

Making Slavery, Making Race

Of late, it has become fashionable to declare that race is a social construction. In the academy, this precept has gained universal and even tiresome assent, as geneticists and physical anthropologists replace outmoded classifications of humanity with new ones drawn from recent explorations of the genome.¹ But while the belief that race is socially constructed has gained a privileged place in contemporary scholarly debates, it has won few practical battles. Few people believe it; fewer act on it. The new understanding of race has changed behavior little if at all.

Perhaps this is because the theory is not quite right. Race is not simply a social construction; it is a particular kind of social construction—a historical construction.² Indeed, like other historical constructions—the most famous of course being class—it cannot exist outside of time and place. To follow Edward Thompson's celebrated discussion of class, race is also "a fluency which evades analysis if we attempt to stop it dead at any given moment and atomize its structure." Race, no less than class, is the product of history, and it only exists on the contested social terrain in which men and women struggle to control their destinies.³

The reluctance to embrace the new understanding of race as socially constructed derives neither from a commitment to an older biological classification system, which in truth is no better understood than the newer genetics, nor from a refusal to acknowledge the reality of an ideological construct. Instead, it derives from the failure to demonstrate how race is continually redefined, who does the defining, and why. This book is in part an attempt to address that problem, first by recognizing the volatility of the experiences which collectively defined race, and then by suggesting how they shifted over the course of two centuries.

Many Thousands Gone is a history of African-American slavery in mainland North America during the first two centuries of European and African settlement. Like all history, it is a study of changing relationships. The emphasis on change is important. Philosophers, sociologists, anthro-

pologists, and even some historians have provided extraordinary insight into how property-in-person specified once and forever the character of a slave's standing, personality, and relationship with others and gave slavery a meaning that transcended history. From such a perspective, slavery was both a model and a metaphor for the most extreme forms of exploitation, otherness, and even social death. Its unique character rested upon the slave's physical and cultural uprooting. But slaves were never "absolute aliens," "genealogical isolates," "deracinated outsiders," or even unreflective "sambos" in any slave society.⁴ Knowing that a person was a slave does not tell everything about him or her. Put another way, slaveholders severely circumscribed the lives of enslaved people, but they never fully defined them. Slaves were neither extensions of their owners' will nor products of the market's demand. The slaves' history—like all human history—was made not only by what was done to them but also by what they did for themselves.

quotes from
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All of which is to say that slavery, though imposed and maintained by violence, was a negotiated relationship. To be sure, the struggle between master and slave never proceeded on the basis of equality and was always informed by the master's near monopoly of force. By definition, slaves had less choice than any other people, as slaveholders set the conditions upon which slaves worked and lived. Indeed, the relation between master and slave was so profoundly asymmetrical that many have concluded that the notion of negotiation—often freighted in our own society with the rhetoric of the level playing field—has no value to the study of slavery. Although the playing field was never level, the master-slave relationship was nevertheless subject to continual negotiation. The failure to recognize the ubiquity of those negotiations derives neither from an overestimation of the power of the master (which was awesome indeed), nor from an underestimation of the power of the slave (which rarely amounted to much), but from a misconstruing of the limitations humanity placed upon both master and slave.⁵ For while slaveowners held most of the good cards in this meanest of all contests, slaves held cards of their own. And even when their cards were reduced to near worthlessness, slaves still held that last card, which, as their owners well understood, they might play at any time.

A number of corollaries follow from a recognition that even in slavery's cramped quarters there was room for negotiation. First, even as they confronted one another, master and slave had to concede, however

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grudgingly, a degree of legitimacy to the other. No matter how reluctantly it was given (or, more likely, extracted), such a concession was difficult for either party to acknowledge, for masters presumed their own absolute sovereignty and slaves never relinquished the right to control their own destiny. But no matter how adamant the denials, nearly every interaction of master and slave forced such recognition, for the web of interconnections between master and slave necessitated a coexistence that fostered cooperation as well as contestation.

Second, because the circumstances of such contestation and cooperation continually changed, slavery itself continually changed. The refusal of either party to concede the realities of master-slave relations meant that slavery was intrinsically unstable. No bargain could last for very long, for as power slipped from master to slave and back to master, the terms of slavery would again be renegotiated. Slavery was never made, but instead was continually remade, for power—no matter how great—was never absolute, but always contingent.

