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**Slavery in Print:
Slaveholding Ideology and Anxiety in
Antebellum Southern Newspapers, 1830-1861**

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in History

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Declaration

This thesis is entirely the work of the candidate.

The thesis has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

Chapter 3 has been published as:

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Abstract

The newspaper press of the antebellum South was crucial to both creating and perpetuating slaveholders' anxieties over the possibility of slave rebellion. Antebellum southern slaveholders encountered a constant reinforcement of racist stereotypes when they read their newspapers, which fed such anxiety while also bolstering slaveholders' moral justification for their exploitation of fellow human beings. This thesis seeks to show how the southern elite used everyday racism in its press to buttress white supremacy and the system of slavery upon which it rested. This southern form of white supremacy was an unstable formation linked to international events beyond the South; events which the South's elite were very well aware of. As will be shown in the thesis, the southern press coverage of news from beyond the South reveals how the southern slaveholding class saw themselves in relation to a global hierarchy of white men. Ultimately, global matters of whiteness came to structure how the South perceived itself in the lead up to secession. Overall, the thesis argues that when it came to their system of slavery, the southern slaveholding elite lived in a state of constant, stable instability.

Part One of the thesis analyses the representation of African Americans in one newspaper, Macon's *Georgia Telegraph*, to demonstrate how slaveholding readers would have absorbed stereotyped images of black people over particular periods of time, and how this fed a paternalistic justification for enslavement. In Part Two, the thesis considers the reporting of longstanding fears over a possible invasion of the South by the soldiers of the British West India Regiments, stationed in the British West Indies. Such reporting reveals the differing ways such news could both bolster slaveholders' belief in their system, whilst simultaneously creating a vivid vision of black resistance in the South. In the same vein, chapter four focuses on the reporting of a slave rebellion conspiracy in Cuba in 1843-44. This research also shows how news highlighted the possibility of slave rebellion at home, whilst also providing means of reassuring southern slaveholders that their system of slavery was superior to other slave systems, free from outside influences, and therefore secure. Finally, in Part Three, the thesis shows how news of the Indian Uprising of 1857 was reported and read across a global colour line, which posited the superiority of the white or 'European' against the 'darker races,' thereby developing a framework through which southerners could amplify their own internal fears about the possibility of slave rebellion, whilst also feeding notions of a global racial hierarchy that justified slavery and the southern way of life.

**Slavery in Print:
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Introduction

The key to understanding the larger history of white-supremacist imagery in the United States, both during slavery and afterwards, is [the] sharp and recurring contrast between 'the good Negro' in his place and the vicious black man out of it.¹

George M. Fredrickson

While we can continue to abhor the system of human bondage that flourished in the Old South, there is much we can learn from a more dispassionate examination of the arguments used to defend it. We have sought to distance the slaveholders and their creed, to define them as very unlike ourselves. Yet their processes of rationalization and self-justification were not so very different from our own, or from those of any civilization of human actors. The persistence of modern racism is but one forceful reminder of the ways that human beings always view the world in terms of inherited systems of belief and explanation that only partially reflect the reality they are meant to describe. By understanding how others have fashioned and maintained their systems of meaning, we shall be better equipped to evaluate, criticize, and perhaps even change our own.²

Drew Gilpin Faust

¹ George M. Fredrickson, 'White Images of Black Slaves in the Southern United States,' *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, Vol 292:1 (1977), p. 374.

² Drew Gilpin Faust, 'Introduction,' in Drew Gilpin Faust, ed., *The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), p. 20.

This thesis considers how southern print culture - namely southern newspapers - traversed the stereotypes of proslavery ideology whilst simultaneously portraying the possibility of slaveholders' worst nightmares: the rebellion of southern slaves and the downfall of southern slavery. By considering how the ideological representations of the 'good slave' and the 'black other' were expressed to the slaveholding elite, the thesis will explore how newspapers cemented proslavery ideology in the minds of slaveholders. This research seeks a better understanding of the role of the southern press in propagating the racist stereotypes of both the dangerous black 'savage' and the docile and childlike 'Sambo' in the three decades leading to the Civil War. These stereotypes posited black people as inferior to whites and fed a racist ideology that allowed the slaveholding elite to morally justify their exploitation of the enslaved and helped allay their fears of slave rebellion.

There is a large gap in the scholarship relating to the antebellum American press in terms of representations of race. Whilst many scholars have considered the black press, and the agency of those who founded and ran black newspapers, there is very little research that has considered how the dominant, white, elite-run press represented African Americans. Looking at the southern press in particular is important; understanding the ways in which the press encouraged the stereotypes that fed slaveholders' justifications for slavery, is significant in understanding their anxieties over the trustworthiness of their slaves and is vital to explaining how it was that slaveholders also greatly feared the prospect of slave rebellion. Historians have considered the image of the slave rebel in press coverage of slave rebellions and conspiracies, yet newspapers also often perpetuated these stereotypes, even if they were not directly referring to African Americans, or even discussing American slavery. By considering the different ways in which the southern press influenced the diverse stereotypes of people of African descent, this thesis highlights the importance of newspapers in both creating and perpetuating fears and anxieties amongst the slaveholding elite, whilst also bolstering slaveholders' moral justification for their exploitation of fellow human beings and apportioning blame for slave resistance to 'outsiders' such as abolitionists. Whilst it might seem obvious that a white supremacist, slaveholding society would espouse its racist ideology in its newsprint, the importance of researching the intricacies of this print culture is not to be understated. This thesis will consider a number of case studies in order to add to our understanding of how the southern elite 'fashioned and maintained

their system of meaning' by perpetuating racist tropes within their newspapers, both justifying the enslavement of African Americans, whilst also at times, fueling their own anxieties.³

Antebellum Newsprint and the Southern Master Class

The antebellum period was one of the most exciting eras in the history of American journalism.⁴ By 1830, over half of all families in America had newspaper subscriptions.⁵ Newspapers were the fuel of public debate in a whole host of settings: private conversations, public spaces, homes, ceremonies and speeches.⁶ Alexis de Tocqueville, on his tour of America in 1831 noted that newspapers had the ability to 'drop the same thought into a thousand minds at the same moment.'⁷ Over the next thirty years, the American newspaper industry saw seismic shifts. Southerner Thomas Dew remarked, the 'periodical press is now the organ of communication, and the potent engine that controls the popular will.'⁸ By the eve of the Civil War, American political philosopher and statesman Edward Everett, described how 'the newspaper press of the U.S. is, for good or evil, the most powerful influence that acts on the public mind.'⁹

Analysing the newsprint of the past is important to understand a society, and those who held power. Isabel Lehuu has argued that it is vital to 'contextualise historically the

³ Faust, ed., *The Ideology of Slavery*, p. 20.

⁴ William E. Huntzicker, *The Popular Press, 1833-1865* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999), p. 48. For an excellent overview of the Antebellum Press in relation to the coming of the Civil War, see: David B. Sachsman, Gregory A. Borchard, Dea Lisica, Eds, *The Antebellum Press: Setting the Stage for Civil War* (New York: Routledge, 2019). For a classic overview of the History of American Journalism see Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism: A History of Newspapers in the United States through 260 years: 1690-1950* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950).

⁵ David. A. Copeland, *The Antebellum Era: Primary Documents on Events from 1820 to 1860* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003), p. 4.

⁶ Copeland, *The Antebellum Era*, p. 1, p. 14. See also Richard D. Brown, *Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 292.

⁷ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York, 1946), Vol 1, pp. 187-88, cited in Copeland, *The Antebellum Era*, p. 4.

⁸ Thomas R. Dew, *A Digest of the Laws, Customs, Manners, and Institutions of the Ancient and Modern Nations* (New York, 1853), cited in Jonathan Daniel Wells, *Women Writers and Journalists in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 65.

⁹ Lambert Wilmer, *Our Press Gang* (Philadelphia: J. T. Lloyd, 1860), pp. 63-65, cited in Hazel Dicken-Garcia, *Journalistic Standards in Nineteenth-Century America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p. 48.

interaction between texts and readers,' as the constructions of meaning within the texts can be understood as 'an interplay of the texts themselves, the mental outlook of the readers and the prohibitions and precepts inscribed in the texts.'¹⁰ Benedict Anderson has explained how newspapers draw together an 'imagined community' of readers into a conceived community of peers.¹¹ Whilst Anderson referred to newspapers as providing the means of drawing together the imagined community of the nation, the same logic is true of other forms of hegemonic 'communities' within the nation state. In the Old South this was, of course, the slaveholding elite. As Ratner and Teeter point out, whilst historians of antebellum newspapers can certainly assume that newspapers influenced the opinions of their readers, there is not actually any clear way of measuring such influence. Rather, they argue, the value of antebellum newspapers to the historian is what they reveal about the 'emotions and opinions' of their readers. As editors needed to stay in business, the way of keeping their readers happy was to 'remain attuned to words and ideas that would attract the readers they sought.' As such, newspapers reflected the opinions of their readers.¹²

The majority of the slave population of the antebellum South lived on plantations, (units of twenty slaves or more), with a quarter of slaves living on large plantations (defined as a unit with fifty slaves or more).¹³ Historian Eugene Genovese therefore laid emphasis on those 'planters' who owned large plantations and whose political influence and power was highly significant in southern politics and society.¹⁴ This approach, which looms large in the historiography, has its critics, with historians such as James Oakes arguing that Genovese's emphasis on large plantations and his use of the term 'planter,' (normally used to describe a slaveholder with twenty slaves or more) used interchangeably with 'slaveholder,' has ignored the small farmers who owned five slaves

¹⁰ Isabel Lehuu, *Carnival on the Page: Popular Print Media in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), p. 31.

¹¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), pp. 24-25.

¹² Lorman A. Ratner, Dwight L. Teeter Jr., *Fanatics and Fire-Eaters: Newspapers and the Coming of the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), pp. ix-x.

¹³ James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: Knopf, 1982), p. 38. Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), p. 7. For further discussion see: Oakes, *The Ruling Race*, p. x, pp. 38-39, p. 41, p. 52, p. 65; Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery 1619-1877* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), p. xiii, p. 101; David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 198; D. C. Brown, Clive Webb, *Race in the American South: From Slavery to Civil Rights* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 107.

¹⁴ Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll*.

or fewer, and who made up the majority of the slaveholders in the antebellum South.¹⁵ It is, of course, worth noting that about 75% of white families did not own slaves at all.¹⁶

Given that most slaveholders were not planters, James Oakes has highlighted the broader picture of slaveholding experience, with emphasis on the 'typical' slaveholders; small farmers and medium-sized landowners as well as the small but powerful elite planter class.¹⁷ Oakes argues that historians have established 'arbitrary numerical boundaries' to understand the planter class, which limit proper understanding of the slaveholding class overall. He argues that the planter class was often far more fluid than many historians would have us believe, with individuals moving in and out of the slaveholding ranks.¹⁸ Of particular interest is his emphasis on the professionals (such as doctors, lawyers and teachers) who became slaveholders and whom, he argues, were the 'single most influential class' in the antebellum South due to their control of the southern press.¹⁹ Oakes considers these individuals, who often made up the ranks of middle class masters, as the 'backbone' of southern slave society.²⁰

Whilst this thesis does not aim to explore the complexity and many subtleties of the categorization of the slaveholding class, it does seek to highlight the content of the newsprint being read by those slaveholders who were able to afford newspapers. The southern press operated in the interests of a propertied elite. The majority of the readership of the southern newspapers discussed here comprised wealthy white males, evidenced by the money needed to afford the yearly subscription rates of most political newspapers.²¹ Importantly, many of these men were slaveholders. Southern elite women were also interested in the contents of the newspapers; listening when husbands

¹⁵ Oakes, *The Ruling Race*. For further discussion of the problems of definition see: Oakes, *The Ruling Race*, p. 52; Peter. J. Parish, *Slavery: History and Historians* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), pp. 52-53; see also p. 4, p. 29 and p. 126.

¹⁶ Keri Leigh Merritt, *Masterless Men: Poor Whites and Slavery in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 345.

¹⁷ Oakes, *The Ruling Race*, p. x and p. 39. Lydia Plath has recently discussed the nature of slave ownership by poor southern whites: Lydia Plath, "'My Master and Miss ... Warn't Nothing but Poor White Trash': Poor White Slaveholders and their Slaves in the Antebellum South," *Slavery & Abolition*, 38:3 (2017), pp. 475-488.

¹⁸ Oakes, *The Ruling Race*, p. 52.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

²⁰ Parish, *Slavery: History and Historians*, p. 29. See also Jonathan Daniel Wells, *The Origins of the Southern Middle Class, 1800-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

²¹ Gerald. J. Baldasty, 'The Nineteenth-Century Origins of Modern American Journalism,' in John. B. Hench, ed., *Three Hundred Years of the American Newspaper* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1991), 409.

and male relatives read pamphlets and newspapers aloud, and even reading the news to one another.²² Indeed, as Jonathan Wells has shown, although white southern women were normally excluded from actively participating in politics or government, they still 'kept abreast of contemporary issues' and read a wide range of literature, finding periodical literature particularly useful to their varied interests.²³

The importance and influence of newspapers to elite Southerners cannot be underestimated. They were the most popular form of literature, informing Southerners about 'virtually everything they knew of events outside their own communities. Thus, the way in which news was selected and interpreted exerted a tremendous influence in molding the viewpoints of Southerners on many subjects.'²⁴ Southern slaveholders did not solely read southern publications; southern men and women subscribed to northern periodicals throughout the antebellum period in 'great numbers.'²⁵ However, as Donald Reynolds has argued, Northern newspapers 'posed no threat to the hegemony of the native political press.' Despite the importation of northern publications into the South for general interest purposes, when it came to politics, most Southerners gave preference to southern editorial outputs.²⁶ A planter or middle-class family normally subscribed to five or six periodicals, 'including a local newspaper, a financial journal from the North, a periodical for women, a humorous magazine, and at least one general literary monthly.'²⁷

To maintain the financial stability of their newspapers, southern editors often had no choice but to structure their content in the interests of the elite. Indeed, these editors 'survived by joining, or at least integrating themselves with, the establishment.'²⁸ In this sense, the editors spoke for the slaveholders of the South; they were the voice of the most politically and economically powerful individuals in the community and served as

²² Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 385.

²³ Wells, *Women Writers and Journalists*, p.57, p. 61.

²⁴ Donald E. Reynolds, *Editors Make War: Southern Newspapers in the Secession Crisis* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006 [1970]), p. xiii.

²⁵ Wells, *Women Writers and Journalists*, pp. 62-63.

²⁶ Reynolds, *Editors make war*, p. 5.

²⁷ Wells, *Women Writers and Journalists*, pp. 65-66.

²⁸ Carl. R. Osthaus, *Partisans of the Southern Press: Editorial Spokesmen of the Nineteenth Century* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), p. 10.

'weathercocks, indicating the prevailing views of the elite.'²⁹ Reynolds argues that 'even if they were simply reflecting the views of their readers, it is important to recognise that [southern] journals articulated those opinions in ways that distilled and reinforced them in the minds of their readers and mobilized them to act on their convictions.'³⁰ Content analysis of southern newspapers, (rather than a historical study of the newspaper industry), will seek to better understand the projection of proslavery ideology amongst the elite. Ideology, as defined by Althusser as 'the imagined relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence', -specifically proslavery ideology- was a defining feature of the Southern press.³¹ Drawn together by this ideology, the spirit of the community of slaveholders, particularly the elite, was bolstered by its newsprint.

Masters and the 'Trustworthiness' of Slaves

Planter-slave relationships were complex power relations in which the slaveholder needed assurance that slaves were faithful and not dangerous. This was particularly important to individual masters and mistresses as most slaveholders in the antebellum South were not absentee planters but lived alongside their slaves.³² If we follow the argument that slaveholders needed to form a narrative of the 'happy slave,' or 'Sambo,' as a form of self-comfort, then we should not take it as face value when slaveholders said they were not afraid of their slaves. Indeed, Franklin suggests that southerners 'protested almost too much' that they did not fear their slaves.³³ George Fredrickson remarks that talk of the 'loyal and contented bondsmen was probably...self-deception' and that intimidation and violence (or the threat of such) were vital to slaveholders' maintenance of power over slaves, rather than any family-like bonds.³⁴ Parish argues that 'fear was the binding agent of the master-slave relationship;' the threat of planter violence left slaves fearful, yet the master also had the fear of slave insurrection and other smaller scale acts of resistance.³⁵

²⁹ Osthaus, *Partisans of the Southern Press*, p. xiii.

³⁰ Reynolds, *Editors Make War*, p. x.

³¹ Althusser cited in Kevin G. Barnhurst and John Nerone, *The Form of News: A History* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2001), p. 3.

³² Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll*, p. 5, p. 11, Kolchin, *American Slavery*, p. 101.

³³ John Hope Franklin, *The Militant South* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 92.

³⁴ George M. Fredrickson, 'The Role of Race in the Planter Ideology of South Carolina' in Sean Wilentz, ed., *Major Problems in the Early Republic, 1787-1848* (Lexington: Heath, 1992), p. 276.

³⁵ Parish, *Slavery: History and Historians*, p. 81 and p.74.

Some historians argue that the fear of slave rebellion was ever present during the antebellum years. Franklin contends that the fear of slave rebellion was the South's greatest nightmare and that only a few antebellum years were free of rumors of revolt. He claims that, 'fear and apprehension were always present'. Franklin notes that some southern leaders argued for a 'state of continuous preparation' for the oncoming rebellion.³⁶ Richard Maxwell Brown remarks that slaveholders lived with a feeling of 'profound unease.'³⁷ Harvey Wish tells us that there was an 'ever-present fear of attack,' which 'haunted the minds' of whites and Peter Parish describes a 'constant, nagging fear of servile insurrection.'³⁸

In contrast, Dickson Bruce believes that it would be going too far to suggest that slaveholders were in constant fear for their lives as he argues that southerners were able to 'contain their fear.'³⁹ But *containing* fear, in the sense of the social and performative nature of expressing emotions, is a different thing to *feeling fear*; so slaveholders may very well have been constantly fearful even if they were able to contain their emotions as part of the 'self-deception' that their slaves were happy. Indeed, the Genoveses highlight that slaveholders distrusted their slaves even more than they themselves realised.⁴⁰ Questioning his original argument, Dickson Bruce goes on to say that it is 'difficult to know the extent to which southerners were possessed by a fear of insurrection: the evidence is at best ambiguous.'⁴¹ However Genovese points out that no amount of stoking of panic by intemperate slaveholders would have achieved the levels of hysteria seen at times of slave insurrection panics if whites had not already had underlying worries about their slaves' ability to openly resist their enslavement.⁴²

Others, such as Wyatt-Brown, remark that the 'ruling race did not live in constant dread of revolt from below,' they were not afraid of being robbed, raped or massacred. Only

³⁶ Franklin, *The Militant South*, p. 76, p. 70 and p. 78.

³⁷ Richard Maxwell Brown, *Strain of Violence: Historical Studies of American Violence and Vigilantism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 190.

³⁸ Harvey Wish, 'American Slave Insurrections Before 1861,' *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (1937), pp. 313-314, Parish, *Slavery: History and Historians*, p. 22.

³⁹ Dickson. D. Bruce, *Violence and Culture in the Antebellum South* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), p. 127.

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene. D. Genovese, *Fatal Self-Deception: Slaveholding Paternalism in the Old South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 135.

⁴¹ Bruce, *Violence and Culture in the Antebellum South*, p. 128.

⁴² Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll*, p. 596.

during insurrection scares did slaveholding whites become truly afraid. Wyatt Brown argues that during times of non-hysteria, they left doors unlocked and were happy for slaves to come and go from the plantation household. Genovese argues that almost every slaveholder 'claimed to trust his own slaves but to fear his neighbour's.'⁴³ He claims slaveholders rarely locked the doors of the house at night nor locked the slaves in.⁴⁴ Yet despite a professed trust in faithful slaves, there were enough instances of the murder of southern masters to leave slaveholders with a constant sense of anxiety and insecurity which existed simultaneously with a declared belief in the loyalty of their slaves.⁴⁵ Indeed, as Wyatt Brown has described, two 'alternating states of mind' existed for slaveholders: 'apathy and horror.'⁴⁶

The current historiography of the antebellum South is full of anecdotal examples of individual slaveholder fear of black resistance or sweeping statements about generalised fear. Interestingly, historians have not explicitly said that it was only black men who were feared and that black women were not. Carter acknowledges that white southerners had been 'haunted' throughout the history of southern slavery by an 'unsettling fear of the black men and women in their midst.'⁴⁷ Indeed, Kate Stone, the daughter of a planter, writing in Civil War Louisiana, noticed that some mistresses were unable to hide their 'dread of strong, recalcitrant black women.'⁴⁸ It is simply implied by most historians that black males rather than females were deemed to be threatening. This is not necessarily surprising, given that violent crime in most cultures throughout history has been largely a male preserve.⁴⁹ Although discussing men in relation to violence is hardly a new topic, it is important to point out that social and cultural factors are 'decisive in how often and how far aggressive tendencies (which are innate in both genders) are manifested.'⁵⁰ Wyatt Brown has shown that in controlling slave behavior, slaveholders found male

⁴³ Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll*, p. 595.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 615.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 615.

⁴⁶ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 156-157.

⁴⁷ Dan T. Carter, 'The Anatomy of Fear: The Christmas Day Insurrection Scare of 1865,' *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (1976), p. 345.

⁴⁸ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Fatal Self-Deception*, p. 139.

⁴⁹ Pieter Spierenburg, 'Masculinity, Violence and Honour: An Introduction' in Pieter Spierenburg, ed., *Men and Violence: Gender, Honor and Rituals in Modern Europe and America* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998), p. 1.

⁵⁰ Ute Frevert, 'The Taming of the Noble Ruffian: Male Violence and Dueling in Early Modern and Modern Germany,' in Pieter Spierenburg, ed., *Men and Violence: Gender, Honor and Rituals in Modern Europe and America* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998), p. 37.

slaves to be the most problematic. They often had far less reason to fear open resistance and rebellion from enslaved females, as women could be intimidated with threats against both their men and their children. He goes on to say that “women would fall into line if the men were subdued.”⁵¹ Ensuring male slave obedience via demands for ‘signals of full compliance,’ was therefore vital to the prevention of slave insurrection. However, this explanation does not totally eradicate the high probability that female slaves, and the role they might play in any future insurrectionary activity, were also feared, even if less so than their male counterparts. The racist stereotypes of black women were just as important as those of black men to the formation and proliferation of proslavery ideology and rhetoric.

Slaveholder Anxiety and Fear of Slave Rebellion

There is a clear consensus within the historiography of the antebellum South that at times of hysteria, conjured up by real and imagined slave insurrection, slaveholders, both male and female, feared the prospect of the enslaved rising violently against them. Yet despite a narrative of fear, which is ingrained throughout the historiography, there is rarely a deeper analysis of fear that also considers the periods of time when hysteria did not prevail. Steven Channing has argued that understanding the decision of the southern states to secede needs to be seen in light of the fears and passions that were ‘mighty enough’ to drive this political decision.⁵² Eugene Genovese has similarly argued that persistent fear of slave revolts was a key contributing factor to the southern act of secession.⁵³

Slave insurrections were not common in the antebellum South, especially compared to other slave societies. However, there is still a large body of literature dedicated to the local histories of slave rebellion and the after-effects of associated rumours across the southern states, which leaves little doubt that slaveholders feared insurrection by their

⁵¹ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, ‘The Mask of Obedience: Male Slave Psychology in the Old South’, in J. William Harris, ed., *Society and Culture in the Slave South* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 128.

⁵² Steven. A. Channing, *Crisis of Fear: Secession in South Carolina* (New York: Norton, 1974), pp. 5-6.

⁵³ Eugene. D. Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), p. 117.

enslaved population.⁵⁴ The antebellum South experienced two major slave rebellions, Louisiana in 1811 and Nat Turner in 1831, and two major conspiracies, Richmond, Virginia in 1800 and Charleston, South Carolina in 1822.⁵⁵ The Louisiana uprising of 1811 saw up to two hundred armed slaves, led by free mulatto Charles Deslondes, march upon New Orleans. They burnt plantations and killed whites along the way before they were stopped by troops and a well-armed militia.⁵⁶ Some historians have estimated the numbers involved to have been even higher; up to 500 slaves.⁵⁷ In 1831 in Virginia, rebel leader and free black, Nat Turner, gathered the support of seventy slaves and they killed a large number of whites. The imagery of Nat Turner's revolt was as strong as that of the Haitian Revolution in the South's memory. Turner's rebellion caused reaction outside Virginia, with neighbouring states experiencing widespread rumours and panic reactions.⁵⁸

The first of the two biggest antebellum slave conspiracies to be exposed was Gabriel's rebellion in 1800 in Richmond, Virginia. Influenced by the Haitian revolution, the blacksmith and slave, Gabriel, planned an uprising, which was betrayed and led to Gabriel's hanging, alongside twenty-six other blacks.⁵⁹ The second plot was led by Denmark Vesey in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1822. Vesey's plan included killing whites and then escaping to Haiti. Like Gabriel's rebellion, Vesey's plan was betrayed by a slave involved in the plot, leading to the arrest of over one hundred and thirty slaves

⁵⁴ See in particular: Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: International Publishers, 1993 [1943]) and Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution*.

⁵⁵ Maxwell Brown, *Strain of Violence*, p. 190.

⁵⁶ Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, p. 208. For more on the Louisiana Revolt of 1811, see: Robert. L. Paquette, "A Horde of Brigands?" The Great Louisiana Slave Revolt of 1811 Reconsidered,' *Historical Reflections*, Vol. 35, No. 1, (2009), pp. 72-96.

⁵⁷ Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll*, p. 592.

⁵⁸ There is an extensive literature on Nat Turner's Rebellion. See for example: Kenneth S. Greenberg, ed., *Nat Turner: A Slave Rebellion in History and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); David. F. Allmendinger, *Nat Turner and the Rising in Southampton County* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014); Herbert Aptheker, *Nat Turner's Slave Rebellion* (New York: Dover Publications, 2006 [1966]). See also: Lydia Plath, 'Not one black was spared that fell into their hands: North Carolina's reaction to the Nat Turner Rebellion,' MA Thesis, University of Warwick, 2006.

⁵⁹ Gad Heuman, 'Slave Rebellions' in Gad Heuman and Trevor Burnard, eds., *The Routledge History of Slavery* (London: Routledge 2010), pp. 226-227. For more on Gabriel's Rebellion see: Douglas. R. Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia slave conspiracies of 1800 and 1802* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); James Sidbury, *Ploughshares into Swords: Race, Rebellion and Identity in Gabriel's Virginia, 1730 – 1810*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

(and free blacks). Vesey was hanged along with thirty-four others.⁶⁰ Denmark Vesey's rebellion has caused some controversy amongst historians who have debated whether or not the plot was ever real in the first place, or whether it was simply a creation in the minds of whites who were terrified their worst fears would come true.⁶¹ For our purposes, it is not vital to understand whether such conspiracies were 'based upon authentic black' action, but rather to understand the white reaction to, and fears of, such conspiracies.⁶²

After 1831, the South saw no actual slave rebellions, and yet, while slaveholders tried to convince themselves that their slaves were faithful and trustworthy, rumours of poisoning, arson and planned slave rebellions circulated the South.⁶³ Stanley Elkins describes how the South after 1831 became 'victimized by its own fears.'⁶⁴ Haiti and Nat Turner became 'embedded in the antebellum psyche,' meaning white fears of black violence were persistent.⁶⁵ The depth of this fear is illustrated by the fact that 448 people were killed during the thirty-five occasions in which extralegal action was taken against supposed plots. Of these, 447 were mob victims; the vast majority being slaves. Only 26 of these people were white and only 8 were stated as free black people.⁶⁶

What then, did slaveholders fear? Stanley Elkins writing in the late 1950s, argued that southerners did not really fear 'physical peril' but rather they feared subversion, and that it was this that constituted the 'black terror' felt by all whites.⁶⁷ However, since Elkins' study, historians have tended to see slaves' 'subversion' and the threat of physical

⁶⁰ Gad Heuman, 'Slave Rebellions', p. 228. For more on the Vesey Plot, see: Robert L. Paquette, "From Rebellion to Revisionism: The Continuing Debate About the Denmark Vesey Affair," *Journal of the Historical Society*, Vol 4, No. 3 (2004), pp. 291-334. See also Douglas R. Egerton and Robert L. Paquette, eds., *The Denmark Vesey Affair: A Documentary History* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2016).

⁶¹ See Richard. C. Wade, "The Vesey Plot: A Reconsideration," *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 30, No. 2, (1964), pp. 143-61. In his discussion of the Vesey plot Wade concluded that 'there is persuasive evidence that no conspiracy in fact existed, or at most that it was a vague and unformulated plan in the minds or on the tongues of a few colored townsmen,' p. 150.

⁶² Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South*, p. 155.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

⁶⁴ Stanley Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1976), p. 220.

⁶⁵ Brian Gabriel, 'From Haiti to Nat Turner: Racial Panic Discourse during the Nineteenth Century Partisan Press Era', *American Journalism*, Vol 30, No. 3 (2013), p. 360.

⁶⁶ David Grimsted, *American Mobbing: 1828-1962: Toward Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 135.

⁶⁷ Elkins, *Slavery*, p. 221.

violence as far more closely linked in the formation of white elite fears. There is now a clear consensus that slaveholders feared two things. First, they feared slave rebellion and its immediate possibilities; the violent deaths of themselves and their families in particular. This fear persisted despite the fact that so few slave uprisings occurred in the antebellum period, with no significant slave rebellion in the three decades prior to the Civil War.⁶⁸ Laurence Shore has suggested that slaveholders' fear of slave insurrection was largely based upon a haunting fear of the divisions between poorer and richer (and slaveholding and non-slaveholding) whites, which might ultimately result in a lack of unity at a time of violent uprising by slaves.⁶⁹

Second, slaveholders feared the ultimate breakdown of the social order if emancipation should ever occur. Slavery was a way of life for southern slaveholders; 'it ordered their very existence.'⁷⁰ The possible ramifications of emancipation were therefore immense. Slaveholders dreaded 'economic ruin, social chaos, and racial anarchy.'⁷¹ Historian, Winthrop Jordan, described the fear felt by whites of a future 'appalling world turned upside down, a crazy nonsense world of black over white.'⁷² Many slaveholders believed that with the demise of slavery the 'purity of whites' would be threatened and a violent race war would spread across the South.⁷³ This was especially frightening to slaveholders as proslavery ideology encouraged the idea that as a result of emancipation, slaves, who were contented and 'civilised' under the progressive guidance and firm hand of their masters, would regress to the 'natural' state of barbarism and savagery they had apparently experienced in Africa.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Parish, *Slavery: History and Historians*, p. 130.

⁶⁹ Laurence Shore, 'Making Mississippi Safe for Slavery: The Insurrectionary Panic of 1835,' in Orville Vernon Burton and Robert. C. McMath Jr., eds., *Class, Conflict and Consensus: Antebellum Southern Community Studies* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982), pp. 96-127.

⁷⁰ Kolchin, *American Slavery*, p. 111.

⁷¹ Parish, *Slavery: History and Historians*, pp. 22-23.

⁷² Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), p. 111 and p. 114.

⁷³ Oakes, *The Ruling Race*, p. 233.

⁷⁴ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Fatal Self-Deception*, p. 109.

Anxieties of Whiteness

The memory of the Haitian Revolution loomed large in the minds of southern slaveholders and no doubt fuelled their fears. 1791 saw the beginning of the largest slave rebellion in history in the French colony of Saint Domingue, which led to Haiti's independence by 1804. The revolution was devastating for Haiti's white, slave-owning, French elites, many of whom were killed. News from the island left white Southerners terrified.⁷⁵ Events in Saint Domingue encouraged slaveholders in their conviction that emancipation would lead to the slaughter of whites and to economic ruin.⁷⁶ Slaveholders were right to fear the spectre of Haiti, given that the revolution inspired two of the antebellum South's most famous slave conspiracies - Gabriel Prosser's 1800 Richmond, Virginia planned uprising, and Denmark Vesey's 1822, Charleston, South Carolina, planned revolt – and lesser known conspiracies such as the 'Secret Keeper' conspiracy of 1793.⁷⁷ Michael O'Brien argues that the 'emotional focus of southern attitudes lay in Haiti,' and Fredrickson states that memories of Saint Domingue 'continued to haunt the southern imagination.'⁷⁸ It is clear that the imagery of Haiti was apparent when insurrectionary panics occurred. Indeed, Haiti's revolution became 'a compacted, recurrent intertextual discourse that exploded in newspapers anytime later slave troubles occurred, summarizing immediately for the reader what black-on-white violence meant.'⁷⁹

⁷⁵ David Brion Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p.78. For the impact of the Haitian Revolution on the early United States, see Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010) and David P. Geggus, *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001).

⁷⁶ Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, p. 159.

⁷⁷ Gad Heuman, 'Slave Rebellions,' p. 226. For more on the Prosser and Vesey conspiracies see: Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion* and Egerton and Paquette, eds., *The Denmark Vesey Affair*. For more on the 'Secret keeper' conspiracy, see James Sidbury, 'Saint Domingue in Virginia: Ideology, Local Meanings, and Resistance to Slavery, 1790-1800,' *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 63. No. 3 (1997), pp. 531-552 and Robert Alderson, 'Charleston's Rumored Slave Revolt of 1793,' in David P. Geggus, *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), pp. 93-111.

⁷⁸ Michael O'Brien, *Conjectures Of Order: Intellectual Life and The American South, 1810-60, Vol 1* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), p. 207 and Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, p. 53.

⁷⁹ Brian Gabriel, *The Press and Slavery in America, 1791-1859* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2016), p. 18.

Planters in the South were also greatly alarmed by other slave revolts in the Caribbean, namely Barbados in 1816, Demerara in 1823 and Jamaica in 1831. Seeing British abolitionism as the cause for these Caribbean rebellions, slaveholders in the American South were terrified of the potential risk that northern abolitionist thought would incite slave rebellion.⁸⁰ There is much discussion within the historiography of the way in which slave owners feared the possibility of abolitionist plots and outside agitation. Abolitionists were seen as the source of possible slave discontent and threat of violence.⁸¹ Ultimately the fear was that these outside agitators would arm black slaves and initiate a slave rebellion. As Jeffrey Young has highlighted, growing concern that the 'menace' of antislavery was gaining traction, resulted in ever-deepening stereotypes of black identity coupled with ever-more-insistent claims about the humanity and happiness of southern slaves.⁸²

As will be seen throughout this thesis, the southern press often portrayed both internal and foreign events within this paranoid style, with clear emphasis on plotting and outside influences. The fear of the British and their role in fostering abolition was a preoccupation of the southern press. Such Anglophobic rhetoric can be seen time and time again and will be highlighted in part two of this thesis as an important form of slaveholder deflection from the agency and capacity for resistance of enslaved individuals. Yet, despite such Anglophobia and fear of abolitionists, southern slaveholders could also find it within themselves to verbally support the British when it came to the maintenance of a global hierarchy of whiteness. Peter James Hudson has argued that recent scholarship on slavery's role in the emergence of modern capitalism, notably Sven Beckert's *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*, has dismissed race as almost incidental; the whiteness of white men who profited so handsomely from the rise of capitalism is not considered, despite the fact that 'descriptions of the global hierarchy of labour and production that mark modern capitalism are clearly raced' within such literature.⁸³ Follet explains the importance of exploring the master-slave relationship of the American South in order to understand how planters 'reconciled their profit-minded

⁸⁰ Edward Bartlett Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation: The Caribbean Roots of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008).

⁸¹ See for example: Grimsted, *American Mobbing*, p. 156. Gabriel, *The Press and Slavery in America, 1791-1859*, p. 107.

⁸² Young, *Proslavery and Sectional Thought in the Early South*, p. 52.

⁸³ Peter James Hudson, *The Racist Dawn of Capitalism: Unearthing the economy of bondage*, March 14 2016. <http://bostonreview.net/books-ideas/peter-james-hudson-slavery-capitalism>

entrepreneurialism with their collective self-image as paternalistic lords.⁸⁴ This thesis will also consider how such a self-image fits into a narration of what appeared to be a global social order of white supremacy, as seen via the news of rebellions of those deemed to be of the 'darker races' elsewhere in the world. In his 2002 review of the field of whiteness studies, Peter Kolchin concluded by highlighting the unfulfilled potential of the field. Kolchin noted that he hoped the characteristics of future scholarship would 'include greater attention to historical and geographical context' and that there would be a 'continued exploration of the complex relationship between race and nation.'⁸⁵ The case studies presented in this thesis, particularly in Part Three, go a small way to fulfilling both of Kolchin's requests.

Proslavery Ideology

The proslavery argument was the 'collective moral reconciliation' of Southern whites to racialised slavery.⁸⁶ Faust has explained how proslavery thought gained increased significance in the three decades before the Civil War, acting as a means of harnessing the fight for the survival of the 'southern way of life.' This thesis begins its analysis in 1830 in order to take account of the changes and intensification of proslavery thought over the course of the following thirty years. Although such thought had 'demonstrated remarkable consistency from the seventeenth century' it became far more of a formalised ideology in the South in the period of the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s with wide dissemination of proslavery writings. As Faust puts it: 'The intensification of proslavery argumentation produced an increase in conceptual organization and coherence within the treatises themselves, which sought methodically to enumerate all possible foundations for human bondage.'⁸⁷ As time went on, apologists for slavery were far less likely to openly acknowledge negative aspects of human bondage and preferred to only discuss what they considered the positives of their peculiar institution.⁸⁸ Studies of proslavery and intellectual thought have highlighted the antebellum debates over

⁸⁴ Follett, *The Sugar Masters*, p. 9.

⁸⁵ Peter Kolchin, 'Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America,' *Journal of American History*, Vol. 89, No. 1 (2002), p. 172.

⁸⁶ Clarence Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom: Masters and Slaves in Civil War Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), p. xix.

⁸⁷ Faust, ed, *The Ideology of Slavery*, p.4.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

slavery and the southern justifications for enslavement of African Americans.⁸⁹ Within many proslavery narratives there was a clear racial defence of slavery. Fredrickson argued that this racist defence led the way to a 'herrenvolk democracy,' – the enslavement of an inferior race as the foundation for an egalitarian white democracy.⁹⁰ By the 1830s, where this study starts, the South was most certainly, and had long been, a white supremacist society.⁹¹

This position was strengthened in the 1840s and 1850s by a greater emphasis on a scientific racism, (a 'quasi-scientific doctrine') which stressed the inherent inferiority of the 'black race' based on apparent medical and scientific wisdom.⁹² Whilst racial arguments had been an important element of proslavery thought from the colonial period, the development of ethnology helped to 'enlarge and systematize this facet of the argument'. Considered a real science, ethnology offered a 'variety of skull measurements, geological and anthropological "facts" as incontrovertible evidence for the mainstream position.'⁹³ In the 1850s this 'biological conception' of white supremacy made it far easier for proslavery theorists to argue that rather than black people being culturally inferior human beings, they were actually an entirely separate species of human- far different to the advanced human form of the white man. Proslavery ideology therefore took such 'science' as proof that freeing black people would be unwise- even mad- as only under slavery could white people keep black people safe from their own propensity to be savage.⁹⁴ The American School of Ethnologists included key figures such as the Philadelphia physician Samuel Morton and the Mobile, Alabama, doctor Josiah Nott, who argued that Europeans were not only physically and medically different from what they deemed to be the other 'races', but that Europeans were so 'different as to

⁸⁹ See for example: Jeffrey Robert Young, *Proslavery and Sectional Thought in the Early South, 1740-1829. An Anthology* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006); Eric L. McKittrick, ed., *Slavery Defended: The Views of the Old South* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1963); Faust, ed, *The Ideology of Slavery*.

⁹⁰ Parish, *Slavery: History and Historians*, p. 142, See George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

⁹¹ Brown and Webb, *Race in the American South*, p. 101.

⁹² Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, p. 2, p. 70. George. M. Fredrickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 154. See also Lacy K Ford, *Deliver us from Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 532.

⁹³ Faust, ed., *The Ideology of Slavery*, p. 14, p. 16.

