rather than, say, debt or estate sales (both of which were generally effected by the public crying of an auction sale). The spatial dimensions of interregional trades, however, put them at the center of the debate over the future of slavery: it was only by long-distance trade that slaveholders could continue to colonize territory that lay within the boundaries of their polities but, for the moment, outside the grasp of their slave-based political economy. In their focus on long-distance trades made by "professional" slave traders, then, many of the essays in this collection build on a definition of the problem of the internal slave trade that was itself shaped by the horizons of political possibility that framed nineteenth-century discussions: subnational jurisdictional boundaries were the frontiers in debates about regulation, debates that produced most of the contemporary images—statistical, literary, and visual—on which historians of the internal slave trade necessarily rely.

There were, of course, many in the nineteenth century who resisted the reductive redefinition of the quicksilver capacity of cash value to disrupt the lives of enslaved people into a set of debates about the rights of traders to move slaves across jurisdictional boundaries, most notably enslaved people themselves. Slaves in Mississippi, for example, feared being sold across the Mississippi River much more than being sold down the river: the physical features of the

landscape were of much more immediate concern to them than the **(p.6)** abstract lines of jurisdiction laid on top of it. As several of the essays suggest, fear of being sold (whether into the slave trade as usually defined or not) suffused the lives of enslaved people in the antebellum United States and in Brazil after the closing of the transatlantic trade. (The much smaller volume of intercolonial transfers and the comparatively dire conditions in the exporting areas of the West Indies seem to have made this somewhat less of an issue in the British Caribbean.) Indeed, as several of the essays show, slaves often used whatever means they could to resist or at least ameliorate the threat of sale. They begged and lied and hid and ran away and killed themselves and conspired and revolted. But, by at least one common measure, perhaps the most important one, they failed: they remained enslaved. And they were sold by the hundreds of thousands. Their bodies were pieced out, priced, and sold, transformed from vessels of their own feelings and hopes into vehicles of their owners' plans and receptacles of their masters' fantasies. Their loved ones were stolen, their children disappeared or went unborn, and their fractured lineages were scattered across the landscape. Taken together, the essays in this collection outline a history of subjection that in demographic scale, cultural impact, and sheer psychological terror ranks as one of the most obscene in human history. Perhaps only amidst the bloody chronicle of wrongs perpetrated against people of African descent in the New World could the internal slave trades of the Americas have slipped out of historians' sight for so long.

In addition to documenting the devastating impact of the chattel principle on the lives of enslaved people throughout the Americas (and in particular in the United States and Brazil), the contributors suggest new ways to think about "slave resistance." It has become conventional among historians of slavery (especially of slavery in the United States) to distinguish day-to-day resistance (such as running away to avoid the threat of sale or misrepresenting one's abilities in the slave market) from revolutionary forms of resistance (such as slave revolts theorized as attacks on the system of slavery itself).⁴ These essays, however, map a series of connections between these two supposedly distinct types of resistant practice. A simple and very direct set of connections emerges from the material culture of the slave trade. Historians have often accepted that the jails and whips and chains that defined the disciplinary parameters of the trade were what the traders said they were—symbols of power. And yet they might just as well be seen as artifacts of uncertainty and fear, of the traders' knowledge that slaves did not go to market willingly and that they sometimes ran away from and revolted against the traders who were trying to sell them. Although it might be argued that those revolts often failed, remained isolated from one another, or failed to pose a real challenge to the system of slavery itself, it must also be recognized that the imagery of domination **(p.7)** that figured so prominently in attacks on the slave trade was, in fact, the result not of slaveholders' certainty of their own power but of their sense of their own vulnerability. The information necessary to sustain the revolutionary abolitionist attack on slavery was created by the action of resistant slaves in the South.⁵

Another set of connections, as the essays by Daina Ramey Berry and Robert Gudmestad suggest, might be observed in its beginnings in southern fields and slave quarters where slaves talked to one another about the trade, sharing their terror of being sold. In so doing and, especially, in publicly remembering those whom it had carried away, enslaved people converted their own lonely fears into a common account of what it meant to be enslaved. That account (what Pennington called "the chattel principle") was carried along the pathways that escaped slaves (many of them fleeing a threatened sale) took to the North, where its clandestine history might be further traced through the black self-defense organizations that aided fugitive slaves in northern cities before it finally burst into the broad light of white awareness on the abolitionist

speakers' circuit. Still another set of connections between “day-to-day” and “revolutionary” forms of resistance might be seen in the feedback loop between slave politics and state politics in a place such as Demerara, where, Hilary Beckles argues, the system of slave registration put in place by the British government in an effort to control the extent of the intercolonial trade (and thus in response to enslaved people's demonstrated resistance to the trade) was interpreted by slaves as a prelude to their own emancipation, which they rose by the thousands to seize for themselves in 1823. Or it might be seen in the series of cane field burnings and mass flights of the 1870s and 1880s that Richard Graham and Robert Slenes, in separate essays, cite as reactions to the devastating effect of the internal slave trade on Brazilian slaves and crucial determinants of the pace of the debate about abolition. One after another, the essays in this collection suggest the historical importance of what Phillip Troutman calls “alternative geographies” of slavery and the trade: both individual and collective in character and varying from straightforward responses to a moment of danger to fully theorized attacks on the system, slaves' everyday actions had intended as well as unimagined consequences in the epochal struggle against slavery. As Robert Gudmestad's essay suggests, even an anonymous slave's suicide attempt could spark a national discussion about the slave trade.

The other perennial topic of the slavery scholarship taken up in this collection is the question of capitalism. Traditionally, this question has been posed according to some variant of the following formula: What can Adam Smith or Karl Marx tell us about slavery? The answers that have emerged have been shaped by the fact that Smith and Marx, in very different ways, treated slavery (**p.8**) as a sort of historical backdrop to what they saw as the main tendency of history (here conceived in terms of the secular eschatologies of their respective versions of political economy): the development of wage (or “free”) labor relations. Both framed the discussion of slavery as a story of temporal supersession: in Smith's case, the inevitable decline of slavery in the face of the superior efficiency of workers motivated to work in their own interest, in Marx's case as part of a larger history of expropriative “primitive accumulation” by means of which the capitalist class made proletarians out of peasants and gained control of the means of production—the backstory to the history of capitalism proper.⁶

Turning the question around—asking what slavery tells us about Smith or Marx—reveals that the institution of slavery in general and the histories and perspectives of enslaved people in particular remain unthought in the foundational texts of Western political economy. In them the peculiar plight of people of African descent in the market economies of the West exists in a state of erasure, acknowledged only to be superseded by capitalism (here understood to be uniquely characterized by wage labor and generally, though not exclusively or explicitly, European-descended workers). What would have happened to the orthodox definition of “capitalism,” if, rather than adducing a timeless truth about the relation of human motivation to self-interest from the history of wage labor he saw around him in Britain, Adam Smith had addressed himself to the historical etiology of the so-called undermotivation of enslaved workers—to what you or I might call the resistance of enslaved people? Likewise, what would have happened if Karl Marx had begun his magnificent critique of the commodity form with a detailed consideration not of a bolt of finished linen but of a bale of cotton? What would a theory of political economy that treated the labor, products, and experiences of people of African descent as central to (rather than prior to) the history of Western capitalism look like?⁷

By putting the words “slavery” and “market” together, the essays in this collection begin the project of rethinking the relation of the history of slavery to the philosophy and practice of Western political economy. If this was not “capitalism,” they suggest, then in some important

way the descriptive power of that term as a tool of historical analysis has been diminished. For slaves, Daina Ramey Berry suggests, were pieced out and priced on a grid that applied abstract notions of physical ability and potential to their very real, very saleable, and very moveable bodies. They were, Edward Baptist argues, distanced from any real notion of themselves in the slave market, their own histories and identities overwritten by their status as commodities. Their capital value, Steven Deyle shows, was, in 1860, greater than the capital value of almost any **(p. 9)** other type of property held in the United States. Their rate of exchange, Robert Slenes argues, was the best index of the belief of Brazilian slaveholders in the future of slavery. And so on. In this light, Adam Rothman's observation that American slavery was not fully capitalist because it was labor itself rather than abstracted labor power (the capacity of a human body to work for an hour) that was being bought and sold comes to seem less a comment on the character of American slavery than a comment on the orthodox definition of the term "capitalism."