Thus, understanding that a person was a slave is not the end of the story but the beginning, for the slaves' history was derived from experiences that differed from place to place and time to time and not from some unchanging transhistorical verity. In some sense, this truism has become a staple of recent histories of all subordinate classes, not only slaves but also servants, serfs, and wage workers. Surely, it would come as no surprise to say that all wage workers at any particular moment had much in common, both in shared experiences and in opposition to their employers; but the lives of steel workers and cigar makers differed, as did their languages, institutions, and relationships with their employers, their fellow workers, and their families. If at times steel workers and cigar makers stood together against their employers on matters of compensation, working conditions, and political allegiance, few would expect their opposition to take precisely the same form. Yet, because slavery was such a powerful, all-encompassing relationship, scholars have often been transfixed by the commonalities that slavery produced, by the dynamics of the relationship between master and slave, and by the personality traits this most extreme form of domination appears to have generated.

Slavery's distinctiveness has been reinforced by its historic confrontation with free labor, a battle in which slavery—for good and ill—came to embody traditional society. The slave master's domination of the plantation order was seen as nothing less than monarchy writ small and patriar-

chy writ large. By extension, it represented hierarchy, discipline, and corporate control. Slaveholders understood their rule to be the incarnation of the well-ordered society, which mirrored the well-ordered family. By the same token, their slaves' interminable insubordination represented not only a loss of labor and a threat of insurrection but also a direct assault on order itself.

Such an interpretation has propelled the relationship between master and slave, generally in the guise of the question of paternalism (or sometimes patriarchalism or seigneurialism) to the center of the debate over slavery, and has given the history of slavery a significance that reaches beyond the bounds of the subject itself. The destruction of slavery and its corporate ethos—as a means of organizing society as well as a means of extracting labor—was a central event in the rise of capitalism and the triumph of liberalism, certainly in the West and in other parts of the world as well. Little wonder, then, that the discussions of the nature—and sometimes the existence—of paternalism has preoccupied historians during the last four decades.⁶

In contrasting the relations of slave labor to those of free labor, just as in contrasting republicanism to monarchism or the patriarchal family to the companionate one, historians have frozen their subject in time. While they have captured an essential aspect of chattel bondage, they have lost something of the dynamic that constantly made and remade the lives of slaves, changing them from time to time and place to place. The static model reified and reinforced the masters' vision of their hegemonic power and the slaves' willing acceptance by removing from public view the contingencies upon which power rested. The minuet between master and slave, when played to the contrapuntal music of paternalism, was a constant, as master and slave continually renegotiated the small space allotted them. But the stylized movements—the staccato gyrations, the seductive feints, the swift withdrawals, and the hateful embraces—represented just one of many dances of domination and subordination, resistance and accommodation. The essence of the slaves' history can be found in the ever-changing music to which slaves were forced to dance and in their ability to superimpose their own rhythms by ever so slight changes of cadence, accent, and beat.

As always, close examination of the particulars of the human condition subverts general ideas, for it exposes contradictions and unearths exceptions to the most powerful generalizations. The historicization of

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the study of slavery inevitably calls into question many of the tropes that have guided the study of African-American slavery in mainland North America: African to creole, slave to free, sundown to sunup, and white over black, to name but a few. In reconsidering these general ideas, I have tried not merely to reverse them and argue instead for a progression from creole to African or from freedom to slavery, although such a course may at times be more accurate. Simply reversing the traditional formulations does little to advance knowledge of slave life and leaves the discussion of the African-American experience "encased," as Herbert Gutman once noted, "in snug and static historical opposites."⁷

As Gutman understood, binary opposites fit nicely the formulation of history as written, but they do little to capture the messy, inchoate reality of history as lived. Rather than proceed from African to creole or from slavery to freedom, people of African descent in mainland North America crossed the lines between African and creole and between slavery and freedom many times, and not always in the same direction. Similarly, although racial domination took many forms, at critical moments some white and black people met as equals and stood shoulder-to-shoulder against those they deemed a common enemy. And on some rare occasions, slaves enjoyed the upper hand. Although much of slave life took shape beyond the masters' eyes from sundown to sunup, slaves also created their own world under the owners' noses from sunup to sundown.