⁹⁴ Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom*, p. xx.

constitute a separate and markedly superior species.’ Such ideas were used to widely promote the proslavery cause in the US.⁹⁵

This is not to say that there was seamless agreement within proslavery thought. By the 1850s the unity of proslavery thought was beginning to be challenged. However, these ‘inconsistencies were to remain largely dormant’ before the Civil War as proslavery Southerners ‘sought to minimize the impact of philosophical contradictions in order to maintain the strength that derived from proslavery unity.’⁹⁶ At the core of mainstream proslavery thought stood the Bible; one of the ‘most important sources of authority in their intellectual culture and associated slavery with the fundamental values of their civilization.’⁹⁷ One of the most important aspects of proslavery thought was the embedding of proslavery arguments within the context of nineteenth-century moral philosophy, which lay great emphasis on the duties and responsibilities of man. Apologists for slavery argued that masters could not disregard their human obligation to care for their enslaved property.⁹⁸ Thus paternalism became a defining feature of proslavery ideology. Paternalism was the ideological premise by which an elite, propertied class was able to defend and rationalise the exploitation of an enslaved labour force. Elite slaveholders justified their power over enslaved people by insisting that a parent-child reciprocal relationship existed; this familiar metaphor sat at the heart of paternalist ideology.⁹⁹

Paternalism

The work of Eugene Genovese has been pivotal within the historiographical discussions of the southern master class’ ideological orientation. Genovese argued that the South had its own distinct form of paternalism. He described a web of obligations and expectations that bound masters and slaves together and ultimately fortified the

⁹⁵ Timothy Lockley, *Military Medicine and the Making of Race: Life and Death in the West India Regiments 1794-1874* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 139. See especially Chapter 5: ‘Dehumanising the Black Soldier,’ pp. 139-163. Lockley highlights how leading figures in the American School of Ethnologists, particularly Josiah Nott, used the publications of British military surgeons to advance their own arguments.

⁹⁶ Faust, ed., *The Ideology of Slavery*, p. 14.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁹⁸ Faust, ed., *The Ideology of Slavery*, p. 12.

⁹⁹ Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom*, p. xix.

masters' rule.¹⁰⁰ This culture was ruled by a paternalistic worldview that valued family-like relationships between master and slave above impersonal relationships. It defined the relations between the superordinate and the subordinate, ultimately resulting in the subordinate accepting 'a doctrine of reciprocal obligations' as legitimate.¹⁰¹ For Genovese, slavery in the southern US was primarily a matter of class relationships (made more complex by racial hierarchies). Southern history was 'essentially determined by particular relationships of class power in racial form.'¹⁰² Fredrickson has argued that while Genovese's earlier work acknowledged planter racism and the brutality inherent in the system of paternalism, he hugely underestimated the significance of racial fears and prejudices as the foundation of slaveholder ideology.¹⁰³ Indeed, as Follett has noted, slaveholding paternalism of the South 'carried the indelible stamp of antebellum racism.'¹⁰⁴

In more recent work, Genovese, alongside Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, argued that slaveholders wished to present slavery as a benevolent institution in which paternalism ruled. The slaveholder took care of the whole family, white and black, and slaves were happy. In reality, this romanticised picture only existed in the minds of slaveholders who perpetuated the myth because they needed to justify an exploitative system.¹⁰⁵ The Genoveses describe this paternalistic vision of slaves as quasi-kin as an 'ideological imperative' embedded in the slaveholder's psyche.¹⁰⁶ Genovese and Fox-Genovese argue that slaveholders really truly believed that the system of slavery they led was best for all involved. Indeed, in their opening page, they argue that 'in most respects, southern slaveholders said what they meant and meant what they said.'¹⁰⁷ The word 'paternalism' and the notion of whether slaveholders truly believed in their own rhetoric or not has proven to be fairly problematic and far from clear for successive historians. Burnard, critiquing Genovese and Fox-Genovese's book, points out that they do not

¹⁰⁰ See Eugene D. Genovese, 'Paternalism and Class Relations in the Old South' in Sean Wilentz, ed., *Major Problems in the Early Republic, 1787-1848* (Lexington: Heath, 1992). See also Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll*.

¹⁰¹ Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll*, p. 6 and J. William Harris, 'Introduction,' in J. William Harris, ed., *Society and Culture in the Slave South* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 5.

¹⁰² Genovese, 'Paternalism and Class Relations in the Old South,' p. 264.

¹⁰³ Fredrickson, 'The Role of Race in the Planter Ideology of South Carolina,' p. 276.

¹⁰⁴ Richard Follett, *The Sugar Masters: Planters and Slaves in Louisiana's Cane World, 1820-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), p. 153.

¹⁰⁵ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Fatal Self-Deception*.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

engage fully with Follet's work on Louisiana Sugar masters.¹⁰⁸ Follet highlights how paternalism was often a mask for slaveholders to 'disguise their incentives' of maximising profits and the associated 'market dynamics of the master-slave relationship.'¹⁰⁹ This was because the '...advanced capitalist forms of slave management [were] difficult to reconcile with a paternalist mode of behavior.' However, Follet also argues that whilst the 'charade' of paternalism was an act, it was nevertheless an act in which many slaveholders believed.¹¹⁰

Indeed, Fredrickson has argued that the slaveholders of the South did not need to be paternalistic, as it was possible to rule by intimidation and coercion, and that rather than being paternalistic, powerful slaveholders felt fear and contempt towards their slaves.¹¹¹ If we combine Fredrickson's argument with the Genoveses' idea of 'self-deceiving' slaveholders, we arrive at a picture of planters who perpetuated the myth of a paternalistic happy plantation life while simultaneously fearing their slaves. This is exactly akin to the 'masking' described by Follet, except for the fact that Follet explicitly highlights the economically focused incentives that lay 'beneath a façade of paternal reciprocity.'¹¹² As Follet so aptly puts it, 'the slaveholders' pastiche was an act of denial, but it defined their self-image and articulated their objectionable, though bona fide world view.'¹¹³

The notion of paternalism has played a pivotal role in the historiographies of the Antebellum South, with debates over it often obscuring or overshadowing other important facets of understanding slavery. This thesis does not seek to argue what 'paternalism' really meant to slaveholders or whether slaveholders really believed that paternalistic family-like relationships were good. Debating whether slaveholders really believed in what they said takes our attention away from more important discussions. It is possible that slaveholders truly believed in what they told themselves, but it is also possible that they desperately tried to believe in what they said, despite knowing it was not true. The things that slaveholders told themselves, whether they truly believed them

¹⁰⁸ Trevor Burnard, 'Who Deluded Whom? Eugene Genovese and Planter Self-Deception,' *Slavery & Abolition*, Vol. 34, No. 8 (2013), p. 511.

¹⁰⁹ Follett, *The Sugar Masters*, p. 156. For a superb explanation of paternalist masking, see especially pp. 152-160.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

¹¹¹ Fredrickson, 'The Role of Race in the Planter Ideology of South Carolina', pp. 274-276.

¹¹² Follett, *The Sugar Masters*, p. 156.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

or not, were important to the way they continued to justify the enslavement of human beings. This thesis will examine this rhetoric and the way it was expressed in the southern newspapers.

Sambo and the Savage

From 1830-1860, Sambo was the predominant southern image of the 'securely enslaved' black person.¹¹⁴ Slaveholders encouraged a dualistic image of the black 'child' Sambo and the 'savage' - what Fredrickson describes as an 'unstable compound of opposites.'¹¹⁵ In this stereotyping of enslaved African Americans, slaveholders believed that under their guardianship, the slave who would otherwise be a brutal savage and a monster, was now a 'Sambo:' a contented, childlike and docile individual.¹¹⁶ The belief in racial difference was also expressed via a gendered characterisation of the Sambo as dependent, weak and lacking in manly qualities. This infantilisation saw the Sambo's masculinity defined against that of the white man, with Sambo represented as the natural subordinate. As Michael Hatt has written: 'If manliness was a question of control, then the [Sambo] could not be considered masculine. His dependence on his owner within the paternalistic bond of slave society, and his lack of control over his circumstances...made him a very paradigm of the unmanly.'¹¹⁷ Racist stereotypes of the African American character made clear that the docility and loyalty of the Sambo were not natural characteristics, but rather an 'artificial creation of absolute white dominance and control.' In the event of weakening the bonds of such dominance, apologists for slavery argued the black slave would 'revert to type as a bloodthirsty brute.'¹¹⁸ Slaveholders needed the 'sambo' to exist (in their minds at least) to convince both themselves and the outside world of the morality of slavery and, as Ronald Takaki has argued, masters needed Sambos, even if they were imagined, as the image of the contented slave helped to pacify the minds of masters who were hysterically alarmed by

¹¹⁴ Fredrickson, 'White Images of Black Slaves in the Southern United States,' p. 370.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 370.

¹¹⁶ Ronald. T. Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1900), pp. 116-117 and Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, pp. 53-54. Fredrickson, 'White Images of Black Slaves in the Southern United States,' p. 370.

¹¹⁷ Michael Hatt, "'Making a Man of Him': Masculinity and the Black Body in Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Sculpture,' *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 15. No. 1 (1992), p. 21.

¹¹⁸ Fredrickson, 'White Images of Black Slaves in the Southern United States,' p. 370.

the idea of slave uprisings.¹¹⁹ Within their proslavery paternalist ideology, antebellum slaveholders framed African Americans as wayward children requiring guidance and discipline and, as such, 'racial bondage appeared as an altruistic exercise in white benevolence and humanitarianism.'¹²⁰

While we cannot know how many slaves played the role of sambo in order to simply survive daily life, it is clear that the slaveholders' own reliance on the myth of the 'sambo' meant that they therefore felt an extra level of anxiety towards their slaves as they did not know whether true personalities were on show or whether slaves were 'acting' as a sambo.¹²¹ So whilst masters felt a sense of comfort and control at the thought of the docile sambo, they also felt a level of fear that behind the 'mask' of the sambo was the possibility of a 'rebellious savage.'¹²² Indeed, as Fredrickson points out, masters were often honest about their feelings in their writings; admitting that they held suspicions that 'duplicity, opportunism, and potential rebelliousness lurked behind the mask of Negro affability.'¹²³ Slaveholders were frightened of possible signifiers of a 'different spirit among blacks.' The social demeanor of the slaves created the allusion of the sambo; 'doffing the cap, intoning of the right greeting, downward glance.' However, a miserable stare, an abrupt reply or wearing clothes in a certain way were gestures which worried masters and stoked fears of the falsehood of the sambo stereotype. Wyatt-Brown explains that whites felt they were 'helpless to prevent blacks from moving out of accustomed patterns of behavior.'¹²⁴

As the dualistic image propagated the belief that the slave's contentment was not his natural character, but was a result of the slaveholder's firm control, there was always a possibility that a loosening of this control would lead the black person to revert to their natural state of a 'bloodthirsty savage.'¹²⁵ It was these 'brutes' whom slaveholders predicted would lead a race war in the event of abolition. In the minds of white masters,

¹¹⁹ Takaki, *Iron Cages*, pp. 121.

¹²⁰ Follett, *The Sugar Masters*, p. 153.

¹²¹ Takaki, *Iron Cages*, pp. 118-119. In his *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979) John W. Blassingame argued that the character of Sambo was a mask used by enslaved African Americans which enabled them to play the role of Sambo in front of the master as a survival tactic.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 121.

¹²³ Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, p. 53.

¹²⁴ Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South*, p. 161.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

therefore, the sambo existed alongside the 'African savage, given to acts of incredible brutality.'¹²⁶ Masters could not reconcile the two sides of this dualism, nor could they reject either image, for the system depended on belief in both.¹²⁷

Dickson Bruce has highlighted how slaveholders' private papers often reveal stories of slaves who 'rebelled' against the master in a violent manner; taking the form of threatened or real violence against the master's own body. Bruce argues that murders, stabbings and other forms of violence towards slaveholders were recorded often enough to make it clear that southern slaveholders believed that disciplining slaves was a preventative measure for their own safety. For our purposes, the most important point Bruce makes is the notion that black violence against masters represented a move away from the sambo character which had been 'so carefully constructed in the interests of slavery.'¹²⁸ In this sense, *resistance* on the plantation and *open rebellion* were 'virtually synonymous in the white mind.' Plantation order was therefore of vital importance and 'any deviation' from its 'fragile and organic' structure, was a challenge to the whole system.¹²⁹ Fear of localised violence against the body of the slaveholder was indistinguishable, in the mind of the master, from revolt and, therefore, symbolized the distinct possibility of the breakdown of the entire system of slavery.

The Sambo stereotype seems to have intensified over the course of the antebellum period. In the aftermath of the Nat Turner rebellion of 1831, leading spokesmen in the Virginia legislature who argued for the benefits of slavery emphasized the happiness of slaves, pointing out that the rebellion had been but a blip in an otherwise calm, contented set of social relations between masters and slaves.¹³⁰ Young has shown that as the 'antislavery menace' grew in the minds of southern slaveholders, their response was an increase in the stereotyping of black identity alongside 'ever more insistent claims about the humanity and happiness' of their slaves.¹³¹ This is where the importance of the Sambo stereotype mattered; believing in the apparent happiness of the 'bumbling, loving, childish, and grateful recipients of their masters' love,' was a key

¹²⁶ Bruce, *Violence and Culture in the Antebellum South*, p. 132

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

¹³⁰ Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, p. 52.

¹³¹ Young, *Proslavery and Sectional Thought in the Early South*, p. 52.

factor in allaying such fears.¹³² Stereotypes, it is argued, are crucial to the construction of the self, as they develop in reaction to what are deemed as threats to the sense of self.¹³³ The Genoveses also argue that as the South moved towards secession, arguments in favour of the loyalty and trustworthiness of slaves grew stronger. This assertion grew simultaneously with the representation of black people as racially inferior.¹³⁴

The Antebellum Newspaper Press: An Overview

From 1800 to the 1850s, partisanship dictated much of the American press.¹³⁵ The US census of 1850 estimated that eighty percent of newspapers were partisan.¹³⁶ This is unsurprising, given that President Andrew Jackson had bestowed favours on editors who supported him. This pattern of political patronage continued with newspapers being financed by political parties, factions and candidates. As Gerald Baldasty has noted, there was 'no room for indecision or neutrality in the press.' Editors put together the political content of their papers in order that their readers who could vote were persuaded to vote for the political party that financed the paper.¹³⁷ Editors across the country were also political activists; they held party meetings and recruited new candidates.¹³⁸ There was nothing underhanded about this. It was common practice and readers were well aware of the partisan nature of the press. At federal level, political patronage and government printing contracts could help editors. At local and state level, editors who remained loyal to local officials were also awarded printing contracts. Printing contracts were also awarded within county and congressional districts by state and federal agencies and officials.¹³⁹ Most states awarded legislative printing contracts to subsidise editors.¹⁴⁰ Many newspapers also depended upon advertising revenue to keep them

¹³² Young, *Proslavery and Sectional Thought in the Early South*, p. 51.

¹³³ William Tynes Cowan, *The Slave in the Swamp: Disrupting the Plantation Narrative* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p.21.

¹³⁴ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Fatal Self-Deception*, p. 89.

¹³⁵ Dicken-Garcia, *Journalistic Standards in Nineteenth-Century America*, p. 64.

¹³⁶ Gerald J. Baldasty, *The Commercialization of News in the Nineteenth Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), p. 7.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹³⁹ Huntzicker, *The Popular Press*, p. 35. See also: Culver H. Smith, *The Press, Politics and Patronage: The American Government's Use of Newspapers 1789-1875* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1977), pp. 73-74.

¹⁴⁰ Baldasty, *The Commercialization of News in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 22.

going.¹⁴¹ Some papers were commercial rather than political, yet both types of newspaper were expensive, at an average cost of six cents an issue. Buying one issue at a time could only be done at the printer's office and therefore the normal way of purchasing newspapers was by annual subscription at a cost of eight to ten dollars.¹⁴² This amount was more than a skilled worker earned in a week.¹⁴³ It is hardly surprising then, as Michael Schudson points out, that newspaper circulations were very low, with even the largest metropolitan titles having circulations of one or two thousand. It is also not surprising that content within papers was limited to politics and commerce and as such, the readership of newspapers was confined to a political and a mercantile class of elites.¹⁴⁴

Before the introduction of the telegraph, news in America spread via incoming ships and via the newspaper exchange system. Due to a law of 1792, the government allowed editors to swap papers with one another for free through the postal system, therefore making news plentiful and inexpensive.¹⁴⁵ Antebellum newspaper editors filled their papers with material gained from exchange papers. They compiled their papers 'with both "scissors and the quill," borrowing from and contributing to regional, political, religious and even national newspaper networks.'¹⁴⁶ These networks used 'textual borrowing,' where authorship was essentially substituted by circulation.¹⁴⁷ Due to ill-defined copyright laws, the exchange system resulted in entire columns of newspaper being reprinted; sometimes providing credit to the original publication, sometimes not.¹⁴⁸ Ryan Cordell has argued that antebellum newspaper readers were 'accessing an imagined, collective authorial presence' because of the number of articles which were reprinted.¹⁴⁹ Importantly, Cordell explains that this system of news circulation and

¹⁴¹ Reynolds, *Editors Make War*, p. 7.

¹⁴² Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), p. 15.

¹⁴³ Michael Emery and Edwin Emery, *The Press in America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media*, 7th Ed (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992), p. 96.

¹⁴⁴ Schudson, *Discovering the News*, p. 15.

¹⁴⁵ Baldasty, *The Commercialization of News in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 145. Huntzicker, *The Popular Press, 1833-1865*, p. 12.

¹⁴⁶ Ryan Cordell, 'Reprinting, Circulation and the Network Author in Antebellum Newspapers,' *American Literary History*, Vol. 27, No. 3, (2015), p. 434.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 417.

¹⁴⁸ Wells, *Women Writers and Journalists in the Nineteenth-Century South*, p. 76.

¹⁴⁹ Cordell, 'Reprinting, Circulation and the Network Author in Antebellum Newspapers,' p. 430. Cordell suggests that this is similar to the 'Imagined Community' as described by Benedict Anderson in his *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

exchange created a feedback loop, in which texts were circulated throughout the network as a consequence of their presumed value to readers. In their decision to reprint pieces from elsewhere, Cordell argues that editors 'appropriated the collective authority of the newspaper system.' In so doing, they placed their publications as one 'node' within a whole host of wider networks, both political and social. By reprinting content, editors simultaneously drew from these wider networks, whilst also adding to them.¹⁵⁰

The telegraph was introduced in 1844, with all the major cities (except San Francisco) linked by telegraph by 1852, when seventeen thousand miles of telegraph wires were in use. Lorman Ratner and Dwight Teeter Jr. highlight how by the late 1850s railroad and telegraph infrastructure was far more complete in the North than in the South, revealing a 'divergence of cultures.' They describe the North as 'communication rich,' and the South as 'communication poor.'¹⁵¹ However, even in the North, the newspaper exchange system was so popular that it remained a viable news gathering system even after the introduction of the telegraph. This was especially true given that mailed news was free while the telegraph cost money, and far longer reports could be sent in paper exchanges and in letters compared to telegraph dispatches.¹⁵²

The 'typical' newspaper was a weekly (although many dailies did exist too). Papers tended to be four pages long, with two of these pages normally given over to advertisements. Editorial content was typically printed on the inside pages alongside shorter items of news and clippings taken from the exchange papers.¹⁵³ The content of newspapers included long government reports and printed political speeches. Presidential speeches, Congressional debates, and other official reports were printed verbatim in order to inform the reading public about executive and legislative decisions, diplomacy, and other government activities. It was common for this material to be printed with no editorial comment attached.¹⁵⁴ Papers also printed jokes, 'tall tales,' anecdotes, poetry, private letters, recipes, news of fashion and advertisements. Southern newspapers tended to also print slave runaway 'ads' and information about auctions of enslaved people alongside their advertisements. As John Coward notes, the

¹⁵⁰ Cordell, 'Reprinting, Circulation and the Network Author in Antebellum Newspapers,' p. 418.

¹⁵¹ Ratner and Teeter Jr., *Fanatics and Fire-Eaters*, p. 16.

¹⁵² John M. Coward, *The Newspaper Indian: Native American Identity in the Press, 1820-90* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), p. 14.

¹⁵³ Schudson, *Discovering the News*, p. 14.

¹⁵⁴ Coward, *The Newspaper Indian*, p. 86

‘relative openness’ of the editorial process resulted in antebellum news-making being an ‘idiosyncratic affair, largely dependent on an editor’s needs or interests.’¹⁵⁵

The rise of the penny press takes center stage in the historiography of American journalism. The 1830s saw a ‘commercial revolution’ in the American newspaper press with the development of commercial newspapers that shifted from politically focused content to news for the ‘ordinary’ city dweller. The penny papers spread far more ‘news’ rather than editorial opinions.¹⁵⁶ The penny press saw a huge alteration in content, printing local news as well as national and foreign, and including aspects of social life such as crime news and unusual stories. Penny papers began to reflect the affairs of urban artisan, middle-class and working-class Americans, rather than just the elite.¹⁵⁷ Emerging in New York, the penny press was mainly a northern urban phenomenon, based in major eastern cities. The first penny paper, the *New York Sun*, first published September 3, 1833, had the largest circulation of any paper in the city within a few months.¹⁵⁸ Costing just a penny or two, these new papers were sold in the streets each day, rather than by annual subscription and therefore their circulation figures were huge compared to the traditional newspaper.¹⁵⁹ As such, the financial support of penny papers came from advertisers and less so from political patronage.¹⁶⁰

The Southern Newspaper Press

A large body of scholarship focuses on the American newspaper press of the antebellum years. This scholarship focuses on the shift in newspaper production from a partisan press run in the interests of the elite, to the development of the penny press and, as such, much of the literature covering the later antebellum press is dominated by discussions of the popular press.¹⁶¹ The penny press was largely a northern phenomenon in this period, with the exception of Baltimore and New Orleans where penny papers did

¹⁵⁵ Coward, *The Newspaper Indian*, p. 14

¹⁵⁶ Schudson, *Discovering the News*, p. 14, p. 17. For a history of the penny press see: Susan Thompson, ‘The Penny Press, 1833-1861,’ in Wm. David Sloan, *The Media in America: A History*, 8th ed (Northport: Vision Press, 2011), pp. 121-140. Baldasty, *The Commercialization of News in the Nineteenth Century*; Huntzicker, *The Popular Press, 1833-1865*.

¹⁵⁷ Schudson, *Discovering the News*, pp. 22-23.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁶⁰ Baldasty, *The Commercialization of News in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 48.

¹⁶¹ See: Martin Conboy, ‘The American Popular Press from the Nineteenth Century,’ in his *The Press and Popular Culture* (London: Sage, 2002); Huntzicker, *The Popular Press*.

arise. Because of the vast change in the nature of news prompted by the introduction of the penny press, it is unsurprising that historians have focused time and attention on its development in the North and the associated cultural, economic and social shift towards a popular press.

However, as a result of this focus, the South is often overlooked in surveys of nineteenth-century newspaper press history. The southern press did not keep up with the developments of the northern press during the years covered by this thesis. As William Huntzicker has highlighted, not all newspapers became penny papers searching for a mass popular readership. As was certainly the case in the South, most newspapers 'continued to rely on political, religious and other organisations for subsidies.'¹⁶² Northern newspapers, due to their far greater circulation, were more numerous. For example, the *New York Tribune's* daily circulation was 77,000, whereas the South's largest paper, the *Richmond Enquirer*, had a circulation of 8,000.'¹⁶³ Historians of print culture therefore have tended to discuss both North and South together, whilst focusing mainly on the North.¹⁶⁴ However there were big differences between the northern press and the southern press in the last three decades of the antebellum era. Whilst northern penny papers began to transform American journalism and started to reflect a wider variety of reader interests, the major urban dailies of the South remained as voice pieces for wealthy planters, other slaveholding professionals and those with commercial interests.¹⁶⁵ Fierce partisanship marked most of the southern newspapers. Indeed, Carl Osthaus has stated that on the eve of Civil War 'southern journalism was old-fashioned.'¹⁶⁶

Apart from the penny papers of New Orleans and Baltimore, newspapers of the South were still limited to an educated, literate class who could afford the annual subscriptions. As this limited newspaper subscribers to the upper and middle classes, it is worth highlighting, as Jonathan Wells has done, that 'whiteness also circumscribed southern periodical culture.'¹⁶⁷ This is unsurprising, given that the elite proslavery planter class dominated politics, which in turn dictated the support of newspaper editors. Doug

¹⁶² Huntzicker, *The Popular Press, 1833-1865*, p. 48.

¹⁶³ Copeland, *The Antebellum Era*, p. 15.

¹⁶⁴ See for example, Dicken- Garcia, *Journalistic Standards in Nineteenth-Century America*.

¹⁶⁵ Osthaus, *Partisans of the Southern Press*, p. xiii.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁶⁷ Wells, *Women Writers and Journalists in the Nineteenth-Century South*, pp. 4-5.

Cumming highlights that even editors in southern small towns who had slightly more independence were not willing to take a risk and profess themselves in favor of ending slavery or, indeed, to appeal to the 'unpredictable interests of a mass audience.'¹⁶⁸

A small number of studies have focused entirely on southern newspapers and, in particular, on southern editors. Donald Reynold's study of southern newspaper editors in the secession crisis and Carl Osthaus' study of nineteenth-century southern editors, both highlight the critical role of editors and their newspapers in the build-up to the Civil War.¹⁶⁹ By the 1850s, southern editors who 'rejected any compromise with antislavery forces' were known as 'Fire-eaters'.¹⁷⁰ Doug Cumming describes how they 'flourished as the proslavery theoreticians for the planter class.'¹⁷¹ Infamous 'fire-eaters' such as Robert Barnwell Rhett Jr. of the *Charleston Mercury*, Edmund Ruffin of the *Southern Planter* and James D. B. De Bow of *De Bow's Review*, were as powerful as clergy or politicians in their ability to shape opinion. Such editors were entirely devoted to the South and its way of life and were massively influential figures due to their aggressive resistance to abolitionist rhetoric.¹⁷² The role of the southern editor cannot be understated. These men dominated journalism and controlled the spread of news in the South. As they were the voice of the those who held most political and economic significance, the editors of the South were tasked with defending 'southern values,' namely, defending slavery against the abolitionist forces of the North.¹⁷³ By 1850, the southern newspaper press and its editors were preoccupied with sectional politics and a deep concern over threats to the 'racial status quo.'¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁸ Doug Cumming, *The Southern Press: Literary Legacies and the Challenge of Modernity* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2009), p. 50.

¹⁶⁹ Reynolds, *Editors Make War*; Osthaus, *Partisans of the Southern Press*.

¹⁷⁰ Cumming, *The Southern Press*, p. 79.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

¹⁷² Bernell Elizabeth Tripp, 'The Antebellum Press, 1820-1861,' in Sloan, Wm. David, *The Media in America: A History*, 8th ed (Northport: Vision Press, 2011), p. 152. For more on southern 'fire-eaters' see: Cumming, *The Southern Press*, pp. 79 -80, Michael Emery and Edwin Emery, *The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media*, 7th ed (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992), p. 123.

¹⁷³ Osthaus, *Partisans of the Southern Press*, pp. xi - xiii.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

Antebellum Southern Newspapers and Slavery

This thesis considers the way the southern press in 1830-1860 represented African Americans and negotiated slaveholder's proslavery ideology when not directly discussing the events linked to southern slave insurrections. There is a large body of work that considers the antebellum black press and other alternative newspapers, such as those written by Native Americans.¹⁷⁵ This scholarship considers the voices of African American people, but not the representation of black people within the white press. There has been work that considers the representation of African Americans in the nineteenth-century press, but these often cover the postbellum period and often do not concentrate on the southern press.¹⁷⁶ Scholars have traditionally used newspapers as sources rather than as a subject of study themselves. It is very common to see newspapers used as sources when discussing slave rebellion.¹⁷⁷ Brian Gabriel's *The Press and Slavery in America* is the only monograph to focus on the antebellum press and slavery. It considers the role of the press, and an associated racialised media discourse, in the formation of racial panics surrounding slave insurrections in the antebellum South. He highlights that the underlying foundation of the moral panic was a *longstanding social fear*: an 'all-consuming... fear that white people had regarding the potential or real violence that black people could inflict on them'.¹⁷⁸ As the southern press was run in the interests of the white slaveholding elite, their ideological social fears of slaves taking action against white control played out in the media, encouraging public concern and authorities to act

¹⁷⁵ See for example: Jacqueline Bacon, *Freedom's Journal: The First African-American Newspaper* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007); Frankie Hutton, *The Early Black Press in America, 1827-1860* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993); Jane Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary: The Black Press and Protest in the Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); Rodger Streitmatter, *Raising Her Voice: African-American Women Journalists who Changed History* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994); Todd Vogel, ed., *The Black Press: New Literary and Historical Essays* (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2001), 'Diverse Voices, Alternative Newspapers,' in Huntzicker, *The Popular Press*; Juan González and Joseph Torres, *News for all the People: The Epic Story of Race and the American Media* (London: Verso, 2012).

¹⁷⁶ David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing, Roy Morris Jr., eds., *Seeking a voice: Images of Race and Gender in the 19th Century Press* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2009).

¹⁷⁷ See for example the excellent collection of primary source material in: Egerton and Paquette, eds., *The Denmark Vesey Affair: A Documentary History*.

¹⁷⁸ Gabriel, *The Press and the Slavery in America*, p. 81.

in order to maintain their own economic and cultural interests.¹⁷⁹ Scholars have also paid attention to the newspaper coverage of John Brown's Raid.¹⁸⁰

Whilst press coverage of the main slave rebellions and conspiracies in the South, as outlined in Gabriel's work, is vital to any understanding of the formation of racist stereotyping of African Americans, it is important to keep in mind that the southern press kept its coverage of open slave resistance to the bare minimum; there was an 'understood code-of-silence' amongst southern editors in terms of reporting on the threat of slave rebellion.¹⁸¹ It is important then to understand that the coverage of the major slave rebellions and conspiracies in the South was not the norm: these were extraordinary events. As such, this thesis will show that we should also consider the role of the press at times when slave rebellion was not the main focus of the news.

This thesis takes its lead from John Coward's book *The Newspaper Indian*. Coward's work shows how a focus on violence in news about Native Americans in the national press resulted in incredibly negative representations. Stereotypes of the noble savage and the ignoble savage were perpetuated by the papers in the North and South. Native Americans were represented as either 'sensitive, proud, peaceful children of the forest or they were sneaky cruel barbarians.'¹⁸² Just like the Sambo/Savage dichotomy, these stereotypes were hugely oversimplified and racist formations, affirming the perceived inferiority of the Native American to the white readers of newspapers.¹⁸³ Coward's work considers what role the newspapers played in the creation and perpetuation of these

¹⁷⁹ Gabriel, *The Press and the Slavery in America*, p. 103.

¹⁸⁰ John Brown, a white abolitionist, and his supporters took over the federal arsenal and armory at Harper's Ferry, Virginia in 1859, hoping to arm slaves who might join him. Brown's raid was stopped by the local militia and Brown himself was sentenced to death and hanged. After Brown's raid, fears of slave rebellion swept across the South, causing intense panic at the prospect of whites arming slaves. Of particular concern as time went on, was the worry that such outside 'agitators,' notably white abolitionists or free blacks, would encourage slaves to rebel. Parish, *Slavery: History and Historians*, p. 71. Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, p. 197. For analysis of newspaper coverage of John Brown's raid see: Brian Gabriel, "'Alarming Intelligence": Sensationalism in Newspapers after the Raids at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, and St Albans, Vermont,' in David B. Sachsman and David W. Bulla, eds, *Sensationalism: Murder, Mayhem, Mudslinging, Scandals and Disasters in 19th-Century Reporting* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2013); Timothy R. Talbott, "'Principles Opposed to the Public Peace": Kentuckian's Reactions to John Brown's Raid,' in David B. Sachsman, ed, *A Press Divided: Newspaper Coverage of the Civil War* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2014).

¹⁸¹ Cowan, *Slave in the Swamp*, p. 37. Michael Ayers Trotti, *The Body in the Reservoir: Murder and Sensationalism in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), p. 40.

¹⁸² Coward, *The Newspaper Indian*, p. 7.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7.

stereotypes. By placing newspapers at the centre of 'debates over race, progress and civilization,' Coward argues that newspapers themselves were an important 'force in the creation and promotion of a powerful set of Indian representations that dominated the C19th imagination and endure in popular culture today.'¹⁸⁴ Coward's work shows that the press' role in the larger cultural system of the nineteenth century should be better understood in order to consider the way that popular native American or 'Indian' identities were created and maintained.¹⁸⁵ This thesis will utilize a similar approach through highlighting the Southern press' role in the larger cultural system of southern planation slavery.

Source Material

The newspapers analysed in this thesis cover the entire slaveholding south of the antebellum period: Alabama, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia. Also included are those slaveholding areas that had not yet gained statehood by the 1830s, such as Florida, Texas and Arkansas. Using Readex's extensive digital collection, '*America's Historical Newspapers: Early American Newspapers 1690-1922*,' to search a huge volume of digitised newsprint material, the thesis considers a number of case studies from across the period 1830-1860.¹⁸⁶ The collection holds more than 6,000 titles from across the United States, 1690-1922. The database has provided the ability to search through 407 separate English-language newspaper titles published in the southern states, with editions surviving for dates that fall between January 1830 and December 1860. Whilst many of these titles only have a small number of issues available (many with under ten issues), there are also many titles that are digitised extensively within the collection, with hundreds of editions available for the years under consideration. Whilst this thesis seeks to provide a better understanding of proslavery ideology as revealed through the southern press in general, it would be practically impossible for this study to be a comprehensive history of all of the southern press. Due to the nature of the case studies covered within this thesis and the availability of newspapers within Readex's digitised newspaper database archive, it

¹⁸⁴ Coward, *The Newspaper Indian*, p. 11, p. 62.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 229.

¹⁸⁶ Accessed at the Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

should be stated that not every State, nor every newspaper, is discussed with equal frequency.

Outline of the Thesis

Part One of the thesis, 'Building trust in the faithfulness of 'Sambo' in the heart of the cotton country,' considers a diachronic approach to the analysis of one newspaper, Macon's *Georgia Telegraph*. Macon provides a fascinating case study as it lay in the heart of Georgia's cotton country, with a large enslaved population in its vicinity that, by 1860, outnumbered white people. By analysing the representation of African Americans in one newspaper across two seven-year periods (1830-1836 and 1854-1860), at the start and at the end of the period being considered in this thesis, it will be possible to gain a better understanding of how one community of slaveholding readers would have digested stereotyped images of black people over a course of time, and how this may have helped bolster slaveholders' moral justification for slavery. Chapter One will consider how newspaper jokes and comedic stories about African Americans, often copying the style of increasingly popular minstrel shows, characterized black people as stupid and childlike, and therefore in need of the 'care' of their masters. Chapter Two will consider the commonly printed stories of runaway or manumitted slaves who begged to return 'home' to the plantation, encouraging the belief in a paternalistic system in which the enslaved were content. The purpose of Part One is to consider how day-to-day perpetuation of racist stereotypes played a part in bolstering the faith of slaveholders in their racist ideology. In so doing, it will show how such a need for constant reiteration of these stereotypes was required in order to paper over the cracks in slaveholder's confidence in their system of racial oppression. It will show how the need for this rhetoric increased substantially from the 1830s to the eve of secession. In reality, as Parts Two and Three of the thesis will go to show, newspapers were also highlighting and adding to the inner anxieties of slaveholders.

In Part Two, 'Threatening news from the Caribbean' the thesis considers how news from the Caribbean both reinforced racist stereotypes and fed slaveholders' concerns about slave resistance. Chapter Three considers longstanding fears over a possible invasion of the South by the soldiers of the British West India Regiments, stationed in the British

West Indies. The perceived threat was part of a wider southern paranoia over Britain's role in what was seen as a conspiracy to demolish the southern American system of slavery for Britain's ultimate economic gain. The alarm over an imagined British invasion was exacerbated by the fact that the anticipated invaders were free black men of the West India Regiments, stationed in the British West Indies. The tone of this paranoia was shaped by the memory of black participation in the War of 1812 and the fear that slaves would flee to British lines in any future conflict. An analysis of the discourse about these men in the southern press can tell us much about the fears of southern slaveholders with regard to the trustworthiness of their own slaves and the ever-present threat of slave rebellion. Ultimately, the fears expressed about a disciplined black army led by an abolitionist imperial power, reveal the true nature of southern anxiety over the stability of the South's own form of white supremacy. Continuing on from the theme of southern worries about British involvement in abolitionist activity, Chapter Four focuses on how southern newspapers reported news of a slave rebellion conspiracy, *La Escalera*, in Cuba in 1843-44. The chapter shows how such news highlighted to slaveholders the possibilities of slave rebellion at home. The reporting of the actions of Cuban enslaved people was used as a metaphorical device by which slaveholders were warned of the ways in which their own shortcomings as masters could lead to rebellion. It was also used to bolster the confidence of slaveholders by inferring that the southern system of slavery was far superior to that of the Cuban system and, therefore, they were not at risk unless they made the same mistakes as Cuban slaveholders. In the same vein as Chapter Three, this chapter considers the role of Anglophobia in simultaneously reducing and perpetuating anxieties over slave rebellion in the South.

Part Three of the thesis, 'Sepoys, Slaves and the Global Colour Line: The Indian Uprising in the Southern Press' shows how news of foreign events, such as the Indian Uprising of 1857, was reported and read across a global colour line, which posited the superiority of the white or 'European' against the 'darker races,' thereby developing a framework through which southerners could amplify their own internal fears about the possibility of slave rebellion. Chapter Five considers how the racial categorisation of Indians fed into the bolstering of a category of whiteness, to which slaveholders were proud to belong, reinforcing their justification of their slaveholding supremacy. Chapter Six, goes on to show how a considerable amount of southern reporting of the Indian Uprising could be

read as a metaphor for slave rebellion at home, with one editor in particular being explicit in this comparison.

* * * * *

The stereotyped images of black (and people of colour more broadly) portrayed in southern newspapers during the antebellum years can still be seen across our modern-day media. Whilst it might seem obvious that the southern antebellum press was racist, this research is important in highlighting the intricacies of how those in power seek to both bolster their own ideology, whilst also alerting themselves to the dangers inherent in it. As Drew Gilpin Faust so brilliantly comments: 'by understanding how others have fashioned and maintained their systems of meaning, we shall be better equipped to evaluate, criticize, and perhaps even change our own.'¹⁸⁷ It is hoped that this thesis goes some way to explaining how white elites in the antebellum South maintained and understood their systems of meaning in relation to systems of meaning that were similar or different to their own; whether those were local, southern, national or global systems.

¹⁸⁷ Faust, ed., *The Ideology of Slavery*, p. 20.

Part One

**Newsprint and Paternalism:
Believing in Sambo in the Heart of the Cotton Country**

Chapter One

‘De sun shine in de day time, when de light am ob no konsequence’: Humour and the representation of African Americans in the *Georgia Telegraph*, 1830-1836 and 1854-1860

Crucial to understanding how any racist society functions, is how hegemonic groups maintain their belief in the inferiority of the subordinated. Communication is a key part of this, and this is why analysing newspapers is vital to grasping how slaveholders in the South digested stereotyped images of black people and how such rhetoric bolstered their moral justification for the enslavement of human beings. This day-to-day perpetuation of racist stereotypes played a part in strengthening the faith of slaveholders in their racist ideology. Part one of this thesis will show how such a need for constant reiteration of these stereotypes was required in order to paper over the cracks in slaveholders’ confidence in their system of racial oppression. It will show how the need for this rhetoric increased substantially from the 1830s to the eve of secession. As the abolitionist petition and mail campaigns of the mid 1830s were shaking the South, paternalist ideology became hegemonic, particularly in the lower South in states such as Georgia. As Lacy Ford has so succinctly summed up: ‘The triumph of a systematic ideology of white supremacy lent momentum to the embrace of paternalism on the basis of the racial inferiority of the enslaved.’¹ Proslavery advocates insisted that black people were best suited to slavery due to their racial characteristics. The attributes that white southern elites accorded to African Americans were racist stereotypes of the childlike and simple ‘Sambo’ under the master’s care and management, and the savage brute outside the safety net of slavery.² The ideology of paternalism allowed white slaveholders to believe that their enslavement of African Americans was providing them with ‘direction, guidance and benevolent discipline’ otherwise lacking in the black individual.³

Ford has argued that from the mid-1830s the South (and the lower South in particular) moved toward ‘an ideological reconfiguration’ of slavery, which saw paternalism embraced fully, and ‘placed it at the centre of the South’s efforts to explain and defend

¹ Ford, *Deliver us from Evil*, p. 9.

² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

slavery.⁴ The ideological reconfiguration of slavery in the 1830s rested heavily upon the notion that race was the key determining factor in marking difference; it was the 'primary basis for social distinction.' Such emphasis on race became the 'vehicle for denigrating black potential' in ways that advocated the perpetual subordination of black people.⁵ Ford's work highlights that this ideology was what united the South, whether or not all individual slaveholder's believed in paternalism to justify their actions. The triumph of paternalism, as Ford describes it, was based upon the success of a very clear, dominant and recognisable ideology within the specific economic and social environment of the slaveholding South.⁶ Understanding how this ideology was created, reinforced and perpetuated is vitally important to the study of antebellum slavery. In this very specific historical setting, print culture played a vital role in spreading the discourse of paternalism. Delving into a case study of one particular slaveholding region and one particular newspaper can offer an insight into the ways in which such discourse was disseminated to slaveholding readers. Part One of this thesis will consider two seven-year periods at the beginning and the end of the time period covered by the thesis. It will analyse the content of one newspaper, Macon's *Georgia Telegraph*, published in central Georgia. Analysing this particular newspaper is immensely informative due to the fact that every published edition survives for the period under study. This allows for a truly comprehensive review of all content printed. Choosing a newspaper from Georgia as a focus of analysis provides an indicative view of the kind of information and narrative read by the elite in the heart of the slaveholding cotton country. It provides an excellent case study in order to assess how content changed over time in the lower South, in line with what Ford describes as the ideological reconfiguration of slavery.