Such evidence of the commercial character of slavery in the Americas, however, must be reconciled with slaveholders' repeated statements that their relations with their slaves were nothing of the kind. Although the contributors take various approaches to this question, they all seem to agree that reform-minded talk about the benevolence of slavery coexisted uneasily with its apparent negation—the sale of those very slaves—and must somehow be explained.⁸ In addition to the explanations provided here, which generally treat the relation between slaveholders' statements and their actions as contradictory, it might be worth thinking about the slave trade not as the negation of the "paternalist" project of proslavery reformers but as that project's historical predicate—the material condition that made it possible to imagine reforming slavery without legislating it out of existence. The problem facing proslavery reformers was finding a way to convince slaveholders that they could get their slaves to work hard without relying on the pornographic tortures that characterized much of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century slavery. Perhaps it is true that the benevolent side of the solution to that problem was an implicit bargain in which slaveholders exchanged good treatment for hard work. But as the by-now massive literature on day-to-day resistance to slavery suggests, slaves, at least, did not always hold up their side of the implicit bargain. Slaveholders, even reforming slaveholders, still had the problem of disciplining their slaves, and, as several of these essays suggest, in the developing interstate slave trade they found a solution. "I govern them ... without the whip," one Southern slaveholder proudly wrote in 1838, "by stating to them that I should sell them if they do not conduct themselves as I wish."⁹ It requires little imagination to understand the character of the bargain he proposed, nor to understand the dependence of his posture of ostensible moderation on a ready market for his "well-treated" slaves. It may be that the emergence of an internal slave trade allowed for a transformation in the character of the terror by means of which slaveholders governed their slaves from the individual sort registered directly on their bodies to a more displaced, systemic sort of violence that was registered in the (forcible) redistribution of those bodies over space.

(p.10) In their effort to discharge their debt to the existing historiography of slavery, many of the essays seem to rub up against the limits of the terms in which that historiography has been handed down to us. It is perhaps less important at this point, the essays seem to suggest, to keep asking whether slavery was "capitalist" (or not) according to a set of terms that were created in self-conscious opposition to the condition of slavery than to try to diagram the connections between the slave market and the broader political economy of slavery and to analyze the way that economy was insinuated into the most intimate aspects of the lives of enslaving and enslaved people. So, too, perhaps, is it less important to try to come to a final

conclusion about whether the character of the slaveholding regime was capitalist, paternalist, Christian, corrupt, or otherwise than it is to trace the various nineteenth-century accounts of the relations between masters and slaves—paternal, commercial, racial, metaphysical, and so on—back to the circumstances of their production (who thought these things up, where did they do it, and why?). Focusing on this aspect of the intellectual history of slavery would illuminate the connections between the everyday life of slavery (how slaveholders and slaves used ideas about the nature of slavery to solve the quotidian problems they faced in the households, the fields, the shops, and the slave markets of the antebellum South) and the historical process by which the material circumstances of everyday use conditioned and redefined the meaning of those terms even as they were passed on for the use of other generations of slaveholders and slaves.

One such history might concern the role of racial categories in the slave market, or, more particularly, the relations among the law, slavery, and race—the interrelated histories, that is, of national sovereignty, economic exploitation, and racial domination. The question of whether racism led to slavery or whether slavery needed race has, even in its most brilliant and influential applications, been characterized by a level of analytical abstraction that might, as Thomas Holt has pointed out, be sharpened by closer attention to the everyday processes by which ideas of race were employed and reproduced.¹⁰ Focusing on the situated employment (in the slave market) of ideas about difference provides a thickening of the notion of the social that subtends the by-now almost rote invocation of the idea of “the social construction of race.”¹¹ For, in addition to closing off the supply of slaves to the Americas, the closing of the Atlantic slave trade closed off slaveholders' access to the theory of difference they had commonly used to compare imported slaves to one another: national stereotyping. In the years that followed, slaveholders' “knowledge” that Coramantee slaves were likely to revolt or Igbo slaves were likely to commit suicide or Angolan slaves were especially suited to the cultivation of (p.11) rice became increasingly useless as they attempted to differentiate among the people they bought and sold. And so they turned instead to race: a set of explicitly biological ideas that related productive and reproductive capacity to skin color.

The slave market became, in the era of the internal trade, a major site for the employment (as a price-setting standard of comparison) and reproduction (by repetition before an ever-changing audience of white observers) of the sort of biological racism that increasingly underwrote the defense of the system as a whole.¹² Or, put another way, in the slave market, slaveholders turned from a theory of difference that had embedded within it a history of the politics of slavery, and specifically the history of African traditions of knowledge and noncompliance, to one that used a natural history of race as a vehicle for reducing slaves to a spectrum of color based on varying proportions of black blood and white blood. The commodity categories that governed the internal trade produced the abstractions Negro, griffe, and mulatto, which were themselves suggestive of subjects with no history beyond natural history and what Edward Baptist describes as a half-remembered, half-forgotten history of their mothers' and grandmothers' sexual violation at the hands of other—always other—white slaveholders.

The transformation of the terms of the business done every day in the slave market from nation to race were in turn, it could be argued, reflected in the terms of its regulation, at least in the United States. The early proposals to ban the trade, Adam Rothman asserts, reflected fears that a hostile nation of Africans might take root in the Mississippi Valley. When those bans (and their successors) were finally repealed they were replaced by laws that employed the racial terms increasingly employed in the slave market: warranty laws concerning health and character that treated slaves as knowable biological and psychological subjects rather than as unfathomable

outsiders. These were laws that telegraphed an image of slaves as individual and governable rather than serial and disposable. The transformation of the slave trade from external to internal and the terms of its business from national to racial, then, must be seen as partial determinants of the process by which an image of slaves as subjects that were susceptible of “paternalist” governance was produced and passed on.¹³

The idea that the transition from the external to the internal slave trade in the United States played an important role in the transformation of enslavement based on categories of national otherness to those based on racial otherness might be productively counterpoised to the histories of slavery and race in Cuba and Brazil. These histories stand out among those of other New World slave societies for (at least) three reasons: first, these were the nations that had **(p. 12)** the longest histories of importing African slaves (Brazil closed the trade in 1850, Cuba not until 1866); second, they held out the longest before finally abolishing slavery (Cuba in 1886, Brazil in 1888); and, third, among the former slave societies of the Americas, they produced the most obvious and influential articulations of a political ideology of multiracial democracy—the clear and continuing divergence of the social and political experience of people of African descent from those stated ideals notwithstanding. A tentative explanation of the seeming riddle of how nations distinguished by the depth of their commitment to slavery were so quickly transformed into nations distinguished by their commitment to racial inclusion might be found in the fact that the persistence of the African trade in Cuba and Brazil kept alive categories of difference that were based on national origin—the dominant axis of differentiation being, as Robert Slenes suggests, that between creole (native-born) and African slaves. These categories, which rendered the formerly enslaved populations susceptible of transformation into indigenous inhabitants of the nation—into citizens—persisted alongside the emerging racial categories that would so powerfully define the limitations of the achievement of citizenship over time.¹⁴