The latter point is of great importance. On mainland North America, as in the Americas generally, slaves worked. New World slavery did not have its origins in a conspiracy to dishonor, shame, brutalize, or reduce slaves on some perverse scale of humanity—although it did all of those at one time or another. The stench from slavery's moral rot cannot mask the design of American captivity: the extraction of labor that allowed a small group of men to dominate all. In short, if slavery made race, its larger purpose was to make class, and the fact that the two were made simultaneously by the same process has mystified both.⁸

Since labor defined the slaves' existence, when, where, and especially how slaves worked determined in large measure the course of their lives. But despite the centrality of their labor, the history of black people cannot be reduced to it. Slaves, like their owners, did not live by bread alone. Whether in moments stolen in the field, the dark of night, holidays granted by their owners, or harvest festivities, slaves, like other working

peoples, expressed themselves in song, dance, prayer, and fables by which they understood their world and plotted to create another more to their liking. Such activities, often as separated from the world of work as day from night, were characterized by slaveowners—and not a few historians since—as escapist, mindless mimicry, or harmless distractions whose instinctive or impulsive basis reflected a resignation to a fate that could not be altered. Such a depiction of the slaves' culture—with emphasis on the sensual, hedonistic, and exotic—had their point, particularly when viewed from the reserved, often prudish world of the Big House. But they badly underestimated the oppositional content of slave culture. The slaves' struggle to give meaning to their music, dance, and devotions were no less political than their struggle over work.

Matters of family, language, and spirituality were ensconced in the patches of tobacco and the fields of rice and indigo, just as questions of exploitation and compensation were articulated in the spiritual language of brush-arbor sermons and the vernacular of field chants. The weight of time alone—whether calculated as a portion of a day, a year, or a lifetime—does not automatically elevate work over any of the other manifestations of human existence, whether emanating from the quarter, household, and church rather than the field or workshop. Indeed, it is precisely in connecting the quarter, household, and church to the field and the workshop that the slaves' experience can be made comprehensible. The study of the workplace offers a practical point of entry to the slaves' social organization, domestic arrangements, religious beliefs, and medical practices, along with their music, cuisine, linguistic and sartorial style, and much else.

Observing slaves at work reveals differences in how slaves lived from place to place and time to time. For if no one would argue with the proposition that steel workers and cigar makers spoke different languages, created different institutions, and partook in different social relations, neither would anyone maintain that the language, institutions, or actions of each had always been the same. Nor would anyone contend that the struggles of steel workers in capitalist North America had been the same as those in communist Russia or even in capitalist Japan. What is true for steel workers and cigar makers is no less true for those enslaved people who chopped cotton, rotted hemp, winnowed rice, holed sugarcane, and cured tobacco. Slave life also differed from place to place and from time to time.

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the time provides a means to draw some fundamental distinctions and find some essential commonalities among the varied experiences of North American slaves. In this study of the first two hundred years of slavery in mainland North America, I have distinguished four different slave societies: one in the North; another in the Chesapeake region; a third in the coastal lowcountry of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida; yet another in the lower Mississippi Valley. In each region, slavery had its own geography, demography, economy, society, and—of course—history. Slave life evolved differently in the North, where slave labor supplemented that of family members and servants in an economy based on commerce and mixed agriculture; in the South Carolina lowcountry, where chattel bondage arrived with the first settlers and had little competition as the main source of labor on the great rice and indigo plantations; in the Chesapeake, where black-slave and white-servant labor developed in tandem within an economy organized around the production of tobacco; and in the lower Mississippi Valley, where an ill-defined labor system groped for a staple crop until the sudden emergence of sugar and cotton production transformed all. In such diverse circumstances, slavery's different development depended upon the nature of the terrain, the richness of the soil, the availability of markets, the demographic balance between white and black, free and slave, and men and women, and the diverse origins of both slaves and slaveholders.

Yet, whatever the geographic markers of slavery's development, time did not stand still for slaves any more than it did for free workers. The lives of slaves changed radically over the course of the two centuries between the time the first black people arrived in mainland North America and the beginning of the cotton revolution in the first decade of the nineteenth century. They would continue to change thereafter.

If the transformation of slave life was a continuous process, some moments were more important than others, as they altered the most basic relationships and set in motion conflicts that would take generations to resolve, if they could be resolved at all. Enslavement was one such moment, as was the final emancipation. Since the business of defining freedom remains unfinished nearly a century and a half after the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment that abolished slavery at the end of the Civil War, it should come as no surprise that the meaning of slavery and the terms of the relationship between master and slave were still subject to contention on the eve of that war.