Delving deeper into the nuances of newspaper print highlights the complexities of racist ideologies. This chapter will consider the role of humour in the representation of black people, particularly African Americans, in the *Georgia Telegraph*. As the minstrel show gained popularity in the South, newspaper jokes often took on the characteristics of minstrel show humour and perpetuated the racist tropes of black people as stupid and childlike. Importantly, the use of African American dialect was a tool used to further underscore the negative attributes linked to these stereotypes. This chapter will show how the rise in the popularity of minstrelsy and its reach into the South, should be

⁴ Ford, *Deliver us from Evil*, p. 506.

⁵ Ibid., p. 532.

⁶ Ibid., p. 514.

considered in unison with the humorous written material found in newspapers such as the *Georgia Telegraph*. Together, these forms of cultural praxis helped to perpetuate the ideology of white supremacy and the justification for the institution of southern slavery.

A Brief History of Macon

Founded in 1823, Macon was located in the heart of central Georgia's expanding cotton belt. Macon itself was a rapidly growing industrial urban area, and was Georgia's fifth largest city by population in 1860.⁷ Cotton grew incredibly well in the surrounding counties, and so within one generation the area around Macon became the 'heartland of Georgia's upland cotton kingdom' where cotton growers were immensely prosperous.⁸ Unsurprisingly, Macon became one of the main markets in the South for the buying and selling of enslaved people.⁹ Cotton was King in antebellum Macon, Bibb County and other surrounding counties. All who wished to make a good living were dependent on the business of cotton production, sale, storage and transportation. Even those not in the direct trade were dependent on its success; the grocer, the lawyer, the doctor, the merchant, to name but a few.¹⁰ Macon itself was located within Bibb County, surrounded by the plantation counties of Jones, Twiggs, Houston, Crawford and Monroe. Macon's railroad connections played a huge role in its economic, political, social and cultural development. A railroad was already running from Macon in the late 1830s, and by the 1850s it was the central hub of a network of railroads; with the Central of Georgia (to Savannah), the Macon and Western (to Atlanta) and the Southwestern railroad (to Albany) all running via Macon.¹¹

The economic growth from cotton cultivation seen in Macon and its surrounding counties rested on the labor of enslaved African Americans. In 1830, the slave population of the six counties of central Georgia was 25,000, that is, forty-three percent of the total population. By 1840 the number of enslaved peoples had reached parity with the white population.¹² From 1830 to 1860, the number of black people compared to white people

⁷ Donnie D. Bellamy, 'Macon, Georgia, 1823-1860: A Study in Urban Slavery,' *Phylon*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (1984) p. 298.

⁸ Joseph P. Reidy, *From Slavery to Agrarian Capitalism in the Cotton Plantation South: Central Georgia, 1800-1880* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), pp. 18-19.

⁹ Bellamy, 'Macon, Georgia, 1823-1860: A Study in Urban Slavery,' p. 305.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 302.

¹¹ Reidy, *From Slavery to Agrarian Capitalism in the Cotton Plantation South*, p. 18.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

rose so that they become the majority in all counties except Bibb, where black people still made up forty-two percent of the population (see Table 1). With the unprecedented cotton boom of the 1850s, this enslaved community was forced to work like never before.

Table 1.

**Percentage of white and black people in the populations of
central Georgia's counties, 1830 and 1860**

(Source: Statistics taken from the Appendix printed in Joseph P. Reidy, *From Slavery to Agrarian Capitalism in the Cotton plantation south: Central Georgia, 1800-1880* (Chapel Hill, 1992), pp. 249-251)

		Percentage of Population who were white	Percentage of Population who were black
Jones County	1830	48%	52%
	1860	34%	66%
Twiggs County	1830	56%	44%
	1860	34%	65%
Bibb County (Including Macon)	1830	58%	42%
	1860	58%	42%
Crawford County	1830	68%	32%
	1860	44%	56%
Houston County	1830	70%	30%
	1860	31%	69%
Monroe County	1830	54%	46%
	1860	36%	64%

The number of black people as a percentage of the population of the six counties surrounding Macon had risen from forty-one percent in 1830, to sixty percent in 1860. Notably, the vast majority of these African Americans would have been enslaved; in 1860 in all the six counties, there were only two hundred free black people.¹³ That enslaved people made up most of the black population and outnumbered whites is important to consider when thinking about the anxieties of white slaveholders, especially in the later 1850s when the need to bolster paternalist rhetoric was an important element in maintaining belief in the southern system of slavery.

¹³ Reidy, *From Slavery to Agrarian Capitalism in the Cotton Plantation South*, p. 80.

As Clarence Mohr has shown, the very end of the 1850s saw an intensification of a climate of fear and anxiety in Georgia as reaction to John Brown's raid of October 1859 set in.¹⁴ Insurrection scares occurred throughout 1860 with the initial hysteria and panic gradually turning into sheer fear.¹⁵ Macon experienced over a dozen fires in the spring and early summer of 1860, with suspicion firmly placed upon black people. As it was an election year, tensions especially increased and rumors spread rapidly. In August, news reached Georgia of similarly suspicious fires in Texas, which led to heightened fear of incendiary and insurrectionary activity.¹⁶ However, importantly, Mohr highlights how many white Georgians were keen to emphasise and 'preserve the important psychological crutch' provided by the belief that black people were content to be enslaved. Such reaffirmations that their local enslaved population was innately docile and happy was expressed explicitly amongst Georgia planters, many of whom would 'continue to deny that slavery was in jeopardy even as the system crumbled around them.'¹⁷ It is unsurprising then, as the following two chapters show, that the *Georgia Telegraph* continued to print material that fits this narrative. The message of paternalism was a tonic to the racial paranoia in the minds of men and women who enslaved fellow human beings for their own economic, social and personal benefit.

The *Georgia Telegraph*

The weekly *Macon Telegraph* was founded by Myron Bartlet in 1826. The name of the paper was changed to the *Georgia Telegraph* in October 1832. In the period 1830-1836, Myron Bartlet was publisher and editor. The paper supported the Whig party during these years. It is fair to assume that Bartlet was a slaveholder himself, given that a runaway slave advert was placed for the enslaved man 'Jacob' in May 1835, under the name of Myron Bartlett.¹⁸ In the early 1840s, the paper began to affiliate itself with the Democratic Party. During the period 1854-1860, there were a number of editors. First, Green, Barnes & Co who edited and owned the newspaper. In May 1855, these owners passed editorship to P. Tracy.¹⁹ In December 1855, the *Telegraph* received a new owner

¹⁴ Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom*, p. 11. For more on John Brown's raid, see this thesis: p. 30, fn. 178.

¹⁵ Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom*, p. 7.

¹⁶ For an account of the Georgia response to the Texas fires of summer 1860, see Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom*, pp. 20-27.

¹⁷ Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom*, p. 4.

¹⁸ 'Runaway: A Negro man named Jacob, or Jake,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 21 May 1835.

¹⁹ *Georgia Telegraph*, 15 May 1855.

and a new editor in Joseph Clisby.²⁰ He remained editor throughout the rest of the period in question (with a short interlude of three months when a caretaker editor, E. C. Rowland, took over whilst Clisby was absent from Macon).²¹ During these years, the *Telegraph* staunchly supported the Democratic party and secession. The *Telegraph* was one of several newspapers printed in Macon. In 1860, other newspapers published in the city included two important titles, the *Georgia Citizen* and the *Journal and Messenger* as well as smaller papers such as the *Baptist Champion*, *Christian Index* and the *Weekly American Republic*.²² Significantly, Fox Genovese and Genovese remark that the *Georgia Telegraph* was a newspaper from which publications in smaller cities and towns reprinted directly.²³

Subscribers were very likely slaveholders in the surrounding counties. Macon itself had large slaveholders who held important occupational posts within the city. These included its physician and state legislator, an educator and the county's sheriff.²⁴ By 1860 there were 793 slaveholders in Bibb County alone. Seventy-five percent of these slaveholders owned fewer than ten slaves and ten percent (eighty-one) were planters owning twenty or more slaves.²⁵ As discussed in the introduction, whilst the main audience in terms of subscribing to newspapers were male, female slaveholders and wives of slaveholding men did read newspapers. This is apparent when reading the *Georgia Telegraph*. In the two periods covered, numerous examples show that the editors were well aware of their female readership. The paper included a whole column of 'luxury' recipes using rice that the editor noted would be 'appreciated by our *fair* readers, who are ever willing to gather facts in the peculiar sphere of their duty- *domestic economy*.' Other articles included more recipes, 'directions for the ladies' in terms of things a wife ought to do to 'govern a family' well; dancing advice; Parisian fashion; advice on being a good mother and numerous advertisements for nipple shields.²⁶ In the later period, similar content for the

²⁰ *Georgia Telegraph*, 11 December 1855.

²¹ 'The editor is compelled to be absent from Macon....' *Georgia Telegraph*, 15 July 1856; 'My connection with the Georgia Telegraph as editor pro. tem...' *Georgia Telegraph*, 30 Sept 1856. In this period, subscription to the paper was two dollars and fifty cents per year, paid in advance.

²² Richard W. Iobst, *Civil War Macon: The History of a Confederate City* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2009), p. 17.

²³ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Fatal Self-Deception*, p. 89.

²⁴ Bellamy, 'Macon, Georgia, 1823-1860: A Study in Urban Slavery,' p. 305.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 304.

²⁶ 'An article of luxury...' 9 October 1834; 'Household affairs,' 16 October 1834; 'Rice family bread,' 21 April 1836; 'French mode of making Brandy Peaches,' 7 July 1836; 'Directions for the ladies,' 16 October 1834; 'Practical observations on dancing,' 20 November 1834; Parisian Fashions,' February 9 April 1835; 'Nursery maxims. Judicious mothers will always keep in

female readership was printed. In the 1850s, the paper included guidance on preserving flowers for the 'benefit of our lady readers,' recipes for female readers 'who take pride in good pastry and dessert' and even made it clear when articles were 'interesting to ladies only' noting that 'gentlemen need not read this article.'²⁷

The content of the *Telegraph* included a whole host of materials. Political speeches (most notably presidential addresses) and congressional and state business dominated, with editorial comments also central to the newspaper. Alongside this sat an array of literature and poetry, foreign news, some local news, news snippets, advertisements and notices. This included adverts for clothing, medicines, foodstuffs and fertilisers, and notices for sheriffs' sales, slave auctions and rewards for the return of runaway slaves. The inclusion of seemingly random miscellaneous items, such as jokes and humorous stories, is the focus of Part One of this thesis. What these chapters will show, is that the inclusion of such material was an important part of the slaveholding system. Rather than just being randomly selected pieces, everything was chosen for print for a clear reason. In June 1854, the then editors, Green and Barnes, and their co-editors, wrote an editorial describing how they made their selections of materials to print. They remarked that choosing the most 'suitable matter' for publication was the 'most difficult' thing about the newspaper business. They remarked that after looking over hundreds of exchange papers the editors must decide what should be printed from an often very 'dry' selection. They were clearly aware that their readership had 'many tastes' noting that: 'one wants something smart, another something sound' whilst another person may like 'anecdotes, fun and frolic.'²⁸ On first glance this material may appear to be unimportant filler. However, these miscellaneous items should be studied and understood as important newspaper content that is as significant as the material traditionally considered worthy of analysis, such as political speeches. Such 'filler' played its part in maintaining the discourse of slaveholding paternalism.

mind...' 15 Sept 1836; Advertisement for 'Pratt's Nipple Shields,' 22 Sept 1836, all in *Georgia Telegraph*.

²⁷ 'Preserving gathered flowers' 30 July 1850; 'Recipes,' 17 May 1859; 'Interesting to ladies only,' 8 Feb 1859, all in *Georgia Telegraph*.

²⁸ 'Selections for a newspaper,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 20 June 1854.

Humour, Newspapers, the Sambo and Minstrelsy

Eugene Current-Garcia's 1949 short study of humour in Georgia's newspapers from 1835-1855 found that newspapers gave 'generous space and unusual prominence' to humorous material, with such material printed almost every week, with the exception of those weeks when political speeches took up much of the available space.¹ It is clear then, that there was an appetite from the reading public for humorous material. The wide network of newspaper exchanges made it easy for editors to share jokes and humorous tales. As such, newspapers across America became the 'seed-bed of a genuine American literary tradition.'² Considering this wide network of shared material, Current-Garcia highlights that if his small sampling of Georgia newspapers is a measure of southern interest in the cultivation of humorous material, then it is highly likely that newspapers across the South ought to be deserving of a deeper investigation and analysis by researchers.³

Jokes and comic stories were common in the *Georgia Telegraph*, although there was no set pattern to comic inclusions. Some editions carried a number of humorous items, whilst on other weeks there might have been no inclusion of anything that might be considered amusing. One might assume that this was due to editorial decision-making, and perhaps jokes were fillers, when no other content was deemed important. However, editors also filled their papers with reading material for which they believed there was an appetite, and thus we should consider jokes as important content. Jokes about 'others' deemed as outsiders in society were clearly popular in the *Telegraph*, with the inclusion of many jokes about Dutch and Irish immigrants.⁴ As Frank Fee highlights, it is virtually impossible to tell who the source of most 'comedic racism' actually was. Whilst the names of newspaper editors and publishers are known, little is known about the staff who may have worked alongside the editor on the paper. As many items printed were

¹ Eugene Current-Garcia, 'Newspaper Humor in the Old South, 1835-1855,' *The Alabama Review*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1949), p. 104-5.

² *Ibid.*, p. 121.

³ Current-Garcia, 'Newspaper Humor in the Old South, 1835-1855,' p. 121.

⁴ For example, Jokes about Dutch immigrants: 'The Dutchman's Experience,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 4 Oct 1860, 'How Mr Gottlieb broke his pony,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 15 June 1860, Joke about Irish immigrants: 'Had a winning way with her,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 15 Nov 1860. For citation purposes: please note that as most jokes were printed without a title, citations will be the first few words of the joke.

taken from the exchange papers or other sources without crediting the material, the authorship of such comedic pieces is obscured.⁵

To understand the importance of jokes that characterised African Americans from a paternalistic ideological standpoint, the *Georgia Telegraph* was analysed over two seven-year stretches: January 1830 through to December 1836 and January 1854 through to December 1860. This diachronic approach considers a shift in narrative content in terms of material that bolstered slaveholders' belief in the apparent paternalistic harmony of their southern life. Analysing every issue during these two periods provides an indicative view of the kind of information and narrative being read by slaveholders. These two time periods were chosen as they fall at the beginning and the end of the three decades considered in this thesis, to allow for a clear analysis of the changes in the types, themes and emphasis of content over time. This chapter will discuss the rise of minstrelsy and its associated stereotyping of African Americans before moving on to discuss the content of the 'humorous material' found within the *Telegraph*. Whilst comedic material is found in the earlier period, far more was printed in the later period. The chapter will argue that this increase in humorous material was linked to the rise in minstrelsy as a popular form of entertainment and to a rise in the importance of paternalism in the lower South. These two factors made the inclusion of racist jokes a quick and easy way of cementing stereotypes of the African American as Sambo-like.

It is unsurprising to see humour used to underpin white supremacist oppression. The use of popular culture by dominant racial groups to 'naturalise and defend white power' in American history is well studied, as is the role of humour in popular culture, and in particular, its use in maintaining social inequalities through the othering of racially subordinate groups.⁶ Such othering was produced through the formation and perpetuation of stereotypes within jokes. This can be seen in the growing popularity of minstrelsy as a form of entertainment. Minstrel shows began in the 1840s and became

⁵ Frank E. Fee, Jr., 'Blackface in Black and White: Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in Frederick Douglass' Hometown Newspapers, 1847,' *American Journalism*, Vol. 20, No. 3, (2003), p. 79.

⁶ J. C. Mueller, A. Williams, D. Dirks, 'Racism and Popular Culture: Representation, Resistance, and White Racial Fantasies,' In P. Batur, J. Feagin, eds, *Handbook of the Sociology of Racial and Ethnic Relations*, (Cham: Springer International, 2018), p.70. See Raúl Pérez's overview of the standard theories used to approach the study of jokes, in particular 'Comedy and Racialization,' in Raúl Pérez, 'Brownface Minstrelsy: "José Jiménez," the Civil Rights Movement, and the legacy of racist comedy,' *Ethnicities*, Vol. 16, No. 1, (2016), pp. 42-44.

incredibly popular across the United States, especially in the North.⁷ Minstrelsy was a form of entertainment in which white performers used burnt cork to blacken their skin. They parodied African Americans on stage through 'song and skits that employed broad racial dialects and exaggerated racial mannerisms.'⁸ They integrated comic sketches with depictions of happy plantation life and sentimental songs.⁹ Minstrel shows had transformed by the 1850s, with comedic elements dominating other aspects of the shows.¹⁰ The racist, stereotyped portrayals of African Americans within minstrelsy were linked closely with the racist representations of the Sambo, which underpinned proslavery ideology in the antebellum South. The growing link between humor and racial stereotyping could also be seen elsewhere; Edward Piacentino has shown how African American characters frequently appeared in Old Southwestern humor, and that these portrayals were almost always highly stereotyped caricatures of the comedic black person and the contented and loyal slave.¹¹ This is hardly surprising, given that many of the humorous works by authors in the antebellum South were written by highly patriarchal, conservative elite men who were staunch supporters of the southern proslavery cause.¹²

As Jan Pieterse has shown, the social rhetoric of images is vital to understanding how 'caricature and stereotype, humor and parody function as markers of social boundaries and devices of domination.'¹³ Alexander Saxton describes how minstrelsy represented

⁷ For more on antebellum minstrelsy, see: William J. Mahar, *Behind the Burnt Cork Mask: Early Blackface Minstrelsy and Antebellum American Popular Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Eric Lott, 'The Seeming Counterfeit: Racial Politics and Early Blackface Minstrelsy,' *American Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (1991), pp. 223-254; Alexander Saxton, 'Blackface Minstrelsy and Jacksonian Ideology,' *American Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (1975), pp. 3-28, Annemarie Bean, James V. Hatch, Brooks McNamara, eds, *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), Robert C. Toll, *Blackening Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977); Dale Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and their World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); W. T. Lhamon. Jr., *Jump Jim Crow: Lost Plays, Lyrics and Street Prose of the First Atlantic Popular Culture* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003).

⁸ Fee. Jr., 'Blackface in Black and White,' p. 74.

⁹ Daniel Wickberg, *The Senses of Humor: Self and Laughter in Modern America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 125.

¹⁰ Wickberg, *The Senses of Humor*, pp. 125-6.

¹¹ Edward J. Piacentino, 'Contesting the Boundaries of Race and Gender in Old Southwestern Humor,' in M. Thomas Inge and Edward J. Piacentino, eds, *The Humor of the Old South* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), pp. 52-53.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹³ Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 12.

the viewpoint of white slaveholders by producing the image of slaves who loved their masters and who valued being enslaved. In this idyllic plantation life, slaves feared freedom because they knew they could not care for themselves as well as their master and mistress could, and whenever the opportunity of freedom presented itself, they simply wished to return to their 'southern home.' These key themes within minstrelsy worked to propagate the plantation myth in which slavery was portrayed as a benevolent and desirable institution, whilst also reinforcing an image of the South as a 'symbol of the collective rural past,' which created a sense of emotional association to the idea of the happy plantation.¹⁴

The inclusion of Sambo within minstrelsy played a vital role in creating the main content of the shows; the 'myth of the benevolent plantation.'¹⁵ The idea of the happy Sambo, - the 'merry nigger' - served as a symbol in the defense of slavery.¹⁶ The stereotype of the happy slave, dancing and singing, even mischievous in a childlike way, was far more preferable than the image of the rebellious, threatening slave. The leading roles of minstrel shows were played by the stereotypes of the Sambo, the rural plantation slave, (often represented as 'Jim Crow') and the free Urban Dandy of the North (often represented as 'Zip Coon').¹⁷ The plot of many minstrel shows thereby followed the mocking of the 'bombastic pretensions' of the northern dandy, by the simple plantation blacks.¹⁸ As well as portraying the idyllic southern plantation and its happy slaves, the minstrel show always represented the black person as inferior. As Robert Toll has highlighted, even black characters to whom the audience may have been sympathetic, were cast as inferior, ensuring that whiteness always remained superior- even where black characters were used to poke fun at white characters.¹⁹

As discussed in the introduction, Sambo was an important figure in slaveholders' justification for slavery.²⁰ The Sambo figure appeared in stories and jokes from the beginning of the nineteenth century, even before the establishment of formalised

¹⁴ Saxton, "Blackface Minstrelsy and Jacksonian Ideology," p. 18.

¹⁵ Pieterse, *White on Black*, p. 134. For more on the stereotype of 'Sambo' see Joseph Boskin, *Sambo: The Rise and Demise of an American Jester* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

¹⁶ Pieterse, *White on Black* p. 132.

¹⁷ William L. Van Deburg, *Slavery and Race in American Popular Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984). p. 40.

¹⁸ Pieterse, *White on Black* p. 134.

¹⁹ Toll, *Blackening Up*, p. 67.

²⁰ See Introduction, pp. 18-20.

minstrel shows. He was a jester-like figure; a contented, carefree slave who was eternally childlike and dependent.²¹ Masters and mistresses needed to believe in Sambo. He was a 'key figure in the theatre of accommodation;' he was the antidote to the fear of the rebellious slave. For slaveholders, Sambo was a 'cultural talisman through which they sought to choreograph reality,' but whose purpose above all was to ease their fears.²² Because of this, by pretending to act out Sambo-like behaviours, slaves could protect themselves, whilst slaveholders could think of themselves as kind, paternal masters and mistresses who cared for their contented slaves.²³ By ridiculing black people, in particular black men, the image of the Sambo, as seen both before and within minstrelsy, was an important symbol in the emasculation of the black man in order to relieve white fears and cement proslavery paternalist ideology. As Joel Williamson has described, the Sambo role 'functioned to build white egos' - it was 'beautifully fitted to flatter the white man's image of himself.'²⁴ As such, Sambo-like characterisation became a fixture of southern culture, as will be seen throughout this chapter. Importantly, Sambo's role as 'humorist was central to the theatre of racism.'²⁵

Minstrelsy in Macon

Minstrel shows were very popular in Macon. The first minstrel show in Macon advertised by the *Telegraph* seems to have been 'Murphey, West and Peel's Campbell's Minstrels' who performed at Macon's Concert Hall for three nights in November 1850.²⁶ Over the course of the next decade, a variety of minstrel troupes visited Macon at least once a year, as table 2 exemplifies.²⁷

²¹ Pieterse, *White on Black* p. 152.

²² Ibid., p. 153.

²³ Cowan, *The Slave in the Swamp*, p. 25.

²⁴ Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 23.

²⁵ Boskin, *Sambo*, p. 63.

²⁶ 'The Campbells are Coming!' *Georgia Telegraph*, 6 Nov 1850

²⁷ 'The Campbells are Coming!' 6 Nov 1850; 'The Campbell Minstrels', 31 Dec 1850, 'The Campbells are coming,' 14 Oct 1851, 'The Campbells are coming,' 21 Oct 1851; 'At Concert Hall,' 11 November 1851; 'Campbell Minstrels,' 8 Feb 1853; 'Concert Hall for Two Nights,' 21 June 1853, 'The Campbells are coming at Concert Hall,' 25 October 1853; 'Dr. F. A. Jones has arrived in our city...' 20 Dec 1853; 'Original Campbell Minstrels', 'The Campbells are coming again,' 10 Jan 1854; 'Campbell Minstrels,' 17 Oct 1854; 'The original Campbell Minstrels,' 30 Jan 1855; 'Concert Hall. Three nights only!' 15 May 1855; 'The Campbell's are Coming,' 'The Campbells are Coming- Model Troupe of the World,' 5 Feb 1856; 'Christy's Minstrels,' 'Concert Hall-Last Two Nights,' 18 Nov 1856; 'The Campbells are Comin', 'The Campbells are Coming,' 10 Feb 1857; 'The Campbells are Coming,' 'Concert Hall- The Campbells are Coming!' 3 Nov 1857, 'Concert

Table 2:
Minstrel shows in Macon advertised in the *Georgia Telegraph* 1850-1860²⁸

Year	Dates	Name of troupe	Venue
1850	November 6-8	Murphey, West & Peel's Original Campbell Minstrels (Jas Norris- Manager)	Concert Hall
1851	January (at some point in first week)	Campbells Minstrels	-
	October 27 ('and every night during the week')	West & Peel's Old and Original Campbell Minstrels	Floyd House Saloon
	November 12-15	West & Peel's Operatic Troupe	Concert Hall
1853	February 7-12	The Old and Original Campbell Minstrels	Concert Hall
	June 22-23	Harmonic Minstrels	
	October 31 and November 1	Murphey, West & Peel's Original Cambell Minstrels (H.E. Dickinson Manager)	Concert Hall
	December 22-24	The Old Original Campbell Minstrels (under direction of James Norris)	Concert Hall
1854	January 12-14	The Old and Original Campbell Minstrels (under the direction of James Norris, incl. Dan Bryant)	Concert Hall
	October 16 (and further nights that week)	Campbell Minstrels	Concert Hall
1855	January 29 (and further nights that week)	The Original Campbell Minstrels	Concert Hall
	May 14-16	Wood and Christy's Original New York Minstrels	Concert Hall
1856	February 5-7	Campbells Minstrels (under the direction of Matt Peel)	Concert Hall
	November 18-19	Christy's Minstrels (under the direction of JW Raynor and E H Pierce)	Concert Hall
1857	February 16-18	West and Peel's Original Campbell Minstrels (under the direction of Matt Peel)	Concert Hall
	November 9-11	Rumsey and Newcomb's Campbells Minstrels	Concert Hall
1858	January 23-24	Original Campbell Minstrels (under the direction of Matt Peel)	Concert Hall
	May 20-22	Rumsey and Newcomb's Campbell Minstrels	Ralston's Hall
	November 1-2	Rumsey and Newcomb's Campbell Minstrels	Ralston's Hall
	December 6-7	Rumsey and Newcomb's Campbell Minstrels	Ralston's Hall
1859	March 3-5	Campbell Minstrels ('Matt Peel's Original Band)	Ralston's Hall
	December 2 (for one week)	Sanford's Opera Troupe (with S.S. Sandford)	Ralston's Hall
	December 28-31	Rumsey and Newcomb's Original Campbell Minstrels	Ralston's Hall
1860	September 17-20	Rumsey and Newcomb's Minstrels	Ralston's Hall

Hall- The Campbells are Coming!' 10 Nov 1857; 'Prepare for a laugh!', 'The Campbells are Coming,' 19 Jan 1858; 'Rumsey's and Newcomb's Campbell Minstrels,' 'The Campbells are Coming!' 18 May 1858; 'The Campbells,' 'The Campbells have come,' 2 Nov 1858; 'Theatre coming...' 30 Nov 1858, 'Return of the Campbells!' 7 Dec 1858; 'The Campbells,' 'Theatrical- The Campbells are coming!' 1 March 1859, 'The Campbells are in full blast at Ralston's,' 8 March 1859; 'Sanford's Opera Troupe,' 22 Nov 1859, 'Sanford's Opera Troupe,' 29 Nov 1859, 'Sanford's Opera Troupe,' 6 Dec 1859; 'The Campbells are coming again,' 'The Campbells are coming!' 20 Dec 1859, 'The Campbells are coming!' 27 Dec 1859; 'First in the world- Rumsey & Newcomb's Minstrels,' 13 Sept 1860, 'Rumsey & Newcomb's Minstrels,' 20 Sept 1860. All in *Georgia Telegraph*.

²⁸ Note that the names listed in Table 2, with inconsistency of spellings and names, reflects what was printed in the *Telegraph*.

A large number of minstrel troupes appeared from the 1840s onwards in response to high public demand across the country. It is hard to determine how many troupes existed as many amateur troupes popped up for short runs and then split up before forming other companies. Furthermore, troupes often gave themselves names associated with previous famous troupes, such as the Campbells, which adds to the confusion of singling out any one particular troupe.²⁹ Whilst minstrelsy was most popular in the North, it was also highly popular in the South, with many minstrel troupes travelling and performing along the 'southern minstrel route,' calling at locations including: Baltimore, Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, New Orleans, Memphis, and Louisville.³⁰ But it is clear that minstrelsy reached further than just these places. By February 1853, the editor of the *Georgia Telegraph* was describing the most recent minstrel visitors as 'established favorites with our community' noting that they 'never fail to draw full houses.'³¹ The following year, the editor noted that 'the Campbells are too well known in Macon to need an introduction to the press.'³² This form of entertainment was clearly of interest to slaveholders, otherwise it would not be discussed in this way, nor advertised in the newspaper. Indeed, attendance at theaters was an important social status concern, as it provided the elite the opportunity to be seen and to show-off the latest fashion.³³

Interestingly, in November 1854, Tracey, the editor of the *Telegraph* wrote of his annoyance at the lack of interest in Macon in what he considered proper 'drama' on the stage: 'the hope that our community will soon be educated into a proper respect for the DRAMA, and that the taste which now prevails for negro minstrelsy and the Circus, will eventually be supplanted by a craving of a nobler sort...We are tired of writing notices upon Negro Shows and Horse Operas and want something better to try our hand on.'³⁴ Yet, despite the editor's annoyance at what he deemed to be unsophisticated forms of entertainment, the newspaper continued to take the advertising revenue from the agents of the minstrel troupes and continued to advertise their shows. When the new editor, Joseph Clisby took over in December 1855, he continued to advertise the shows,

²⁹ Toll, *Blackening Up*, p. 31. For an extensive list of known minstrel troupes see: William L. Stout, *Burnt Cork and Tambourines: A Source Book for Negro Minstrelsy* (San Bernardino: Borgo Press, 2007).

³⁰ Toll, *Blackening Up*, p. 31

³¹ 'Campbell Minstrels,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 8 Feb 1853.

³² 'Campbell Minstrels,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 17 Oct 1854.

³³ Eugene D. Genovese, *The Sweetness of Life: Southern Planters at Home* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 142.

³⁴ 'Theatrical,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 7 Nov 1854.

which were clearly popular in Macon. Described as the 'best Negro Delineators and Comedians, the most pleasing and best Vocalist and Balladists, the most distinguished and best Instrumentalists and Dancers, at present engaged in the Ethiopian profession,' 'Rumsey and Newcomb's Campbells Minstrels' must have been well-liked throughout Georgia, with advertisements noting other cities and towns they were also visiting in the locality.³⁵ By 1858, Clisby was urging his readers to:

'Prepare for a laugh! The Campbells are coming. See advertisement; and if they do not crowd Concert Hall with laughing audiences, we shall begin to think times are tight indeed. It is needless to commend the Musical as well as the Comical ability of this excellent Company. Both have been too often acknowledged in Macon by overwhelming audiences.'³⁶

The 'authenticity' of what the minstrel troupes were portraying was clearly of importance to southern audiences. An advertisement for Rumsey & Newcomb's Campbell's latest show in December 1859, made a point of highlighting just how authentic the representations of the black characters were:

The advantages the Campbells enjoy, above any other minstrel organizations, arise from their wintering for the last twelve years in the Southern country. Their delineations of negro character are taken from natural scenes and incidents in African life, and aim at presenting the musical and comical peculiarities of the southern negro, and elevating him to his proper standard of natural wit and musical talent, presenting the phases of negro life on the plantation.³⁷

This was not an unusual claim. Minstrel troupes regularly promoted themselves and their ability to depict 'authentic blackness' on stage by asserting that they had visited the South and spent time on plantations in order to gather material for their shows. Whether this was true or not, it is certainly fair to say that the material they presented did not display black culture, but was rather 'mimicry of the façade of slavery.'³⁸ The notion that

³⁵ 'Concert Hall- The Campbells are Coming!' *Georgia Telegraph*, 10 Nov 1857.

³⁶ 'Prepare for a laugh!' *Georgia Telegraph*, 19 Jan 1858.

³⁷ 'The Campbells are coming!' *Georgia Telegraph*, 27 Dec 1859.

³⁸ Katrina Dyonne Thompson, *Ring Shout, Wheel About: The Racial Politics of Music and Dance in North American Slavery* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014), p. 172.

southerners wanted to see 'truthful' representations of their enslaved population suggests the value that southern audience's placed upon the minstrel stereotype of the happy Sambo. Believing that the performers on stage were copying their characterisations of happy, carefree slaves from *real* southern plantations helped to further perpetuate the paternalistic notion of the idyllic southern plantation.

From Stage to Print

Within the historiography of blackface minstrelsy in the US, there is a larger discussion on the representation of minstrelsy as portraying meanings and attitudes as 'monolithic,' particularly in relation to race. The notion that the 'racist content of antebellum minstrel shows was never so absolute as the hideous blackface mask would seem to indicate' is linked within much of this research to notions of race and class that scholars have described as 'slippery and problematic.'³⁹ The problem with much of this literature for the purpose of understanding the reception of minstrelsy within the South, is that it focuses largely on the urban North. Discussions of race and class are framed within this northern context, and so are not so helpful in understanding how slaveholding audiences, or southern audiences more generally, received the minstrel shows. Clearly, more research needs to be carried out in this area.

The influence of minstrelsy and its message of happy slaves and the southern plantation home with its benevolent masters was repeatedly reaffirmed in popular culture.⁴⁰ Katrina Thompson argues that such influence spread beyond the theatre stage with popular 'adages and songs' and racialised images from minstrel shows finding their ways into many aspects of American culture.⁴¹ This chapter seeks to analyse how this diffusion of minstrel caricatures, racialised burlesque and 'black' dialect can be seen in the *Georgia Telegraph*. It takes its lead from Frank Fee Jr's article, in which he examined three daily newspapers from Rochester, New York, for the year 1847, to analyse the use of jokes and humour in the representation of black people. His analysis links such humour to the increasing popularity of minstrelsy as a form of popular entertainment in the United States.⁴² Fee has shown that in the newspapers he analysed, this theatrical genre can be

³⁹ Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder*, p. xii. See in particular the work of Eric Lott.

⁴⁰ Thompson, *Ring Shout, Wheel About*, p. 186.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 184, p. 186.

⁴² Fee. Jr., 'Blackface in Black and White,' pp. 73-92.

seen to have influenced the press by the appropriation and 'transfer of textual form from stage to print.'⁴³ He highlights how literary and linguistics historians have explored minstrelsy, yet media historians have not. Despite Fee pointing this out almost twenty years ago, there is still very little scholarly attention in this area. Such research is important as it expands the analysis of newspapers from the traditional study of political content to consider questions about the 'sources, forms, and effects' of texts that have all too often been sidelined as miscellaneous, frivolous, and insignificant, and have therefore not received the scholarly attention they deserve.⁴⁴

Whilst the jokes discussed in this chapter are obviously not amusing to a non-racist modern-day audience, the role of humor in proslavery thinking should be considered in its role of day-to-day perpetuation of racist stereotypes and further normalization of such stereotypes to a slaveholding readership. As humor changes over time and space, it is not always possible to know the exact intricacies of what was humorous about a joke or comical story, yet the denigration of African Americans is always clear. It is the details of these denigrations that this chapter will explore. For Frank Fee, the jokes in Rochester's newspapers that included black people had a clear dichotomous nature; they were either silly or violent- there was 'little in between the absurd and the menacing.'⁴⁵ The ridiculing of black people within the *Georgia Telegraph* took many different forms, but all played into the racist stereotypes perpetuated by early black-face performers, the later popularity of minstrel shows and by proslavery ideology. William Tynes Cowan has analysed the weekly *Williamsburg Gazette* (Virginia) during the insurrection panic of 1856, to better understand how the representation of African Americans echoed and shaped the state of mind of white Virginians.⁴⁶ Through such analysis, Cowan argues that it is possible to have a better understanding of how one Virginian community coped psychologically with the 'conflict between the slaveholder's conception of the system as benign and the institutional contradictions embodied in the image of the insurrectionist slave.'⁴⁷ The humorous material found within the *Georgia Telegraph* reflects the same coping mechanisms; the prevailing representation of African

⁴³ Fee, Jr., 'Blackface in Black and White,' p. 76.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 75.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 87.

⁴⁶ Cowan, *The Slave in the Swamp*, p. 24. See also William Tynes Cowan, 'The 1856 Slave Insurrection Panic and the Williamsburg Gazette,' *American Transcendental Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (1998) pp. 295-310.

⁴⁷ Cowan, *The Slave in the Swamp*, p. 38, p. 40.

Americans as stupid, funny and childlike helped to maintain the system by erasing such institutional contradictions.

In passing, it is worth highlighting that William Tynes Cowan, in his article on plantation comic modes, has considered the different sources of African American humor in the South, especially the question of slave compliance with white demands to be funny on demand. Such obedience allowed slaveholders to believe that their slaves were truly happy. Cowan's work provides a picture of how humor was able to play a large role in 'negotiation identities' on the plantation, by allowing all members of the plantation to 'create and maintain images of the self.'⁴⁸ As Cowan remarks, humor on the plantation, 'served to grease the wheel of everyday interaction' for both the enslaved and the slaveholder.⁴⁹ Whilst the jokes analysed here had a white slaveholding audience, it is worth noting that even published jokes or comic stories could still possess some African American humour and ridiculing of whites, despite it being hidden to white audiences for whom the butt of the joke was the black character. The humor of the enslaved had two important purposes on the plantation; it allowed the slave to endure life by hiding 'true feelings and true intentions' from the master; and it provided the slaveholder a means to believe in the true childlike nature of the slave.⁵⁰ Whilst many of the jokes in the *Telegraph* clearly ridicule the black character, Cowan's work helps to consider where the slaves' 'modes of humor' may lie in the joke; whilst ultimately it is the 'white mindset regarding slave humor,' which will be considered here.⁵¹

1830-1836

Between January 1830 and December 1836, the *Georgia Telegraph* did include jokes, although far less in general than the later period being considered. Of course, the style of content at the time played a role in this, with far more political content filling the

⁴⁸ William Tynes Cowan, 'Plantation Comic Modes,' *Humor*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2001), p.1.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4. Many of the comedic elements included within the newspaper jokes that are discussed in this chapter are seen in animal trickster tales. For more on trickster tales see: Sergio Lussana, 'Reassessing Brer Rabbit: Friendship, Altruism and Community in the Folklore of Enslaved African Americans,' *Slavery and Abolition*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (2018), pp. 123-146. Rebecca Griffin, 'Courtship Contests and the Meaning of Conflict in the Folklore of Slaves,' *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 71, No. 4 (2005), pp. 769-802.

newspaper pages. Where jokes were printed, they included political jokes, jokes that focused on the Irish and jokes that focused on more general subjects.⁵² In this entire seven-year period, there were ten 'jokes' or humorous inclusions that refer to African Americans.⁵³ Two of these were Jim Crow songs and one was a Corn Shucking 'ballad'. In these instances, African Americans were always portrayed as inferior to their white masters and always within stereotypical characterisations, yet there is far more room for the 'mischievous slave' than in the jokes of the later period under analysis.

Humorous material included the text of a fairly lengthy conversation entitled 'Temperance' between two enslaved men, Dick and Sambo, discussing the alcoholism of Sambo's master. Sambo remarks: 'Why, I tell you what, man, dere was great flusterashun at our house. Massa come home berry late rudder night. De fus ting we no, he tump de toe gen de teps, and he head knock de door in.' Describing his master's drunken entrance, Sambo then describes how his mistress attempted to get help from the Temperance Society. 'An did your mass jine?' [did your master join?] asks Dick. 'Yes, Dick,' replies Sambo, 'but den it do him no good. Ha boy, white man berry unsurtin.' Sambo then describes how his master drinks every night from his stash in the sideboard: 'glug, glug, glug, glugity, glug.' Dick turns to Sambo and declares: 'High! Sambo, I tell you what, white man too cute; he no take de rag off de bush, but he take de rag, de bush an all.'⁵⁴ In exclaiming essentially that white men don't do things by half; that they surpass excellence in their ability to drink, Dick's comment mocks white propensity towards intemperance. In early blackface comic routines it was normal for black characters to mock white values or behaviours, especially the drinking habits of white elite men.⁵⁵ Importantly though, the stereotypes of black people as childlike and comedic are still reinforced within the criticism of white intemperance.

In another comedic story, Clem, a black man, asks a magistrate to marry him and Miss Dinah for the same cost as white people; a charge of five dollars, as opposed to two dollars for black people. After they were married and the magistrate asked for his fee,

⁵² For example, a joke about the Irish: 'An Irishman had a bell hung in his lodging rooms,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 13 Oct 1836; a joke about military officers: 'Too deep,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 12 Feb 1835.