Set side by side, the essays in this collection suggest a number of other illuminating comparisons between the internal slave trades in the British Caribbean, Brazil, and the United States. First, as I suggested above, the internal slave trades of the Americas only became visible as such in the serial aftermath of the closing of the Atlantic trade in these regions. Second, the categories produced by nineteenth-century debates about the relation of the internal trade to the rest of slavery persist in the way the topic has been defined down to the present day. Related to that is the extent to which contending visions of the future of slavery invoked terms that brought questions of the movement of slaves across space, and thus of slave trading, to the center of the question. Whether it was proslavery Mississippians in the last decade of the eighteenth century arguing that their land would be “of no more value than an equivalent quantity of waste” without the capacity to move slaves onto it at will, or William Wilberforce hoping that slavery had reached its “natural limit” in the Caribbean at the beginning of the nineteenth century, or the last true believers in Brazil in the 1880s hoping to close the trade to their region in order to keep the rest of the nation as implicated in the future of slavery as they were, the ability to trade slaves across space was seen by contemporaries as a crucial determinant of slavery’s unfolding timeline. Finally, in the cases of Brazil and the United States especially, there is the scale of the human devastation concealed within the phrase “the internal slave trade”: hundreds of thousands of people driven from their homes and their families, a concentrated and repeated **(p.13)** pattern of sales that charged every attachment among slaves with the proximate threat of its dissolution.

Important differences, too, emerge from comparison. That the slave population in the United States, alone among those in the Americas, was self-reproducing shaped both the relative ease with which U.S. slaveholders could accept the closing of the transatlantic trade and the fact that the substantial redistribution of the enslaved population by the internal trade could cement the regions of the South in an economy of mutual benefit rather than—as was the case in the Caribbean and Brazil—attenuating the commitment of the exporting regions to the institution of slavery even as it intensified that of the importing regions. Similarly, slaveholders in the United States seem to have been a good deal more concerned with incorporating the distinction between slaveholding and (internal) slave trading into their political defense of slavery than were those in Brazil or the Caribbean. The relation of slavery's defenders to the defense of the trade also varied widely over time and space. In the end, a fundamentalist defense of the internal slave trade seems to have emerged only in the United States, where by the late 1850s proslavery hotheads were arguing that even the African trade should be reopened.¹⁵ In Brazil, we have seen, the most reactionary defenders of slavery eventually came to the conclusion that too much trading would sap the country's overall commitment to slavery. And in the British Caribbean, when already embattled slaveholders were faced with a battle about the regulation of the intercolonial trade in the 1820s, they simply decided to sit it out (or to quietly smuggle their slaves out of the islands). Finally, there is the comparatively smaller scale of the internal trade in the British Caribbean, although its effects on traded Caribbean slaves (and the families and communities they left behind) were not reduced by the fact that the trade that destroyed their lives was, in aggregate terms, a good deal smaller than that practiced elsewhere.

As interesting as the comparisons are the moments when these histories seem to spill out of their national containers (containers that were themselves historically shaped and made meaningful by the transformation from external to internal slave markets) and into the others around them. Because of the fulcrum effect of diminished supply in the Atlantic sugar market, the revolution in Haiti spurred the trading of slaves to Louisiana and the frontier regions of the British Caribbean. The regulation of the slave trade in the British Caribbean in the 1820s and early 1830s was a spur to the illegal trading of slaves to Cuba. The effect of the American Civil War on the cotton trade was an important factor in repatterning the slave trade in Brazil. In 1841, rebellious slaves on a ship from Virginia, guarded by British soldiers from Africa (who had themselves been rescued from slave ships traveling to Brazil or Cuba), **(p.14)** made common cause with free people in Nassau even as slaves illegally exported from the same port years earlier struggled for their freedom in Cuba.¹⁶ These images point to what lies just behind the essays in this collection: a narrative in which the history of nationally bounded slave trades in the Americas had critical determinants in the transnational process of European political and economic imperialism and in the experience and actions of slaves whose presence outlines an alternative to the nation-state-and-colony map of the Americas—a black Atlantic. The insistent presence of European cotton, sugar, and coffee prices as determinants of the history of the internal slave trades of the Americas seems to press in on the spatial boundaries of these essays, even as the diverse histories of African peoples in the New World—improvisationally forged into collective politics in the *Creole* revolt, the multiethnic revolt that followed the registration of slaves in Demerara, and the slavery-ending mass actions in Brazil—explodes them outwards.

Adam Rothman's essay explores the history of the idea that there was a hard-and-fast distinction between slave trading and other sorts of slaveholding. That distinction, Rothman argues, emerged from the efforts of proslavery reformers, especially in the Upper South, to withdraw from the Atlantic slave trade (which they believed was daily infusing their new nation with shiploads of potential enemies and keeping them dependent on their imperial masters in Britain)

even as they tried to support slavery (on which they were realistic enough to realize the development of their new nation was critically dependent), and it became a central element of early proslavery thought in the United States. It was, however, a defense that was increasingly at odds with the institution's daily practice as slavery began to expand westward through a growing interstate trade.

The domestic slave trade was never simply that—Rothman is careful to trace the international economic and diplomatic conditions that made cotton production in the southwest both possible and profitable—but its regulation was a domestic affair, and Rothman traces the series of regulations and bans by means of which the defenders of the distinction between slaveholding and slave trading attempted to bring reality into closer alignment with their philosophy. After it went into effect in 1808, the ban on the Atlantic trade was generally supported by slaveholders, but applying the distinction between slave trading and slaveholding to the internal trade was a less popular proposition. Early efforts to limit slave importation to the Mississippi Valley to bona fide owners (slaveholders rather than slave traders, in Rothman's terms) disappeared into the evanescence of the distinction on which they relied. Indeed, Rothman points out that the very fear of slave revolt that informed the opposition (p.15) to the international trade could be used to justify the internal trade: by spreading slaves as widely as possible over available territory, the argument went, the threat they represented would be reduced. As it turned out, the lasting result of the closing of the international and the expansion of the domestic trade was not the diffusion of slavery but the consolidation of a slaveholding region that stretched from Virginia to Texas by the time of the Civil War.

Although they recognized their dependence on slavery and on the slave trade, many slaveholding reformers continued to worry about the effects of the trade. They were concerned about the moral implications of wholesaling human beings and destroying their families and the practical implications of moving large numbers of slaves of “bad character” to the vulnerable frontier of white settlement. Again and again, Rothman argues, various states attempted to regulate the trade by applying the distinction between slave trading and slaveholding to importations, and again and again their laws were overruled by the courts, not enforced by local authorities, evaded by savvy speculators, or, most often, simply ignored. The major effect of these laws, asserts Rothman, was not to limit the spread of slavery but to reproduce a set of terms—the distinction between slave trading and slaveholding—that defenders of slavery were able to use to argue for the benevolence of their institution even as they bought and sold slaves by the thousands.