Two markers are critical for understanding the first two centuries of

slavery in mainland North America. The first, drawn from the study of slavery in antiquity, distinguishes between societies with slaves and slave societies.⁹ Societies with slaves are not societies in which, as one apologist for slavery in the North observed, "even the darkest aspect of slavery was softened by a smile."¹⁰ Superficially, slavery in such societies might appear milder, as slaveowners—not driven by the great wealth that sugar, rice, or tobacco could produce—had less reason to press their slaves. Moreover, slaveholdings in societies with slaves were generally small, and the line between slave and free could be remarkably fluid, with manumission often possible and sometimes encouraged. But neither mildness nor openness defined societies with slaves. Slaveholders in such societies could act with extraordinary brutality precisely because their slaves were extraneous to their main business. They could limit their slaves' access to freedom expressly because they desired to set themselves apart from their slaves.

What distinguished societies with slaves was the fact that slaves were marginal to the central productive processes; slavery was just one form of labor among many. Slaveowners treated their slaves with extreme callousness and cruelty at times because this was the way they treated all subordinates, whether indentured servants, debtors, prisoners-of-war, pawns, peasants, or simply poor folks. In societies with slaves, no one presumed the master-slave relationship to be the social exemplar.

In slave societies, by contrast, slavery stood at the center of economic production, and the master-slave relationship provided the model for all social relations: husband and wife, parent and child, employer and employee, teacher and student. From the most intimate connections between men and women to the most public ones between ruler and ruled, all relationships mimicked those of slavery. As Frank Tannenbaum said, "Nothing escaped, nothing, and no one."¹¹ Whereas slaveholders were just one portion of a propertied elite in societies with slaves, they were the ruling class in slave societies; nearly everyone—free and slave—aspired to enter the slaveholding class, and upon occasion some former slaves rose into the slaveholders' ranks. Their acceptance was grudging, as they carried the stigma of bondage in their lineage and, in the case of American slavery, color in their pigment. But the right to enter the slaveholding class was rarely denied, because slaveownership was open to all, irrespective of family, nationality, color, or ancestry.

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in the Americas became slave societies.¹² The transformation generally turned upon the discovery of some commodity—gold being the ideal, sugar being a close second—that could command an international market. With that, slaveholders capitalized production and monopolized resources, muscled other classes to the periphery, and consolidated their political power. The number of slaves increased sharply, generally by direct importation from Africa, and enslaved people of African descent became the majority of the laboring class, sometimes the majority of the population. Other forms of labor—whether family labor, indentured servitude, or wage labor—declined, as slaveholders drove small farmers and wage workers to the margins. These men and women sometimes resisted violently—on the North American mainland most famously in Bacon's rebellion.¹³ But mostly they voted with their feet and migrated from slave societies. Just as the "redlegs" had deserted Barbados in the wake of the sugar revolution of the mid-seventeenth century, the small planters and drovers fled lowcountry Carolina in the wake of the rice revolution of the early eighteenth century, and the yeomanry abandoned the blackbelt for the hill country of the South and the flatlands of the Midwest in the wake of the cotton revolution of the early nineteenth century.

In the absence of competitors, slaveholders solidified their rule. Through their control of the state, they enacted—or reinvigorated—comprehensive slave codes in which they invested themselves with near-complete sovereignty over their slaves, often extending to the absolute right over the slave's life. The new laws sharply reduced the latitude slaves previously enjoyed, and instead insisted that slaves defer to their owners at all times, without question. The prerogatives that slaves once openly maintained—among them the ability to travel, to meet among themselves, to hold property, and to trade at market—were also severely circumscribed or abolished, although they survived at the pleasure of individual slaveowners. That done, slaveholders narrowed the slaves' access to freedom, so that the previously permeable boundaries between slavery and freedom became impenetrable barriers. Finally, slaveholders elaborated the logic of subordination, generally finding the sources of their own domination in some rule of nature or law of God.