⁵³ One joke or comic story in each of 1830, 1832, 1834 and 1836. Two in each of 1831, 1833 and 1835.

⁵⁴ 'Temperance- A Dialogue,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 27 Feb 1830.

⁵⁵ William. J. Mahar, 'Black English in Early Blackface Minstrelsy: A New Interpretation of the Sources of Minstrel Show Dialect,' *American Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (1985), pp. 280-281.

Clem remarked 'Oh no, massa, ya no come up to the greement- *ya no kiss da bride!*' to which the magistrate replied 'Get out of my office, you black rascal' and Clem got away without paying for his marriage.⁵⁶ Clem is portrayed as mischievous and cheeky, yet not as a dangerous risk to the slaveholding system. He is a 'rascal', but also childlike in his actions. Another joke included the text of a conversation between two slaves in the kitchen, entitled 'Tea-table chit chat by the fair sex of the kitchen:'

Miss Dina, you no gobba some cream in da Tea?

No, Sir. De flavorality of de cream detroys de octangular taste of de Tea, and renders it quite obcoof.

Sartinly, sartinly, Miss, dat being owing to de imprecipity of man habing riven to such a life of nature, it's almost onpossible to disinfronce him.⁵⁷

The title insinuates that two women are talking, yet in the conversation, Dina answers 'No, Sir.' This is likely because Dina's companion is pretending to be the master or some other white gentleman. As Cowan has pointed out, in the reality of such situations away from the page, slaves acting out such scenes would have found their own humour in their 'burlesque of white pomposity.'⁵⁸ To the slaveholding reader, the humour lies in the attempt by the slaves to behave and speak with the eloquence of a white person of elite status.

Most of the small number of comic inclusions in this period portray black people as highly stupid and childlike. In one such humorous story, a black man on board a ship at sea is asked to throw overboard the bodies of those who have died from a fever which is spreading throughout the ship. Upon seeing the black man dragging a man who is alive to the side of the deck, the captain asks him what he is doing. 'Going to trow him overboard, massa, cause he dead!' is the black man's response. The captain points out that the man in question is not dead at all, to which the black man responds 'I know he say he no dead, but be always he [sic] so nobody know when to believe him.' This is presumably the punchline- although the wording is a little odd. There is a possibility that the words have been copied incorrectly into print at some point along the reprinting journey in the exchange papers. Either way, the humour for the white reader lies in the

⁵⁶ 'Negro Wit,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 17 March 1832.

⁵⁷ 'Tea-table chit chat by the fair sex of the kitchen,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 21 April 1832.

⁵⁸ William Tynes Cowan, 'Plantation Comic Modes,' *Humor*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2001), p. 16.

portrayal of the black man as incredibly simple minded, so much so that he cannot understand the difference between someone who is dead or not.⁵⁹ Another joke tells the tale of a slaveholder who whips an enslaved male for stealing onions from his garden. The slave is referred to as a 'little negro,' but it unclear whether this refers to his age or not. A couple of days after he is whipped, the slave brings a polecat to his master and proclaims: 'Here, massa...I tole you whip me for nothin. Here 'em chap what steal he ingyum. I smell he bref.'⁶⁰ The childlike and simple nature of the slave are highlighted by his actions of smelling the breath of the animal.

Before the minstrel show became a popular form of entertainment, actors such as Thomas Dartmouth Rice were making a name for themselves. From 1830 Rice became popular in both the United States and in Britain. By 'blackening up' and imitating black men, Rice created the figure of 'Jim Crow.'⁶¹ The character of Jim Crow multiplied into various meanings that different publics attempted to control.⁶² Indeed, Jim Crow had to fulfill the needs of different audiences, particularly between slave states and free states. By producing quickly many different versions of verses for his songs, Rice was able to sustain the different ways in which audiences could digest Jim Crow.⁶³ As Lhamon Jr. has highlighted, rather than being authoritative texts, printed versions of Rice's improvised stage performance songs simply increased the 'flux' of such songs by 'modeling [their] improvisation.'⁶⁴ This can be seen in versions of two popular Jim Crow songs, which were printed in the *Georgia Telegraph*.

In April 1833, the *Telegraph* printed a full version of 'Clar de Kitchen.' Many versions of this song entered American antebellum print.⁶⁵ This version is referred to as a 'highly popular prize song, as sung in character,' and performed by N. G. Dixon, the 'distinguished buffoon singer.'⁶⁶ See here the first, sixth and last verses:

⁵⁹ 'A mortal fever once prevailed,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 21st April 1832.

⁶⁰ 'Original anecdote,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 24th July 1834.

⁶¹ Lhamon, Jr., *Jump Jim Crow*, p. 1.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 424, fn. 38. For another full printed version of 'Clare de Kitchen,' see Lhamon, Jr., *Jump Jim Crow*, pp. 137-9. Further discussion of this song can be found in Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder*, pp. 49-50.

⁶⁶ 'Clar de Kitchen: or, "Old Virginny Neber Tire,"' *Georgia Telegraph*, 10 April 1833.

In old Kentucky, in de arternoon
We sweep the kitchen with a bran new broom,
And arter dat we form a ring,
And dis de song that we do sing,
O! Clar de kitchen old folks, young folks,
Old Virginny neber tire.....

I had a sweetheart in this town,
Who dresses in a green silk gown,
And as she walks the streets around,
Do hollow of her foot makes a hole in the ground,
Now clar de kitchen, &c.

I wish I was back in Old Kentuck,
For since I left dare I had no luck,
De galls dey so proud they won't eat mush,
And when you go to court em, day say, "O! hush!"
Now clar de kitchen, &c

In 'Clar de Kitchen', the happy slave is portrayed singing and dancing and carrying out household chores. In the sixth verse, a racist stereotype of the grotesque black woman is characterised by the black 'sweetheart' whose foot is so large and flatfooted, it makes a hole in the ground as she walks. The last verse represents a common trope throughout proslavery ideology- the notion of the slave wishing to return to the plantation. Wishing that he was 'back in Old Kentuck', the slave reveals the belief that the southern plantation is always where he will be better off. Many minstrel songs created this idyllic image of the plantation where thoroughly happy slaves lived in 'rustic quarters.' In such an image, these quarters were both a source of shelter and warmth, but also formed the backdrop to the musical entertainment that enslaved people enjoyed together regularly; 'dancing, fiddling, banjo twanging, bones playing, and tambourine shaking.'⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Van Deburg, *Slavery and Race in American Popular Culture*, p. 43.

In December 1836, the *Telegraph* printed another Jim Crow song, this time referring directly to Rice, describing his success in London and noting that the printed song was introduced at his debut in the Surrey theatre. The first verse goes as follows:

How are you, massa gemmen,
And de ladies in a row,
All for to tell you whar I'm from,
I'se going for to go!
For I wheel about, and turn about, and do jis so,
An' ebry time I turn around I jump Jim Crow!⁶⁸

Jim Crow is portrayed as a happy slave who is a buffoon; childlike and mischievous in his actions. Just like 'Clar de Kitchen' the fact that the editor chose to print these texts is illustrative of the reach of even the early blackface performers. Readers must have been aware of these songs and found them amusing to read. These texts, similarly to the original stage performances, reinforced racist stereotypes of the childlike, happy slave.

Perhaps the most interesting comic inclusion in the earlier period analysed is the 'Corn Shucking Ballad' printed in October 1835. It was introduced in the newspaper with the byline:

Who has not participated in the delights of a corn shucking? Those mirthful uproarious assemblages of black and white, old and young? Where the grave lose their austerity, and the aged their infirmity; and where for a time, the slave is on a level with his master, and the lad of 12, feels himself a man?⁶⁹

The plantation ritual of the annual corn shucking was an important part of plantation life for both the enslaved and their enslavers. This memorable event occurred in the fall when the barn was loaded with the annual corn crop. This corn was taken to an open space near the plantation house and divided into two large piles. In the evening, slaves from both the plantation and nearby plantations came to join in the festivities. These took the form of a sort of ritualised game whereby two teams were formed amongst the

⁶⁸ 'Jim Crow in London,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 1 December 1836.

⁶⁹ 'Who has not participated in the delights of a corn shucking?' *Georgia Telegraph*, 22 October 1835.

slaves. Each team had a captain who sat atop of each pile of corn and led 'corn songs' as their team members attempted to throw corn from their pile to the other.⁷⁰ The 'corn ballad' printed in the *Telegraph* is such an example:

Corn Shucking Ballad

All de world are tiefers,
De little uns and biggers,
De nigger teal from buckra,
De buckra teal de niggers.

Old massa build a gris mill,
For robbly all he nabor,
But Debel teal he mill pond,
And so he lose he labor.

Sambo teal he master's horse,
To go a long way courtin,
But when he rise "a-bull-back,"
He tink it debblish smartin.

Cato rob a beehive,
While missis gone to preachin.
He get a lubly stingin,
And kill heself a screachin.

De cow he rob a corn crib,
And calf he suck he faster,
And niggers robbin smoke house,
While misses cheatin master.

All de world are tiefers,
De little uns and biggers
De nigger teal from buckra,
De buckra teal de niggers.

- - - - -

'Buckra' white man.
'Debel teal de millpond.' By breaking the dam.
'Ride a bull-back,' to get the cowskin⁷¹

⁷⁰ Cowan, 'Plantation Comic Modes,' p. 15.

⁷¹ 'Who has not participated in the delights of a corn shucking?' *Georgia Telegraph*, 22 October 1835.

It is unsurprising that the song is introduced as part of a ritual in which slaveholders could claim that the 'slave is on a level with his master' for one evening; this is in keeping with the ritual of the event. Slaveholders, their families and other white guests attended the corn shucking and watched the spectacle. Such corn songs were 'laced with humor at the expense of the slaveholder.'⁷² As can be seen in the printed 'corn shucking ballad', in some verses the planter is somewhat mocked, such as when the slave steals his horse. The master's wife is also ridiculed in the line 'whilst misses cheatin master.' The corn shucking festivities allowed the enslaved to 'test power boundaries' and to have a brief evening of 'exhilaration in an otherwise oppressive existence.' Most importantly for the slaveholders though, the corn shucking festivities did not cross a line from 'play to aggression.'⁷³ Crucially, whilst there may have been much discomfort in the event for the white spectators, the ritual was deemed vitally important as a form of plantation control; for one evening the yard was full of 'spirited, intoxicated slaves,' cleverly insulting their master in corn songs, in order that the annual event might 'serve to defuse the overall institutional danger by venting discontent.'⁷⁴ By printing this corn song within the newspaper, the ritual of individual plantations was shared collectively amongst the white slaveholding audience of the *Telegraph*, who could find humour in the corn song and remind themselves of the 'play' of the festivities. In a sense then, the black voice of this printed text was part of the image of Sambo; the happy slave at the Corn Shucking festival- joyous and content with his life on the plantation.

1854-1860

By the 1850s, with the desperate need to defend slavery and justify the southern institution, minstrelsy throughout the nation saw a narrowing of black characterisations on stage. There were now only two clear caricatures; the happy slave and the unhappy free black.⁷⁵ Whilst previous minstrel characters included 'wily black tricksters' and even some antislavery protestors, the 1850s saw mainly loyal, 'grinning darkies' who loved their plantation home. Such representations were 'romantic and sentimentalized images

⁷² Cowan, 'Plantation Comic Modes,' *Humor*, p. 15. For discussion of corn songs see Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll*, pp. 318-9.

⁷³ Cowan, 'Plantation Comic Modes,' p. 18.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁷⁵ Toll, *Blackening Up*, p. 66.

of happy, contented slaves and nostalgic old Negroes looking back to the good old days on the plantation.⁷⁶ These southern slaves were contrasted with free northern black people who were represented as totally useless and ridiculous.⁷⁷ Between January 1854 and December 1860 (as seen in table 3), the *Telegraph* included eighty-one jokes or otherwise humorous material, which situated black people as characters within the texts, substantially more than the ten found in the period 1830-1836. Most of these eighty-one examples, included representations of southern slaves. It is likely that the increase in such humorous material between 1855 and 1856 was linked to a new editor and his editorial decision making. Indeed, in December 1855, the *Telegraph* received a new owner and a new editor in Joseph Clisby.⁷⁸

Table 3:
Jokes and humorous ‘stories’ including black
characters in the *Georgia Telegraph*, 1854-1860

1854	52 editions	0 jokes
1855	54 editions	7 jokes
1856	54 editions	20 jokes
1857	52 editions	9 jokes
1858	53 editions	10 jokes
1859	52 editions	15 jokes
1860	51 editions	20 jokes

But the dramatic difference between the two periods considered in this chapter can also be attributed to wider factors. Firstly, as was discussed in the introduction to part one, the lower South’s move toward an ideological reconfiguration of slavery from the 1830s onwards, saw paternalism fully embraced.⁷⁹ As this reconfiguration rested heavily upon the notion that race was the key determining factor in marking difference, an emphasis on race became the ‘vehicle for denigrating black potential’ in ways that advocated the

⁷⁶ Toll, *Blackening Up*, p. 88.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 88.

⁷⁸ *Georgia Telegraph*, 11 December 1855.

⁷⁹ Ford, *Deliver us from Evil*, p. 506.

perpetual subordination of black people.⁸⁰ As Fox-Genovese and Genovese remark, 'black inability to progress reverberated in southern newspapers,' providing a popular subject on which proslavery ideologues and spokesmen could focus; portraying African Americans (or any non-whites for that matter) as lacking the ability to govern themselves.⁸¹ Secondly, as discussed above, the rise in minstrelsy as a form of popular entertainment, across the United States, including the South- and certainly in Macon, played into the myth of the happy plantation slave. Given these two factors together, it is not surprising that a southern editor might choose to print material that was both a form of entertainment, whilst also bolstering the hegemonic overtones of the system at the time it was under greatest attack from abolitionists.

The Dehumanisation of African Americans

As discussed in the introduction, the increased influence of scientific racism, led by the American School of Ethnologists in the 1840s and 1850s, stressed the inherent inferiority of the 'black race' based on apparent medical and scientific wisdom.⁸² As black people came to be considered as a separate subhuman species, it is unsurprising to find material which highlighted such thinking. The dehumanisation of black people as animalistic was a recurring theme in jokes during this period. Such items often highlighted the perceived racial difference of black people right from birth, such as jokes about a black babies crying: 'If you want to see a black squall, just look at a negro baby with the colic' and 'Great cry and little wool- an Ethiopian infant just born.'⁸³ In Feb 1855, the *Telegraph* included a 'comical story' about a master who wished to prove to his dinner guests that his slave Sam, was strong enough to endure any knock to the head:

A gentleman gave a party to a few friends, who happening to converse about Sambo's power of head endurance, the gentleman said he owned a negro whom no one in the party could knock down or injure by striking on the head. A strong, burly fellow laughed at the idea, and as Sam, the coloured person, was about

⁸⁰ Ford, *Deliver us from Evil*, p. 532.

⁸¹ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Fatal Self-Deception*, p.90, p. 92.

⁸² See Introduction, pp. 11-12.

⁸³ 'If you want to see a black squall...' *Georgia Telegraph*, 1 July 1856. 'Great cry and little wool...' *Georgia Telegraph*, 27 Oct 1857.

entering with the candles, the gentleman stood behind the door and as he entered, Sam's head received a powerful sockdologer. The candles flickered a little, but Sam passed on, merely exclaiming- "Gentlemen, be careful of de elbows, or de lights will be distinguished."⁸⁴

Highlighting the brutish strength and almost animal nature of Sam added to the stereotyped notion of the male African American as a powerful body whose stupidity and enslavement kept them from violence. In this sense, laughter over Sam's apparent stupidity masked white fears of the ultimate potential of Sam's strength and what such potential could mean for the possibility of future slave rebellion.

Similarly, jokes highlighting the darkness of the skin were made to dehumanise and to stress the association of dark skin pigmentation with uncleanness:

We were amused the other day at the nature of a very dark African matron, who was exhibiting several rather fine looking children, equally dark as her self. We ventured to admire an infant in her arms rather ominously light in complexion, but she declared she could not bear him. "Why?" we asked. "Because" she said "he is too light and *shows dirt too easily*"⁸⁵

This was clearly a popular joke, as a shorter version of it appeared again a few years later: 'A negress, speaking of her children, said of one who was lighted colored than the rest; "I nebber could bear dat ar' brat, kase he show dirt so easy.' The editor clearly liked this joke, (or forgot that he had already printed it), because it was printed again, just a week later.⁸⁶

The link between darkness of skin and uncleanness is also expressed in a joke where a black boy or man (as 'boy' was often used as an emasculating and infantilising name for enslaved men) is asked about the colour of his father's skin; "Boy, what makes your father have such black and dirty hands?" "I don't know, sir, unless it's cause he's all-ers wipin' um on his face!"⁸⁷ Jokes could also ridicule those of mixed-race heritage such as

⁸⁴ 'A gentleman gave a party...' *Georgia Telegraph*, 20 Feb 1855.

⁸⁵ 'We were amused the other day...' *Georgia Telegraph*, 12 Feb 1856. Italics in original.

⁸⁶ 'A negress, speaking of her children...' *Georgia Telegraph*, 1 Nov 1860, 8 Nov 1860.

⁸⁷ 'Boy, what makes your father...' *Georgia Telegraph*, 26 Feb 1856.

the 'dark complexioned clergyman in New Orleans who said to a colored parishioner- "You black folks always appear so happy, I half wish I was black myself." "There's no need, massa, of your wishing that," was the reply, "you black enough now."⁸⁸ The humour of the joke lay in the fact that the clergyman clearly had African heritage and therefore was deemed to think too highly of himself not to realise his actual position within the racial hierarchy of the South.

Other jokes played on the apparent uncivilized nature of the black person, with them often portrayed as stupid and rude, despite their best intentions to be polite to a white person: "'John is my coffee hot?" "not yet, Massa; me spit in him and he no sizzle."⁸⁹ Even though John is trying to answer his master's question, his uncouth way of working out whether the coffee is hot or not signifies his inherent uncivilised nature. Similarly, a comical story about a slave who is asked to take a billet to a white man on behalf of his master portrays the slave as incredibly stupid:

"Pompey, did you take the billet to Mr Jones?" "Es, massa." "Did you see him?" "Es, sar, me did." "How did he look?" "Why massa, he looked pooty well, 'sidering he is so bline." "Blind! What do you mean by that?" "Why, massa, when I was in de room gibbin him de paper, he axed me whar my hat was; and goramity, perhaps you won't believe me, but massa, he wor on de top of my hed de hull time."⁹⁰

Pompey, not realising that Mr Jones' question was a demand for him to remove his hat, believed Mr Jones' could not see the hat on his head. Portraying Pompey as childlike in his inability to understand Mr Jones and therefore his accidental disrespect to the white man highlighted the stereotype of the stupid, childlike and uncivilised Sambo. In the same manner, a joke about an Englishman ordering a piece of pie in a Rhode Island restaurant portrayed the black man as inherently stupid and uncivilised, even when trying his best to carry out the duties requested by the white man. When the pie was found to be cold, the Englishman ordered 'the Ethiopian waiter' to 'take this piece of pie

⁸⁸ 'A dark complexioned clergyman in New Orleans...' *Georgia Telegraph*, 22 Dec 1857.

⁸⁹ 'John is my coffee hot?' *Georgia Telegraph*, 15 April 1856.

⁹⁰ 'Pompey, did you take the billet...' *Georgia Telegraph*, 5 Jan 1858.

to the fire and 'eat it.' According to the joke, 'Sambo walked to the stove and quietly devoured the pie.'⁹¹

The portrayal of a slave as idiotic can be seen in a humorous story about a white man with an enormous nose, who stopped at a tavern in Eatonton, Georgia. When a 'half grown negro boy' was asked to take the man's luggage to his room, the slave exclaimed 'what a nose!' and was overheard by the white man who sent for the slave's master 'with a demand for his punishment.' The slave promised his owner that he would apologise. Approaching the man with the large nose, the slave touched his hat and 'humbly bowing, he said "Massa, you ain't got no nose at all!"'⁹² The slave's ability to take the apology to a level of ridiculousness, portrays him as simple minded in addition to the childlike nature of his original rudeness. In another such example, a master asks his slave whether he looks alright as he finishes dressing. The slave replies:

'Elegant, massa; you look bold as a lion.'

'Bold as a lion, Pompey! How do you know? You never saw a lion.'

'Oh, yes, massa, I seed one down to Massa Jenks' in his stable.'

'Down to Jenks' Pompey? Why, you great fool Jenks hasn't got a lion. That's a jack ass.'

'Can't help it, massa; you look just like hi [sic].'⁹³

Whilst the joke appears to mock the master, the humour for the slaveholding reader lies in Pompey's simplicity in not realizing that he is being incredibly rude to his master; the joke ultimately ridicules the stupidity of the slave for not knowing that a donkey is not in fact a lion.

A final example of a comic story in which the actions of the slave, even when trying to please the master, reveals their inherent incivility is the story of a slaveholder in Charleston who has an enslaved man who serves at dinner parties. The slave cannot remember how to work out his left and right hands and therefore cannot pass guests their plates from the left-hand side. His master explains to pass the plates to the buttonhole side of the men's jackets however soon after this advice, the master received

⁹¹ 'An Englishman dropped into a restaurant...' *Georgia Telegraph*, 27 May 1856.

⁹² 'What a nose!' *Georgia Telegraph*, 14 Dec 1858.

⁹³ 'How do I look, Pompey?' *Georgia Telegraph*, 1 Nov 1860.

guests who arrived wearing double-breasted jackets. This startled the slave, who exclaimed "'Button-holes on both sides, massa!'" He then 'handed the plate right over the gentleman's head.'⁹⁴ The uncouth nature of the slave's handling of the situation and his stupidity in being unable to work out his right from his left certainly made him the butt of the joke, reinforcing the racist stereotype of the uncivilized African American.

Black Dialect

The use of an apparent representation of African American dialect was an important theme within many of the comedic stories and jokes included in the *Telegraph*, as can be seen in many of the examples already discussed. Edward Piacentino has argued, the use of such dialect was associated with 'ignorance, illiteracy, inferiority and primitiveness' in the minds of white readers.⁹⁵ As Frank Fee highlights in his study, the use of such representations of an exaggerated form of phonetically spelt dialect was the 'newspaper equivalent' of the minstrel routine.⁹⁶ William Mahar describes how the representation of a 'Black English Vernacular' was translated from minstrel shows into written form in the shape of 'eye-dialect,' in an attempt to 'capture specific phonetic qualities,' of such speech.⁹⁷ It is unsurprising then, to see so many of the jokes and comic stories within the *Telegraph* following this pattern of including an apparent authentic black voice. Minstrel shows followed a very clear three part structure, the first always being an opening sketch with dialect humor and song.⁹⁸ Within minstrel routines, strong dialect was used to represent African Americans as stupid and 'compulsively musical.'⁹⁹ Published versions of comic stories which included representations of conversations between slaves (or including slaves' voices) were given some form of authenticity by creating the sense of how black people sounded by adding specific syntactical and grammatical features to the written form of speech.¹⁰⁰ By creating a sense of

⁹⁴ 'Button-holes on Both Sides,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 3 Nov 1857.

⁹⁵ Piacentino, 'Contesting the Boundaries of Race and Gender in Old Southwestern Humor,' p. 55.

⁹⁶ Fee, Jr., 'Blackface in Black and White,' p. 74. For further explanation of the use of an exaggerated black dialect, or what William Mahar describes as 'eye-dialect', see Mahar, 'Black English in Early Blackface Minstrelsy.'

⁹⁷ Mahar, 'Black English in Early Blackface Minstrelsy,' p. 278.

⁹⁸ Van Deburg, *Slavery and Race in American Popular Culture*, p.40.

⁹⁹ Toll, *Blackening Up*, p. 67.

¹⁰⁰ Mahar, 'Black English in Early Blackface Minstrelsy,' p. 271.

authenticity to the characters speaking within the text, the messages within them became even more powerful.

Black people's voices are often heard only in the dialect, whilst other humorous stories included black people talking between themselves:

"Caesar", said a negro to a colored friend of his, "what do you tink is de most useful ob de comets- de sun or de moon?"

"Well, Clem, I don't know dat I shall be able to answer dat question, seen' as how I neber had much book larnin:"

"Well, Ceasar, I spect de moon orter take de fust rank in dar partiklar."

"Why so, nigger?"

"Because de moon shine in de night when we need de light, and de sun shine in de day time, when de light am ob no consequence."

"Well, Clem, you is de most larned darkey I eber seed. I guess you used to sweep out a school house for a libin."¹⁰¹

Ceasar and Clem's conversation is another example of where the ideas of black people are portrayed as a strange, childlike way of viewing the world- particularly Clem's lack of understanding of the moon and the sun. The use of a form of black dialect helps to add to the portrayal of the two men as simple, immature and unsophisticated. Even Ceasar's suggestion that Clem is so learned because he must have once swept out a schoolhouse emphasises the notion that black people have an inability to understand the nature of true learning because of their intellectual inferiority.

A number of humorous miscellaneous items included in the *Telegraph* were centered around the idea of the black person ascribing themselves some level of importance. The humor therefore lay in the reader's knowledge that the black person's insistence that they held some form of social standing meant nothing within their white world. One such example tells the story of a Chief Justice whose carriage breaks on the way to Court. Tom, a 'negro waggoner' passes by and helps by fixing the broken shaft of the carriage with some grape vine. "Now, Tom," said the Judge, 'why didn't I think of that?' 'O massa'

¹⁰¹ 'Logical,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 27 Jan 1857.

replied Tom, 'you know dat some people will hab more sense den oders!.'"¹⁰² The source of the humour here is Tom's attempt to sound superior to the judge. As William Tyne Cowan has argued about such anecdotes; the African American is set up as the 'object of entertainment' in the same way that a 'child or animal may seem funny when attempting to 'act' adult or human.'¹⁰³ In this sense, Tom is the one being ridiculed, not the judge. The laughter of the white reader is aimed at Tom.

In other humorous inclusions, black people are portrayed as thinking themselves better than other black people or other non-white people. In the first, a conversation is described between two enslaved men, Clem and Sam as they discuss their annoyance at the prospect of imported slaves arriving in their locality. Sam declares: 'I tell you, Clem, if one of dem forin, unat'arized niggers calc'late to 'sociate wid dis chile, he is a hoin de wrong patch.' The story tells of how Sam explained to Clem 'the impudence of those forin niggers over native American 'culled pussons.'¹⁰⁴ The humor of this story to the *Telegraph's* readership likely lies in the notion that Sam thinks himself superior to 'foreign' black people, whereas to the white reader he himself is at the bottom of the social hierarchy. However, there is also an underlying message to Sam's declaration of annoyance; there is an implied acceptance by the men that they do not mind their social condition, so long as the 'foreign and unnaturalised' black people do not turn up on their plantation. Essentially, the slave's voice is used to defend southern slavery.

Representations of Laziness and Intellectual inferiority

Comedic stories and jokes which concerned the apparent laziness and stupidity of the African American were numerous and by far the most popular kind of joke. A comic story about an old enslaved man insinuated the natural lazy constitution of the African American:

"I have herd o'leap years and de like," said an old negro, who had probably seen many snows- 'but dar was once on a time, durin' this old nigger's life, a lep *day*. Yes, let me tell you de circumstance ob de case:- One night, one Satt'y night, I cum in from my work, I was tired nuff, too, I sot down. I did, and talked, and

¹⁰² 'Comparison Extraordinary,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 13 Sept 1860.

¹⁰³ Cowan, *The Slave in the Swamp*, p. 28.

¹⁰⁴ 'Revival of Know Nothingism,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 8 March 1859.

talked, and talked, till 'bout midnight, den I went to sleep. Next time I waked it was night; ergin I dozed off, and arter awhile day come, and what do yer tink? Why, all de darkies shouldered der hoes and axes and started to work- yes, to work.- Sid I, look here, what's you all doing, its Sunday. 'You ole fool, you had better git up and go to work, it's Monday,' said dey, and I did. Dis event comes back to me with horror, for I was told dat I slept *all day Sunday*.¹⁰⁵

The comic story has two key elements for the reader; firstly, that the slave is inherently lazy and will sleep all day if allowed. Secondly, it highlights the need for the black person to be enslaved in order to be disciplined. In this sense, the institution of slavery was presented as corrective to the 'natural' disposition of enslaved African Americans. Another joke about laziness involved a 'gentleman just returned from Arkansas' who overheard a conversation in a tavern between a customer (presumably a white man) and a slave: 'Hallowa boy! Hallowa, yourself! Can I get breakfast here? I reckon you can't. Why not? Massa's away, Missus drunk, de baby got de colick, and I don't care a darn for nobody.'¹⁰⁶ Both comedic stories portray the uncivilised and lazy nature of the black person when not under the guidance and the demands of the master. In the first, the fact that it is a Sunday and the slave is not expected to work means he returns to his inherent laziness, whilst in the second story the slave refuses to work because his master is away and his mistress is drunk.

In another joke, a slave named Sambo is portrayed as totally ignorant of the system of plantation and crop management, despite the labour performed by the enslaved:

Well, Sambo, is your master a good farmer? "Ees sah, he berry good farmer, he made two crops in one year!" "How is that Sambo?" "Why, he sells his hay in the falls, and makes money once, den in the spring he sells all the hides of the cattle that die for want of hay and dus made money twice!"¹⁰⁷

The humor for the reader lies in the childlike understanding of the slave and highlights the necessity for Sambo to be enslaved. Sambo's words and misunderstandings are

¹⁰⁵ 'Leap Days,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 20 May 1856.

¹⁰⁶ 'A gentleman who has just returned from Arkansas...' *Georgia Telegraph*, 6 July 1860.

¹⁰⁷ 'Well, Sambo, is your master a good farmer?' *Georgia Telegraph*, 20 Feb 1855, 'Good farming,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 8 April 1856.

funny to the white audience because they are so childlike, portraying an 'exotic way of seeing the world.'¹⁰⁸ In this way, Sambo becomes the butt of the joke.

Three jokes in particular emphasised a childlike understanding of Christian religion by the enslaved characters. The first considered the slave 'Corinthian', who upon being asked why he was given that name answered "'Coz, master, it am Bible name, an' dey is lucky, 'specially for black folks." When asked ironically by the white questioner whether he was "first or second Corinthians?", Corinthian answered "De furs', master! De secon' am my little Corinthian named after his fader"¹⁰⁹ The second considered an enslaved woman, Dinah, who stole a goose and was therefore whipped. Soon after, there was an opportunity to attend communion in the neighbourhood. Dinah's mistress suggested that 'the goose affair as a sufficient reason for her not to offer herself on such holy occasion,' but Dinah replied "Lor, missus, I ain't gwine to turn my back on my bressed Massa, for *no old goose!*"¹¹⁰ Thirdly, in a joke entitled 'A darkey Theologian,' an elderly enslaved man in Texas was strongly defending his Baptist faith because he was the only Baptist in the neighbourhood. He did this by asking people "Well, I s'pose you've read about John de Baptist, haint you?" "Yes" "Well you never read about John de Methodist, did you? You see I has de Bible on my side, den. Yah, Ya-ah!"¹¹¹ In all three examples the humour lies in the inability of the black characters to properly understand Christianity, even when they really try to. The underlying message is that they are so simple that they need some sort of white guidance even in their religious understanding of Christianity.

The *Telegraph* printed one particular 'humorous' story twice, first in May 1857 and again in April 1859; presumably it did the rounds again in the exchange papers. In this story, an enslaved man, Sawney, is given some money by his master to visit a menagerie. His master hints at what he deems to be 'the striking affinity between the Simia and negro races.' Upon meeting a 'sedate looking baboon,' Sawney says to the animal: 'folks, sure's you're born: feet, hands; proper bad looking countenance, just the nigger getting old, I reckon.' Sawney extends his hand to the animal 'with a genuine Southern 'How d'ye do uncle.'" The interaction between Sawney and the animal is where the humour of the story lies for the southern slaveholding reader. Sawney attempts to communicate with

¹⁰⁸ Cowan, *The Slave in the Swamp*, p. 27.

¹⁰⁹ '1st and 2nd Corinthians,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 15 Jan 1856.

¹¹⁰ 'A negro woman, soon after having experienced religion...' *Georgia Telegraph*, 26 Feb 1856.

¹¹¹ 'A darkey Theologian,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 5 May 1857,

the baboon, and when it does not respond to his questions, Sawney believes this is an elaborate plot by the animal to save itself from enslavement:

He concluded that the ape was bound to keep non-committal and looking cautiously around, chuckled out. "He, he, you too sharp for them, old fellow; keep dark; if ye'd jist speak one word of English, white man have hoe in yer hand in less than a minute."¹¹²

The punchline of the story, is the insinuation that Sawney is so stupid that he thinks the Baboon is actually smarter than him. It also, as Sawney's master points out, suggests a close link between the baboon and the black man. The clear link being made here between the black person and an animal is unsurprising given the rise in polygenism and ethnology within the United States. As already discussed, from the 1850s, ethnologists were arguing that black and white people were from separate species- an apparent medical and scientific argument used to promote the enslavement of African Americans.¹¹³

Other humorous items include the story of Chloe, an enslaved woman who is a cook. Upon expecting some family and not sure what to make for them, her mistress tells her she must 'make an apology.' Yet Chloe does not seem to understand what an 'apology' is, and instead becomes frustrated, replying 'La! Missus, how can I make it! I got no apples, no eggs, no butter, no nuffin' to make it wid.'" ¹¹⁴ Another such story tells of Pompey the elderly slave who is asked by a clergyman to sell his horse for him. The horse had faults and the clergyman tells Pompey that he must not deceive the purchaser- he must tell them all of the horse's four faults. When exchanging the horse with a stranger who wants it, Pompey only remembers two of the faults, but the stranger soon falls into

¹¹² 'A funny incident,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 12 April 1859, 'Not bad,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 19 May 1857.

¹¹³ See Introduction, pp. 14-15. See also Lockley, *Military Medicine and the Making of Race*, especially Chapter 5: 'Dehumanising the Black Soldier,' pp. 139-163. The ape-like representation of a group of people deemed to be racially inferior was not only made in relation to African Americans; during the nineteenth century it was common for the Irish to also be portrayed in this way. See: Kevin Kenny, 'Race, Violence and Anti-Irish Sentiment in the Nineteenth Century,' in J. J. Lee, Marion R. Casey, eds., *Making the Irish American: History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), p. 365. See also: Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Colour: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 48.

¹¹⁴ 'A colored cook expected some company...' *Georgia Telegraph*, 14 April 1860.

a ditch after the horse stumbles. 'You black rascal, what does this mean?—This horse is broken-kneed, and as blind as a mole!' the man shouted, 'O, yes, massa, said Pompey, blandly, 'dem's de oder two faults dat I couldn't remember.'¹¹⁵ Pompey's inability to remember the most obvious and important information about the horse and Chloe's inability to understand the basic message of what her mistress is suggesting reinforces the notion that the black person is intellectually far inferior to the white person; both Pompey and Chloe are presented as foolish and stupid.

In other miscellaneous items, the humor lay in ridiculing the apparent inability of free African Americans to cope in conditions of freedom. Such an example is the story of Knox, a free black man, which was printed twice- in September and October 1860. Knox goes to the Court House to raise some money by mortgaging some property. However he is informed that he already has a mortgage. Knox is sure he hasn't, but is told that his signature is on the paperwork. He declares "Wall, I duzzent know nuffin about it, only dat I len Misser Call a hundred dollars two years ago, an' he made me sine dat ar paper to skure what he owed me." It becomes clear that Knox had lent a man a hundred dollars and then executed a mortgage on his own property to secure the debt. The story ends with the comment: 'Good for Knox- he can boast of another color besides black now, and this is---green.'¹¹⁶ Just as the minstrel shows mocked free black people of the North, Knox is ridiculed for his inability to cope in the real world because of his intellectual inferiority.¹¹⁷ In minstrel skits it was common for northern free blacks to be portrayed as 'dandies' who were regularly tricked out of their money by conmen because they were 'foolishly inept for freedom.'¹¹⁸ Such representations of free black people served to confirm to southern slaveholders that black people could not 'play a constructive role in a free society' and thus belonged on their southern plantations.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ 'Faults Pompey couldn't remember,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 27 July 1860.

¹¹⁶ 'Verdancy,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 20 Sept 1860; 'Knox went down to the Court House...' *Georgia Telegraph*, 18 Oct 1860.

¹¹⁷ Thompson, *Ring Shout, Wheel About*, p. 180.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

¹¹⁹ Toll, *Blackening Up*, p. 71.

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This chapter has shown that better consideration should be given to the ways in which proslavery ideology infiltrated so many aspects of slaveholding life, even down to those miscellaneous items in the local newspaper. Jokes and comic stories with very clear racist stereotyping could be found in the *Georgia Telegraph* in the earlier period analysed (1830-1836), but by 1854-1860 there was a large increase in the inclusion of humorous material. This can be explained by the rising popularity of the minstrel show, with its comic routines and stereotypes finding written form in the newspaper. This was no doubt fueled by racial 'science,' as seen in the work of the American School of Ethnologists whose ideas about polygenism and the medical and physical differences between white and black people fed a proslavery agenda. Furthermore, as Lacy Ford has argued, the 1830s onwards saw a continuing rise in paternalist proslavery ideology and it is therefore unsurprising to see a large quantity of comic jokes which perpetuated racist stereotypes in the years preceding the civil war. These factors made the inclusion of racist jokes and comic stories a quick, easy and entertaining way of cementing stereotypes of the African American as Sambo-like.

Chapter Two

'Thoroughly sick of liberty': Narratives of returning 'home' to the Plantation in the *Georgia Telegraph*, 1830-1836 and 1854-1860

As Chapter One highlighted, the inclusion of miscellaneous items such as jokes in newspapers played an important role in shaping and reiterating racist stereotypes of American Americans. Yet content in the newspapers could also shape slaveholders' views about themselves in relation to their slaves, particularly as Southern slaveholders believed themselves to be good masters.¹ Given this belief in their ability to manage their enslaved 'property,' it is unsurprising to find that newsprint would help shape and encourage such beliefs. Slaveholders needed assurance that slaves were happy under their 'care', that they were content with their lives on the plantation (or in other geographies of forced labour within the South), and that they would not seek freedom or revenge. Paternalism was the dominant slaveholding ideology, particularly so in the lower South, from the mid 1830s. This ideology posited the domestication of slavery at the center of the moral argument for the enslavement of human beings. By promoting the apparent social benefits of slavery, advocates were seeking to show that 'paternalism as a social system, provided the perfect counter to abolition charges that holding slaves violated all reasonable humanitarian sensibilities.'² What Lacy Ford describes as the 'triumph of paternalism' in the lower South, was based on a racial hierarchy in which the black and white 'family' members fulfilled reciprocal duties. Slaveholders' acceptance of, and belief in, paternalism could be seen in numerous references to slavery as a paternalistic and domestic institution. It could be demonstrated in the many references to the paternal and benevolent responsibilities of slaveholders and in the references to the family bonds of loyalty and kindness between slaves and masters.³ This chapter seeks to explore these kinds of references.

The ideology of paternalism depended on the idea that slavery was justified on moral and humanitarian grounds. After all, these were some of the key criticisms made by abolitionists. In bolstering confidence in their system of slaveholding, paternalism gave

¹ Follett, *The Sugar Masters*, p. 159.

² Ford, *Deliver us from Evil*, p. 515.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 515.

white slaveholding southerners 'a platform from which to defend themselves to the larger world.'⁴ This chapter takes its lead from Emily West's work on white perspectives of voluntary enslavement.⁵ West has shown how southern newspapers reported stories of enslavement requests by 'couching' such requests 'within broader proslavery rhetoric,' as a form of proslavery propaganda.⁶ Importantly though, West points out that enslavement petitions were not reported in the southern press as much as one might expect due to the 'ultimate irony at the heart of voluntary enslavement:' the fact that requests for enslavement point to 'free black initiative.'⁷ Whilst West did not look extensively at southern newspapers for reporting of enslavement petitions, it is worth noting that she did find five enslavement requests reported upon in contemporary southern newspapers that cannot be found within southern archives and therefore may well have been written purely for the purpose of proslavery propaganda.⁸

This chapter will show how such newspaper content, whether based upon fact or fabrication, reveals the growth in intensity of paternalistic slaveholding ideology. It will show how the *Georgia Telegraph* reported on a number of enslavement petitions, as well as on associated news items which form part of a larger proslavery propaganda narrative. As in Chapter One, the *Georgia Telegraph* was analysed over two seven-year stretches, from 1830-1836 and from 1854-1860, (at the beginning and the end of the period under consideration in this project), to trace such proslavery propaganda. These include stories about 'happy slaves' and formerly enslaved people wishing return to the South. Such propaganda in newspapers could feed the minds of slaveholders with 'facts' that rendered their paternalistic visions more believable. It is clear that the nature of this type of content played an important role in the hegemony of a paternalist ideology (particularly in the lower South as Lacy Ford has shown), in the later antebellum years.