Daina Ramey Berry's essay opens with a scene from a sale held by one of those “ordinary” slaveholders: an enslaved man on a Georgia auction block nudging his wife forward to be examined by a slave buyer. Using a combination of statistical and literary analysis, Ramey Berry gradually unpacks that disturbing scene to reveal a world in which enslaved people and their owners each attempted to use the dollar values assigned in the slave market to suit their own purposes. For slaveholders this meant comparing the incommensurable—no matter their age, sex, temperament, or skill, enslaved people could be run together on a single scale of comparative value—and the author carefully parses the characteristics of slave pricing schemes. Indeed, Ramey Berry argues, in pricing slaves, planters relied more on the assignment of an abstract “rate” (full hand, half hand, quarter hand) than they did on the most obvious physical characteristics of the human bodies they bought and sold: age and sex. Part of the work that planters required of their female slaves, of course, was reproductive, and Ramey Berry further argues that although sex was not a statistically significant component of slave prices when taken

on its own, women's prices began to rise earlier in their lives than did those of men. For slaves, the question of value was less economic than it was existential, and drawing on journalistic and autobiographical accounts of slaves' experience in **(p.16)** the market, Ramey Berry outlines both the family-destroying capacity of the regime of race and the efforts that many slaves made to keep their families together by advertising themselves and their loved ones in the terms of the market.

Similarly, Robert Gudmestad's essay begins with the story of a slave in trade—in this case, one who jumped from the roof of the Washington, D.C., tavern where she had to be sent to await sale to the South. Picked up by Congressman John Randolph of Virginia, the story of her suicide attempt framed the earliest effort to ban the trade within the District of Columbia (1816). In contrast to those who followed him in seeking the abolition of the trade in the nation's capitol, Randolph was a defender rather than an opponent of slavery. For him, however, the abuses of the trade seemed to compromise rather than emblemize what he thought to be the rightful claims of those who owned slave property. Although Randolph's proposal never made it to the floor of the House, Gudmestad sees it as an important window into the politics of slavery in the early Republic. It was, he points out, the work of a slaveholder from the Upper South rather than an abolitionist from the North. And more important, perhaps, it died quietly with little of the debate or publicity that would attend subsequent efforts to abolish the trade.

In Gudmestad's telling, however, an issue that the nation's leaders were content to let die was continually brought back to life by the resistant actions of the nation's slaves. Although slaves' terror of the trade provided slaveholders with an extraordinary means of preserving order under regular circumstances (and one that left no evident scars), it also ensured that when the moment of sale finally came it was often messy. The memory of each escape, each suicide, each murder, and each mutiny was sedimented into the brutal material culture of the trade—the barred jails, cuffed chains, and brandished weapons—where it could be readily decoded by those who witnessed a public auction or saw a coffle passing along a southern road as evidence of that system's brutality. The interstate slave trade, Gudmestad argues, was not only extremely disruptive of slave life and extremely brutal, it was extremely obvious.

The abolitionist attack on the trade that coalesced around images of slave resistance, the overall growth of the trade, and the sectional politics of surrounding the expansion of slavery in the western territories came together to produce, in 1820, a critique of the admission of a slaveholding Missouri to the union that focused on the “speculation” in slaves that would attend it. Whereas those who defended the admission of Missouri as a slave state continued to argue that migration rather than speculation was the dominant form of slavery's westward expansion, Gudmestad argues that the debates about Missouri showed that enslaved peoples' resistance had flushed the character of **(p.17)** the trade out into the open. In the years that followed, critics of slavery again and again returned to the spectacle of the trade—to the scenes of slaves' anguish and resistance—as they framed their attack on the whole of slavery.

Steven Deyle's essay likewise focuses on the debate between opponents and defenders of slavery about the relation of the interstate slave trade to the rest of slavery in the antebellum South. Deyle begins by charting the importance of the domestic slave trade to the regional political economy of slavery, and he goes on to illustrate the capital value of the enslaved population (a value supported by the interstate trade). The three billion dollars' worth of capital invested in slaves in 1860, Deyle writes, was three times greater than the amount of capital invested in the

manufacturing sector nationwide, seven times the value of all the currency in circulation in the national economy, and forty-eight times the federal government's annual budget. The slave trade was big business.

It was also a big target. From the first issue of William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator*, Deyle argues, the slave pen, the auction block, and the southbound coffer were essential elements of the abolitionist case against slavery. That case took various forms: some abolitionists argued that by turning people into property, the slave trade stole them from God; some emphasized the devastating effect of the trade on enslaved families as well as its corrupting effect on the families of their owners; some emphasized the corrosive effect of the trade on republican institutions; some hoped to divide the interests of the Upper South from those of the Lower by getting Congress to abolish the interstate trade; in particular, many urged that the thriving slave trade operating in the shadow of the Capitol and the direct authority of Congress should be abolished forthwith. Deyle argues that as the Free Soil and Republican Parties sought to broaden their support in the 1840s and 1850s, the opponents of slavery focused less of their attention on the slave trade per se than they did on the future of slavery in the west. Southern Democrats and defenders of slavery, on the other hand, continued to argue that Republican rule would mean the immediate end of the slave trade if not of slavery itself.

Since the Missouri Compromise (1820), those defenders had been arguing that the responsibility to regulate the slave trade lay not with Congress but with the states—many of which, they pointed out, had already regulated and even periodically banned the trade. The interstate commerce clause, they argued, was designed to keep interests in one section of the country from making laws that interfered with the interests in another. Although the defenders of the trade managed to hold their position through the fitful series of fragile compromises leading up to the Civil War, Deyle argues, they could never hide the trade and found themselves instead forced to dismiss or explain it: it was **(p.18)** the slave traders' fault for being avaricious, or the slaves' fault for behaving badly, or the abolitionists' fault for making slaveholders fear that their lawful property would be stolen from them, or, perhaps, it simply did not exist at all.

Michael Tadman's essay takes on the question of the relation between the slave trade and the rest of slavery from the other side of the emerging sectional divide, asking how a society in which so many so frequently proclaimed their benevolent intentions toward their slaves could have supported a thriving trade in those very slaves. What was the relation of the slave trade to the system of slavery and the ideology that supported it? Tadman begins by outlining the contrasting accounts that defenders and opponents of slavery gave of this relation. The proslavery argument was that the trade was simply the pastime of a few marginal men who were forced to make up their lots of runaways and criminal because few planters worthy of the name would separate the families of their slaves by selling them to the traders. For defenders of slavery, criticizing the traders was a good way to defend the rest of slavery. The abolitionist account of the trade focused instead on the links between the trade and the rest of slavery. According to this account, the planters of the Upper South gained much of their income by “breeding” slaves destined to replace the slaves who were being worked to death in the Lower South. For opponents of slavery, attacking the slave trade was a good way to attack the rest of slavery.

The reality of the situation, Tadman contends, lies in the numbers, and the central portion of the essay is devoted to a statistical reconstruction of the scope and scale of the interstate slave trade using a study of the age structure of the westward-moving slave population (a full run of

ages being associated with the “intact” migration of plantations and a highly age-selective sample indicating a commercial process of selection) and intensive study of the daily business of the trade in South Carolina. Altogether, Tadman estimates, more than a million slaves were traded across the United States between 1790 and 1860. Of these, most were sold not in the urban auctions that figure so prominently in abolitionist and subsequent historical accounts of the trade but in private bargains made between an itinerant speculator and a slaveholder who was often standing in his own front yard. Most of those who sold slaves to the traders, Tadman argues, did so by choice rather than from necessity: most slaves were sold from regions of the Upper South, where staple crop production was still highly profitable and the traders' preference for dealing in cash (as opposed to credit) offered a substantial incentive for selling to them.