Since slavery became exclusively identified with people of African descent in the New World, the slaveholders' explanation of their own domination generally took the form of racial ideologies. But African descent and the racist pigocracy that accompanied it was only one manifes-

tation of the slaves' subordination. Even in societies where slaveowner and slave admittedly shared the same origins, masters construed domination in "racial" terms. Russian serf masters mused that the bones of their serfs were black.¹⁴

Whereas elements of the process by which societies with slaves were transformed into slave societies were everywhere the same, the process itself was always different, except for its inherent brutality. Some societies with slaves passed rapidly into slave societies, so that the earlier experience hardly left a mark. Others moved slowly and imperfectly through the transformation, backtracking several times, so that the process was more circular than linear. Yet other societies with slaves never completed the transition, and some hardly began it. Moreover, slave societies did not always stay slave societies. The development of slavery did not necessarily run in one direction; slave societies also became societies with slaves as often as the opposite.

While acknowledging differences in the process by which societies with slaves became slave societies, historians have differed sharply as to the causes of the change.¹⁵ A salable commodity alone did not in itself produce a slave society. The discovery or development of a staple crop predated the emergence of slave societies in some places; and once established, some slave societies outlasted their raison d'être. In the Chesapeake region, for example, tobacco was grown in a society with slaves before the 1670s and in a slave society thereafter. What distinguished the post-1670 Chesapeake was not the cultivation of tobacco or the employment of slave labor but the presence of a planter class able to command the region's resources, mobilize the power of the state, and vanquish competitors. A salable commodity was a necessary condition for the development of a slave society, but it was not sufficient. The slaveholders' seizure of power was the critical event in transforming societies with slaves into slave societies.¹⁶

The evolution of slavery in mainland North America took many forms, so that the moment (or moments) of transformation differed in the North, the Chesapeake, the lowcountry, and the lower Mississippi Valley. But the driving force behind the evolution of slavery remained the ever-changing nature of production. Alterations in the slaveholders' demands and the slaves' expectations opened the door to fundamental shifts in power. By definition, such moments were times of great stress, when the violence upon which slavery rested surfaced, sometimes with

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insurrectionary fury. The process of renegotiating the rules of the game put everything at risk.

Locating the seat of social change in the workplace, rooting those changes in the material circumstances of African-American life, and connecting such material changes to the development of African-American institutions and beliefs offer a structure for historicizing the study of slavery. The struggle over labor informed all other conflicts between master and slave, and understanding it opens the way to a full comprehension of slave society and the integration of the slave experience into the history of the American workingclass. It also provides the material basis for an appreciation of agency within the confines of slavery and how resistance that fell short of revolution could be effective.¹⁷

The conflict between master and slave took many forms, involving the organization of labor, the hours and pace of work, the sexual division of labor, and the composition of the labor force—all questions familiar to students of free workers. The weapons that workers employed in such conflicts—feigning ignorance, slowing the line, minimizing the stint, breaking tools, disappearing at critical moments, and, as a last resort, confronting their superiors directly and violently—suggest that in terms of workplace struggles, slave and wage workers had much in common. Although the social relations of slave and wage labor differed fundamentally, much can be learned about slave life by examining how the work process informed the conflict between wage workers and their employers. For like reasons, the processes of production were as much a source of workingclass culture for slave workers as for free workers.¹⁸

A second marker in the evolution of slavery had an effect that was as powerful as the transition from societies with slaves to slave societies. This was the great democratic revolutions of the late eighteenth century, which hit slavery hard. The Declaration of Independence, the Declaration of the Rights of Man, and the emergence of an independent Haitian Republic undermined the ideological foundation upon which slavery rested, and the wars that accompanied these ideological upheavals allowed slaves new leverage to contest their owners' power.¹⁹ But the impact of the Age of Revolution was anything but uniform. In some places, the events that accompanied revolutionary change toppled slavery; in some places, they strengthened it; and in some places they pulled simultaneously in both directions. The new societies that emerged from the revolutionary era were as different from one another as those that emerged

What's informing an author's understanding of the abolitionist/worker? Is it simple racism - generated exclusively by the dominant class - or is it some more complex control over her/his

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from the earlier transformation. In the North, most slaves were freed or eventually would be; in the Chesapeake, a large free black population increased in tandem with the region's slaves; in lowcountry South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, slavery grew as never before, and few slaves gained their freedom; and in the lower Mississippi Valley, slavery expanded in the countryside while the number of free people of color grew in the cities. Again, the nature of each slave society and its interactions with the chronology of revolution made the difference.