⁴ Ford, *Deliver us from Evil*, p. 533.

⁵ Emily West, *Family or Freedom: People of Color in the Antebellum South* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2012). See especially chapter 3; "'Traditional' Motivations and White Perspectives of Voluntary Enslavement,' pp. 75- 92. For more on enslavement requests, see also Emily West, "'She is dissatisfied with her present condition': Requests for Voluntary Enslavement in the Antebellum American South,' *Slavery and Abolition*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (2007) pp. 329-350.

⁶ West, *Family or Freedom*, p. 77.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 79, p. 92.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Sambo: The Loving, Happy Slave

Slaveholders saw paternalism as a perfect relationship. The ideology of paternalism allowed slaveholders to believe in 'their own idealized notions of mastery,' in which they could deceive themselves that they were truly looking out for the welfare of their slaves whilst they condemned their slaves to a state of permanent dependence.⁹ As Jeffrey Young has remarked, as the 'spectre of the antislavery menace grew in the planters' minds, they responded with ever-deepening stereotypes of black identity coupled with ever-more-insistent claims about the humanity and happiness of southern slaves.'¹⁰ Such emphasis on black happiness simultaneously represented African Americans as childlike; 'bumbling and loving' and grateful for the love of their masters. As the sectional conflict grew in intensity such stereotypes were used as a form of paternalist propaganda to shield the South from anti-slavery rhetoric.¹¹ Fox Genovese and Genovese also argue that 'assertions of slaves' loyalty and friendship grew louder' in the years before secession. They note that Southern newspapers 'relished' reprinting the 'frequent' accounts taken from proslavery opinion in parts of the Northern press which emphasized how well southern slaves were cared for, whilst also printing stories of free black people in the North who found themselves in destitution and wished to return to enslavement in the South.¹²

Such reporting could be used to highlight how the master could offer safety for the slave to protect them from their own inability to care for themselves. These narratives could also feed the slaveholder's belief that slaves thought their masters to be their closest and most trustworthy friends.¹³ Stereotypes do not exist because they are true. They exist because they 'reflect the concerns of the image-producers;' indeed Jan Pieterse has described how Sambo was the antidote to the image of the savage and rebellious slave symbol- the Nat Turner figure.¹⁴ Indeed, the black slave stereotype was fundamentally dichotomous. The contradictory images of the Sambo and Savage were an 'unstable

⁹ Follett, *The Sugar Masters*, p. 154.

¹⁰ Young, *Proslavery and Sectional Thought in the Early South*, p. 52.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 51.

¹² Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Fatal Self-Deception*, p. 89.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 89-90.

¹⁴ Pieterse, *White on Black*, p. 233.

compound of opposites' which southern slaveholders had to acknowledge.¹⁵ From 1830 to 1860, Sambo was the 'predominant white southern image of the securely enslaved Negro.'¹⁶ With the rise of northern abolitionism in the 1830s, the need for the Sambo stereotype in order to justify slavery was increasing. It therefore seems evident that newspaper content which perpetuated the image of the happy Sambo who wished to stay enslaved provided evidence that made the stereotype even more real in the minds of slaveholders, furthering the cause of a paternalist ideology.

William Tynes Cowan has remarked that the white South's insistence on the happiness of its slaves, 'smacks of whistling in the dark- a diversionary tactic to soothe one's nerves in a potentially dangerous situation.' The Sambo stereotype was the preferred ideological representation and it aimed to control, destroy and replace the image of Nat the savage brute.¹⁷ Cowan highlights that one crucial way in which southern white society attempted to 'exorcise the Nat demon' was via cultural representations in print. Newspapers were particularly important to this process. By purposefully avoiding printing news of slave resistance, newspaper editors could instead focus on printing news of the punishment of potential slave rebels or by 'deluging the reader with Sambo images.'¹⁸ It is exactly this inundating of the stereotype of the happy slave that was considered in Chapter One and which will be explored in the examples shown in this chapter. The comfort of the Sambo stereotype for slaveholders lay in its ability to mask the 'other'- the 'Nat'. Whilst the Nat figure was terrifying in its unpredictable nature, the Sambo stereotype was no threat to the individual nor to the system. The importance then, of the regular stories in the newspapers was to 'conjure forth the rebellious image in order to dispel it safely.' Time and time again, the stories talked of runaway slaves. Of course, these individuals' actions were entirely inconsistent with the notion that slaves were happy and content as slaves. But these contradictions were dispelled when the protagonists in the story decided they would rather be enslaved.¹⁹

¹⁵ George. M. Fredrickson, *The Arrogance of Race: Historical Perspectives on Slavery, Racism and Social Inequality* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), p. 209.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

¹⁷ Cowan, *The Slave in the Swamp*, pp. 1-2.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

1830-1836

Between 1830-1836, the *Georgia Telegraph* printed a number of items that fed into a distinctly paternalist rhetoric. The April 1833 printing of 'Clar de Kitchen,' (as discussed in chapter one), fed into the 'returning to the plantation home' narrative that complemented the paternalist vision of slaveholders. The line 'I wish I was back in Old Kentuck,' portrays the idea of the black person wishing to be back in the South on the plantation, where they are happy and well cared for.²⁰ A report 'on the management of negroes' reprinted from the *Farmer's Register* in June 1834, commented on how Virginia's enslaved people could 'endure fatigue and hardships with great patience, are very contented and cheerful- and in fact, are the happiest people in the world, unless tampered with by fanatics.'²¹ A report in February 1836, complained about the hypocrisy of northerners who had allowed the death of a black woman who had frozen to death in cold weather. In reporting this news, the paper implied that black people were so much better cared for in the South under slavery.²²

A piece reprinted from the *Salem Register* in October 1834, noted how a northern visitor to the south had seen that 'slaves were well treated' and that:

There are many plantations within my knowledge, where the master has offered freedom to all his slaves, or to a part, and they have refused to accept it. This is fact; not desire, or hope, but fact; and proves, much. I have witnessed the offer of freedom to twenty or thirty slaves, and strange as it may seem, I have seen them refuse it! When urged upon them, as I remember it was once particularly, their masters saying they might go to the North or to Africa, and there live free, they all burst into tears declaring that they would not leave him, and that they did not want to be free.²³

The fact that this statement came from a Northern visitor is important, adding extra weight to the apparent truthfulness of the comments; if a northerner had reported that

²⁰ 'Clar de Kitchen,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 10 April 1833.

²¹ 'From the Farmer's Register,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 26 June 1834.

²² 'How Negroes fare among the Abolitionists!' *Georgia Telegraph*, 11 February 1836.

²³ 'From the Salem Register. Facts on Slavery,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 9 October 1834.

southern slaves were content in their enslavement, then the moral justification for slavery provided by the report was given more impetus.

In November 1836, the *Telegraph* printed the story of a Boston Sheriff, who, on investigating a habeas corpus case was brought to see a female slave on board a ship from the South. The woman, who refused to get out of bed, was told that they had 'come to break her chains and make her free; whereupon, she thanked them kindly, said she didn't want to be free, and civilly requested them to go about their business.'²⁴ It is interesting here that no reason is given for why the woman says she wishes to remain enslaved. Because of this, the seemingly wholehearted nature of the woman's desire to be left in her current condition makes her answer seem ever more determined. Furthermore, the fact that she is already in the North, yet happy to remain enslaved, seem to suggest she is content in her situation.

It was not unusual for obituaries of slaveholders to contain information that declared them to have been an excellent master whose slaves loved them unconditionally.²⁵ The September 1836 obituary in story form of 'Randolph,' noted that 'his slaves loved him with the strongest affection' and that 'the return of "Massa Randolph" from Congress was always greeted with the utmost demonstrations of joy.'²⁶ Whether any of these stories and apparent 'facts' are true or not is not the object of study here. The fact they were printed at all is what is important. The editor chose to print these items, because the message these pieces sent to slaveholders was one of positivity and justification for the southern system of slavery and fed a paternalist vision of southern life. Yet, whilst these examples clearly provided a distinct narrative of the 'happy slave', there were not all that many inclusions in the period 1830-1836. By the 1850s, this had changed dramatically. Whilst such a large change in the appearance of similar content was likely also linked to a change in newspaper content and style over time and, of course, to changes in editorship, it is hard to ignore the fact that this stereotyped content also fed into the vision of paternalism. It is conceivable that this increase in stories of the 'happy slave' wishing to return home to the plantation was linked to the rise of paternalistic proslavery ideology and its increased importance in the justification of slavery, particularly in the lower South.

²⁴ 'Another slave case,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 17 November 1836.

²⁵ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Fatal Self-Deception*, p. 71.

²⁶ 'Randolph,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 15 Sept 1836.

1854- 1860: The Triumph of Paternalism

Over the course of the years 1854-1860, the *Georgia Telegraph* included 41 news items in which slaveholders would have been given confidence in a vision of a paternalist system of slavery.

Table 4: Stories perpetuating proslavery propaganda in the *Georgia Telegraph*, 1854-1860

Year	Number of Stories
1854	4
1855	1
1856	4
1857	10
1858	4
1859	7
1860	11

As already mentioned, whether these stories were true or not will not be discussed here, but rather, the fact they were printed at all and what they say, offer us an insight into the kind of narratives for which readers of the *Telegraph* must have had an appetite, otherwise, the editor would not have thought them worth printing. Indeed, as already noted, West's analysis of five enslavement requests reported upon in contemporary southern newspapers, which were not stories based upon factual reality, shows that they were very likely written purely for the purpose of proslavery propaganda.²⁷ The stories printed in the *Telegraph* included three main themes. Firstly, there were numerous examples of enslaved people who had either been freed or who had runaway to seek freedom. These people were voluntarily returning to enslavement because they were apparently happier as slaves. Secondly, many of the stories highlighted the supposed dire circumstances in which black people found themselves whilst living freely in the North, in Canada, Liberia, Mexico, in the British Caribbean, or in England. In these stories, the black person often declares how enslavement in the South would be better for them than freedom elsewhere. Thirdly, the stories were used to criticise Abolitionists for

²⁷ West, *Family or Freedom*, p. 14.

making false promises to black people who wished to escape slavery. Throughout all the news items, a clear paternalist defence of slavery can be seen. Masters are shown to be caring, benevolent and just in their actions, whilst formerly enslaved people beg to be returned to their masters and to their old homes. Importantly, many of the stories used the black voice to give the story more authenticity and the moral justification for slavery greater depth of meaning.

From Freedom Back to Slavery

Many of the stories talked about formerly enslaved people who had become free, whether by being manumitted by their masters, or by running away as fugitives. These individuals then found various ways of returning to enslavement. Fox Genovese and Genovese have remarked that this was common 'news' in the Southern press with many newspapers printing reports of slaves who had the chance of freedom when travelling to the North with masters but who chose to return with their masters to 'the only homes they knew.'²⁸ As early as the 1820s, the *Southern Review* had reported that southern state legislatures were inundated with petitions from black people residing in the North who wished to return to the South.²⁹ All such stories fed into the paternalist narrative that slaves themselves knew that they needed the care of their masters and, as such, preferred to be enslaved than to be free.³⁰ As discussed in Chapter One, the rise of the popularity of minstrelsy saw the discourse of the minstrel stage spread to other forms of cultural praxis. Indeed, many minstrel routines told the stories of ex-plantation slaves who had escaped slavery and were now unhappy in the North, longing for the 'comfort and security of their "place" on the plantation.'³¹ This same narrative can be seen time and time again in the stories printed in the *Georgia Telegraph*.

One such example is the unnamed female slave who once belonged to a 'lady of New Orleans.' Travelling with her mistress to Paris, seventeen years earlier, the woman somehow managed to escape her enslavement and 'subsequently led a miserable, half starved life.' She travelled to Jamaica where she lived an easier life and then moved to

²⁸ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Fatal Self-Deception*, p. 102.

²⁹ Ibid., p.96.

³⁰ Ibid., p.95.

³¹ Toll, *Blackening Up*, p. 88.

Haiti where she 'procured the necessities of life.' However, she moved to New York where she grew 'thoroughly sick of liberty'. 'Yearning to be a slave again,' she returned to her former mistress and after asking for forgiveness and to be 'taken back as a slave,' her mistress agreed.³²

In December 1855, the *Telegraph* reprinted a story from the *Richmond Dispatch*, which told of an unnamed elderly black man in Southampton County who had recently become free and wished to be voluntarily re-enslaved. The paper noted that the Virginia legislature had introduced a general act for the voluntary enslavement of free black people as so many applications 'of this character' had been received.³³ It is likely the paper was referring to the upcoming introduction of new legislation in 1856. Through this legislation, Virginia was the first state to 'formalise voluntary enslavement legislation,' meaning any free woman of colour aged eighteen and any free man of colour aged twenty-one, could request voluntary enslavement through court petition.³⁴

In November 1856, the *Telegraph* reprinted a long piece ironically titled 'The Blessings of Freedom to Negroes' from the *Montgomery Advertiser*, providing an example of cases in which free black people wished to return to slavery. The piece was at pains to highlight the inability of black people to look after themselves, commenting that 'the thoughtless, improvident creatures require some intelligent, human control, and it is only under the system which exists in the Southern States that their nature receives its best and highest development.' According to the report, which also quoted from the *Louisville Democrat*, a few months previously Mrs Catherine Smoot had freed her 'ten or twelve slaves' and took them to Cincinnati where she rented them rooms for a year and gave them money to get started in their new lives. However, on the 27 October 1856, they returned to Kentucky, where they declared they were 'heartily tired of freedom and its privileges,' further commenting that they would 'rather be slaves here than free in Ohio.' The report noted that one old woman had received no pay for hard work in a wage paid job and therefore 'couldn't stand freedom at that rate; that she would rather be put up at auction and sold to the highest bidder even to the Devil himself than to go back to freedom as she found it.'³⁵ A week later, the *Telegraph* printed a very similar story, of

³² 'Returned to Slavery,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 7 Feb 1854.

³³ 'Voluntary Enslavement,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 25 Dec 1855.

³⁴ West, *Family or Freedom*, p. 45.

³⁵ 'The Blessings of Freedom to Negroes,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 18 Nov 1856.

two black women from Richmond, Virginia, Caroline Banks and Mary Frances, who were emancipated through the will of Mrs Sarah Branch of Chesterfield. They were taken to New York and left there with some money to last them until they found work. However, when a Richmond businessman was in Boston, Caroline Banks visited him and requested that he take her children back to Virginia and she would follow, as 'she preferred slavery in Virginia to freedom in the north, where the most she could obtain by constant toil was a miserable subsistence.' The man did not carry out her request, and so the two women and their children came back to Virginia themselves, 'voluntarily and of their own accord,' and 'they earnestly besought the protection of a gentleman here representing their willingness to become slaves again.'³⁶ Both stories display the notion that black people found themselves bewildered by freedom and desperately in need of the protections that enslavement provided them.

Other stories followed exactly the same pattern, including the report of forty freed slaves from King William County, Virginia who were taken to Ohio and found weeks later in a 'wretched condition, almost starving' and begged to be allowed to return to Virginia and 'go into slavery.'³⁷ Another person wishing to return to slavery was a 'fine looking mulatto' girl called Harriet Hall who was liberated in Richmond and travelled to Massachusetts. According to the report, she found that 'Northern freedom talk' had been nothing more than a 'bogus gold that glitters' and she 'began to sigh for her 'Old Virginia home,' which, with all its faults, she loved still.'³⁸ The *Telegraph* reprinted another story from the *Bayou Sara Ledger* that stated that emancipated slaves had returned from Cincinnati, declaring that they would 'rather be slaves in Louisiana than free in Ohio.'³⁹

In 1860, the *Telegraph* printed a number of articles reprinted from Cincinnati newspapers. One story told of a family of six, who had been freed six years previously, but were returning to Arkansas to 'enter again into the service of their old master,' after 'having tasted of the sweets of liberty' and decided to 'voluntarily return to bondage.'⁴⁰ More 'sweets of liberty' were discussed in the story of a runaway slave who had spent

³⁶ 'Something for Abolitionists to reflect upon,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 25 Nov 1856.

³⁷ 'The Richmond Enquirer says...' *Georgia Telegraph*, 9 June 1857.

³⁸ 'Did not relish 'down east' life,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 15 Feb 1859.

³⁹ 'What will the abolitionists say to this?' *Georgia Telegraph*, 30 Aug 1859.

⁴⁰ 'Returning to slavery,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 3 March 1860.

six months in the North in several cities and was discovered by his owner 'peddling apples on the railroad at Syracuse.' The report notes that the fugitive slave 'voluntarily accompanied' his master 'to his old home.'⁴¹ 'Negro fugitives' were discussed in a report reprinted from the *Cincinnati Times*, who were returning to the South to their original master. A letter from a correspondent in Arkansas described the former slaves arriving in Arkansas:

So desirous were they to get on shore, they could hardly be restrained from jumping from the boat before she had landed. Their eyes sparkled, and they grinned from one ear to the other at the prospect of once more returning to their old homes. One of the women exclaimed- "Bress God! I'se home now, and no one 'ell eber catch dis child gwine away agin; I's gwine to stay home, I is!" and she fairly danced again in the exuberance of her feelings. On the wharf boat they were met by one whom I took to be their owner, who received them cordially, and was evidently delighted to see them. He examined them critically, and I heard him say to one- "Why Jane, you don't look so hearty as you did, you ain't sick, are you?" "No, Massa, I ain't sick as I knows on, but I's mighty tired and worried, and dis child wants to get home."⁴²

In this letter, the runaway African Americans are portrayed as thoroughly delighted to be returning to the South. One woman is described as dancing in happiness, playing to the stereotype of the comical, musical and happy slave. The reaction of their master is one of true happiness. He is not portrayed as angry for the fact that they ran away, but rather lovingly welcomes them back as though they are relatives who have been missed. He asks after the health of Jane, presenting himself as a caring master who cares only for the wellbeing of his enslaved people. Ultimately, Jane's comment that 'dis child wants to get home' highlights the childlike nature of the stereotype of the slave. The runaways are represented as naughty children who realise their wrongdoings and long for their plantation home where they are cared for properly.

Other reports in this vein discuss enslaved people who were offered freedom and did not take the opportunity at all, often wishing and begging to remain enslaved, such as

⁴¹ 'A colored prodigal returning,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 7 April 1860.

⁴² 'Glad to get home,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 17 March 1860.

the family of recently freed slaves in Virginia who were offered passage to Liberia, but were instead 'going about the country begging various gentlemen to buy them, declaring they had rather be slaves in Virginia than free men in Liberia.'⁴³ In April 1857, the *Telegraph* reprinted from South Carolina's *Cheraw Gazette* the story of a North Carolina enslaved woman who had given birth to conjoined twins. The babies had been purchased and after being toured as exhibits, found themselves taken to England, where their owner could no longer claim them as his slaves. He therefore purchased their mother, in the hope of taking her to England to claim the children herself. Upon finding the children in Scotland, the report states that 'No effort was spared to induce the mother of these children to desert her master and remain in England.' However, the woman said that she had 'seen white slavery and it was far worse in civilized England, than African slavery in the United States. Indeed, so strongly was she impressed with the misery of white slavery, that she clung to her master and returned with him home, to endure the misery of negro slavery in North Carolina, as not only a choice of evils, but as the happiest condition of the African race.'⁴⁴ This story played clearly into the common proslavery argument that wage labour in the North and in England was just another form of slavery—one in which labourers were far worse off than in slavery in the South. The idea that a black person could see this and confirm such a state of affairs was important to the proslavery propaganda on display here.⁴⁵

A story reprinted from the New Orleans *Picayune* tells the tale of 'Lucky Dick' an enslaved male who often wins on the Havana Lottery, recently winning five thousand dollars. His friends therefore pester him to purchase his freedom: to 'invest a portion of his surplus funds in his own flesh and blood.' However Dick does not wish to do so, remarking that 'I'm as free as I want to be...I've a master who is kind and good to me; when I get old, as I know I must, he will take care of me without my bothering my head about it, and when he dies I'd just as soon die too.' Therefore, rather than purchasing freedom for himself, his wife or his son, he decides instead to 'furnish them with costly apparel and luxuries, which appeal to the eye and the appetite.'⁴⁶ In this scenario, Dick becomes the ultimate

⁴³ 'A postscript for "Dred,"' *Georgia Telegraph*, 14 Oct 1856. For more on enslavement requests in Virginia, see: Ted Maris-Wolf, *Family Bonds: Free Blacks and Re-enslavement Law in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015). See especially chapter five, 'To Liberia and Back.'

⁴⁴ 'The Ethiopian Times,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 14 April 1857.

⁴⁵ For an excellent exploration of the many complex motivations for free blacks to choose residency or voluntary enslavement see: Emily West, *Family or Freedom*.

⁴⁶ 'A lucky and contented Negro,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 26 May 1857.

justification for the system of southern slavery. He is so happy as an enslaved person that no amount of money changes how he feels about his situation: he would rather remain enslaved than buy his freedom. Again, proslavery ideology is put into the mouth of an enslaved person to powerfully highlight the contentedness of the slave.

In November 1857, the *Telegraph* printed two cases that displayed apparent bonds of affection between the slaveholder and slave. In the first story, three slaves, (two girls and a man) who were travelling from Missouri to Virginia with their master, were stopped in Cincinnati where abolitionists attempted via a habeas corpus to set them free. Yet, the girls were 'overwhelmed with grief' and 'clung to their master.' The male slave 'declared his desire to be "let alone." He wanted to go to Virginia (Fauquier County), where he has a wife. After the conclusion of proceedings in court, he reiterated his desires, and declared his intention to go with his master.' The girls' actions portray a deep emotional attachment to their master, implying that they are content in their bondage. The man's desire to remain enslaved in order to be with his wife also implies the notion of the plantation as a happy family dwelling place for black and white people alike. Emily West has pointed out the horrific irony of southern newspapers 'happy to humanize' the reason for wanting to remain enslaved based upon emotional attachments to 'home and kin' at a time when 'most black people in America were regarded as subhumans suitable only for enslavement.'⁴⁷

The second case concerned a slave named Betty who was with her owners, Mr and Mrs Sweet while they travelled in the North. A writ of habeas corpus was obtained for Betty and Mr and Mrs Sweet stated that there would 'cheerfully abide by Betty's own choice in the matter.' When Betty was questioned in an 'adjoining room, for the purpose of ascertaining her wishes, without bias from the presence of those around her,' she made the decision to return to Tennessee with her master.⁴⁸ Betty's owners are represented as fair and just people who offer total respect to Betty's decision, making her ultimate desire to remain enslaved seem ever more reasonable to the reader. Another story printed from South Carolina's *Newberry Sun* told of a slaveholder who wished to free a number of his slaves and take them to a free state. However several of his slaves 'refused positively to march one step, saying that they were satisfied with their condition, and

⁴⁷ West, *Family or Freedom*, p. 100.

⁴⁸ 'Slave Cases,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 17 Nov 1857.

preferred death rather than freedom, starvation and misery in a free-soil state.⁴⁹ Here again, a master is portrayed as generous in his offer of freedom to his slaves, yet because his slaves are so content under bondage they want to remain with him. The proslavery rhetoric of the North as a place of a different, and worse, form of slavery is placed in the mouths of the slaves, who powerfully declare they prefer death to life in the North.

Other reports told of black people who were born free yet chose to become enslaved, such as the story of a black man who was born free, but decided at thirty-five years of age to become enslaved so long as he was supported by his new master. Satisfied in his new 'arrangement' the man 'boasts that he would not exchange his present for his former situation for anything.'⁵⁰ A very long piece printed in July 1857 told the story of Henry Dixon, who was born free in Michigan and spent most of his younger life travelling in the Northern states, Canada, and Europe. In Maryland, Dixon committed crimes, for which he was sold into slavery, and found himself owned by James Dean Esq. in Georgia. Abolitionists got involved to try to free Dixon, 'the cause of so much correspondence, the subject of so much excitement, the much wronged freeman of New York so ruthlessly held in bondage,' yet he 'absolutely and positively refused to leave his master!' The newspaper ends its report with the following commentary:

Here, then, is a negro who had tried free soil and free society, in all its aspects. He has lived in Ohio and New York- in Canada and in England- among the shriekers of Rochester and the hypocrites of Auburn. Yet after all, he rejects freedom when offered to him, and prefers to live a slave upon a Georgia plantation. What a commentary upon the boasted philanthropy of the Abolitionists, when a negro who was born among them, and who had passed most of his life in their strong holds, prefers the condition of a Georgia plantation slave, rather than trust himself again to their tender charities!⁵¹

Dixon's case was raised again in an article (copied from the *Rochester Union and Advertiser*) a month later. In this account Henry's decision to reject freedom is explained again: 'He had lived a good part of his life as a free negro at the North; and his comparatively brief experience as a Southern slave taught him that the latter condition

⁴⁹ 'Not willing to go,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 31 May 1859.

⁵⁰ 'Slaveholding in New York,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 28 April 1860.

⁵¹ 'A Nut for the Abolitionists to Crack,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 21 July 1857.

is the best.’ Once more, the agency of the black person is given priority in the story. Dixon’s wish to be enslaved is reported as absolute and, crucially, his decision is presented as being based upon a well-balanced and thought-out decision-making process.⁵²

The Dire Circumstances of Freedom

Proslavery arguments by the 1850s rested largely on legitimating and justifying slavery based upon ideas of the moral duty of slaveholders to care for their slaves; this being a human obligation. In light of this, it was easy for proslavery advocates to argue that the enslaved person was better cared for, clothed, and fed under slavery than they would be as free workers whose employers cared little for their wellbeing.⁵³ Many stories of free black people wishing to return to slavery contained narratives of horrendous living conditions in places of freedom. As Fox-Genovese and Genovese point out, it became common for Americans to hear stories about ‘destitute northern blacks ready to sell themselves into slavery.’⁵⁴ Not only did this narrative fit an image of the moral obligations of slaveholders as protectors, but it also exemplified a key point of proslavery ideology; that black people were incapable of being free and therefore needed to be enslaved for their own wellbeing.⁵⁵ Fox-Genovese and Genovese highlight that the southern press liked to impress upon readers the stories of freed slaves whose outcomes had not been positive. Unsurprisingly, the reasons given were that black people were unable to survive outside of a condition of enslavement and that they had not received the support of northern whites. Both of these reasons stressed the notion that slaveholders were the only people who could, and would, care for black people.⁵⁶

The *Telegraph* printed many stories that provided examples to slaveholders of the apparent inability of black people to survive in the North and further afield. In November 1854, a report reprinted from the *Cincinnati Gazette* referred to a court case of a black man named John Stewart who was charged with stealing clothing from an elderly black woman. Pleading guilty, Stewart admitted that he had stolen the goods because he was

⁵² ‘The “Boy” Henry Dixon obstinately refuses his freedom,’ *Georgia Telegraph*, 11 August 1857.

⁵³ Faust, ed, *The Ideology of Slavery*, p. 10.

⁵⁴ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Fatal Self-Deception*, p. 96. For more on slaveholders’ arguments about free black people seeking re-enslavement: see pp. 95-102.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

in need of money and food. Stewart told the court that he had until recently been enslaved in Raleigh, North Carolina and 'upon being informed of the kind treatment he would receive from the Abolitionists of the North,' he purchased himself at the cost of \$900. Stewart told the court that since coming to Ohio:

'I have been kicked about and abused by all classes of white men. Can't get work from no one, and to borrow money to get bread with, that is out of the question. I wish I were a slave again. I did a great deal better there than I ever did here.'⁵⁷

John's inability to cope in the North and his lack of help from abolitionists are shown as important factors in why slavery was a better condition for African Americans. Once again, the use of John's voice confirming this, added weight to the moral justification. Other stories told of a runaway slave from Virginia who had grown 'disgusted with the free states and returned to Virginia, where negroes are not looked upon as brutes,' and an enslaved man from Alabama who was to be set free at the age of twenty-one but who, after visiting the North with his master's friend, decided that he had seen 'enough of the free negroes of the North to disgust him.' He therefore gave himself back to his previous owner, saying that he would not live in the North 'for nothing.'⁵⁸ Both enslaved people described their disgust at the North; the use of this powerful word providing a clear contrast with the image of harmonious life in the South.

Other news items contained stories of the dire circumstances in which black people found themselves living in other countries. In February 1857, the *Telegraph* printed a story from the *San Antonio Texan* which talked of the runaway slaves in Mexico who lived in a 'wretched condition... ragged and destitute of the comforts of life,' so much so that 'many of them would be glad to get back to their old homes.'⁵⁹ An article reprinted from the *Cincinnati Commercial* in September 1858, explained how two runaway slaves from Kentucky made their escape to Canada, where they soon became 'tired of their spell of liberty,' and sent a letter to their master from Toronto, asking him to send them funds in order to return 'to Kentucky and servitude.'⁶⁰

⁵⁷ 'Would rather be in slavery,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 28 Nov 1854.

⁵⁸ 'Adventures of a Virginia Darkie,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 1 June 1858; 'Would not live there for nothing,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 29 June 1860.

⁵⁹ 'Negro returning from Mexico,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 24 Feb 1857.

⁶⁰ 'Return of a master with two slaves from Canada,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 21 Sept 1858.

An article reprinted from the *Cleveland Democrat* in August 1859 reported that a ship had arrived from Canada carrying sixteen runaway slaves who had escaped the South over the previous two years and had been living at a black settlement. They had become:

Weary of Canadian freedom- which to many blacks embraces the exalted liberty of going inadequately clothed, and of being nearly starved to death- they were about to return to the South, preferring plantation life to the responsibilities attendant on a state of existence for which circumstances have rendered them peculiarly disqualified.

According to the report, one family had begun to 'sigh for their "old Kentucky home"' and had written to their master, requesting to return and asking him to meet them in Cleveland. Upon greeting their master there, they 'expressed their gratification at the meeting in a manner which denoted a sincere regard for him.' The report went on to discuss 'Old Aunty,- a venerable negress, whose black and shining face stood out in a strange contrast with her hair, white as the driven snow,' who said that 'Dey kin all talk about dar freedom over dar,' but that she would rather 'stay with dem down in Old Kentuck'. The article ended with the remark that 'the entire party took the train for Cincinnati, happy in the thought that they were going home.'⁶¹

In January 1860, the *Telegraph* reprinted an excerpt from the recently published travel writings of Frederic Cozzens. Cozzens and his travel guide had been in Nova Scotia, visiting a black settlement. 'These are your people- your fugitives' remarked the guide. Referring to the awful living conditions of the inhabitants, the guide added that they are 'a miserable set of devils' who won't work. Cozzens visited the home of Mr and Mrs Deer, fugitive slaves from Maryland, where he questioned Mrs Deer about her preferred place to live; in Nova Scotia, or back in Maryland. A strange back and forth ensued, in which Mrs Deer clearly wanted to admit that she preferred it in Maryland, noting that; 'Why, I never had no such work to do at home as I have to do here, grubbin' up old stumps and stone; dem isn't women's work. When I was home I had only to wait on missis and work was light and easy.' When pressed further Mrs Deer said that she preferred Nova Scotia, despite the work, the cold and her rheumatism, because 'de difference is, dat when I

⁶¹ 'Extensive arrival of Blacks from Canada en-route for the South,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 2 Aug 1859.

work here I work for myself, and when I was working at home I was working for other people.' Yet, when Cozzens asked her what she would advise her relatives still living in slavery in Maryland to do, to stay or to escape to Nova Scotia, she hesitated and simply remarked: 'Well, sah, I'd let 'em take dere own heads for dat.' Cozzens writes that 'there is a moral in the story.' Cozzens also approached an elderly black man from Virginia and 'adopting the sweet mellifluous language of his own home I asked him whether he liked best to stay where he was or go back to 'Old Virginny!' 'Oh, massa,' said he, with such a look, 'you must know dat I has de warmest side for my own country.'⁶²

Another story reprinted from the *New Orleans Crescent* in June 1858 referred to a runaway slave, Griffin, from Missouri, who had fled to Nassau weeks previously, but had 'surrendered himself, preferring service under a good master to the delights of British West India free negroism.' He had found that the 'society of the place didn't exactly suit him,' and therefore had 'begged to be brought back to the United States and restored to his master.'⁶³

But it was not just the North, Mexico, Canada and Nassau that were brought to the attention of slaveholders in newspaper reports. As Fox-Genovese and Genovese have highlighted, reports of Liberia as a disastrous project for free black people were numerous across the South, with news items putting 'Liberians in the worst possible light.' Between 1820- 1861 nearly twelve thousand free black people went to Liberia, yet it was a difficult place to live, with deprivation a huge problem due to the difficulties of building a workable economy. The narrative of black deprivation that was emphasised in accounts from Liberia simply added to the proslavery ideological reasoning that highlighted the incompetence and inability of black people to survive outside of slavery.⁶⁴

An example of such a story was published by the *Telegraph* in May 1857. On the first page of the newspaper, the editor chose to print an article from the *Atlanta Examiner* which told the news of Jeff, a freed slave who once lived in Gwinnett County, Georgia.

⁶² 'Fate of the Fugitive slaves,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 17 Jan 1860. The *Telegraph* quotes from Frederic Swartwout Cozzens, *Acadia; or a Sojourn among the Blue Noses* (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1859)

⁶³ 'Returned Runaway,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 1 June 1858.

⁶⁴ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Fatal Self-Deception*, pp. 103-105. For more on Southern arguments that free black people wanted to return from Liberia see pp. 102-105.

Jeff had been sent, along with forty other freed black people, to Liberia in accordance with the will of his late master. During the seven months he was in Liberia, many of Jeff's close relatives, alongside many others, died from the 'want of wholesome food' and from disease. Jeff was therefore 'determined to leave 'those digguns' and seek his old Georgia home!' and he travelled back to the Southern states, making 'his escape...from Liberian citizenship and freedom.' Reaching Atlanta, Jeff contacted old acquaintances of his former master and declared that 'all he wanted or desired was to reach the plantation of his young master Mr. T. J. Waters of Gwinnet, [the son of his former master] so as to be permitted for the balance of his life either to handle the plow, or to take up the shovel and the hoe.' According to the report, Jeff did make it back to the 'old plantation.' The report goes on to note that Jeff says that the condition of the people in Liberia is miserable and that 'ninety-nine out of every hundred of them would, like himself, gladly return to servitude upon the plantation.' Furthermore, the report highlights what Jeff thinks of the 'natives of Liberia.' He says that they are 'lazy, filthy, and in their diet worse than beasts.' Describing what he considers to be a horrible choice of food, Jeff remarks that this food 'don't suit a Georgia nigger.' He also points out that there was no work available in Liberia.

On the second page of the newspaper, an editorial refers to the story of Jeff which appeared on the first page. The editor is critical of the Colonization Society's plans for settlements in Liberia, noting that despite his previous belief that the 'project' might work towards the 'process of civilization and christianising' in Africa, 'longer experience, closer observation and maturer reflection however, have satisfied us that the whole idea was founded upon a false estimate of the capacities of the negro race.' The editor remarks that black people cannot enjoy the 'blessings of civilization when removed from the management, supervision and influence' of white people, as they will 'sink again into barbarism;' without white men to 'manage and maintain the Republic... it will come to naught, as soon as their supervision is withdrawn.' Making clear that the duty of the slaveholder is to protect the black people under their 'care,' because they are incapable of looking after themselves, the editors argues that: 'our sober conviction is that the negro is in his average most comfortable and prosperous condition as a slave in the Southern States.'⁶⁵

⁶⁵ 'Escape from Citizenship and Freedom,' and 'Liberia,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 12 May 1857.

Four months later, the *Telegraph* again discussed the story of Jeff, in relation to what it described as the 'failure of the Colonization Scheme' in Liberia. In this editorial, the editor explained at length why he believed the scheme could not work, as it 'was not in harmony with the negro character,' remarking that 'the negro, as a slave, under the government and protection of a kind, intelligent and provident master is in his best and happiest condition. Release him from it, and with rare exceptions only, he sinks in every condition- physical, intellectual and moral.' He went on to remind those who may have wished to emancipate their slaves that 'the benevolent slaveholder should be satisfied that he can do better for the welfare of his black family' by instead securing 'them a position of well regulated servitude.'⁶⁶

A week later, the *Telegraph* reprinted a letter from the *Hawkinsville Times* (Ga). The letter was from a black woman, Anna Lampkin, who had been freed by her owner and sent to Liberia. The letter's recipient was her husband, still enslaved (but owned by a different master) in Pulaski County, Arkansas. Apparently, this letter was 'only one of a 100 similar in tone, received by different citizens of this County from others of the same family of negroes- all imploring to be brought back and returned to the condition of slavery.' In the letter, Anna asks her husband to try to send her something; 'do send your children something- we are dishartin and distressed- send me some clothes...shoes if you are not able to do more try and divide your rashun.'⁶⁷ According to Fox-Genovese and Genovese, it was common for other newspapers to print similar letters from free black people in Liberia to former masters, asking for help.⁶⁸

In September 1859, the *Telegraph* printed the story of when the editor of the *Fredericksburg News* met a black man named Joe McIntosh, the superintendent of a bathhouse at White Sulphur Springs in West Virginia. Joe had been born free and decided to go to Liberia where he was appointed a Judge of the Superior Court of Liberia. He stayed six months, before deciding that any black person arriving in Liberia, 'would be better off with a good master at home.' Joe testified that 'he has known native Africans in Africa, slaves in Virginia, and free negroes in Virginia and in the northern states, and also in Canada, and taking all together, with few exceptions he thinks the happiest

⁶⁶ 'Failure of the Colonization Scheme,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 15 Sept 1857.

⁶⁷ 'The Liberia trap,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 21 Sept 1858.

⁶⁸ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Fatal Self-Deception*, p. 103.

condition for negroes is to belong to white masters; they cannot get along without white men to direct and govern them.’⁶⁹

The Southern Slave as Critic of Abolitionists

As well as stories which emphasised how much the southern slave wanted to return ‘home’ to the plantation and stories which highlighted the apparent inability of the black person to survive outside of the confines of slavery, other stories added another layer of proslavery narrative: the slave as a critic of abolitionists. Representations of abolitionist activity were often criticised in printed stories using the black voice. In so doing, attacks on the institution of slavery could be discredited; if the very people abolitionists wanted to ‘help’ were criticising their activity, the work and the arguments of the abolitionists were both discredited and ridiculed.

In one such story, printed in June 1854, Burns, a slave from Richmond is discussed in relation to his experiences of the North. Described as a ‘fugitive’, the report says that Burns claims that his travel to Boston was ‘accidental and not premeditated,’ as he fell asleep in a ship headed North. According to the report, Burns was not able to get work for a month and in the meantime he was starving and ‘ragged as a buzzard.’ Interestingly, Burns is highly critical of abolitionists in the North:

None of his abolition friends cared for him until they found that he was a ‘runaway nigger’ and then they were ready enough to help him. A common nigger there (he said) was of no account with them- he might starve and rot; but if he, was only a ‘runaway’ they were almost ready to fall down and worship him. ‘Look at these clothes’ said he, pointing to the elegant dress suit he had on- ‘do you think they would have given them to any common nigger? Shugh!’⁷⁰

Burns criticises abolitionists for not actually caring about black people, but only as acting as saviours for the slaves of the South. Burns ridicules the abolitionists as hypocrites in a way that readers may have found amusing. This was a clever device; by using the black

⁶⁹ ‘A colored ex-judge,’ *Georgia Telegraph*, 13 Sept 1859.

⁷⁰ ‘Abolition Sympathies,’ *Georgia Telegraph*, 27 June 1854.

voice to discredit and criticise abolitionists, such stories fed the defence of the southern institution of slavery in a way which encompassed paternalist ideology.

Another report told of abolitionists in Salem who 'rescued' a slave girl who wished to remain with her mistress. The report states that upon arriving in Salem, 'a big negro' stepped into the train car and 'accosting the girl, asked her if she was a slave.' When the mistress replied that she was, the 'black ruffian seized' the girl, 'she, clinging to her mistress' neck, begged most piteously not to be torn away; but the black fellow violently tore her away, and in the effort bruised the lady's neck severely and carried the child out of the car on one arm, and flourished a revolver in the other hand.' The slaveholder offered to give the girl her freedom if she wanted it, but the 'child's screams were heard above the tumult, begging to go back, so that she could again see her mother who belongs to the same owner.' The report ends by commenting only that the master, in fear of his life went 'on in the cars to carry grief to the mother of the girl.'⁷¹ This emotionally charged story highlighted to slaveholders the dangers inherent in the freedom of black people. The 'big negro' is portrayed as a violent brute who does not care for the child's desire to be with her mother. The overall message of the story is that the abolitionists had little kindness in their treatment of the child, unlike the master who has to deliver the sad news to the mother of the little girl. The story represents the 'grieved' master as the true humanitarian.