The final sections of Tadman's essay contrast the scale of family destruction wrought by the trade to the prevalence of slaveholders' statements about the degree to which they cared for and about their slaves. Estimating that one-third (**p.19**) of slave marriages in the Upper South were destroyed by the trade, Tadman argues that there is little chance that enslaved people adopted their masters' benevolent view of the institution that bound them together. By focusing their attention on certain “key slaves,” slaveholders were able both to pursue their own (financial and disciplinary) interests when it came to selling slaves and point to an object of their paternalism when it came to wanting to feel good about themselves. Thus, Tadman concludes, could slaveholders de-monize the traders as hard-hearted speculators even as they continued to do business with them; thus could those who already had slaves promote self-interested bans on the trade and blame the traders for importing large numbers of diseased and malign slaves while exporting vast quantities of specie; and thus could the plantation legend of the sunny South coexist down to the present day with the hard facts and material remains of the slave trade.

Lacy Ford's essay places debates about the role of the antebellum slave trade in the context of the historiographical discussion of slaveholders' “paternalism.” Ford's essay begins by contrasting Eugene D. Genovese's characterization of the slaveholders' regime as one structured by the back-and-forth play of accommodation and resistance (which always stopped short of threatening the system itself) expressed in the idea that there was a familial (hence “paternalism”) rather than a commercial relation between masters and slaves with recent critiques of that notion. These critiques, Ford argues, emphasize the commercial and coercive character of the relations between masters and slaves at the expense of a nuanced understanding of the capacity of the (hegemonic) ideology of paternalism to reframe individual acts of resistance in terms that were not threatening to the institution itself. Ford nevertheless argues that the more recent scholarship makes a substantial (though, he believes, unwitting) contribution by hitching the historiography of the South to that of the “market revolution.” Seen in that light, Ford argues, recent work on the internal slave trade bound the regions of the South together in a system of capital transfer and labor allocation.

Ford emphasizes that behind slave traders' unsavory reputation for being speculators lay the fact that they were the economic actors in the South who were willing to take the risk of transporting slaves between the low-profit Upper South sector of the slave economy to its high-profit Lower South sector, thus promoting the long-term growth of the southern economy. Noting his debt to the work of Gavin Wright, Ford argues that the interstate slave trade linked slave values in these regions (as opposed to the value of land, which fluctuated widely across

space) and thus promoted the solidification of (planter) class interests in protecting slave values across the South.

To this broad accounting of the importance of the trade to the regional **(p.20)** coherence of the southern political economy Ford adds an account of the tensions generated by the trade as evidenced by southern efforts to tax, regulate, and abolish the trade. This discussion, as several of the essays point out, pitted Upper South slaveholders hoping to “whiten” their polities against Lower South slaveholders wary of importing a potentially insurrectionary mass of slaves into theirs even as they exported specie via the traders to the Upper South. In the Lower South, doubts about the trade, particularly in the aftermath of the 1831 insurrection led by Nat Turner in Southampton County, Virginia, resulted in periodic bans on the trade in slave-importing states from South Carolina to Louisiana. Although such bans were always controversial (pitting as they did the portion of the white population interested in preserving the status quo against that interested in bettering its own position by buying slaves) and often honored in the breach (occurring as they did at different times in states that shared long borders and developed transportation and financial networks), they demonstrate the diversity of interests in and opinions about slavery in a region that is too often treated as if its support of slavery was uniform across time, space, and class position. In the arguments about the trade Ford sees the “counterfactual” possibility that, in the absence of the interstate slave trade, a genuine paternalism might have emerged in at least the Upper South, where slaveholders would have had to reform themselves in order to stave off both the threat of insurrection they associated with having so many slaves and the colonizationist and emancipationist sentiments that were emergent though, in the event, dampened by the existence of the trade. By thus isolating the trade's effect in shaping the whole of southern slavery, Ford posits, it becomes possible to imagine writing a history in which events in the slave South are integrated into an account of broader regional, national, and international trends.

Edward Baptist's paper adds a sexual dimension to the interpretation of the slave trade. The essay begins with a bonhommic exchange of letters between slave traders about the rape—their rape—of women owned by their firm, Franklin and Armfield. Employing both Marxian and Freudian theory, Baptist uses the notion of enslaved women as fetishes—as objectifications of the desires of white men—as a way into the tangled history of sexual and economic exploitation in antebellum slavery. In these men's leering expression of their supposedly forbidden desire for their slaves, Baptist argues, was encoded a process of “half-forgetting and half-remembering” that characterized antebellum slaveholding culture as a whole.

The forgetting was in the fetishism of the commodity: the capacity (as identified by Marx) of capitalists and consumers to view the objects they bought and sold as having an existence independent of the social relations that, in **(p.21)** fact, produced them. In this case, Baptist uses commodity fetishism to highlight the way in which slaveholders regularly and unabashedly treated individual slaves as serial manifestations of “Cuffy,” the perfect (and perfectly priceable) slave—the process, that is, by which they took parents and children, lovers and friends and repeatedly made them into dollars and cents. The process of commodification, Baptist argues, was one in which enslaved people had very few avenues of resistance and very little effect on the intentions and actions of their owners, so few that slave traders sometimes half forgot that the market in human beings posed different challenges than did the markets for other retail goods.

It was, however, not in the forgetting that underwrote their economy but in the remembering that presaged its reproduction that slave traders massaged their pleasure out of their work. In repeatedly referring to one another as “one-eyed men” as they discussed their business, the traders of Franklin and Armfield, Baptist argues, invoked a well-known phallic metaphor that invested their forays into the slave market with the sadistic thrill of rapine. It was a thrill through which enslaving men generally, like the traders in these letters, repeatedly replayed a fantasy of their own independence: that they could take what they wanted from women and from blacks. And it was one through which they commingled their society's history of sexual exploitation, their own desires, and the social reproduction of the slaveholding regime in general in a matrix of past, present, and future exploitation grafted onto (and in some ways definitive of) the bodies of light-skinned women. For by fetishizing light-skinned women, they focused their desire on those who embodied both the centuries of sexual assault that tracked the history of their class and the contemporary control over enslaved women's sexuality on which its future rested. The rough trade made manifest in these women's bodies, Baptist concludes, suffused the whole of the business of slavery with “the promise and pleasure of rape.”

While Baptist's essay seemingly calls into question the standard empirical methods—especially demographic statistics and cliometrics—that historians have used to fashion their interpretations of the slave trade, Phillip Troutman's implicitly contrasts the geographic pattern of the slave traders' business (the parameters of which have bounded most historians' accounts of the internal slave trade) with the slaves' geography of the trade. In Troutman's formulation the successful 1841 revolt aboard the slave ship *Creole* was not simply an event that took place at some point along a fixed way southward: it was an “inversion of the slave traders' network of communication and transportation,” a forcible superimposition of the slaves' geography on that of their erstwhile masters. Troutman notes that the rebels' success in taking over the (p.22) ship that was to carry them to New Orleans and having it steered instead for the Bahamas, where they knew they would stand a chance—a good chance, as it turned out—of being freed by the British colonial authorities is a testament to a slave “grapevine” that stretched filaments of information and hope throughout the United States and the Americas generally. Troutman terms this information “geopolitical literacy,” knowledge of the abstract boundaries that divided slavery from freedom in the Americas.

Troutman is careful to spell out the limitations as well as the possibilities of access to the information transmitted over the grapevine. Much of the information was carried by (and limited to) men, for they were the visiting spouses in abroad marriages (those in which spouses lived on different plantations) and the sailors, boatmen, herdsman, teamsters, and slave trade stewards whose movements traced a negative image of the commercial connections that tied American slaveholders to one another and to those in the Caribbean. And in addition to helping build a community across space (and time), the grapevine could undermine trust between those who had information they were afraid to share and those who wanted that information for their own purposes.