The slaves' history thus took shape at the confluence of several diverse processes. Defining the markers of time and space by which slavery developed can only be contested terrain. While some would distinguish between New England and the Mid-Atlantic states, I have included them in a generalized North; while some would distinguish between tidewater and piedmont, I have joined the two together as part of a greater Chesapeake; and while some would divide lowcountry South Carolina from the upcountry (and even add a middlecountry), I have treated them as one, along with tidewater regions of Georgia and Florida. In a like fashion, the chronology of revolution can take a variety of different forms. While some might mark it with the outbreak of the French conflict, the ratification of the United States Constitution, or the triumph of Toussaint, I have begun with the War for American Independence.

The transformation of societies with slaves into slave societies and their metamorphosis during the Age of Revolution cannot be captured in the conventional formulations of "Africans to African Americans" or "slavery to freedom." Rather, the history of slavery on mainland North America was an uneven, convoluted process that can best be encompassed in three distinctive experiences: that of the *charter generations*, defined as the first arrivals, their children, and in some cases their grandchildren; the *plantation generations*, who were forced to grow the great staples; and the *revolutionary generations*, who grasped the promise of freedom and faced a resurgent slave regime. These successive experiences do not allow for a progressive history of black people on mainland North America, either in the linear or the optimistic sense of that word. But they do reveal how generations of people of African descent wrestled with the realities of slavery and freedom, trying to fashion a world of their own in circumstances not of their own making.

In presenting the diverse histories of the charter, plantation, and revolutionary generations, I have begun in each instance with an examination

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of the region that best exemplifies that generation's history. Thus, Part I,
which covers the charter generations, starts with the Chesapeake region
not simply because of its chronological primacy but because the charac-
ter of the charter generations was most fully evident in seventeenth-cen-
tury Virginia and Maryland. Succeeding chapters trace the history of the
charter generations in the North, in lowcountry South Carolina and Flor-
ida, and in the lower Mississippi Valley, where it evolved along a differ-
ent—and sometimes a diametrically opposite—path.

For like reasons, Part III, which chronicles the revolutionary genera-
tions, begins not in the Chesapeake but in the North or nascent free
states. There, the full force of the Age of Revolution transformed slav-
ery into juridical freedom, setting in motion both a reconstruction of
African-American society and the growth of new forms of coercion. Vari-
ants of the same processes are then viewed in the Chesapeake (which by
the mid-nineteenth century is called the Upper South), lowcountry (the
Lower South), and lower Mississippi Valley, where some people of Afri-
can descent secured freedom but most found themselves caught in slav-
ery's tightening grip. By beginning where change was most evident and
then exploring the permutations, this organization reveals how the very
same processes—initial settlement, the advent of staple production, or
social revolution—took different shapes.

Slave society in mainland North America did not cease to change in
the first decades of the nineteenth century when this book concludes.
Historians who have tried to hold time constant in order to explain the
complex interactions of master and slave or the development of the slave
personality have inevitably found their investigations stymied and their
conclusions stereotyped by their very method. Even the most complex so-
cial relationships become caricatures when men and women—subalterns
or superiors—are frozen in time. In the study of slavery, such static vi-
sions rob both slaves and slaveholders of their agency or, more strangely,
allows agency but denies that their struggle changed the basic constella-
tion of social relations. If the masters' hegemony is immutable, slaves and
their owners are reduced to stock figures of the scholarly imagination. In
mainland North America, slaves (like their owners) were simply not the
same people in 1819 that they had been in 1719 or 1619, although the
origins and color of the slave population often had not changed.

Indeed, the meaning of race itself changed as slavery was continually
reconstructed over the course of those two centuries. Projecting the regi-

men of seventeenth-century tobacco production, the aesthetics of African pottery, or the eschatology of animistic religion into the nineteenth century is no more useful than reading the demands of blackbelt cotton production, the theology of African-American Christianity, and the ethos of antebellum paternalism back into the seventeenth century. It is important to remember that at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when this book concludes, the vast majority of black people, slave and free, did not reside in the blackbelt, grow cotton, or subscribe to Christianity. That the character of slave life in North America was reversed a half century later is a striking commentary on a period that historians have represented as stable maturity. This radical transformation affirms the notion that slavery's history can be best appreciated in terms of generations of captivity and the many thousands who suffered through the long night of American enslavement. Although it would take more than another half century before the last slave in the United States could intone the words, "No more auction block . . . No more hundred lash . . . No more Mistress call," the words of the great spiritual would remind all of the "many thousands" before the day of Jubilee.