The Black Voice Defends Paternalism

The most powerful of the stories printed were the ones in which the black voice defends paternalism; accepting that they are well looked after by their masters and mistresses. This was a common theme in much of the proslavery propaganda of this type. As discussed in Chapter One, the representation of black dialect added a sense of authenticity to what was being said. Where the black voice was needed to defend slavery; it needed to be an 'authentic' black voice for the reader to be assured of the message being delivered.⁷²

⁷¹ 'Disgraceful Act at Salem- Forcible Rescue of a Slave Girl,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 19 Sept 1854.

⁷² See Chapter One, pp. 95-98

In March 1860, the *Telegraph* printed a letter to the editor containing the transcript of a conversation between two enslaved men in Macon, which the author stated took place the previous Monday. One of the men asks the other man, Austin, why he has been moved by his mistress from working on the Rail Road to work instead with a 'one horse dray.' Austin explains that the railroad company has new legal arrangements in order to release itself from liability for hired enslaved workers. Austin explains that his "'missus ain't going to risk her property in dat kind ob way,'" as working on the rail road is far more dangerous than working with a one horse dray. When Austin remarks that "'missus is right not to risk her property where dere is no chance to recober anyting,'" his friend responds: "'But "Aus", I think you lower yourself by calling yourself property.'" Austin retorts:

"Not a bit, it is nuthing less dan what I am and what you be too, and for myself, I tank God dat some one does own me, who feels interested enuff to protect me from dangers of de Railroad and all udder kind of dangers."

The author of the letter remarked that 'the negro Austin... has a much better idea of Southern rights and his own "status" and comfort and safety, than the whole body of the Black Republican Congressmen.'⁷³ Austin's voice is vital to the reception of this story. His understanding of his situation is a powerful message for the slaveholding reader and drives right to the heart of paternalist ideology. Austin really believes he is better off enslaved, and the fact that it is his words that are printed, makes this point even stronger. In printing the words of a black person, the slaveholding reader could well imagine, and hope, that these were also the spoken words of their own 'property.'

In September 1860, the *Telegraph* (reprinting from the *Springfield Republican*, Mass.) printed extracts from a forthcoming book by a Massachusetts author, entitled 'The Ebony Idol.' It told the story of a runaway slave, Caesar, who is given help by Mr Cary, a clergyman, who explains to him that he must now work to make a living in the North. The editor of the *Telegraph* notes that the extracts reveal how 'The inexorable law of civilization, work or starve, is one that Sambo, from the very tropical sensuousness of his being, is exceedingly slow to learn.' When Mr Cary explains that Caesar must do some tasks around the house whilst he stays and that he will seek paid employment for him in

⁷³ 'For the Daily Telegraph,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 17 March 1860.

a local family, Caesar 'sat dog-eyes and sullen,' and cried "'Dis nigger didn't come Norf to work, no how; get work enuf at de Souf.'" Mr Cary reminds Caesar that he "'must work or starve; liberty is nothing unless you can be clothed and fed,'" and tells him that "'providence has released'" him from slavery. Caesar replied that "'Providence hadn't nurthin to do with it; it was just dem cussed abolitioners, and dat is fact, massa Cary.'" Mr Cary, urges Caesar to think again about his situation:

"Caesar all gifts are from God! He has doubtless some motive in releasing you from a cruel task-master."

"Nebber heard any nigger, black or white, call my ole massa cruel task-massa afore. He was a gemmen as is a gemmen!"

"Why did you leave him, then?" asked Mr Cary a little testily.

"Oh Lor' only knows, coz I was over-persuaded I spect; Sambo he heard as how dat pussens up Norf didn't work only when dey had mind; now dis child nebber had a mind and so as I was over-persuaded." ⁷⁴

Caesar's replies portray him as the typical Sambo; as stupid and childlike and as incredibly lazy. The editor of the *Telegraph* printed Caesar's story because it fitted the ideology of slaveholding paternalism perfectly.

Just a week later, another example of the black voice defending slaveholding paternalism was printed. This piece referred to the story of a number of New York mechanics who were employed on a government contract to work in Tampa Bay, Florida. An enslaved man, Jupe, belonging to the employer of the northern mechanics, approached the 'foreman of the gang,' Charles, to ask him why the 'debbil you all work for so, eh?' Charles tells him he works to earn money and when asked if he earns a lot of money in the North, Charles answers that he does well in the spring, summer and fall, but that work 'is slack in wintertime.' Jupe asks Charles what would happen if he gets ill and Charles explains that if he could not work, he would "get very poor, and suffer great privations." Jupe is set up in the account, just as Caesar was in the previous week's edition of the newspaper, as a Sambo character. His reply to Charles shows he sees himself as better cared-for under conditions of enslavement, than as a free man in the North:

⁷⁴ 'The Ebony Idol,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 13 Sept 1860.

I thought white folks sensible people; 'taint nuffin ob de sort. Work, work, nuffin but work; gets sick, and nobody taken care ob' em. White folks blame fools. Jupe work, too.--- Nebber hurt himself working though. Jupe gets sick. Miss Sallie come down and nurse him. Massa Bob send a boat sebenty miles up the riber to get a white doctor for him. --- Norf good 'enough for white folk, but reckon old Jupe stay at home.⁷⁵

Jupe's declaration that 'home' is the place he'd rather be sets a clear narrative of the plantation as the best place for the African American and further portrays the North as a place of wage slavery. Once again, here, the black voice authenticated the argument that slavery was a benign institution.

* * * * *

This chapter has shown how inclusions of proslavery propaganda in the *Georgia Telegraph* fed a psychological need for the moral justification of slavery for the slaveholding readership of Bibb County and beyond. Through the many examples of enslaved people who begged to return to slavery, or who begged not to be freed at all, the *Telegraph* sent a message to readers that African Americans wanted to be enslaved and knew that it was best for them in all respects. Portraying the North (and other places where black people could live freely) as hostile environments in which the black person was unable to prosper, cemented the image of the idyllic southern plantation home, where all members of the family, white and black, could live in harmony and wellbeing. Yet, despite the attempts of newspapers such as the *Georgia Telegraph* to erase the image of the rebellious slave in their midst by wallpapering over institutional contradictions with Sambo-like characterisations of happy southern slaves, it was not always so easy to remove the threat of slave revolt from their pages when such images came from foreign news, as Parts Two and Three of this thesis will explore.

⁷⁵ 'White folks blame fools,' *Georgia Telegraph*, 20 Sept 1860.

Part Two

News from the Caribbean and the Spectre of Slave Revolt at Home

Chapter Three

‘Creating Insurrections in the Heart of our Country:’

Fear of the British West India Regiments in the Southern US Press, 1839-1860

Part one of this thesis saw an exploration of the kinds of proslavery rhetoric and propaganda that helped bolster slaveholders’ belief in the humanitarian benevolence of their southern system of human bondage. These forms of cultural praxis helped to strengthen the ideology of paternalism, reiterating to slaveholders that their slaves were best placed in slavery and that slaveholders themselves were kind, caring masters and mistresses. Part two will turn to look beyond the borders of the southern states, to the Caribbean, to consider how two particular news topics were focal points for southern slaveholding readers. These were news topics that demonstrated the inherent instability of the system that their paternalistic ideology attempted to conceal. The imagery of slave rebellion within the South was not often explicitly mentioned in southern newspapers. Yet, focus on outside influences on the southern system of slavery, or coverage of foreign slave rebellions, could allow Southerners to explore a dangerous topic at a distance.

In the decades prior to the Civil War, the American slaveholding South became increasingly concerned about both its foreign and northern enemies and crucially, the enemy within; its slave population. After Nat Turner’s Rebellion of 1831, in which white slaveholders and their families in Virginia were killed, the South experienced no actual large-scale slave rebellions, and yet, while slaveholders tried to convince themselves that their slaves were faithful and trustworthy, rumours of poisoning, arson and planned slave rebellions circulated widely, leading to numerous slave insurrection panics.¹ The 1840s and 1850s saw a period of strong Anglophobia, with fears of British invasion on the south-eastern coastline and, in the aftermath of British abolition of slavery, the South became increasingly concerned about the relative geographical proximity of the British West India Regiments, formed of free black soldiers stationed in the Caribbean. Some of the regiments had fought on American soil during the War of 1812, and this fact remained fixed in the southern memory as a source of paranoia. An analysis of southern

¹ See Introduction, pp. 10-12.

newspaper reports that covered politicians' discussions about a possible invasion by black troops demonstrates how this scenario was disseminated to a wider slaveholding public.

The role of the southern press was important in popularising the fears of politicians. American politicians, particularly southerners, were concerned about a possible invasion by the West India Regiments, yet there has been very little analysis of the way in which this putative invading force was portrayed in the southern press, nor exactly why it was considered so terrifying. Southern newspaper articles show how news about a possible invasion by the British West India Regiments perpetuated a deep-seated fear of slave rebellion within the South and a long-standing Anglophobia linked to the fear that the enslaved population would support a British invasion. Newspaper coverage gives us a better understanding of what slaveholders found so menacing about the prospect of the West India Regiments landing on the shores of the South, and a glimpse into southern anxiety over its own form of white supremacy and its long-term stability. Using fear of the West India Regiments as a case study, it is possible to analyse how southern Anglophobia addressed a southern idea of whiteness and a specific form of white supremacy.

Anglophobia and the Fear of Invasion by the West India Regiments

From the late 1830s until the Civil War, diplomatic tensions between the United States and Great Britain were severe and, at moments, came close to war. Fear amongst southern leaders that the British would send an invasion force of black troops was part of an increasing Anglophobia, particularly in the South where southern slaveholders saw Britain's abolition of slavery in 1833 as part of a grand conspiracy designed to weaken the United States.² In 1842, the Washington D. C. *Madisonian* described British plans for 'the destruction of slave labor in America' in order for Britain to eradicate 'the cotton

² Rebecca Berens Matzke, 'Britain Gets Its Way: Power and Peace in Anglo-American Relations, 1838-1846,' *War in History*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2001), p. 27. Edward B. Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation: The Caribbean Roots of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), p. 180.

culture to which this country is the successful rival of her East India possessions.’³ However, while Britain did attempt to use India as an alternative cotton source after 1830, and put obstacles in the path of Atlantic slaveholders after 1833, there is no evidence of a ‘nefarious conspiracy that linked the two policies, unless, perhaps, it was the nefarious conspiracy of global capitalism itself.’⁴ The fear that Britain had a plan up its sleeve to end southern slavery had become a source of great anxiety. In a speech to the Senate in January 1842, delivered in the wake of the antislavery convention in London in 1840, Virginian, Henry Wise, expressed alarm at the ‘black army of sixty thousand men’ that had been raised in Jamaica. He insisted that:

English Abolitionists were moving on Jamaica, and contemplating to make their next demonstration on Cuba- while they were establishing lines of a commercial marine, connecting England and the West Indies with this country, and thus opening the way for a military marine to follow, which at the first sound of the tocsin would pour in armies of trained free blacks upon the whole South.⁵

Fear that the British were working alongside American abolitionists to destroy American slavery was a constant theme whenever tensions rose with Britain in the decades prior to the Civil War.⁶ This is exemplified in Wise’s observations in the same speech that: ‘English influence abroad was in league with the same English influence at home to dissolve this Union; that there was foreign conspiracy, aided by home agents, to effect a union between Abolitionists and dissolutionists in this country.’⁷

Between 1838-1846, a number of ‘Anglo-American’ crises occurred, including the burning of the American ship, *Caroline*, by the Canadian authorities (1837), the arrest and trial in New York of the Canadian, Alexander McLeod, (1840) and ongoing disputes

³ *Madisonian* (Washington, D.C.), 1 April 1842, cited in Matthew Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2016), p. 27.

⁴ Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire*, p. 28. For more on Anglophobia in the antebellum period, see chapter ‘From Anglophobia to New Anglophobia,’ in Kenneth Greenberg, *Masters and Statesmen: The Political Culture of American Slavery* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), pp. 107-123, see also Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire*, pp. 10-31.

⁵ *The Congressional Globe containing Sketches of the Debates and Proceedings of the Second Session of the Twenty-Seventh Congress*, Vol. 11 (Washington, 1842), p. 171.

⁶ Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation*, pp. 181-5.

⁷ *The Congressional Globe containing Sketches of the Debates and Proceedings of the Second Session of the Twenty-Seventh Congress*, Vol. 11 (Washington, 1842), p. 173.

over the Maine and Oregon boundaries.⁸ By the mid-1840s, political debate focused on the annexation of Texas in order to support the western expansion of slavery. Southern politicians used arguments about the threat of British abolitionism in order to gain support for their pro-annexation stance.⁹ Such politicians used the reports of Robert Monroe Harrison, the US consul in Jamaica, to develop a theory that abolitionist Britain would use Jamaica as a base from which to attack the southern states. Harrison was concerned that the 'recruiting of blackguard negroes' to serve in the British army would be a danger to the South because, as he put it, 'these fellows will be excellent firebrands to be thrown ashore on our slaveholding states' during wartime. In 1841, Harrison argued that Britain would 'throw [an army] of 200,000 blacks' onto the southern coast.¹⁰

Harrison was referring to the British West India Regiments, which were free black soldiers stationed in the Caribbean.¹¹ These soldiers, commanded by white officers, numbered around 1600 in 1835, significantly less than the number claimed by Harrison a few years later.¹² Yet their mere presence was enough to worry Southerners whenever diplomatic tensions mounted. War did not break out during the tensions of the 1830s, 40s and 50s, and the British did not send the West India Regiments onto southern soil.¹³ Whilst there was no direct plan in London to send black troops, the idea was mooted amongst British politicians. Indeed, Matzke provides evidence that officials discussed using troops from the Caribbean in the southern states in order to 'distribute muskets to

⁸ Matzke, 'Britain Gets Its Way,' p. 22.

⁹ Edward. B. Rugemer, 'Slave Rebels and Abolitionists: The Black Atlantic and the Coming of the Civil War,' *The Journal of the Civil War Era*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2012), p. 191 and Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation*, pp. 180-221, see also Edward. B. Rugemer, 'Robert Monroe Harrison, British Abolition, Southern Anglophobia and Texas Annexation,' *Slavery & Abolition*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (2007), pp. 169-191.

¹⁰ R. M. Harrison to John Forsyth, 2 April 1839, and R. M. Harrison to Daniel Webster, 22 March 1841, cited in Rugemer, 'Slave Rebels and Abolitionists,' p. 191. See also Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation*, pp. 180-221 and Rugemer, 'Robert Monroe Harrison,' pp. 169-191. Matthew Karp and Gerald Horne have also discussed Harrison's dispatches from Jamaica concerning his fears of an invasion of the West India Regiments: See Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire*, p. 22; Gerald Horne, *Negro Comrades of the Crown: African Americans and the British Empire Fight the US before Emancipation* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), pp. 11-12, pp. 130-1.

¹¹ For an early history of the West India Regiments, see: Roger Norman Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats: The British West India Regiments, 1795-1815* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979). See also Brian Dyde, *The Empty Sleeve: The Story of the West India Regiments of the British Army* (Antigua: Hansib, 1997).

¹² The National Archives, CO320/3, 71. Records indicate that as of 1 Jan 1835, the number of black troops in Jamaica was 960 and in the rest of the British West Indies was 639, totalling 1599 troops.

¹³ Matthew. J. Karp, 'Slavery and American Sea Power: The Navalist Impulse in the Antebellum South,' *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 77, No. 2 (2011), p. 310.

the Negroes in Syrian style' - a reference to a similar tactic used by the British in the 1840s to arm Syrian rebels who supported the British campaign against Egyptian forces.¹⁴

Conflict between Britain and the US seemed very likely during many periods of increased diplomatic tensions, and southern politicians were enormously concerned over the vulnerability of the southern coastline. Fear of a British attack encouraged the 'distinctly southern naval activism' of this time.¹⁵ Whether these fears were based on fact or fiction, they reflected a perceived need for accelerated armament of the US navy in order to secure the southern coast. The impending threat of British attack thus became 'both a goad and a license for the navalists.'¹⁶ Southern politicians called for naval reform and modernization, as did Abel P. Upshur, Secretary of the Navy, in his 1841 annual report to Congress. The ideas expressed by Upshur, and other southern navalists, continued to resonate into the 1840s and 1850s.¹⁷ Aware that British steamships could access their coastline, southern Anglophobes continued to fear the specter of Britain's 'coloured battalions.'¹⁸

To understand why black troops under the supervision of another white supremacist state seemed so menacing, we need to understand the use of black troops by the British, and African American support for Britain, following the American Revolution. Put simply, we need a better appreciation of the role of slave resistance in understanding Anglophobia. Gerald Horne has highlighted how important- and how real- the threat of black resistance in support of the British was throughout the revolutionary and antebellum periods. This chapter takes its lead from Horne's assertion and seeks to show how this threat manifested itself in the fears of the southern elite as represented in the southern press. Taking issue with Eugene Genovese's claim that slaves in the Old South 'experienced little or no exterior power except that of their masters,' Horne argues that an alliance between the UK and African Americans was 'probably the single most important threat to US national security' due to the fact that a significant proportion of the US population - its enslaved population - was 'supportive of its external foe.'¹⁹

¹⁴ Trevelyan to Routh, confidential, 12 Jan 1842, C.E. Trevelyan Papers, New Bodleian Library, MS film 1186, 126–8. Cited in Matzke, 'Britain Gets Its Way,' p. 27.

¹⁵ Karp, 'Slavery and American Sea Power,' p. 288.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 311.

¹⁷ Karp, 'Slavery and American Sea Power,' p. 289.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 309. See also Matzke, 'Britain Gets Its Way,' p. 27

¹⁹ Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution*, p.22, p. 140, cited in Horne, *Negro Comrades of the Crown*, p. 5. Second and third quotations: Horne, *Negro Comrades of the Crown*, p. 5, p. 11.

Horne's point here is incredibly important for two reasons. Firstly, it implicitly acknowledges the agency of the enslaved population and their awareness of the world beyond the plantation, and secondly, it recognises that the threat of open resistance and support for the British by the enslaved was a very real danger. That Britain could count on the support of the southern enslaved population was a powerful threat, with historical precedent. Indeed, in a speech given in Birmingham, UK, in 1846, at a time when the US and Britain seemed on the brink of war, Frederick Douglass told his audience that 'in the event of a British army landing in the States and offering liberty to the slaves, they would rally round the British at the first tap of the drum.'²⁰ This was indeed a well-founded claim, given that African Americans had fought for the British in both the Revolutionary War, and the War of 1812, and would subsequently flock to Union banners in the Civil War.

Anglophobia provided a psychological crutch in the daily lives of slaveholders in the decades leading to the Civil War. Its message to fearful slaveholders was that there was nothing to fear from their own slaves: if any real threat existed, it was external to the South. Therefore, so long as there was no infiltration of abolitionist ideas to their slaves, slaveholders were safe.²¹ The real threat was from British and northern abolitionists who might trick otherwise happy slaves into rebelling. Indeed, 'the logic of Anglophobia...allowed southerners to continue belief in this fiction,' even in spite of any forms of slave resistance.²² Furthermore, this Anglophobia must have reached new heights when the supposed threat consisted of free black soldiers under the military command of white officers. The fear then was that the enslaved would escape to fight for the British and help to end the institution of slavery. In this sense, Anglophobia became both a psychological crutch and a source of incredible paranoia; it allowed the daily life of the slaveholders to continue without fear of their slaves so long as no British invasion seemed imminent, whilst ultimately, it also threatened destruction of their entire way of life.

²⁰ Report on Douglass speech, 29 July 1846, in John Blassingame, ed., *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Series One: Speeches, Debates and Interviews, Volume I: 1841-1846* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 312, cited in Horne, *Negro Comrades of the Crown*, p. 7.

²¹ Greenburg, *Masters and Statesmen*, p. 122.

²² Greenburg, *Masters and Statesmen*, p. 122.

The Southern Press and Fear of the West India Regiments

Whilst the concern of Southern politicians about the possible invasion of the southern coastline by the black West India Regiments of the British Army has been considered by historians, there has been comparatively little analysis of the extent to which these fears were played out in newspapers. Rugemer believes it likely that the correspondence of Robert Monroe Harrison was leaked to the press.²³ He also argues that the fear of a British attack on the South 'using a black army from the West Indies was not uncommon.'²⁴ In addition, Karp's work on southern navalism shows how one prominent southerner in particular played a role in arguing for better naval defences in the press. In a number of articles in the *Richmond Whig* newspaper in 1838, Lieutenant Matthew Fontaine Maury, a Virginian oceanographer, naval scientist and defender of slavery, who wrote under the pseudonym 'Harry Bluff', argued that the southern coastline was vulnerable to attack by Britain.²⁵ As Anglo-American tensions increased in the early 1840s, Maury pressed his navalist campaign further in articles in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, arguing that the southern coastline was vulnerable to the British 'black-a-moor regiments.'²⁶

By examining articles in southern newspapers during flashpoints in diplomatic tensions between the US and Britain during the period 1839-1860, we can see how fear of an invasion by British black troops was a long-standing and recurring theme in the southern press. It is reasonable to assume that stories repeating alarm about an invasion of black troops along the southern coastline may have influenced readers' own anxieties and their perception of threat. An analysis of newspaper content suggests ways in which Anglophobia might have shaped slaveholders' feelings about the trustworthiness of their own slaves. It was not only during times of slave insurrection panics that the press used its power to perpetuate fear. Newspapers fed the minds of slaveholders with images of possible rebellion, conjuring up past memories, which may have contributed to anxiety over the future of the system of slavery. The image of a black British army on the

²³ Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation*, p. 197.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

²⁵ Karp, 'Slavery and American Sea Power,' p. 293.

²⁶ Union Jack [Matthew F. Maury], "Letters on the navy to Mr Clay" *Southern Literary Messenger*, 7 (Oct 1841), pp. 724-29 (quotations on p. 729), cited in Karp, 'Slavery and American Sea Power,' p. 303. Karp also provides the example of an article: 'Harry Bluff, On the Right of Search' *Southern Literary Messenger*, April 1842, cited in Karp, 'Slavery and American Sea Power,' p. 305.

southern coastline, and its possible use as an invasion force, was another powerful theme in the construction of slaveholder fear.

The rank and file of the West India Regiments in this period were free black men, and this fact is important in understanding southern fears. In the antebellum South, being black was synonymous with being a slave. Studies of proslavery intellectual thought highlight antebellum debates over slavery and southern justifications for the enslavement of African Americans.²⁷ Within many proslavery narratives there was a clear racial defence of slavery that promoted a 'herrenvolk democracy,' – justifying the enslavement of an inferior 'race' as the foundation for an egalitarian white democracy.²⁸ Whiteness was privileged, and attempts were made to reduce the status differences between whites in order to stress the social importance of race above class.²⁹ This was sharpened in the 1840s and 1850s by a greater emphasis on a scientific racism, which stressed the inherent inferiority of the 'black race' based on supposedly impartial scientific wisdom.³⁰ Yet the description in many newspaper reports of the West India Regiments as 'disciplined' was at odds with the racist stereotypes used by slaveholders to justify slavery. These black men were not docile or childlike, they were organised, and potentially dangerous.

In recent years, scholarly attention has been paid to the arming of slaves and formerly enslaved individuals.³¹ David Lambert has shown how this caused significant anxiety among white West Indians who opposed the establishment of the regiments largely due to an 'intense 'Negrophobia' that was habitual among white, slaveholding minorities in colonial slave societies'.³² The southern US press portrayed the black men of the West India Regiments as capable of enacting mass violence, and in doing so highlighted the many anxieties that a white supremacist society had with the notion of the armed black

²⁷ See for example: Young, *Proslavery and Sectional Thought in the Early South*.

²⁸ Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*. See also Parish, *Slavery: History and Historians*, p. 142.

²⁹ Brown and Webb, *Race in the American South*, p. 101, Timothy J. Lockley, *Welfare and Charity in the Antebellum South* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007).

³⁰ Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, p. 2, p. 70.

³¹ See for example: Christopher L. Brown and Philip D. Morgan, eds, *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

³² David Lambert, "'[A] mere cloak for their proud contempt and antipathy towards the African race": Imagining Britain's West India Regiments in the Caribbean, 1795-1838', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (2018), p. 632.

man.³³ This was a black army under the supervision of white officers, fighting on behalf of another white supremacist state. The white man, the British man - the 'white officer and skilful general' - used the black body as an extension of himself, not only as a physical force, but as a vehicle and translator of ideas of freedom with which to entice the enslaved of the South to rebel and to serve the British. These soldiers, as free black men, fighting in a way that mirrored white mass violence, would be symbols of freedom to the enslaved of the South. The disciplining of black men had essentially turned them into a 'white' army. Crucially though, if slaves were to escape to join a British invasion, this black force would also have expert knowledge of the geography of the southern states. This combination of force and knowledge had been used to the detriment of slaveholders in the War of 1812, and they knew it could be used again.

Eugene Genovese describes southern slaveholders as 'historically minded people' who would have known that both slaves and free black men had been armed throughout their recent history.³⁴ Southerners not only knew of, and had experienced, the recent British arming of black males, but also actively feared further attacks because of this knowledge and experience.³⁵ Indeed, Britain knew the anxiety it caused in the southern states when it threatened the use of African American men in its numerous confrontations and disagreements with the US during the antebellum period.³⁶ Black soldiers had fought for both Patriot and British forces during the War of Independence.³⁷ Thousands of enslaved black people had fled to the British side during the 1776 conflict.³⁸ It is unsurprising then, that when London 'sought to shift the theater of conflict to the South this was further testimony to the idea that the enslaved were akin to a 5th column.'³⁹ During the war, a black regiment was raised by the British in South Carolina by recruiting runaway slaves.⁴⁰

³³ For more on US white supremacist anxiety over the arming of African American men during the First World War see Bobby A. Wintermute, 'The Negro should not be used as a combat soldier': reconfiguring racial identity in the United States Army, 1890–1918,' *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. 46, No. 3-4, (2012), esp. 284-5 and Adriane Lentz-Smith, *Freedom Struggles: African Americans and World War I* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), esp. p. 8

³⁴ Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll*, p.155

³⁵ Horne, *Negro Comrades of the Crown*.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2

³⁷ See: Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), Sylvia Frey, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), Douglas R. Egerton, *Death or Liberty: African Americans and Revolutionary America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), esp. p. 88.

³⁸ Horne, *Negro Comrades of the Crown*, p. 27.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁴⁰ Dyde, *The Empty Sleeve*, p. 19.

The Carolina Corps, as they became known, gained a very good reputation for their military service and the soldiers who were taken to the Caribbean by the British later became part of the First West India Regiment.⁴¹ Crucially, the use of slaves as soldiers by the British during the War of Independence helped to 'undermine the slave regime in both subtle and overt ways' as the use of black men was contradictory to the notion that enslaved black people were different from white people. Black soldiers were able to present themselves as individuals 'capable of the courage and honour that the plantation regime sought to deny.'⁴²

The War of 1812 demonstrated to southerners the ability of British-led black troops to encourage slave rebellion.⁴³ During the war, the South saw a huge amount of slave unrest and, again, thousands of the South's enslaved population fled to British lines. Some of these men returned as redcoats to fight in the Chesapeake and Georgia. Many were used by the British as spies, messengers and, crucially, as guides through terrain well-known to them. This both 'maddened and frightened' their former masters.⁴⁴ The words of the British naval commander, Sir James Yeo, written in 1813, are powerful in that they represent a truism for decades to come:

'I am persuaded there is nothing that would cause more alarm and consternation than [the] apprehension of our Black troops being employed against them. The population of the slaves in the southern provinces in America is so great, that the people of landed property would be panic-struck at the sight of a Black Regiment on their coast and nothing would more effectively tend to make the war with this country unpopular than the knowledge of such a measure being in contemplation.'⁴⁵

⁴¹ Gary Sellick, 'Black Skin, Red Coats: The Carolina Corps and Nationalism in the Revolutionary British Caribbean,' *Slavery & Abolition*, Vol. 39, No. 3, pp. 459-478, Gene Allen Smith, *The Slaves' Gamble: Choosing Sides in the War of 1812* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 18, See also: Timothy Lockley, "'The King of England's Soldiers': Armed blacks in Savannah and its hinterlands during the Revolutionary War Era, 1778-1787" in Leslie Harris and Daina Berry, eds., *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2014).

⁴² Philip. D. Morgan and Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, 'Arming Slaves in the American Revolution,' in Brown and Morgan, eds., *Arming Slaves*, p. 200-1.

⁴³ See Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 139-143.

⁴⁴ Horne, *Negro Comrades of the Crown*, p. 39.

⁴⁵ Sir James Yeo to First Lord of the Admiralty, 19 Feb 1813, Edward Parsons Collection, University of Texas, cited in Horne, *Negro Comrades of the Crown*, p. 40.

Although the British did not win the War of 1812, the ways in which African Americans aided the British left permanent scars upon the minds of southerners, and the involvement of the British West India Regiments in the conflict was not forgotten, even decades later.⁴⁶ The *Southern Banner*, of Athens Georgia printed a letter from Mr Poinsett, a South Carolina politician, in June 1840, which discussed the arming of state militias. This was deemed important because:

Called by the voice of Congress to prepare to defend the country, taught by the events of the last war what might be expected from an enterprising and great naval power, and warned by the English press of the possibility in case of war with that country, of black regiments being landed within the territory of the Southern States and that the horrors of a servile insurrection might be added to the ordinary calamities of war, it became the duty of the executive to seek to organise and render efficient the only means of defence at hand.⁴⁷

In February 1856, The *Savannah Georgian* reprinted an article from a fellow Georgia newspaper, the *Thomasville Watchman*, entitled 'Defences of the Seaboard,' which read:

In reference to depredations committed by the British on our coast, in the war of 1812 and '15 there are many now in the state of Georgia that have a feeling recollection. The British fleets entered the ports of Brunswick and St Marys- they invited the negroes to leave their masters and join their standard, enlisting the men in their black regiment and actually carried off several thousands of our slaves.... England is far more abolitionized now than she was then; for since that time she has abolished slavery in her West India islands, but a four days sail from us and has established regiments of negroes there. And now let me ask, has it occurred to our statesmen how exposed is our condition in case of a sudden descent of a hostile fleet upon our shores?⁴⁸

⁴⁶ For more on the mental scars and impact of the War of 1812 on the southern mentality, see Horne, *Negro Comrades of the Crown*, Especially chapters 3-5. Also see Junius P. Rodriguez, "Always 'En Garde': The Effects of Slave Insurrection upon the Louisiana Mentality, 1811-1815," *Louisiana History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (1992), p. 415.

⁴⁷ 'Letter from Mr Poinsett,' *Southern Banner* (Athens, Georgia), 7 Aug 1840.

⁴⁸ 'Defences of the Seaboard,' *Savannah Georgian* (Savannah, Georgia), 15 Feb 1856.

It is perhaps unsurprising that Georgia newspapers printed such articles, given that the West India Regiments had seen active service in the state during the War of 1812. St Mary's on Cumberland Island, off the coast of Georgia, was attacked by British forces in January 1815. These included the 2nd West India Regiment and refugee Colonial Marines who had been recruited in the Chesapeake. Of the 2,500 British troops that landed, 1,600 were black.⁴⁹ The shock of seeing formerly enslaved people brandishing weapons against frightened white Americans had a striking psychological impact on both slaveholders and the enslaved. They watched as up to two thousand slaves fled to British ships- so many that there was barely enough room for the British to take them all to Bermuda.⁵⁰

The Vulnerability of the Southern Coast and Fatal Self-Deception

Concern over the vulnerability of the southern coast was seen in Florida newspapers. *The News* of St Augustine, claimed in March 1839 that, 'a short time will determine whether we shall have alone to battle with the Indian (and this one war is quite enough) or be ready to repel the invasion and co-operation of her West India regiments with our present enemies.'⁵¹ The *Florida Herald* in June 1839, argued that Florida's 'geographical position exposes us to another danger. The peninsula, islands and reefs, run down parallel to the Bahamas, only a few miles distant where the British keep constantly two BLACK Regiments.'⁵² In March 1840, The *Herald* reprinted the senate speech of Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri who argued in defence of his 'Armed Occupation Bill,' which would help settlers in the Florida territory. According to Benton, Florida was:

The salient angle of the South... the exposed point.... the pointe d'appui of an enemy in time of war; as the tongue of land which runs far down towards the British West Indies and constituting a bridge for the ingress of the black regiments which a cruel policy, in time of war, may direct against the Southern States...⁵³

⁴⁹ Smith, *The Slaves' Gamble*, p. 149.

⁵⁰ Horne, *Negro Comrades of the Crown*, p. 46.

⁵¹ *The News* (St. Augustine, Florida), 23 March 1839.

⁵² 'Abolitionism,' *Florida Herald and Southern Democrat* (St. Augustine, Florida), 27 June 1839. Capitalisation in original.

⁵³ 'Armed Occupation of Florida,' *Florida Herald and Southern Democrat* (St. Augustine, Florida), 12 March 1840, (Referring to Speech of Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri in Senate, 12 Jan 1840).

Concern spread to newspapers in other states. In February 1840, the *Federal Union* (a Milledgeville, Georgia paper) reprinted an article from the *Washington Globe* which discussed the importance of Florida for the:

Defence of the United States against an aggressive war from Great Britain....her officers have no hesitation in pointing to a servile insurrection as the certain means of assailing our most vital interests...Let her land (and what is there to prevent her?) twenty thousand troops, half negroes, any where south of the St Mary's; it would be a most formidable position, secure on the flank and rear, open to retreat and easily accessible to supplies and just such a base as one of her skilful generals would select to carry out her ruthless schemes...⁵⁴

In July 1841, the *Savannah Daily Republican* reported twice on the 'ten thousand black troops in the British West Indies' who were 'disciplined and commanded by white officers and no doubt designed to form a most important portion of the force to be employed in any future contest that may arise between Great Britain and the United States.'⁵⁵ Once again, the number of West India Regiment soldiers was massively exaggerated. Fears concerning the vulnerability of the Florida territory is hardly surprising given that even after the War of 1812 had officially ended in February 1815, the British, based at the so-called 'Negro Fort' at Prospect Bluff, had continued to recruit runaway slaves until May. The 5th West India Regiment was present at Prospect Bluff. Nathaniel Millet has described how in the minds of former slaves, the presence of black soldiers was important in a process of connecting formal military service with the idea and realities of freedom.⁵⁶

Perhaps the most fascinating thing about the southern newspaper coverage of the West India Regiments is the tone taken in those reports that attempted to allay fears. In what Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese described as 'Fatal Self-deception,' slaveholders tried to convince themselves that their slaves would always remain loyal to

⁵⁴ 'Armed Occupation of Florida,' *Federal Union* (Milledgeville, Georgia), 25 Feb 1840.

⁵⁵ 'Report on a home squadron,' *Savannah Daily Republican* (Savannah, Georgia) 22 July 1841. Reference to these '10,000 black troops' is also found in an article, 'Steamships for our navy,' *Savannah Daily Republican* (Savannah, Georgia), 24 July 1841.

⁵⁶ Nathaniel Millet, *The Maroons of Prospect Bluff and Their Quest for Freedom in the Atlantic World* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013), p. 151. See also, Matthew J. Calvin, *The Battle of Negro Fort: The Rise and Fall of a Fugitive Slave Community* (New York: New York University Press, 2019).

them. Slaveholders wished to present slavery as a benevolent, paternalistic institution. In reality, this romanticised picture only existed in the minds of slaveholders who perpetuated the myth because they needed to justify an exploitative system.⁵⁷ George M. Fredrickson has argued that the slaveholders of the South did not need to be paternalistic, as it was possible to rule by intimidation and coercion, and that rather than being paternalistic, powerful slaveholders were fearful and contemptuous of their slaves.⁵⁸ Combining Fredrickson's argument with the Genoveses' idea of 'self-deceiving' slaveholders, a picture emerges of planters who perpetuated the myth of a paternalistic happy plantation life while simultaneously fearing their slaves.⁵⁹

Slaveholders' worry over the trustworthiness of their slaves is crucial to understanding how they may have feared black men. Planter-slave relationships were complex power relations in which the slaveholders needed assurance that slaves were faithful. Ultimately, it was fear that bound the relationship between slave and master; the threat of planter violence left slaves fearful, yet the master also feared slave insurrection and other smaller scale acts of resistance.⁶⁰ Many slaveholders encouraged a dualistic image of the slave as a 'child' and a 'savage.' Under their guardianship, the brutal savage became a happy and docile 'Sambo.'⁶¹ This contented figure was useful in convincing themselves and the outside world of the morality of slavery, and helped calm the minds of nervous masters.⁶² But, as the dualistic image propagated the belief that the slave's docility was a result of the slaveholder's firm control, inevitably a loosening of this control would lead the black person to revert to a 'bloodthirsty savage.'⁶³ In their writings, masters admitted that they believed 'duplicity, opportunism, and potential rebelliousness lurked behind the mask of Negro affability.'⁶⁴ In the minds of white masters, therefore, the sambo existed alongside the 'African savage, given to acts of incredible brutality.'⁶⁵ Masters could not reconcile the two sides of this dualism, nor

⁵⁷ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Fatal Self-Deception*.

⁵⁸ Fredrickson, 'The Role of Race in the Planter Ideology of South Carolina,' pp. 274-6.

⁵⁹ Franklin comments that southerners 'protested almost too much' that they did not fear their slaves. Franklin, *The Militant South*, p. 92.

⁶⁰ Parish, *Slavery: History and Historians*, p. 81, p. 74. See also Fredrickson, 'The Role of Race in the Planter Ideology of South Carolina,' p. 276.

⁶¹ Takaki, *Iron Cages*, pp. 116-7 and Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, pp. 53-4.

⁶² Takaki, *Iron Cages*, p. 121.

⁶³ Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, p. 54, see also Takaki, *Iron Cages*, p. 121.

⁶⁴ Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, p. 53.

⁶⁵ Bruce, *Violence and Culture in the Antebellum South*, p. 132.

could they reject either image, for the system depended on belief in both.⁶⁶ In the same manner, the southern press oscillated between a similar dualism in the way it discussed the possibility of an invasion by the British West India Regiments: paranoia on the one hand, and over-confident self-deception on the other.

This 'Fatal Self-deception' can be seen in newspaper coverage that claimed that slaves would remain loyal to their masters if and when the West India Regiments landed on the South's coast. In July 1845, the *Georgia Telegraph* reprinted a letter, which first appeared in the *Columbia South Carolinian*, from Governor Hammond to an English abolitionist. It exclaimed:

Should any foreign nation be so lost to every sentiment of civilized humanity as to attempt to erect among us the standard of revolt, or to invade us with Black Troops for the base and barbarous purpose of stirring up servile war....Our slaves could not be easily seduced, nor would any thing delight them more than to assist in stripping Cuffee of his regimentals to put him in the Cotton field, which would be the fate of most black invaders.⁶⁷

The *Savannah Daily Republican*, in February 1846, reprinted the opinion of the Washington correspondent of the *Charleston Evening News*, who argued that, in relation to:

The black regiments from the West India islands overrunning the South....they who fancy that a slave insurrection will necessarily follow an invasion of the South by Great Britain, mistake the slaves' character and attachments. Black regiments might be filled by a few vagabonds, but nine out of ten slaves would follow and fight for their masters.⁶⁸

In printing articles that featured these arguments, southern newspapers used the threat posed by the West India Regiments as a way of bolstering slaveholders' own self-deception about the loyalty of their slaves.

⁶⁶ Bruce, *Violence and Culture in the Antebellum South*, p. 135.

⁶⁷ 'Governor Hammond's letter on Southern Slavery,' *Georgia Telegraph and Republic* (Macon, Georgia) 9 July 1845. 'Cuffee' seems to have been used here as a generic term to mean slave.

⁶⁸ 'Mr Giddings' Portrait,' *Savannah Daily Republican* (Savannah, Georgia), 2 Feb 1846.

Some papers went further than this, claiming that soldiers of the West India Regiments would be caught, enslaved and used to populate the western territories. For example, in February 1846, Georgia's *Albany Patriot* contained an article reprinted from Alabama's *Montgomery Journal*, which argued that:

The '*black regiments*'...instead of freeing their sable kindred here, would find themselves 'put up to all they know' to save their own wool. We know nothing which would tend to bring our population into the field with such eagerness and unanimity as that capital idea of the *negro regiments*. Three or four thousand negroes to be had for the catching, do not turn up every day. They are the very fellows wanted in the new cotton fields of the west, and we opine most of them will be there within two months after landing, in fact the affair, instead of being a battle would only be the tallest sort of hunt.⁶⁹

The same level of over-confidence can be seen in a long editorial from the Baltimore *Sun* in January 1846. In a piece entitled 'The Madness of Fanaticism', the editor commented on a House of Representatives speech by Ohio politician, Joshua Giddings, in which Giddings discussed a resolution terminating the joint occupation of Oregon and advocating that the US take possession of the territory. Giddings warned that a war with England would destroy southern slavery.⁷⁰ *The Sun* printed an extract of the speech, remarking that the passage was 'worthy of special notice:'

They now see before them the black regiments of the West India Islands landed upon their shores. They now call to mind the declarations of British statesmen that "a war with the United States will be a war of emancipation." They now see before them servile insurrections which torment their imaginations. Murder, rapine and bloodshed, now dance before their affrighted visions. Well, sire, I say to them, this is your policy- not mine. You have prepared the cup and I will press it to your lips until the very dregs shall be drained. Let no one misunderstand me. Let no one say that I desire a slave insurrection: but sir, I doubt not that hundreds

⁶⁹ *Albany Patriot* (Albany, Georgia), 18 Feb 1846. Emphasis in original.