The slaves aboard the *Creole*, Troutman argues, may well have heard of prior shipboard slave revolts along the Atlantic coast, and, as testimony that followed the revolt shows, they had definitely heard of the emancipation of the cargo of a slave ship that had been grounded in the Bahamas the year before. Troutman suggests several passageways (most of them leading through the slave pen of Richmond trader Robert Lumpkin, who had housed many of the slaves aboard the *Creole* before their shipment) by which the slaves could have gained the geopolitical literacy evident in the revolt. And though their knowledge of cartography and Caribbean

geography was limited, they were able to piece together enough information and among them had enough skill to make sure that the ship's white crew steered the course to freedom. Slaves' ability to reverse the current that flowed through the slave-selling, staple-cropping network of American and Atlantic trade, Troutman argues, was limited by slaveholders' efforts to keep them in "geographic ignorance" and by the traders' daily practice of tearing them away from the places and people they already knew. In the back-and-forth violence and resistance of the slave trade and the grapevine, he concludes, we can see the outline of an interpretation of slavery that takes space and motion seriously as dimensions of contested power.

Seymour Drescher's essay tells the story of how the islands for which the *Creole* rebels steered their ship ended slavery with particular attention to debates about the internal slave trade. He begins by noting that throughout its history, the Atlantic slave trade transcended politics: no matter who controlled the trade to any given place at any given moment, no matter the winners and **(p.23)** losers in imperial wars, the slave trade persisted. And yet, he concludes, it was jurisdictional boundaries—between countries, between colonies, and between states—that offered abolitionists their best opportunity to chip away at the margin of the system they ultimately hoped to abolish: the transfer of slaves across political boundaries increased both the visibility of their subjection and the potential for its public regulation. And in the years between the closing of the Atlantic trade and emancipation, Drescher argues, the struggle over the future of slavery in the British Caribbean occurred along the jurisdictional boundaries that divided the island colonies of the Caribbean from those along the empire's South American frontier. This was, however, a struggle accompanied by little of the public clatter of the debates about the abolition of the Atlantic trade and, later, the abolition of slavery itself. Having lost the first of these battles and apparently girding themselves for the second, the West Indian interests in Parliament seemed to have taken the restrictions on intercolonial trading as a *fait accompli*.

Comparing the British intercolonial trade to the U.S. interstate trade, Drescher notes the relative prevalence of state regulations concerning the condition of slaves transported in the West Indian trade and argues that in the last decade of British slavery these amounted to a "virtual abolition" of the intercolonial trade. Although he argues that any economic effects of such regulation were clearly secondary to the effect of closing that Atlantic trade—slaveholders forced to trade within the political boundaries of the British Empire had no pool of ready exports (as did Virginia, for example) on which to draw—Drescher emphasizes that the restrictions on the intercolonial trade had significant effects on the daily life of slaves in the British Caribbean. The primary effects of these restrictions were to intensify planters' commitments to use their (aging and shrinking) labor forces to produce sugar rather than less profitable crops such as coffee and to reduce planters' ability to control their slaves using the threat of sale. Indeed, the ameliorative restrictions on the trade often forced slaveholders planning the transfer of their slaves to obtain approval from the slaves in question in order to receive an export license from the government. In the progression of trade-limiting laws Drescher sees a fairly successful "gradualist" evolution from slavery to pseudoservitude to full emancipation.

Like Drescher's essay, that of Hilary Beckles places the interregional movement of slaves within the British Caribbean in the context of shifts within that region's economy, particularly the opportunity provided British sugar planters by the success of the slave revolt in Haiti and the decline of the sugar economy in the smaller islands (Barbados and the Leeward and the Windward Islands). This occurred at the same time that planters in the larger islands and frontier **(p.24)** colonies (Jamaica, Trinidad, Demerara, and Essequibo) were expanding their sugar production and, in the aftermath of the closing of the Atlantic trade, looking for a ready

source of slaves to supply their murderous labor regime (which Beckles delicately terms “systemic natural decline”). His account of the pattern of intercolonial trade emphasizes the “uneven” situation of the various colonies at the moment the slave trade was closed: the closing accelerated the transfer of slaves from the islands (with the notable exception of Jamaica) to the frontier colonies along the northern coast of South America.

Current estimates suggest that the intercolonial trade in the Caribbean was a good deal smaller in relative terms than that in the United States or Brazil—twenty-two thousand slaves were legally traded in the years between 1808 and 1830 (a figure comparable to a single year's interstate trading in the United States during the 1830s)—and Beckles concludes that it was, taken as a whole, too small to significantly alter the demographic profile of either the exporting or the importing colonies. More important, he argues, were the political effects of the trade: a series of fights between metropolitan opponents of slavery and its colonial defenders over where to draw the line between legal and illegal trading. The rising power of antislavery forces in the British Parliament, he argues, can be tracked by the laws that regulated the intercolonial trade. As they gradually gained power they managed to move from a system of licenses and duties designed to regulate the pattern of intercolonial transfers, to a slave-registering census to track the degree of smuggling, to a law that required exporters to prove that transfer was in the best interest of their slaves (generally to keep families together), to, finally, a law that limited intercolonial transfers to “domestic” slaves. Colonial slaveholders (and authorities) combined to evade and subvert most of these regulations using a combination of fraud and outright smuggling, but the laws' import was not lost on colonial slaves. Slave revolts in Barbados (1816) and Demerara (1823), Beckles argues, were partially spurred by the slaves' belief that “registration procedures were a prelude to emancipation.”

Manuel Barcia Paz's paper tells the fascinating story of a family of Bahamian slaves carried illegally into Cuba in the 1820s, not to reemerge until the 1840s. As the Bahamian planter Mary Elizabeth Kelsall foresaw the abolition of colonial slavery, Barcia Paz argues, she took steps to try to preserve her property from history, duping her slaves into signing their own emancipation papers (so that they would be allowed to depart from the Bahamas) before shipping them to Cuba and continuing to hold them as slaves. The Kelsalls were among the estimated thousands of Bahamian blacks being held in Cuba as slaves. Whereas Barcia Paz's narrative focuses on the diplomacy that eventually freed a few of the Kelsalls (though it left many more behind) and the **(p.25)** complexity of the position of antislavery British officials in a Cuba overcome with the fear of slave revolt, it also provides a tantalizing glimpse of a slave society in the middle of Cuba that was populated by English speakers and Africans—the living evidence of the shadowy networks of smuggling and illegal trade that haunt the edges of so many of the essays in this collection.

Richard Graham seeks to outline the macroeconomic profile of the internal trade in Brazil and to explore the stories of some of the slaves whose experience that statistical profile claims to represent. After a survey of the deep history of internal trading in Brazil, which included both an early seventeenth-century trade in Indian slaves and an interregional trade in imported Africans in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Graham turns his attention to the internal trade that expanded after the Brazilians (under pressure from the British) closed their Atlantic trade in the early 1850s. The internal trade in Brazil, Graham argues, extended generally from the Northeast and the extreme South to Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, from relatively minor sectors of the slave economy (mining, castor beans, salted beef, and, before and after but not during the American Civil War, cotton) to the coffee sector, from northeastern sugar plantations

to southern sugar plantations, and from urban areas to rural ones. Following the estimates of Robert Slenes, Graham suggests that more than two hundred thousand people, perhaps as many as two-thirds of them men and the vast majority of them between the ages of ten and forty, were relocated in the four decades between the effective closing of the African trade to Brazil and the abolition of slavery in 1888. Although the numbers of people traded were, in the aggregate, smaller than they were in the United States, the trade in Brazil in the 1870s and 1880s was, much like that in the United States in the 1830s, associated with the threat of slave rebellion, and one province after another moved to shut down slave importations in the years leading up to 1888.