⁷⁰ This refers to the speech of Mr Giddings of Ohio: 'Joint occupation of Oregon.' Delivered in the House of Representatives, 5 Jan 1846. The full speech can be found in: Joshua R Giddings, *Speeches in Congress* (Boston: J. P. Jewett, 1853), pp. 148-163.

*of thousands of honest and patriotic hearts will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.*⁷¹

In printing the words of Mr Giddings, the paper claimed that the fears described did not exist. Indeed, the editor exclaimed, 'Fanatical as all this is, how bitter, how vindictive and truculent a spirit it must have been to conjure up the fearful vision, and gloat with the appetite of the vulture over the obscene repast.'⁷² Yet the fearful vision was deemed important enough to print. Perhaps the memory of Maryland's experiences in the War of 1812, when some Calvert County slaveholders found that all of their slaves fled to the aid of the British, was enough to scare them further. In the rest of the state, slaves had refused to work, believing that their freedom was imminent, as the local militias desperately fought British redcoats and defended against slave rebellions.⁷³ Indeed, during 1814, just the presence of the British fleet on the Chesapeake coastline was enough to inspire slaves to flee their bondage, resulting in the local countryside being 'virtually indefensible.'⁷⁴

Despite such examples showing a self-deceiving confidence in the ability of the South to prevent a slave insurrection in the event of a British invasion, there are far more examples of paranoia over the possibility of a black invading force. In July 1841, the *Southern Whig*, referring to the diplomatic tensions with Britain and to the possibility of war, criticized the British press for 'the threats of her journalists to send *black regiments*....to incite a servile insurrection and give our families and little ones to the horrors of massacre?' The *Whig's* editor tried to allay the fears of such a scene by warning 'the audacious British that we are not going always to indulge their insolence and that they must prepare for a fearful reckoning with us, the moment they touch our shores with the black minions....England is hanging on our front and rear, threatening us with negro armies and black incendiaries...'⁷⁵ Despite their professed confidence that a 'fearful reckoning' would welcome the West India Regiments should they invade the southern coastline, the writer still refers to the 'horrors of massacre' which they see as

⁷¹ 'The Madness of Fanaticism,' *The Sun* (Baltimore, Maryland), 13 Jan 1846. Italics in original.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Horne, *Negro Comrades of the Crown*, p. 47.

⁷⁴ Smith, *The Slaves' Gamble*, p. 18, See also: Lockley, 'The King of England's Soldiers,' p. 131.

⁷⁵ 'Our relations with Great Britain,' *Southern Whig* (Athens, Georgia), 23rd July 1841.

the inevitable outcome of servile insurrection. The reference to 'families and little ones' simply adds to the heightened levels of anxiety.

Southern newspapers also printed material that imagined what an invasion of black troops might mean for the South. Georgia's *Augusta Chronicle* in July 1842 printed an address given by Dr Blanchard Fosgate of Auburn N.Y., to Philadelphia's Franklin Institute in January 1842. Fosgate criticized British foreign policy towards the US:

What is her position toward this country?....By what means does England intend to enforce her schemes, relative to the United States? By operating on her fears. By exciting negro insurrections and Indian hostilities. ... the military discipline of the but just liberated negro slaves in the West Indies began and has progressed with a steady and rapid pace. These black regiments commanded by white officers, numbered in the latter part of 1840, ten thousand soldiers, well drilled and equipped for immediate service. In this we clearly perceive the object of British benevolence. She is training her emancipated slaves for the purpose of creating insurrections in the very heart of our country.'⁷⁶

Fosgate continued by warning of 'the probable insurrections that would arise among our slave population upon the introduction of black troops on our southern coast...It is perfectly evident, that by her having an army of well-drilled black soldiers in this position, she can readily throw them into the territory of this nation and create bloody insurrections among the people.'⁷⁷ In making reference to Indian hostilities, Fosgate recalled the British involvement at Prospect Bluff in Florida during the War of 1812 in which Seminole Indians and runaway slaves helped the British.⁷⁸ Interestingly, the notion that 'just liberated' slaves had been so quickly 'disciplined' and 'well drilled' would have alarmed slaveholders, who feared their own slaves escaping to fight for the British. The notion that just-freed slaves could quickly be 'trained' as soldiers was a terrifying prospect. As previously mentioned, the West India Regiments had nothing like the ten thousand soldiers suggested by Fosgate, yet this exaggerated number must have

⁷⁶ 'America,' *Augusta Chronicle* (Augusta, Georgia), 7 May 1842. The first half of Blanchard's address was printed the previous day: 'Great Britain,' *Augusta Chronicle* (Augusta, Georgia) 6 May 1842.

⁷⁷ 'America,' *Augusta Chronicle* (Augusta, Georgia), 7 May 1842.

⁷⁸ See Millet, *The Maroons of Prospect Bluff*.

sounded menacing to southern slaveholders.⁷⁹ The fact that ‘ten thousand soldiers’ are mentioned so many times in relation to the West India Regiments, suggests that the same misinformation was being circulated across the US for decades.

The *Nashville Union* in April 1846 printed from the *London Naval and Military Gazette* a warning to the US to:

Beware how she lights the torch of war, lest it fire her own funeral pile, already laid in her slave states....Let her see manifestoes distributed on her southern coast, and sent inland by means of balloons, proclaiming freedom to her thousands held in bondage in the so-called land of liberty. Let her see Charleston and Savannah occupied by our West India Regiments, and her black population flocking in crowds to have their manacles knocked off and join the ranks of their sable brethren. Then let her see an army, thus set free from slavery, marching northward.⁸⁰

Printing threats from the British press could be seen as a form of self-confidence, yet such a vividly described scenario must surely have alarmed some newspaper readers. It is here that Gerald Horne’s argument is crucial. It is important not to underestimate the psychological impact of African American participation in the War of 1812 and the lasting anxiety this created. What is perhaps most interesting about these reports is not the fear expressed about what black soldiers might do to southern slaveholders but what effect they would have on southern slaves. What enslaved people would do to their own masters seemed far more terrifying.

In August 1841, The *Daily Georgian*, a Savannah paper, printed an article discussing Britain’s maritime strength. The author’s words exude palpable concern over the apparent exposure of the South’s coastline to British ‘influences:’

Aside, however, from the danger common to us all as a nation- we, us Southerners, are.... peculiarly exposed to influences which threaten our destruction. The points of conflict with the South, are New Orleans, Mobile and

⁷⁹ See page 105, fn. 12.

⁸⁰ ‘Opinion of the British Press,’ *Tri-Weekly Nashville Union* (Nashville, Tennessee), 21 April 1846. The original can be found in the *Naval and Military Gazette* (London) 7 Feb 1846.

Charleston or Savannah. This will link us directly, every two weeks with the West Indies- with Hayti, with Jamaica and with all the free black and apprentice system islands. The proximity with these obnoxious governments, will be within a few hours- the intercourse uninterrupted- the temptation almost irresistible.

The author goes on to raise concern over the presence of the West India Regiments and how any possible invasion by black troops may progress. The language used is full of a sense of paranoia. The rhetoric of abolitionist interference can be seen weaving throughout the build-up to the fear-inducing notion of an 'ultimate explosion:'

It is well known, that the English have in the West Indies many regiments of black troops....Is it not beyond the laws of reason, and human nature, to suppose that there will be no contamination- no corruption- no secret influences- no silently formed schemes- no sapping of foundations- no fiendish undermining- no ultimate explosion?War is declared with America. The vessel that orders home the English minister, stops on its way at Kingston, or St Thomas; and while the steamer goes onward to the Chesapeake, others spread the news from island to island, from barracks to barracks; and (---) an order can be issued from the navy department, a vessel commissioned, or a post rendered defensible, twenty regiments of blacks are ready, or perhaps already embarked... This is no idle fear- no extravagant assertion. God grant we may never realise its bitter truth... There is no sympathy between England and America; there is positive enmity between Great Britain and the South....⁸¹

The mention of Haiti in this fearful scenario is important. The spectre of the Haitian Revolution loomed large in the minds of southern slaveholders and no doubt fuelled their fears. The year 1791 had seen the beginning of the largest slave rebellion in history in the French colony of Saint Domingue, which led to Haiti's independence by 1804. The revolution was devastating for Haiti's white, slave-owning, French elites. Those who did not flee were killed. News from the island left southern slaveholders terrified and encouraged them in their conviction that emancipation would lead to the slaughter of whites and to economic ruin.⁸²

⁸¹ 'Royal Mail Steam Packet Company,' *Daily Georgian* (Savannah, Georgia), 24 Aug 1841.

⁸² Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress*, p. 78, Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, p. 159.

Slaveholders were right to fear the memory of Haiti, considering that the revolution inspired two of the antebellum South's largest slave conspiracies, those of Gabriel Prosser in Richmond in 1800 and Denmark Vesey in Charleston in 1822.⁸³ For much of the antebellum period the fear that the South would experience its own Haitian Revolution provided much of the emotional foundation of southern attitudes, as memories of Saint Domingue haunted the imaginations of southern slaveholders.⁸⁴ The influence of Haiti can be seen when an invasion by the West India Regiments was discussed in the newspapers. Slaveholders would have been accustomed to reading narratives that mentioned Saint Domingue, as the idea of Haiti's revolution became a common trope and discourse that appeared in writings and newspapers during times of slave rebellion or the rumors of plots. Haiti was 'embedded in the antebellum psyche;' just the mention of Haiti conjured forth images of violent slave resistance and provided the reader with an instant picture of the potential of any such uprising.⁸⁵

The mid-1850s saw more tension between the US and Britain, particularly over Britain's Foreign Enlistment Act through which it attempted to recruit volunteers in the US for the Crimean War.⁸⁶ Once again, the threat of black troops in the South was talked about in the southern press, and more threats from the British press were reprinted. The *Daily Morning News* in Savannah, in November 1855, reprinted a threatening article from the *London Standard* which claimed that 'a few black regiments must be sent to the American continent and it is as easy as it must be painful to tell what would be the effect of their presence amid a population of their kindred and color, held in severe not to call it cruel slavery, by a handful of whites...'⁸⁷

The following March, three southern papers, South Carolina's *Charleston Mercury*, and Georgia's Savannah *Daily Morning News* and *Albany Patriot*, all reprinted a selection of text from a pamphlet recently published in London. Interestingly, the Albany Patriot mentions that the pamphlet 'fastens upon the British Government and its agents, the

⁸³ Heuman, 'Slave Rebellions,' p. 226.

⁸⁴ O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, p. 20; Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, p. 53.

⁸⁵ Gabriel, 'From Haiti to Nat Turner,' p. 360. Gabriel, *The Press and the Slavery in America*, p. 18.

⁸⁶ J. B. Conacher, *Britain and the Crimea 1855-56: Problems of War and Peace* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1987), p. 134.

⁸⁷ 'What the English Tories think of the war with America,' *Daily Morning News* (Savannah, Georgia), 26 Nov 1855. The original article can be found in *The Standard* (London), 31 Oct 1855.

charge of having knowingly violated the laws of the United States, in recruiting men for their military service', which is presumably why the newspapers chose to reprint sections of it. However, the three newspapers also all printed the pamphlet's comments that the London paper, the *Morning Post*, had 'recommend[ed] the ravaging the coast of America with our 200 gunboats and the sending an army of black soldiers to free the negroes of the South; or in other words, to massacre the male, and to violate the female, population of half the United States.'⁸⁸ The pamphlet's language is interesting here; when it says 'in other words', it suggests that it is not only the army of black soldiers who will do the massacring and violating, but also the freed slaves. The armed black men of the West India Regiments were not the most menacing aspect of the described scenario and we can be sure that the author of the *Morning Post* article was aware of this by looking at the original article from which the pamphlet's author drew their conclusions. The *Morning Post* claimed that:

...were a quarrel between the two countries unhappily to ripen into a war, an invasion of the Southern States with a free black army, declaring slavery abolished, would be a blow of crushing effect. Open as the seaboard of the United States is, no bombardment or destruction of maritime property could strike so deep into the very heart of the country as a measure which must at once give rise to a worse than civil, a servile war.⁸⁹

The author adds that this would 'lead to scenes of deplorable bloodshed'. The *Morning Post* writer makes it clear that many in Britain were aware of the unprecedented extent of support the British might expect from the enslaved population of the US in the event of an invasion: 'In the last war we could not resort to such an operation, for we had slaves of our own, and it would have cut both ways. Now our hands are untied and free to strike a deadly blow without fear of dangerous retort.'⁹⁰

⁸⁸ 'Foreign Enlistment,' *The Charleston Mercury* (Charleston, South Carolina), 8 March 1856, 'Foreign Enlistment,' *Daily Morning News* (Savannah, Georgia), 11 March 1856, 'Foreign Enlistment,' *Albany Patriot* (Albany, Georgia) 20 March 1856.

⁸⁹ 'With the question of American slavery,' *The Morning Post* (London), 29 Jan 1856.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

Anglophobia and 'Negrophobia'

Newspapers both reflected and helped fashion slaveholders' views. The coverage given to the West India Regiments, and the prospect of black troops landing on the shores of the South, tells us a great deal about slaveholders' fears regarding their own slaves. Press discourse surrounding the West India Regiments suggests southern anxiety over the long-term stability of slaveholding society, and also gives us an insight into southern notions of geopolitics and the uses of Anglophobia. The potential of slave rebellion hung over the South, especially after the Haitian revolution. It increased with every slave rebellion or foiled plot in the southern states. However, slaveholders wished to play down this threat, arguing that their slaves were happy 'sambos' whose natural savagery was kept in check by the paternalistic and benevolent control of their owners. In order for slaveholders to sleep easy in their beds, and for them to maintain that slavery was moral, the threat to the southern system of slavery had to be seen as external rather than internal. Anglophobia, so often represented in the press, was therefore a useful tool for the slaveholder who could argue that the problem lay with British imperialists rather than within the southern system itself.

Fear of a British plot to ruin the slaveholding fortunes of the South was widespread. The War of 1812 marked a turning point, demonstrating to the South how vulnerable their slaveholding society could be when put under pressure from both internal and external forces. Horne argues that it was a 'familiar tactic in the Americas for colonizing powers to ally with the enslaved of competing powers - to the detriment of the latter.'⁹¹ Yet the British took this one step further, using the black soldier as a symbol of freedom to lure the enslaved to their side. Slaveholders learnt that enslaved people could not be trusted to remain loyal to their masters when they fled to fight for the British during the War of 1812. This only pushed the South's own white supremacist vision further, encouraging slaveholders in their need to tighten control over their enslaved property.⁹²

Outwardly abolitionist, imperial Britain continued to utilise brown and black bodies for

⁹¹ Horne, *Negro Comrades of the Crown*, p. 17.

⁹² Smith, *The Slaves' Gamble*, p. 3.

its own benefit while, at the same time, condemning the South's slavery. This was done in the interests of Britain's own form of capitalism and construction of 'whiteness.' The southern press portrayed the West India Regiments as so menacing because the British foe had enabled black men to take on the characteristics of a disciplined and armed white army. Southern newspapers repeated stories suggesting this efficient and orderly force would invade, and that it would then urge and embolden the enslaved to rebel, thereby unleashing a cataclysm on the slaveholders and slaveholding system of the South. For the elites of the southern states, the threat from the black slave within, which had hitherto been kept in check, combined with the machinations of the imperialist foe and his black troops abroad, created a perfect storm. Both threats in different, but for a short time, complementary ways, challenged the form of white supremacy that underpinned the South and its collective psyche.

Chapter Four

‘A fiery ocean of insurrection and massacre, ready at any moment to spread by explosion’: Reports of Cuba’s *Conspiración de la Escalera* (1843-44) in Southern US Newspapers

In recent years historians have shown how the influence of Caribbean events shaped the history of antebellum North America, often igniting and encouraging fears of slave revolt in the southern slaveholding states.¹ As discussed in Chapter Three, southern politicians were particularly concerned, often to the point of paranoia, that abolitionist Britain planned to meddle in affairs across the Atlantic in order to encourage the ultimate downfall of the southern institution of slavery. News of Britain’s involvement in anti-slavery activity was crucial to persuading politicians in their decision-making and in swaying public opinion; indeed, this intense Anglophobia ultimately led to the annexation of Texas by the United States in 1845.² Building upon the themes and discussions in Chapter Three, this chapter will consider the southern US newspaper coverage of *La Escalera*, a series of Cuban slave rebellions throughout 1843 and their subsequent brutal repression in the early months of 1844. It seeks to show that southern newspapers were not merely reporting facts from Cuba. Instead, news of *La Escalera* highlighted the inner anxieties of the southern slaveholding class. The news from Cuba was of immense importance to southern slaveholders as it provided them with visions of black resistance and abolitionist plotting that propagated the fear of slave rebellion in the South. Paul Naish has highlighted how Americans in the nineteenth century thought of themselves in ‘a global context,’ looking to other countries to understand themselves.³ In this vein, antebellum Southerners commonly criticised slavery in Cuba as a way of concealing their own anxieties about slavery in the South. They were able to use Cuba and other slaveholding countries such as Brazil, as screens ‘upon which [flattering] portrayals of US slavery could be projected.’⁴

¹ See in particular: Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation*; Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire*; Paul D. Naish, *Slavery and Silence: Latin America and the U.S. Slave Debate* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).

² Rugemer, ‘Robert Monroe Harrison,’ pp. 169-191; Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation*, see especially chapter 6: ‘The Fears of Robert Monroe Harrison’; David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Emancipation* (New York: Knopf, 2014), pp. 286-7.

³ Naish, *Slavery and Silence*, p. 13.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 23, p. 179.

La Escalera

On 26 March 1843, the district of Bemba in Matanzas province, Cuba, saw hundreds of enslaved people rise up on five estates, kill five white people, set fire to buildings, damage the railroad works leading to Matanzas, and cause mass panic. Though defeated and killed quickly by the army, many of the enslaved people who had escaped into the surrounding areas committed mass suicides in a second wave of resistance to the brutal system of slavery and its white leaders who held them in bondage. Four hundred and fifty enslaved people were shot, executed or committed suicide. In May, June and July 1843, Cuba saw more attempted revolts.⁵ The largest rebellion took place on 5 November 1843 in the district of Sabanilla near Matanzas. Slaves, numbering 300, on two sugar mills, Ácana and Triunvirato, killed a number of white people and burned plantation buildings. Only a few hours later they were defeated. Fifty-four slaves were killed and sixty-seven captured.⁶

In December 1844, in the aftermath of the November uprising, a planter in Matanzas province alerted Cuban authorities that he had discovered an insurrectionary plot amongst the slaves of Sabanilla sugar district. The Captain-General Leopoldo O'Donnell, believing that a large, highly coordinated conspiracy, with numerous organized cells had been discovered, ordered his government agents to widen the geographical boundaries of their investigations and to torture suspects and execute the plot's leaders.⁷ The conspiracy, led by free colored men and involving the enslaved population, was believed to have the aim of ending slavery in Cuba in the hope of creating a republic like Haiti.⁸ Those enslaved people and free people of colour supposed to have been involved in the conspiracy, were captured and most were brutally punished and forced to confess or provide information about co-conspirators. Many were whipped whilst tied face down to a ladder- *La Escalera*- which gives its name to both the resistance movement and its subsequent suppression. The ferocity of the repression that followed the discovery of the conspiracy was so brutal that the year 1844 is commonly known in Cuba as *El Año*

⁵ Manuel Barcia, *Seeds of Insurrection: Domination and Resistance on Western Cuban Plantations, 1808-1848* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), p. 26, p. 40. For a discussion of suicide as a form of resistance, see Barcia's chapter 'Suicide' in his *Seeds of Insurrection*.

⁶ Barcia, *Seeds of Insurrection*, p. 41.

⁷ Robert L. Paquette, *Sugar is Made with Blood: The Conspiracy of La Escalera and the Conflict between Empires over Slavery in Cuba* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), p. 3.

⁸ Barcia, *Seeds of Insurrection*, pp. 27-8.

del Cuero- 'The Year of the Lash.'⁹ By the end of 1844, thousands of people of colour, both enslaved and free, had been imprisoned, killed or banished. Many had just disappeared.¹⁰

A large body of literature has delved deep into these events but it is not the intention of this chapter to discuss whether a conspiracy actually existed.¹¹ Robert Paquette has argued that *La Escalera* was not one conspiracy but was a set of unique, but overlapping plots, most of which centered upon revolutionary aspirations.¹² What historians agree upon, is that hundreds of free people of colour were working towards ending colonial rule. As Manuel Barcia has pointed out, it is highly likely that those individuals involved at the forefront of any conspiracy were well aware of the ideas spread by the French and Haitian revolutions; these were individuals who knew very well what was going on internationally.¹³ Indeed, many of the supposed leaders, like the well-known poet and alleged ringleader, Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés, alias Plácido, who was executed for his involvement, were free mulattos who were very well educated.¹⁴ Cuban officials also laid blame on two of Cuba's leading intellectuals and writers, Domingo Del Monte and Jose de la Luz y Caballero.¹⁵

Importantly for this chapter, many scholars agree that moral support for the conspirators from British consular officials was a crucial component in providing encouragement for the rebels.¹⁶ A key individual was Scottish abolitionist, David Turnbull, who had been appointed British consul in Havana in 1840. During his time as consul, he acted as a 'kind of one-man machine against the illegal slave trade.'¹⁷ Turnbull had been deported from Cuba in 1842 as Spanish authorities had lobbied Britain to remove him from his post.

⁹ Paquette, *Sugar is Made with Blood*, p 4.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 4. p. 229: "One compilation of sentences from the records of the Matanzas branch of the military commission showed just over 1,800 killed or imprisoned or banished. It accounts for only a portion of the sentence. 78 said to have been executed were judged to be leaders or instigators of a projected revolution."

¹¹ For more on *La Escalera*, see: Michele Reid-Vazquez, *The Year of the Lash: Free People of Color in Cuba and the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011); Aisha K. Finch, *Rethinking Slave Rebellion in Cuba: La Escalera and the Insurgencies of 1841-1844* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Barcia, *Seeds of Insurrection*; Paquette, *Sugar is Made with Blood*.

¹² Paquette, *Sugar is Made with Blood*, p. vii.

¹³ Barcia, *Seeds of Insurrection*, p. 28.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁵ Paquette, *Sugar is Made with Blood*, p. 3.

¹⁶ Barcia, *Seeds of Insurrection*, p. 28.

¹⁷ Finch, *Rethinking Slave Rebellion in Cuba*, p. 5.

They believed he was working as an 'avowed and unblushing tool of the British society of abolitionists.'¹⁸ As Aisha Finch highlights, the archival evidence suggests that, during his time in office in Cuba, Turnbull made promises of both financial and military backing to nationalist rebels, both white men and men of color, who together considered overthrowing colonial rule and slavery.¹⁹ During the early months of 1844, the Cuban authorities convicted Turnbull, *in absentia*, of being the key leader of the conspiracy.²⁰

Southern slaveholders' awareness of *La Escalera*

Analysis of what *La Escalera* meant for southern slaveholders, or what they knew about it, needs to consider the historical context in which it occurred in the wider Atlantic world. By the early 1840s Cuba was the wealthiest colony in the Caribbean and the largest producer of sugar cane globally. Finch describes how Cuba was 'swimming in a fierce political whirlpool amid endless debates over slavery, abolition and colonial rule.'²¹ At the same time as Cuban sugar production prospered, the transatlantic abolition movement, led by Britain was waging a global campaign against slavery.²² Cuba's prosperity was also of key significance to slaveholding interests in the US, to whom the prospect of Cuban annexation seemed lucrative.²³ Robert Paquette, Edward Rugemer, Matthew Karp and Gerald Horne have shown how US politicians were alarmed by perceived British involvement in Cuba. They have shown how this fed into US paranoia over the future of slavery in Texas, ultimately encouraging President Tyler's administration to push for annexation, which it achieved officially by December 1845.²⁴

¹⁸ Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire*, p. 62.

¹⁹ Finch, *Rethinking Slave Rebellion in Cuba*, p. 5.

²⁰ Paquette, *Sugar is Made with Blood*, p. 3. For more on David Turnbull's role in *La Escalera*, see: Jonathan Curry-Machado, 'How Cuba burned with the Ghosts of British Slavery: Race, Abolition and the Escalera,' *Slavery & Abolition*, Vol. 25. No. 1 (2004), pp. 71-93.

²¹ Finch, *Rethinking Slave Rebellion in Cuba*, p. 4.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁴ See Paquette, *Sugar is Made with Blood*, Chapter 7: 'Africanization of Annexation to the United States?' pp. 183-205; Gerald Horne, *Race to Revolution: The United States and Cuba during Slavery and Jim Crow* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2014), Chapter 3: 'Africans Revolt!' pp. 65-81; Edward B. Rugemer, 'Slave Rebels and Abolitionists: The Black Atlantic and the Coming of the Civil War,' *The Journal of the Civil War Era*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (June, 2012), p. 191 and Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation*, pp. 180-221, see also Rugemer, 'Robert Monroe Harrison.'

Karp has commented that the 'record of US foreign policy in this period forms little more than a chronicle of anxieties about Cuban slave emancipation.'²⁵ Indeed, Karp highlights how three periods of panic over the threat of Cuban emancipation troubled the Tyler administration in the early 1840s. In the autumn of 1841, news was passed to the president that a Spanish traveler had brought reports to the South of an insurrection plot in Cuba which has been encouraged by the British government through the 'agency of the British consul and emissaries from Jamaica.'²⁶ In 1842, Cuban planter, Domingo del Monte, wrote to his friend, Alexander Everett, former US minister in Spain, with news that British agents were plotting the abolition of slavery in Cuba and organizing an 'invading force of Jamaican and British antislavery instigators' who intended to arrive on the Cuban shoreline and spark slave uprisings across the island.²⁷ After being informed of Del Monte's warning, in January 1843 Secretary of State Webster wrote to American representatives in Madrid and Havana, warning that Britain 'intended to compel a general emancipation in Cuba and convert the island "into a *black Military Republic*, under British protection,"' which would lead to Britain's influence in the region being "'unlimited... With 600,000 blacks in Cuba, and 800,000 in her West India Islands, she will, it is said, strike a death blow at the existence of slavery in the United States.'"²⁸

As shown in Chapter Three, the reports of Robert Monroe Harrison, the US consul in Jamaica, played a role in raising the concerns of politicians who feared that abolitionist Britain planned activity that would lead to the downfall of southern slavery. Harrison wrote to new secretary of state, Abel Upshur, in the summer of 1843 warning of the 'partial insurrections' that were becoming common in Cuba. He informed Upshur that 'English emissaries,' including David Turnbull (now in post in Jamaica), were responsible for the insurrectionary state of Cuba and that he worried that the rebellions would spread to the southern US.²⁹ Harrison was an obsessive Anglophobe and had spent the previous few years anxiously inundating the State Department with reports that concerned British abolitionist activity against slavery in Texas, the US and Cuba. In Upshur, Harrison had finally found a listening ear. Indeed, as Karp remarks: 'The main current of elite proslavery opinion had finally caught up with [his] gushing paranoia.'³⁰

²⁵ Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire*, p. 61.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

²⁹ Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation*, p. 209.

³⁰ Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire*, p. 63.

Throughout 1843 southern concerns over the future of slavery in the Republic of Texas grew and US politicians became more concerned about British abolitionist activity in Cuba. John C. Calhoun wrote to Upshur warning that 'Cuba deserves attention. Great Britain is at work there, as well as in Texas; and both are equally important to our safety.'³¹ Harrison's dispatches played an important role in convincing the Tyler administration that the annexation of Texas was necessary for the future stability of southern slavery. Indeed, in the summer of 1843, Harrison warned of a 'far-ranging Anglo-Caribbean plot to stir up slave insurrection in Cuba.'³² For Upshur and other powerful southern politicians, the threat posed to American slavery by British abolitionism was deemed imminent and very real.³³

While historians have discussed the reception of news about *La Escalera* on the US political stage, there is no analysis of the way in which American newspapers reported it and, in particular, there is no study of how the southern newspapers discussed it. Pacquette does use some southern newspapers to highlight growing southern concerns regarding British abolitionist designs on Cuba, pointing out that American newspapers of the early 1840s were keen to promote political and economic interest in Cuba. He provides the example of the New Orleans' *Daily Picayune*, which in June 1843, commented on British designs on Cuba: 'the spot on which the British fanatics have fastened their pestiferous regards... and whose government waits but for time and tide to second and support their designs...'³⁴ Pacquette also highlights the example of a review essay written for the *Southern Quarterly Review* by Alexander Everett in which he warned of British imperial ambitions in Cuba. New Orleans' *Daily Picayune* in April 1842, discussed Everett's article, stating that it would attract 'much attention' in the South as there was a 'growing anxiety' over Cuba and the need for it to be annexed to the US: 'the public mind in the South is anxiously bent upon the state of society in Cuba, and all information tending to shed light upon the subject is greedily snatched up.'³⁵ Pacquette comments that the *Daily Picayune's* response 'could speak for much of the South.'³⁶ While historians have used newspapers as individual sources, this chapter

³¹ Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire*, p. 62.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 87.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

³⁴ *The Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana) 17 June 1843, cited in Paquette, *Sugar is Made with Blood*, p. 187.

³⁵ *The Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana) 10 April 1842, cited in Paquette, *Sugar is Made with Blood*, pp. 193-194.

³⁶ Paquette, *Sugar is Made with Blood*, p. 193.

seeks a wider overview of what was printed in southern newspapers in direct relation to *La Escalera*.

The focus of this chapter is not whether the southern newspapers reported the correct version of events, but rather what the press *did* print. This is important, because understanding what news southern slaveholders received about slave rebellion elsewhere in the Atlantic region can help us understand their paranoia and fears over the stability of their own 'peculiar institution.' This chapter seeks to show how the information being read by southern slaveholders about *La Escalera* in southern newspapers, was filtered in a way that represented visions of what slave revolt at home would mean for the South. Of course, this is unsurprising as much of what was printed was reprinted from Cuban newspapers or from letters from correspondents in Cuba who were sympathetic to the proslavery cause.

Four key themes run throughout much of this reporting. First, visions of a world turned upside down are frequently described. In such visions, the representation of black people as dangerous is common and feeds into the fear of violent slave rebellion. Paul Naish has shown that news from other slaveholding regions such as Cuba, was often used by Americans as a 'screen upon which portrayals of US slavery could be projected,' and, as such, the news from Cuba provided a 'staging area for dramas' that Southerners may have 'preferred to rehearse out of town.'³⁷ In other words, reporting of Cuba's slave uprisings in 1843 were both a powerful spectre of what was a real possibility in the South, whilst also providing southern slaveholders with powerful messages with which to bolster their own ideological justifications for slavery. Second, a key component of news is the confirmation of white authorities regaining control and subsequent punishment and repression of black resistance. Third, and of enormous importance, the southern newspapers reported the news from Cuba with great focus on the alleged British involvement in the conspiracy. As argued in the previous chapter, in order for southern slaveholders to sleep easy in their beds, and for them to maintain that slavery was moral, the threat to the southern system of slavery had to be seen as external rather than internal. Anglophobia, so often represented in the press, was therefore a useful tool for

³⁷ Naish, *Slavery and Silence*, p. 23, p. 25.

the slaveholder who could argue that the problem lay with British imperialists rather than within the southern system itself.³⁸

The fourth key theme seen in the reporting of the events in Cuba, is the suggestion that the enslaved have rebelled due to the fact that they are poorly managed. As Paul Naish has argued, southern slaveholders often defined their own system of slavery in contrast to the Cuban system, portraying the southern system as superior. In doing so, slaveholders could convince themselves reassuringly that they had not made the errors that slaveholders in Haiti and the West Indies had made; the same errors being reported in the news from Cuba.³⁹ This chapter will show how news of British involvement in Cuba would have caused alarm to southern slaveholders to whom this external threat was very real. Indeed, as Gerald Horne comments, when David Turnbull was found guilty of being the 'prime mover' in the conspiracy in Cuba, 'it sent a spine-tingling frisson of apprehension coursing through the slaveholders on the island and on the mainland.'⁴⁰ Fear that black resistance in Cuba, aided by British abolitionists, would spread to the South can be seen in many of the newspapers. Such paranoia can be seen in many southern newspaper discussions of the need for Texas annexation, which refer to British involvement in *La Escalera*. Ironically, this form of Anglophobia, as discussed in Chapter One, was both anxiety inducing, whilst simultaneously a form of reassurance to slaveholders that their own slaves would not rebel without outside influence. Such reassurance could also be gained by the criticism of the Cuban system of slavery. This allowed southern slaveholders to remind themselves that under their own paternalistic system and excellent stewardship, their slaves would not rebel.

The March Uprising in Matanzas

By mid-April 1843 news of the March uprising in Matanzas district began to filter into the southern US newspapers. A report reprinted from the *Charleston Mercury* was printed in numerous southern newspapers. It quoted a letter from Havana dated 1 April 1843, which reported that 'an insurrection of the negroes employed on the Cardenas

³⁸ For more on Anglophobia in the antebellum period, see chapter 'From Anglophobia to New Anglophobia,' in Greenberg, *Masters and Statesmen*, pp. 107-123, see also Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire*, pp. 10-31.

³⁹ Naish, *Slavery and Silence*, p. 179.

⁴⁰ Horne, *Race to Revolution*, p. 68.

railroad took place a few days ago; they marched into three sugar estates, and after setting fire to the houses...increased their numbers to over a thousand.' The writer reassured their reader that the rebellious activity had been 'immediately put down by the whites in the neighbourhood, aided by a company of regular troops.' Highlighting the suppression of the uprising and the ability of white elites and white authority, the writer noted that 'so active were the whites, that when the military arrived they found over forty of the negroes killed, and the rest surrounded by the whites and not daring to advance.'⁴¹ Highlighting white strength was a key component to bolster the confidence of slaveholders in both Cuban and southern slaveholding society. After all, such a system relied on the belief by all that the threat of violence could forestall black resistance.

Louisville's *Daily Kentuckian* reported that 'the negroes employed on a railroad in the latter part of March, collected to the number of a thousand, burned several sugar houses, and ravaged as many estates but the whites in a short time repulsed them, killed near forty, took the rest prisoners and restored order.'⁴² Baltimore's *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser* reported that 'a letter received in this city from Matanzas...states that an insurrection broke out on the 25th at Bemba, among the negroes on two sugar estates. The first reports of destruction of life and property were very alarming, but, fortunately, proved to be exaggerated. Three white persons only were killed and some injury was done to some of the estates. Many negroes were killed and those left alive will be lost to their owners. All was quiet again at last account.'⁴³ The *Alexandria Gazette* printed a very similar report the next day.⁴⁴

⁴¹ 'Insurrection in Cuba,' *The Sun* (Baltimore, Maryland), 11 April 1843; 'Correspondence of the Charleston Mercury,' *Savannah Daily Republican* (Savannah, Georgia), 11 April 1843; 'Correspondence of the Charleston Mercury,' *Daily Chronicle & Sentinel* (Augusta, Georgia), 13 April 1843; 'Insurrection in Cuba,' *The Globe* (Washington, D.C.), 13 April 1843; 'Insurrection in Cuba,' *The Macon Georgia Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia), 18 April 1843; 'Insurrection in Cuba,' *Tarboro' Press* (Tarborough, North Carolina), 22 April 1843.

⁴² 'Insurrection in Cuba,' *Daily Kentuckian* (Louisville, Kentucky), 20 April 1843.

⁴³ 'Insurrection at Matanzas,' *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser* (Baltimore, Maryland), 14 April 1843.

⁴⁴ 'Slave Insurrection at Cuba,' *Alexandria Gazette* (Alexandria, Virginia), 15 April 1843: 'A letter from Matanzas of March 27, states that an insurrection broke out on the 25th at Bemba, about fifty miles from Matanzas, the news of which had caused great alarm. The reports, however, as usual were exaggerated, though it turned out that three white persons were killed, and the two sugar estates, which were the seat of the insurrection, were partially damaged. Many negroes were killed, and the loss to the estates would be further enhanced, as the surviving negroes will be lost to their owners.'

Whilst the news of any slave revolt was alarming, the clear message signalled to white southern slaveholders via the press was that black resistance had been repressed and white order and control had been maintained. Indeed, the *Savannah Daily Republican* printed a letter of 1 April 1843 to their editors from the editors of Cuban newspaper, *Noticioso*, describing 'the particulars of an insurrection which recently broke out among the negroes employed on the Cardenas Rail Road' and mentioning that 'tranquillity prevails in that neighbourhood and that the negroes wandering through the country were falling into the hands of the soldiers in pursuit of them.'⁴⁵ The *Savannah Daily Republican* (and two days later reprinted in Augusta's *Daily Chronicle*) also translated from the *Noticioso* of the 31 April, the details of how the rebellion had been crushed by the 'activity of the authorities of that quarter,' noting that the energy displayed by the officials detached thither, the activity of the Brigadier Governor of Matanzas, conveyed successive assurances to the proprietors of the estates, that there was no cause for alarm.' The report was keen to highlight that 'all fear had subsided' and that ultimately, 'the promptitude with which the troops suppressed this outbreak, sufficiently demonstrates that we had nothing to fear, and that an undisturbed tranquillity will be completely restored, and the rebels will remain instructed in the impotency of their attempt.'⁴⁶

In mid-April, the *Charleston Courier* printed a lengthy letter, dated 7 April 1843, from its contact in Limonar, Cuba, in the district of Matanzas. The editor of the *Courier* introduced the letter with the heading and introduction: '*Insurrection in the Island of Cuba promptly and efficiently crushed*- We subjoin, from a highly respectable and intelligent source, an account of a recent insurrection of a barbarous and ignorant tribe of Africans in the island of Cuba, which resulted, as such silly and criminal enterprizes ever will, in a severe and bloody retribution to the insurgents.' The letter printed is fascinating in that it contains many messages clearly aimed at boosting the confidence of the slaveholding readership of South Carolina in their own system of slavery. The writer remarks that as they have been 'fearful that exaggerated accounts of the late insurrection in this neighborhood might reach you', they have rushed to 'send you a correct one of the whole affair, which I have gathered from the immediate neighborhood.' The writer is keen to inform the

⁴⁵ 'Late and Important from Cuba,' *Savannah Daily Republican* (Savannah, Georgia), 11 April 1843.

⁴⁶ 'Late and Important from Cuba,' *Savannah Daily Republican* (Savannah, Georgia), 11 April 1843; 'The Insurrection in Cuba,' *Daily Chronicle & Sentinel* (Augusta, Georgia), 13 April 1843.

readers of the *Charleston Courier* the 'real' facts of the rebellion, worrying that 'exaggerated accounts' might reach them. This is interesting, as it implies that a more exaggerated account might cause real concern amongst slaveholders in South Carolina.

The letter continues to describe the recent events in Cuba, reporting that 'on Sunday, March 27, the negroes of the estate of LOUISA, MOSE, on that of the Count PENALVER, and on three or four of the neighboring plantations, rose by a preconcerted plan, and having killed four white men and some of the negroes who defended their masters, flocked to a tiendo near Bemba.' At this shop the rebels 'soon drank all the liquor they could find in its kegs and bottles, and robbed it of all the machetes it contained, with a few handkerchiefs, to tie them to their sides. Their numbers amounted to about 600 or 700.'⁴⁷ The fact that the plan was 'preconcerted' is highlighted. However, the writer's main aim seems to be to dismantle the notion that the rebellious slaves would ever have been successful due to the strength and superiority of white men and the system of slavery in general. Indeed, that some slaves did not rebel is highlighted in the fact that some faithful slaves did defend their masters: 'At one shop the slaves defended their master and his shop, and drove off the insurgents, and on several of the plantations implicated in the revolt, many of the negroes did not join, but fled into the woods, and returned to their huts after the insurgents left the estates.' The writer is quick to highlight how scared the white women and children were, remarking that 'the outbreak at first caused a great consternation among the women and children, who crowded the rail road cars to Cardenas.' Yet the writer was keen to also point out that 'among the men a far different feeling prevailed, and with but few exceptions, not the least fear was manifested by them.' Indeed, the author comments that it is difficult to describe the 'utter contempt a Montero has for the prowess of a negro.'⁴⁸ This claim of lack of fear amongst men, whilst women suffered emotionally, was common in the US South, where at times of panic it was normal for men to make similar claims. Indeed, Fox Genovese and Genovese point out that southern gentlemen often portrayed their women as 'uneasy and in need of protection.'⁴⁹

⁴⁷ 'Insurrection in the Island of Cuba promptly and efficiently crushed,' *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina), 19 April 1843. Capitalisation in original.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Fatal Self-Deception*, p. 139.