Graham uses several case studies to outline the biographical diversity of those whose lives were forcibly channeled into the slave trade but also identifies some commonalities that bound them together: the ease with which poor people who were legally free could be sucked into the trade, the desire of traded slaves to return home and see their families again, the disorientation caused by geographical relocation and the imposition of new, violently enforced labor regimes, and the prevalence of resistance ranging from shamming sickness and committing suicide to flight and open revolt. Graham's conclusion powerfully brings together many of the themes of the collection by revisiting the epochal history of the trade in the light of its everyday functions. The deracinating experience of being traded away from families and communities, Graham argues, created a set of enslaved people (mostly male, mostly young) **(p.26)** with nothing left to lose, which slaveholders in importing regions increasingly saw as a threat to the order and even the continued existence of their communities. Indeed, the "revolutionary" mass flights and field firings that immediately preceded and spurred Brazilian abolition occurred in regions that had been among the country's greatest importers.

Robert Slenes's essay on the internal trade in Brazil both deepens the economic and demographic overview of that trade provided by Graham and adds an argument about its political history. In Brazil after about 1850, Slenes argues, there were actually two semiautonomous regional slave trading complexes: one serving the coffee planters of the Center-South region and one serving the sugar planters of the Northeast. Especially in the years after 1870, when coffee was exported in increasing quantities, the number of people traded into the Center-South was quite large, and Slenes puts the number of those traded from 1850 to the effective closing of the trade (by high provincial excise taxes) in 1881 at almost a quarter of a million. Considered as an aggregate number and as a proportion of the total slave population, Slenes argues, the internal trade in Brazil was comparable in magnitude to that in the United States. Indeed, because the bulk of sales were concentrated in the period between 1870 and 1880 and because slaves in Brazil were often traded over much longer distances than they were in the United States, the Brazilian trade may have, at least during the 1870s, been even more brutal than that which had functioned in the antebellum South.

Although the coffee-producing regions of the country received the greatest number of slaves traded from other regions, Slenes notes that the fact that the price of slaves in the Northeast did not track that in the Center-South suggests the existence of a fairly autonomous slave market. He compares the records tracking the interregional movement of slaves to censuses of the slave populations on sugar plantations and suggests that even when sugar prices were low and slaves were being exported from the Northeast, they were rarely being sold by sugar planters. Rather, they were being sold interregionally by smallholders, urban slaveowners, and cotton planters suffering from the resumption of exports from the United States after 1865, all of whom would have found a market in the Northeast for their slaves if sugar prices had remained high. These

exported slaves, Slenes argues, were increasingly traded to the Center-South, where they became a large component of a market that had, before the 1870s, been largely intraregional (drawing its slaves largely from the urban sector of the economy, where they could be easily replaced by free workers who refused to work in the sugar fields).

Slenes argues that the expansion of the internal trade after 1850 put to an end a period of relative stability in the family life of creole slaves, an effect that **(p.27)** was magnified by the large proportion of young men among the traded slaves and was especially acute on the smaller plantations that accounted for the bulk of the exports. He suggests that the expansion of the trade and its focus on the young undermined an “implicit paternalist agreement” between those slaves and their masters. Whereas they expected that their families would be protected in exchange for their good behavior, slaves born in Brazil found that their owners were coming to care less about their origins than about their age and their salability. These shattered expectations, Slenes (along with Graham) suggests, contributed to increasing unrest among creole slaves in the decades before emancipation.

Finally, Slenes notes that the expansion of the internal slave trade occurred at a time when the future of slavery in Brazil was increasingly being called into question. Thus demand in that market represented speculation regarding the political future: the belief that slavery would not be abolished too quickly for buyers to make their money back. Between 1881 and 1883 belief in that future faded. Slave prices crashed, hire rates expanded, and banks stopped accepting human collateral to secure long-term loans. Slenes locates the proximate cause of this crash in the fears of planters and politicians in the South-Center that those in the Northeast would seek to dump their (soon-to-be-freed) slaves onto the market, sell them southward, and then vote for abolition. Rather than continuing to import slaves who would soon be transformed into impoverished free people, the South-Central provinces placed high taxes on the interregional slave trade in the early 1880s, effectively taxing it out of existence.

It was William Wells Brown, the once enslaved steward of a Mississippi River slave trader, who wrote that “slavery has never been represented, slavery never can be represented.”¹⁷ Brown's point, first and foremost, was that the true story of slavery could only have been told by those who lived their whole lives and died without ever having the chance to tell it. But his fear of losing contact with a history buried beneath the backfill of its own destructive consequences seems likewise to illuminate the dilemma facing the scholars whose work is collected here: how to represent the enormity of the history of slave trading in the Americas. Taken together, their work surveys the genres of historical writing—comparative, demographic, biographical, political, social, cultural, theoretical—as each seeks to grasp and convey what it meant to live through a history that was being made in the slave market. It is a measure of their success that, by the end of the collection, some of the most persistent of historians' settled categories have been roiled. They make clear, for example, why some slave-trading practices became historically visible as “internal” slave trades while others did not and suggest the ways in which the history of **(p.28)** slave trading was implicated in helping create and maintain the distinction between a national “inside” and a transnational “outside,” a distinction that subtends the very definition of some slave trading practices as internal. They provide new ways to think about the interplay of domination, dependence, race, and resistance, rework longstanding debates about the interrelation of capitalism, sovereignty, and slavery, and reconnect the history of the politics and resistance of enslaved people to the politics practiced in the legislative chambers and courtrooms of the Americas.

Most important perhaps, they call into question the distinction between the human side and the economic side of the slave trade that has defined the parameters of so many of our histories of the trade. By labeling the history of enslaved people the human side, historians have long underestimated the salience of economics to the condition of enslaved humanity. At the same time, by treating the history of the slave traders as “economic history” they have defined away the very humanity of the nevertheless objectionable avarice and savagery of the slave business. Relegating the history of the perpetrators of the slave trade to the category of the merely (or inevitably) economic invites us to misunderstand our human condition as being both beyond economics and morally blameless. Perhaps, living as we do in the long historical shadow of the chattel principle, it is time to start thinking otherwise.

Notes

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Notes:

(1) . James W. C. Pennington, *The Fugitive Blacksmith: Or Events in the Life of James W. C. Pennington* (London: n.p., 1849), iv–vii. For overviews of the internal trade in the United States see Frederic Bancroft, *Slave Trading in the Old South* (Baltimore: J. H. Furst, 1931); Laurence J. Kotlikoff, “The Structure of Slave Prices in New Orleans, 1804–1862,” *Economic Inquiry* 17 (1979): 496–517; Michael Tadmán, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); H. Freudenberger and J. B. Pritchett, “The Domestic United States Slave Trade: New Evidence,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 21 (1991): 447–477; Jonathan B. Pritchett and Herman Freudenberger, “A Peculiar Sample: The Selection of Slaves for the New Orleans Market,” *Journal of Economic History* 52 (1992): 109–128; Thomas D. Russell, “South Carolina’s Largest Slave Auctioneering Firm,” *Chicago-Kent Law Review* 68 (1993): 1241–1282; Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Adam Rothman, “The Expansion of Slavery in the Deep South, 1790–1820,” Ph.D. diss. (Columbia University, 2000); Robert Gudmestad, “A Troublesome Commerce: The Transformation of the Interstate Slave Trade,” Ph.D. diss. (Louisiana State University, 2000); Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African American Slaves* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 159–244; and Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming). For overviews of the internal trade in the British West Indies see David Eltis, “The Traffic in Slaves Between the British West Indian Colonies, 1807–1833,” *Economic History Review* 25 (1972): 55–46; and Barry Higman, *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean, 1807–1834* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984). For Brazil see Herbert S. Klein, “The Internal Slave Trade in Nineteenth-Century Brazil: A Study of Slave Importations into Rio de Janeiro,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 51 (1971): 567–585; Robert W. Slenes, “The Demography and Economics of Brazilian Slavery, 1850–1888,” Ph.D. diss. (Stanford University, 1975).

(2) . For a fuller account of the slaveholding futures available for purchase in the slave markets of the antebellum South see Johnson, *Soul by Soul*, 78–116.

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- (3) . Lewis Hayden, quoted in Harriet Beecher Stowe, *A Key to "Uncle Tom's Cabin," Presenting the Original Facts and Documents upon Which the Story Is Founded* (Boston: J. P. Jewett, 1853), 154.
- (4) . The classic formulation of this distinction in the slavery literature is Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage, 1976), esp. 598-599.
- (5) . See Walter Johnson, "A Nettlesome Classic Turns Twenty-Five," *Common-Place* 1:4 (July 2001), www.common-place.org/vol-01/no-04/reviews/johnson.html; and Walter Johnson, "On Agency," *Journal of Social History* (Fall 2003): 113-124.
- (6) . For Smith see James Oakes, "The Bourgeois Critique of Slavery," in *Slavery and the American South: Essays and Commentaries*, ed. Winthrop Jordan (Oxford: University of Mississippi Press, 2003); for slavery as "primitive accumulation" see Karl Marx, *Capital* (New York: International Publishers, 1967), 1:710-712, and Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 81-82, 110-116.
- (7) . See Walter Johnson, "The Pedestal and the Veil: Rethinking the Capitalism/Slavery Question," *Journal of the Early Republic* 24 (Summer 2004): 301-310. Marx, at least, seems to have wrestled with the question of converting the images of temporal succession which frame the idea of slavery-as-primitive-accumulation (and which have characterized much of the subsequent discussion of slavery and capitalism into a set of spatial images of "unevenness"). To wit: "Whilst the cotton industry introduced child-slavery in England, it gave in the United States a stimulus to the transformation of the earlier, more or less patriarchal slavery into a system of commercial exploitation. In fact the veiled slavery of the wage-workers in Europe needed, for its pedestal, slavery pure and simple in the new world." The image of new world slavery as a pedestal is remarkable for its precision in evoking the idea of something that is, at once, functionally distinct from and structurally integral to the edifice it supports (Marx, *Capital*, 1:711). The figure of "commercial slavery" appears several other times in the first volume of *Capital*, most notably for the project at hand when Marx exemplifies a point about the merciless expansion of the working day to the point that laborers perish and have to be replaced by those imported from other nations by quoting from a pamphlet about the internal slave trade in the United States. Marx's own description of the relevance of the internal slave trade to the condition of European wage workers interestingly refers to slaves as both labor and capital, and thus apparently transcending conventional "Marxist" usage: "The slaveowner buys his laborer as he buys his horse. If he loses his slave, he loses capital that can only be restored by new outlay in the slave-mart.... *Mutato nomine de te fabula narrator* [with the name changed the story applies to you]. For slave-trade read labour-market, for Kentucky and Virginia, Ireland, etc." (Marx, *Capital*, 1:253-254).

(8) . One might push this question a step further by questioning the assumption (generally accepted in the literature on the internal trade in the United States, at least) that uprooting people and forcing them to move hundreds of miles, even with their families intact, was an action that somehow indicated slaveholders' benevolence or paternalism or anything else of the kind. This would involve prying the history of the migration of enslaved people out of the familial terms in which nineteenth-century supporters of slavery tried to situate it, a set of terms in which slaves and slaveholders alike were simply families moving westward. As the proslavery theorist George Fitzhugh described it in 1857, the migratory pattern of slaveholders ensured that “the breaking up of families of whites and blacks keeps equal pace” (George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All! Or, Slaves Without Masters*, ed. C. Vann Woodward, [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960], 158). Future scholars might do well to resituate these claims of slaveholders' paternalism in the history of forced migration, the appalling frequency of which in our own time is scarcely palliated by the fact that most of its victims have been driven from their homes with their families “intact.”

(9) . Thomas Maskell to Samuel Plaisted, August 8, 1838. Samuel Plaisted Collection, Lower Mississippi Valley Collection, Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University.

(10) . Thomas C. Holt, “Marking Race: Race-Making and the Writing of History,” *American Historical Review* 50 (1995): 1–20.

(11) . The slave market, according to this view, would be only one, though perhaps the most important, of a host of institutional settings—churches, medical schools, courtrooms, census tallies, minstrel shows, antislavery societies, and, it should be remembered, slave quarters and secret meetings—that produced and reproduced an ever more tangled set of interrelated but nonidentical notions of “race” throughout the Americas.

(12) . For the general point about the transformation of the categories of bondage from national to racial ones see Colette Guillaumin, *Racism, Sexism, Power, and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1995); for the specific argument about the reproduction of racial “knowledge” in the slave market see Johnson, *Soul by Soul*, 135–161.

(13) . Indeed, one of the arguments made by slaveholders who opposed the proslavery radicals' calls to reopen the African slave trade in the late 1850s was that if the trade were reopened “the slaveholder would become—instead of the patriarchal friend and master of his slave—a bloody, brutal, and trembling tyrant.” Quoted in Ronald T. Takaki, *A Proslavery Crusade: The Agitation to Reopen the African Slave Trade* (New York: Free Press, 1971), 128.

(14) . For the general problem see Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* (New York: Knopf, 1946), and Frederick Cooper, Thomas C. Holt, and Rebecca J. Scott, *Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Post-emancipation Societies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); for an interesting recent rereading of Tannenbaum that spurred my own thinking on the topic see Alejandro de la Fuente, "Slave Law, Claims-Making, and Citizenship in Cuba: The Tannenbaum Debate Revisited," paper delivered at the American Society of Legal Historians meeting, San Diego, California, November 7, 2002; for the (incomplete) conversion of slaves into citizens of a multiracial democracy in Cuba see Rebecca J. Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba: The Transition to Free Labor, 1860–1899* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Aline Helg, *Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality, 1886–1912* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), and Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution in Cuba, 1868–1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). For Brazil see Thomas Skidmore, *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); George Reid Andrews, *Blacks and Whites in São Paulo, Brazil, 1888–1988* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); and the essays in Richard Graham, ed., *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870–1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990).

(15) . See Takaki, *Proslavery Crusade*, esp. 23–85.

(16) . Later, some Cuban slaveholders would favor annexation to the United States on the ground that if the British ever succeeded in closing the Atlantic slave trade, by then officially illegal even in Cuba, they would be able to replenish their labor forces through an "internal" trade with the Upper South. Some Upper South slaveholders opposed annexation for exactly the same reason: they feared that, in the absence of a reopened African trade (an idea that was being broached in the South of the late 1850s), an "internal" trade to an annexed Cuba would drain slaves from their faltering economies and leave them vulnerable to abolition. See Robert E. May, *The Southern Dream of Caribbean Empire, 1854–1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 25, 202–203.

(17) . William Wells Brown, "Lecture," reprinted in *Four Fugitive Slave Narratives*, ed. Robin Winks (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1969), 82.