The writer highlights the African roots of the rebellious slaves noting that the 'negroes [were] well protected from the bullets by front and back pieces of hides suspended from their shoulders.' Yet, despite this, the author is quick to point out that the rebellious slaves: 'did not dare to charge on this small handful of whites, but retreated to the woods where the horsemen could not follow them. The revolt of nearly a thousand negroes was thus checked by forty determined farmers, and the evil kept from spreading.' The supposed inherent superiority of the white men is the writer's main point here. Furthermore, he adds that 'In a short time four hundred monteros assembled, and the work of destruction commenced and before the military had arrived from Matanzas... the whole affair was completely crushed.'⁵⁰ Each detail of the repression of the revolt is given to emphasise the inability of the rebels to carry through a successful rebellion. It is these details that were important to the slaveholders of the South, who needed reassurance that other slaveholding societies could control their slave populations, thereby not becoming another Haiti and another source of inspiration to the enslaved of the South.

Despite the emphasis that the rebellion was unsuccessful, the writer vividly describes the horrific scenes of the loss of life of enslaved rebels narrating how 'a great slaughter ensued, for the fighting was only on one side, many of the negroes hanging themselves to the trees when they found they could not succeed.' A description is given of the immense loss of life, with an estimate that 'in all, including the prisoners who were afterwards shot in the presence of the slaves of the neighboring plantations as an example to them, three hundred are said to have been killed, the rest having fled far into the wood, where men were engaged in hunting them out.' The writer continues to describe the true horror of the events, explaining how 'the scene a few days afterwards was described as being very revolting, none of the dead were buried, and their swollen corpses lying on the ground or hanging from the limbs of trees presented a horrible spectacle.'⁵¹

To fellow slaveholders, the true horror of these scenes was the loss of human property. The writer adds that 'the deserted estates, the burnt fields and dwellings, added still more to the air of desolation spread around.' The blame for the rebellion is placed on

⁵⁰ 'Insurrection in the Island of Cuba promptly and efficiently crushed,' *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina), 19 April 1843.

⁵¹ Ibid.

the 'lax discipline exercised on those estates.' The importance of being a good master is highlighted strenuously, with the criticism of one slaveholder, described as a 'tender hearted man, unfit to hold the reins of government,' who 'permitted the slaves to gamble and visit the neighboring plantations, and was more sparing in punishments even when richly deserved.' The writer explains that the slaves on this particular plantation had killed their overseer less than a year before the rebellion, but this had been 'hushed up' by their master; 'the destruction of nearly 200 of his own negroes has been the result.'⁵²

Clearly aimed at the readers of the *Charleston Courier*, the writer points out that 'like all the other revolts which have occurred in slave holding countries, but especially Cuba, this was quite local in its character; and when we recollect that in 1825, when 16 estates rose, not more than 20 whites were slain, and in this instance only four, and one badly wounded, no fear will be entertained for their results.' Bolstering the confidence of slaveholders was vital. The letter reiterated the organization of white men, highlighting how 'the soldiers were exceedingly orderly and under excellent discipline; and the country is now more free from danger than it could be at any other time.' The inability of the enslaved rebels to succeed and the powerful message sent to the enslaved by the authorities was further reiterated, with the writer remarking that 'the example made of the unfortunate prisoners before the other slaves, the prompt crushing of the whole affair... will make a lasting impression on those who did not join in the revolt.'

The writer criticizes the Northern US States, commenting that the affair will 'probably go the rounds of the Northern prints in glowing colors,' presumably due to an abolitionist agenda, and he is keen to note that the rebellion had 'been disastrous only to the unfortunate blacks.' He argued that 'had their minds been enlightened by religion and their passions restrained by its wise precepts, instead of being nursed by their heathenish revels and gambling, they probably would not have forfeited their lives.'⁵³

While much of the news confirmed the ultimate strength of whites to stop black resistance in its tracks, other reports did present the horrors of insurrection - even unsuccessful insurrection. The shocking description of the mass suicides of fugitive slaves

⁵² 'Insurrection in the Island of Cuba promptly and efficiently crushed,' *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina), 19 April 1843.

⁵³ Ibid.

in the letter from Limonar was reprinted in Milledgeville's *Federal Union* and in Tarborough's *Tarboro' Press*, which, interestingly, was followed immediately by a description of apparent unrest in Porto Rico, describing how 'great numbers of armed negroes were seen on the borders of the island, and that the whites were in a constant state of alarm. They expected an attack from the blacks every hour.'⁵⁴

The Clarksville *Standard* printed a letter from Havana, dated 1 April, which used an interesting choice of language when it described how 'during the past few days rumour has been rife here, and we have all had our throats cut in anticipation.' The letter went on to describe how news had recently arrived from Matanzas:

A large body of negroes, supposed to exceed 1000, had risen near that place and were burning, ravaging, and destroying everything before them; that they had already killed 200 people burnt our village, were tearing up the rail road track, to prevent the arrival of troops by that road, and that they had taken up a very strong position on the hills and were daily joined by large numbers.

Yet, despite describing such scenes, the writer then turns to note that 'much of this, however turns out to be exaggeration' noting that the 'truth of the case was that the 'Negrada' of two estates rose, and after pillaging and burning their own estates, attacked three others, where they were joined by the negroes and the same scenes of violence were repeated.'⁵⁵ Although the article clearly highlights that the scenes described are an exaggeration, the newspapers still printed the description of such scenes. It is interesting to consider why editors would choose print news that is known not to be true. These narratives and images provided a terrifying vision of the scenario that Southern slaveholders most feared. By conjuring a picture that bore a resemblance to the imagined downfall of their own peculiar institution, the subsequent confirmation of the repression of the rebellion added to the confidence of the Southern slaveholder who could feel secure in their own white superiority.

⁵⁴ 'The late servile Insurrection in Cuba,' *The Federal Union* (Milledgeville, Georgia), 16 May 1843; 'Cuba,' *Tarboro' Press* (Tarboro, North Carolina), 6 May 1843.

⁵⁵ 'Insurrection in Cuba,' *Standard* (Clarksville, Texas), 25 May 1843.

Rumors of Another Insurrection

From late May into early June 1843, the southern newspapers printed news of another insurrection, this time in the south-eastern part of Cuba. A report in the New Orleans' *Daily Picayune* of 28 May described the 'melancholy intelligence of another insurrection among the negroes on the South side of the Island, in the immediate vicinity of St Jago de Cuba.' The report stated that the plot appeared to have been much more extensive than the outbreak at Cardenas had been, five or six weeks ago and 'much more desperate and bloody in its execution.' A large number of planters, with their overseers and families, were the 'hapless victims of the infuriated blacks' and considerable property had been destroyed.⁵⁶ Newspaper editors across the South reprinted from the *Picayune*, with the editors of the *Charleston Courier*, *Augusta Chronicle*, *Savannah Daily Republican*, *Pensacola Gazette* and the *Baltimore Sun* all reprinting the same report, referring to the 'hapless victims of the infuriated blacks.'⁵⁷ By 5 June, Charleston's *Southern Patriot* reprinted a story from the *New Orleans Republican*, which suggested that the story of an insurrection in Santiago de Cuba was based upon a rumour that English abolitionists had contemplated travelling from Jamaica in order to foment slave rebellion in Cuba- but that nothing had actually happened to that effect.⁵⁸

As the newspaper exchange system allowed editors to swap papers with one another for free through the postal system, the reprinting of content was commonplace. Due to this system of transmission of news other papers across the South continued to report the rumour. Washington D.C.'s *Daily National Intelligencer*, Baltimore's *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, the *Arkansas State Gazette*, Tallahassee's *Star of Florida*, Tarborough's *Tarboro' Press*, the *Easton Gazette*, the *Richmond Whig* and Raleigh's *North Carolina Standard* all reprinted or made direct reference to the *Picayune's* original report.⁵⁹ The *Easton Gazette* also added to the end of the *Picayune's* original report,

⁵⁶ 'Late from Havana,' *The Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), 28 May 1843.

⁵⁷ 'Late from Havana,' *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina), 2 June 1843; 'Later from Havana,' *Augusta Chronicle* (Augusta, Georgia), 2 June 1843; 'From Havana,' *Savannah Daily Republican* (Savannah, Georgia), 3 June 1843; 'From Havana,' *Pensacola Gazette* (Pensacola, Florida), 3 June 1843; 'From Havana,' *The Sun* (Baltimore, Maryland), 5 June 1843.

⁵⁸ *The Southern Patriot* (Charleston, South Carolina), 5 June 1843.

⁵⁹ 'Late from Havana,' *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington, D.C.), 5 June 1843; 'The last accounts from Havana,' *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser* (Baltimore, Maryland), 6 June 1843; 'From the New Orleans Bulletin,' *Arkansas State Gazette* (Little Rock, Arkansas), 7 June 1843; 'From the N.O. Bee,' *Star of Florida* (Tallahassee, Florida), 8 June 1843; 'Negro Insurrection in Cuba,' *Tarboro' Press* (Tarboro, North Carolina), 10 June 1843; 'An insurrection in

stating that 'The section of Cuba alluded to, is, we may add, a part of the island that is near to the free black republic of Hayti [sic]- Danger to the present state of things in East Cuba is therefore to be feared.'⁶⁰ By mid-June, Baltimore's *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, the *Alexandria Gazette*, Washington D.C's *Daily National Intelligencer*, and Charleston's *Southern Patriot* had all printed reports that the story was clearly incorrect and based upon rumour and misapprehension.⁶¹ However, once again, the very fact that the original rumours had been printed, added to the effect of presenting southern slaveholders with the fearful vision of their own slaves rebelling at home.

British Designs on Cuba

In August 1843 news reports appeared which indicated southern worries over British designs on Cuba. On 21 August, the *Savannah Daily Republican* reprinted an article from the *St Augustine Herald*, which noted that a British brig of war had entered Florida's Key West harbour and had taken a survey of the port. According to the article, the Commander asked the British Consul who had gone on board, whether he had heard that an insurrection had occurred in Cuba. The article goes on to comment:

What the design of the British government may be in this particular remains to be seen; but her rapacity is so well known, that we cannot doubt she has a design upon the Island of Cuba. We have recently heard that some regulations of the Cortez, in relation to the Island of Cuba, favouring certain of the English fanatics in their peculiar views are about to be promulgated, and the move made by the British Admiral may be in contemplation of some turbulence in the Island, of which that Government knows so well how to take advantage.⁶²

Cuba,' *Easton Gazette* (Easton, Maryland), 10 June 1843; 'More trouble in Cuba,' *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia), 13 June 1843; 'By the New Orleans papers,' *North Carolina Standard* (Raleigh, North Carolina), 14 June 1843.

⁶⁰ 'An insurrection in Cuba,' *Easton Gazette* (Easton, Maryland), 10 June 1843.

⁶¹ 'From Havana,' *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser* (Baltimore, Maryland), 12 June 1843; *Alexandria Gazette* (Alexandria, Virginia), 13 June 1843; 'From Havana,' *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington, D.C.), 14 June 1843; *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser* (Baltimore, Maryland), 15 June 1843; 'From St Jago de Cuba,' *The Southern Patriot* (Charleston, South Carolina), 17 June 1843.

⁶² 'Key West,' *Savannah Daily Republican* (Savannah, Georgia), 21 August 1843.

The implication expressed here, is that British abolitionists were working in Cuba to encourage slave rebellion, with the view that this might spread to the southern states. Indeed, the article goes on to point out that 'Key West is an important position, and should be fortified for many reasons... It would be well for our government to order immediately some of our Naval force to that port to counteract any encroachments upon our national rights or domain, for who knows what a day or hour may bring forth.'⁶³ The same story was reprinted in the *Charleston Courier*, Charleston's *Southern Patriot*, Macon's *Georgia Telegraph*, Washington D.C's *Globe* and Washington D.C's *Madisonian*.⁶⁴ As highlighted in Chapter Three, fear of British encouragement of slave rebellion in the South was regularly expressed in southern newspapers.

In an article discussing the need to better secure the southern and western borders in the interest of 'national defense', Washington D.C's *Daily National Intelligencer* argued that 'along the outward chain of the West India Islands, from the Oronoco to the north of Cuba, England has established a cordon of naval and military posts, that, at the first outbreak of war, will give her complete command not only of the Caribbean sea, but also of the Gulf of Mexico...'⁶⁵ It is clear from the August 1843 news reports in southern newspapers that anxiety was growing that Britain might gain some form of power within Cuba in order to gain a larger foothold from which to either attack the South or stifle its commerce.

The *Triunvirato* Rebellion

News of the 5 November uprising, the *Triunvirato* Rebellion, does not seem to have spread quickly amongst southern newspapers, with only a few reports of it in late 1843. Washington D.C's *Daily Madisonian* and *Daily Intelligencer* both printed a story, as did Elkton's *Cecil Whig* and Tarborough's *Tarboro' Press*, which reported on 'A slave insurrection in Cuba' in which it announced that 'Fifty negroes' had been killed. Making reference to the reporting of the rebellion in the *New York Journal of Commerce*, the

⁶³ 'Key West,' *Savannah Daily Republican* (Savannah, Georgia), 21 August 1843.

⁶⁴ 'Key West,' *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina), 23 August 1843; 'Key West,' *The Southern Patriot* (Charleston, South Carolina) 28th August 1843; 'Key West,' *Georgia Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia), 29 August 1843; 'Key West,' *The Globe* (Washington, D.C), 31 August 1843; 'Key West,' *Madisonian* (Washington, D.C.), 11 September 1843.

⁶⁵ 'The maritime interests of the South and West,' *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington D.C) 15 November 1843.

reports all state that a slave insurrection had occurred on several plantations near Matanzas, noting that it had been suppressed, and that fifty slaves had been killed, several slaves had hung themselves and 67 were in custody.⁶⁶

News of the uprising and associated conspiracy began to appear in the southern newspapers in early 1844. Both the *Alexandria Gazette* and the *Richmond Whig*, reprinting from the *New Orleans Tropic*, printed letters from a merchant in Havana who declared that ‘things here are getting worse and worse every day, and it strikes me a change must come very soon.’ The letter must have been alarming to slaveholding readers as it went on to describe how ‘the negroes in the country give a great deal of trouble.’ According to the letter, slaves on the estates of the slaveholding Aldama and Alphonso families had participated in an extensive conspiracy, in which the ‘best slaves were engaged.’ The writer does however reassure readers that ‘nearly five hundred negroes, in arms, were killed, and a large number of prisoners were taken.’⁶⁷ Nevertheless, such reports must have concerned southern readers, for whom the threat of another Haitian-style revolution in the near Atlantic world loomed large, with huge implications for their own system of slavery.

Washington D.C.’s *Daily Globe* and Baltimore’s *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser* and *Saturday Visitor* all printed the news that ‘accounts from Cuba to the 23d ultimo, state a servile insurrection had broken out, but was put down after five hundred slaves had been killed.’⁶⁸ What may have been concerning to southern slaveholders were the details of the reported impetus for this latest insurrection. The *Alexandria Gazette* printed another letter from Havana, describing how this latest ‘insurrection, on the sugar estates of Mr Aldama was far more serious in its nature, as ‘it seems the negroes had orders from the workmen on said estate to rise, burn, and murder all they found in their neighbourhood.’ Alarming for southern readers, the writer notes that ‘some say that

⁶⁶ ‘A slave insurrection in Cuba,’ *The Daily Madisonian* (Washington, D.C), 22 November 1843; ‘Reported slave insurrection in Cuba,’ *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington, D.C), 23 November 1843; ‘A slave insurrection in Cuba,’ *The Cecil Whig* (Elkton, Maryland) same 25 November 1843; ‘Insurrection in Cuba,’ *Tarboro’ Press* (Tarboro, North Carolina), 9 December 1843.

⁶⁷ ‘By the Southern Mail,’ *Alexandria Gazette* (Alexandria, Virginia), 6 January 1844; ‘Insurrection at Havana,’ *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia), 9 January 1844.

⁶⁸ ‘Accounts from Cuba,’ *The Daily Globe* (Washington (DC), District of Columbia), 9 January 1844; ‘Accounts from Cuba,’ *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser* (Baltimore, Maryland), 9 January 1844; ‘Accounts from Cuba,’ *Saturday Visitor* (Baltimore, Maryland), 13 January 1844

the workmen had orders from Mr A. to advise them to do this- This can be believed, as said gentlemen, in company with his relations, the Messrs Alfonsos, are known to be abolitionists.⁶⁹ Fear of abolitionist outsiders feeding ideas of freedom to the enslaved and urging them to rebel was felt keenly in the South.

It is fascinating, that in the same issue of the *Alexandria Gazette*, two pages later, a long letter from a Cuba correspondent of the *Louisville Journal* was reprinted, describing their travels in Cuba. The long piece tells the story of a 'tragedy' within the walls of a 'princely mansion' as it is still in the process of being built. The powerful images evoked are worth considering in that they provide the southern slaveholder with the vision of black resistance. The 'capacious edifice' belonged to an 'old sugar planter' who employed hundreds of slaves to construct the building. On account of them 'being overtasked, cruelly treated, or what not, forty or fifty of them rebelled against the overseers, refused to work, and stood at bay in one of the chambers, armed with stones and their instruments of labor.' The rebellious slaves were given the option to stand down, until the planter called in police soldiers who took aim at the door, behind which 'the black garrison stood firm.' Eventually, 'the soldiers fired- nineteen fell to work no more, and the rest yielded.'⁷⁰

The story went on to describe the ghost stories that might be told of the house in the future: 'In years to come when that house gets old and weather- stained and solemn, and weeds take root on wall and roof, and trail in the long rambling apartments and what a rich harbor it will be for ghost stories!' The writer makes reference to Haiti, describing how 'the barefooted spectre of a friar, who haunted certain profane renters of rooms in the confiscated church of Santo Domingo, will be a poor show in comparison.' The writer narrates an incredibly descriptive scene that evokes what the author presumably deemed to be haunting scenes of the ghosts of the murdered slaves:

Just think of it- nineteen able bodied ghosts, with the whites of their eyes, and their filed teeth and tattooed faces, and black as wreaths of smoke- being more visible on that account, I imagine, than a white man's pale shade- hammering,

⁶⁹ 'By the Southern Mail,' *Alexandria Gazette* (Alexandria, Virginia), 6 January 1844.

⁷⁰ 'Cuba Anecdotes,' *Alexandria Gazette* (Alexandria, Virginia), 6 January 1844.

sawing, and carrying about serial hods of mortar, when the house is not only completed but going to decay!⁷¹

Describing them further as a 'black garrison', and referring to the 'spirit of the negroes', the writer offers a scene of black resistance much feared in the South.

On 7 March 1844, the *Charleston Courier* printed another lengthy letter from its correspondent in Limonar, in which the author discussed how 'thirty thousand' enslaved people were thought to have been 'compromised' and had taken part in the recent insurrectionary activity. There was discussion of how the rebellion had been 'promptly crushed' and how rumours of new plots had been circulating. The author described how rumours were easily started and were 'entirely attributable to the fears of a few mayorals [overseers].' They describe the process of rumour making in which one or two slaves complain of bad treatment or refuse to work, by which the overseer suspects these slaves are plotting some form of open resistance and therefore has the slave punished to force a confession. The slave, under pain of torture then 'confesses, and implicates two or three more, they are punished until they confess,' and implicate further slaves, thus leading to a 'considerable conspiracy... hatched by the imaginations' of the overseers. The existence of a plot is then confirmed to the overseers when one or two of the tortured slaves, out of revenge, set fire to a square of cane. Such a narration of how rumours of new insurrectionary activity were based upon overseers' fears rather than actual large-scale black resistance was a reassuring message to southern slaveholders. It is also worth noting that the blame of fearfulness and paranoia was represented as being the fault of overseers and not of male slaveholders, who could not be described as being fearful as it would undermine their overall authority.

The writer further strips black people of their agency and ability to resist their enslaved condition, describing how their untruthful testimony under torture has led to rumours of further rebellion:

Any one who has studied the African character, as found in the slaves of Cuba, newly imported from their native forests, can easily understand how the fear of punishment will cause them to tell falsehoods that would jepordise (sic) the lives

⁷¹ 'Cuba Anecdotes,' *Alexandria Gazette* (Alexandria, Virginia), 6 January 1844.

of their fellow slaves, and how difficult it is to ascertain the truth from their testimony. To lie, seems to be inherent in the African.⁷²

The described 'inherent' characteristic of the African as a liar simply mirrored pro-slaveholding ideology that posited the black person as stupid or untrustworthy. Such comments also highlighted to the reader that the apparent stupidity of the African was also a reason why they were unable to carry out a successful rebellion, and instead only lie about involvement in such activity when forced to.

The correspondent also believed that a key cause of the rebellion was the lack of Christian teaching amongst the enslaved in Cuba, declaring that 'the whole system of slavery, as maintained in Cuba, is radically wrong.' The writer described how they believed that 'no government is better suited to the African than a well-organized system of slavery, and that under no other is he happy.' However, they believed that the stable foundations of such a well-organized system lie with 'the aid of a true religion'. The writer criticised the system of slavery in Cuba for the lack of Christian understanding amongst the enslaved population. Explaining how key tenets of the Roman Catholic faith were required under Spanish law to be taught to newly imported slaves, the writer added that 'this law has long become a dead letter,' with the enslaved population of Cuba 'denied the privilege of being taught the religion of Christ.' In such comments, the southern slaveholding readership may have found a boost of confidence in their own system; it highlighted to them that their system was in many ways superior and that their slaves were undoubtedly happier, and better controlled, than their Cuban counterparts. Indeed, the writer commented that the majority of the enslaved population in Cuba '*live and die in complete ignorance of even the tenets of the Romish faith,*' adding that it is *unwise* to 'deny to the slave that religion which teaches obedience to masters and rulers' and declares that 'as long as this state of things continues, the slaves in Cuba can be restrained only by force, and will never learn to be guided by principles of duty.'⁷³ Inherent in this statement is the belief that the southern system of slavery is different; that southern slaves, through good management and Christian teachings are happy and

⁷² 'Correspondence of the Courier,' *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina) 7 March 1844.

⁷³ Ibid. For more on Catholic Religion and Cuban slavery see: Franklin W. Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba during the Nineteenth Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), pp.106-112. Noel Leo Erskine, *Plantation Church: How African American Religion was born in Caribbean Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), see especially. pp. 55-56.

do not need to be restrained by force as they, unlike the slaves in Cuba, are guided by principles of duty.

Many southern papers reported the conspiracy as widespread. Washington D.C's *Daily Madisonian* described the situation in Cuba as 'a conspiracy in which the whole population in the vicinity had united' and Baltimore's *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser* and *Saturday Visitor* stated that 'the disaffection among the slaves is more general than it was as first supposed. It is said that there are about 3000 slaves in irons on the different forts in the vicinity of Matanzas.'⁷⁴ Despite the rhetoric that expressed that rebellion had occurred on a huge scale, many reports confirmed confidence in the slaveholding system. The Baltimore *Sun* printed a letter from Cuba, noting that "the alarm occasioned by the late negro conspiracy is already dying away and things are returning to their natural state.'⁷⁵ Five days later, the *Sun* printed more news from Cuba, concerning the 'late troubles among the negroes.' It noted that 'these stories are always exaggerated and should be received with a good degree of caution.' The report emphasises that the merchants of Cuba should have no fears of any further serious trouble arising, remarking that 'any attempt of the negroes at revolts has always subjected them to severe punishment. The whites are far too numerous to run any risk of an insurrection like the one at St Domingo.'⁷⁶

On 18 March 1844, the *Charleston Courier* printed another letter, from its Limonar correspondent dated 29 February 1844. In the letter, the writer remarks that the since they last wrote concerning the insurrection of local slaves, all such activity had been 'completely prevented,' and there was not the 'least alarm on that account.' The writer was at pains to note that the plantations where insurrectionary activity had taken place 'belonged all to Spaniards, who seldom visit their plantations, thus leaving them to the mercy of a brutal Mayoral [overseer] who has no interest in their welfare, and is scarcely at all accountable for his treatment of them.' This clear criticism of what was deemed bad slaveholding practice, was in opposition to the ideal of the southern slaveholding gentleman who cared for his slaves' welfare and therefore it was unlikely that 'happy'

⁷⁴ 'Slave insurrection in Cuba,' *The Daily Madisonian* (Washington, D.C), 7 March 1844; 'Later from Matanzas,' *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser* (Baltimore, Maryland) 5 April 1844; 'Later from Matanzas,' *Saturday Visitor* (Baltimore, Maryland), 6 April 1844.

⁷⁵ 'From Matanzas,' *The Sun* (Baltimore, Maryland) 9 March 1844.

⁷⁶ 'Matanzas Negro Insurrections,' *The Sun* (Baltimore, Maryland), 14 March 1844

southern slaves would rebel. The correspondent also commented that 'it behooves Spain in her present enfeebled state to keep on good terms with the United States, than which no power more fully shields Cuba from the lion's paw.'⁷⁷ Obviously referring to British interest in Cuba, the writer exemplifies southern concern over British interference.

The *Courier* then printed another letter, presumably from the same individual, on 25 April 1844, which was also reprinted in the *Alexandria Gazette* a week later. Dated, Cuba, 6 April 1844, the writer discussed how military commissions had been investigating the recent slave insurrection by travelling to all plantations to obtain confessions which had 'compromised nearly the whole island.' The writer described how prisons, forts, and private houses in Matanzas were overflowing with black prisoners. The railroad depot at Cardenas was turned into temporary jail and was described as being so overcrowded with prisoners that gangrene was affecting many of them. The correspondent was keen to highlight that the supposed ringleaders of the rebels would be shot. They also pointed out that the plot was 'a most extensive one,' with the main leaders being free black people.⁷⁸

Further criticism of Cuban slaveholding was meted out, with the author highlighting how the authorities in Cuba were trying to prove that the plot clearly developed as a result of foreign interference. The writer's main emphasis is that a badly run system of slavery was to blame for the insurrectionary activity. They note that the 'whole is easily explained by their system of slavery, which is extremely defective; the negroes being chiefly given up to the mercy of ignorant and debased whites who have no interest in their welfare, and who as administradors and mayorals [overseers] often commit acts of cruelty which drive the slaves to despair'. They remark especially on the level of absenteeism of the Cuban slaveholders, remarking that in general, 'slavery here and in our country are as different as night is to day.'⁷⁹ This clear comparison between the Cuban system and southern system of slavery, which is deemed far superior, is crucial to the underlying message to southern slaveholders; slaves in the South simply would not

⁷⁷ 'Correspondence of the Courier,' *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina), 18 March 1844.

⁷⁸ 'To the Editors of the Courier,' *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina) 25 April 1844; 'Correspondence of the Charleston Courier,' *Alexandria Gazette* (Alexandria, Virginia), 2 May 1844.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

wish to rebel; they had no need to under the good management, guidance and care of southern masters and mistresses.

The author also makes a point of highlighting that the plot would never have succeeded due to what were deemed to be the deficiency of black people's intelligence:

It is needless to inform one, acquainted with the negro character, that the plot, extensive as it was, could never have succeeded. Indeed, so little unison was there in the plan, that some plantations were to have risen on Christmas and some on Good Friday, and the most silly means were adopted to effect their purposes. The contra mayorals or drivers, were generally with the free negroes, to have been the leaders; and the Kings and Queens and Chiefs had all been chosen in anticipation of the favorable result. The free negroes were the chief means of communicating the progress of the plan from place to place, and some of the most favored servants were the most deeply implicated.

A focus on the fact that free black people were key players in the rebellion is important when we consider the southern elite reaction to free black people. Indeed, the presence of free blacks and mulattos was problematic, as these individuals did not fall neatly on one side of a colour line dividing the free from the enslaved.⁸⁰ As Peter Parish has remarked, free black people in the South led such a 'twilight existence' that they did not threaten the system of slavery.⁸¹ Yet this did not stop white slaveholders fearing that free blacks might incite the enslaved to rebel. Nor did it stop southern white theorists arguing that free blacks were particularly prone to violence given the fact that their natural propensities as black people were no longer checked by a master's control.⁸² Hearing the news from Cuba that free black people played such a role in *La Escalera* may simply have intensified their concerns and confirmed their fears.

The author ends by criticizing abolitionists: 'we can only deplore the efforts of those who would raise the African to a station for which he is totally unfit, and which, moreover, only result in rendering his condition worse.' Finally, they remark that no concern is felt

⁸⁰ For a history of free black people in the antebellum South, see: Ira Berlin, *Slaves without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975).

⁸¹ Parish, *Slavery: History and Historians*, p. 23.

⁸² Bruce, *Violence and Culture in the Antebellum South*, p. 127.

amongst the Cuban slaveholding class in relation to their slaves: 'The country, so far as regards the slave population, will soon be quiet; even now not the least fear exists of that class.'⁸³ Other newspapers, such as Washington D.C's *Daily National Intelligencer*, also reported on calm being restored to the slaveholding system in Cuba, reporting that Cuba's 'insurrection among the blacks had been quelled and confidence quite restored again.'⁸⁴

The Spectre of Rebellion in the South

By May 1844, news of events in Cuba started to appear which provided southern slaveholders with a clear vision of the spectre of successful slave rebellion in the South. Many news reports in southern newspapers described images of a world turned upside down and the need for severe repression to stop the rebellion. In news reports recounting severe repression by the Cuban authorities, the descriptions of what had been avoided is hard to ignore. The potential of successful slave revolt in the South looms over much of what is printed. By printing accounts of the conspiracy, southern newspapers offered their southern slaveholding readers visions of rebellion at home. A letter from Havana printed in Baltimore's *Commercial Journal* and the *Alexandria Gazette* explained the size of the discovered conspiracy, noting that the plot extends all over the Island of Cuba and 'that the conspirators are in correspondence with people abroad.'⁸⁵ Many southern newspaper reports highlighted the supposed plans of the rebels and their connections to abolitionists elsewhere in the Atlantic world. The New Orleans' *Daily Picayune*, mentioned Placido, one of the apparent leaders of the planned insurrection, referring to him as a 'mulatto poet, said to be very clever.' The report makes reference to Haiti and states that 'he was found to be in correspondence with the blacks of St Domingo and had success crowned their efforts, he was to be known as "Emperador Placido Primero."⁸⁶ In referring to the notion of the leader of the rebellion as a future emperor of a free black Cuban state, the writer alludes to connotations of despotism in a rather ridiculing tone.

⁸³ 'To the Editors of the Courier,' *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina) 25 April 1844; 'Correspondence of the Charleston Courier,' *Alexandria Gazette* (Alexandria, Virginia), 2 May 1844.

⁸⁴ 'Important from Cuba,' *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington, D.C), 3 May 1844.

⁸⁵ 'Cuba- Great Drought,' *Baltimore Commercial Journal* (Baltimore, Maryland), May 18, 1844; 'Cuba- Great Drought,' *Alexandria Gazette* (Alexandria, Virginia), 21 May 1844.

⁸⁶ 'From Havana,' *The Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), 20 April 1844.

In May and June 1844, southern papers printed the account of the apparent declaration of one of the Cuban conspirators. The *Baltimore Sun* published a letter from Havana reprinted from the *New Orleans Courier*, noting to its readers that the letter 'gives some startling particulars of the conspiracy among the negroes. By this it would seem that the British ex-consul Turnbull, had a hand in fomenting the recent conspiracy to murder all the whites.' The letter went on to describe the apparent admission of one of the rebels named Cequi and his 'dreadful disclosures' of details of the plot. Cequi is quoted as admitting that the rebels had chosen 'Mr Turnbull, ex consul of England, at Havana and now in Jamaica, to be our king provisionally.' He is quoted as saying that Turnbull had \$270,000 in order to supply the rebels with food, arms and ammunition. Cequi narrated the plan of the insurrection noting all the places where the rebellion was to break out on the first night and commenting that the 'negroes at those points were to set fire to the houses, murder the whites, take possession of their arms, and march to Cardinas, where they were to find, on the banks of the San Guarduda, 600 muskets and ammunition, landed from an English brig.' The rebels were then to march to Matanzas, 3,000 strong where their leader, Placido would be waiting for them. There, they planned to poison all the whites, but after some thought they 'determined, as a surer mode, that the cooks and other house servants should set fire to the dwelling houses on a fixed day, and murder their masters.'

Once all other cities had followed the same plan, Cequi apparently said that the rebels had 'hoped to become masters of the Island, and marry the white women, whom, on this account, we were ordered not to kill- at least, those who were not old and ugly.' As if this description was not awful enough to white slaveholders anywhere, Cequi is quoted as adding: "Finally, the disclosures which I have yet to make, will fill the whole world with horror."⁸⁷ Such a terrifying description of the proposed plot could only have provided southern slaveholders with the image of rebellion at home.

Similar reports of the conspirator's 'declaration' were printed in Baltimore's *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, the *Easton Star* and Houston's *Texian Democrat*.⁸⁸ Boonville's *Coon Hunter* also reprinted a similar report from the *Jackson Reformer*,

⁸⁷ 'Late and important from Havana,' *The Sun* (Baltimore, Maryland), 20 May 1844.

⁸⁸ 'Cuba,' *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser* (Baltimore, Maryland), 21 May 1844; 'Late and interesting from the West Indies,' *Easton Star* (Easton, Maryland), 28 May 1844; 'Cuba,' *Texian Democrat* (Houston, Texas), 26 June 1844.

noting that the plan was to massacre the white population 'without mercy.'⁸⁹ Further 'facts' were included such as the statement from the *Commercial Daily Advertiser* and the *Texian Democrat* that 'all the free negroes and mulattoes...were privy to the revolt,' and the number of men planned to march upon Matanzas was 30,000 rather than 3,000, which suggests that both papers reprinted from the same source (likely the *New York Express*, which is mentioned in the *Texian Democrat*). The *Easton Star* also printed news that 80 white women were currently in jail in Havana, due to having 'agreed to marry the chiefs of the negroes.'⁹⁰ The *Baltimore Sun*, reported in mid June 1844, that their informant in Cuba was suggesting that 'the slaves in all parts of Cuba are ripe for revolt, and that the day when a general rising may occur is perhaps not so far distant as is generally imagined.'⁹¹ Such descriptions of the killing of whites and the violation and corruption of white women were key themes in any descriptions of slave rebellion in the South. It is important to recognise, that despite not talking about the South, such images fed fears of a future in which black resistance might rise in the South to achieve similar ends.

The Success of Repression

Highlighting the success of the repression of uprisings in other slaveholding societies was important to boost confidence in the southern system, and this was certainly true in the case of *La Escalera*. Reports in southern newspapers highlighted how the Cuban 'authorities were still busily engaged in ferreting out the authors and abettors of the recent insurrection... Already more than two hundred ringleaders have been executed.'⁹² The *Alexandria Gazette* noted that 'executions of negroes and mulattoes have taken place to a large extent in all the country,' and the *Baltimore's Saturday Visitor* remarked that the Cuban 'government were using every exertion to put down the insurrection.'⁹³

A letter from Havana printed in *Baltimore's Commercial Journal* and the *Alexandria Gazette* discusses the 'systems of torture and cruelties practised to extort evidence and confession,' noting that 'perhaps the extremity of the case demanded extraordinary

⁸⁹ 'British Designs on Havana,' *Coon Hunter* (Boonville, Missouri), 7 June 1844.

⁹⁰ 'Troubles in Cuba,' *Easton Star* (Easton, Maryland), 28 May 1844.

⁹¹ 'From Cuba,' *The Sun* (Baltimore, Maryland) 18 June 1844.

⁹² 'From Cuba,' *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington, D.C), 7 May 1844.

⁹³ 'From Cuba,' *Alexandria Gazette* (Alexandria, Virginia), 16 May 1844; 'Later from Matanzas,' *Saturday Visitor* (Baltimore, Maryland), 18 May 1844.

remedies.’ The writer goes on to explain the strict measures taken by the Cuban authorities: ‘All the contra-mayorals, boyeros, carreteros, carpinteros... on an estate, must be white men. No *black* cartmen are allowed upon the roads.’ Further measures included the order in Matanzas, that all free people of color, not born upon the soil, were to leave the country, and that all free people of color born on the soil, and who therefore could not be ‘expatriated, are ordered to come in from the country and live in the towns, under surveillance.’⁹⁴

The Baltimore *Sun* printed the comments of an American seaman who had travelled to Cuba onboard the US Frigate Potomac who praised Cuban leadership for the quick suppression of the rebellion, remarking that ‘by the vigilant forecast of the present Captain General, Leopoldo O'Donnell, the energy displayed in his administration of the government of the island, the vigor of his remedial measures, and the promptness of his inflictions upon the guilty, the recent alarming revolt among the blacks had been suppressed.’ Describing how extensive the plot had been and how ‘systematically’ the details of the revolt been arranged, the writer said that the crisis had been ‘a most fearful one.’ The seaman went on to describe what must have been a terrifying vision for the slaveholders of the South. Yet even this fearful scene of rebellious slaves was introduced with the reassurance that such scenes were stopped by the power of white authority:

Nothing but a resort to the most energetic and summary measures by the captain general could have stayed a hundred thousand uplifted hands, all clenching instruments of destruction and all nerved by the demoniac fury characteristic of the Ethiopian race, ready at the next moment to deal death and desolation over the whole island, deluging the fields and smearing the family alters with the life-blood of thousands of unoffending victims.

Despite such a scene being narrated as an apocalyptic vision of a possible future, the repression of the rebellion was of utmost importance in the report, with the seaman emphasising that ‘in a conjuncture so critical, every consideration of policy and humanity dictated to the captain general the use of the strongest measures, and the most summary punishments, to save Cuba from the fate of ill-starred San Domingo.’⁹⁵

⁹⁴ ‘Cuba- Great Drought,’ *Baltimore Commercial Journal* (Baltimore, Maryland), May 18, 1844; ‘Cuba- Great Drought,’ *Alexandria Gazette* (Alexandria, Virginia), 21 May 1844.

⁹⁵ ‘Interesting from Havana,’ *The Sun* (Baltimore, Maryland), 13 August 1844.

The Texas Question

As discussed earlier, throughout 1843 southern concerns over the future of slavery in the Republic of Texas grew and US politicians became more concerned about British abolitionist activity in Cuba. La Escalera was a key moment from which more paranoia over British involvement became apparent. By the second half of 1843, the Tyler administration was very much committed to the plan for annexation and as Matthew Karp has shown, newspapers such as the *Madisonian* were keen to raise concern over potential British plots in Texas, printing content to that effect during the autumn of 1843. Karp argues that 'Like-minded southern newspapers' spent much energy pointing out the British threat to what they described as 'slave states', referring not to the 'American South but the foreign 'states' of Cuba and Texas.'⁹⁶ As Edward Rugemer has highlighted, the autumn of 1843 in America saw a powerful propaganda campaign push public opinion towards an acceptance of the need for Texas annexation.⁹⁷ This can be seen in southern newspaper reports from spring 1844 onwards, which make numerous mention of foreign involvement in the conspiracy of *La Escalera*. Baltimore's *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser* reported in March 1844 that 'several arrests of white men had lately taken place' in Matanzas, due to supposed connection to the 'late insurrection of the negroes', noting that a 'great distrust of foreigners consequently exists.'⁹⁸

Much of the reporting focused on Turnbull's involvement in the plot. Charleston's *Southern Patriot* reported that David Turnbull was being charged for leading the 'recent insurrectionary incidents' and 'having formed a design, in connection with the blacks to get possession of the island.'⁹⁹ The New Orleans *Daily Picayune* reported news from Havana that Turnbull had been accused of 'being the first instigator and prime demon and agent in this horrid attempt to deliver this beautiful land to rapine and slaughter.'¹⁰⁰ Boonville's *Coon Hunter*, reprinting from the *Jackson Reformer*, noted how 'the late British consul had organised among the negroes and mulattoes of the island, a universal and systematic revolt'.¹⁰¹ The New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, reported that:

⁹⁶ Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire*, p. 88.

⁹⁷ Rugemer, 'Robert Monroe Harrison,' p. 179.

⁹⁸ *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser* (Baltimore, Maryland) 14 March 1844.

⁹⁹ 'Grave Accusation,' *The Southern Patriot* (Charleston, South Carolina), 7 August 1844.

¹⁰⁰ 'Correspondence of the Picayune,' *The Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), 20 August 1844.

¹⁰¹ 'British Designs on Havana,' *Coon Hunter* (Boonville, Missouri), 7 June 1844.

The Havana correspondent of the Charleston Courier states that the Government of the island are in possession of letters to the ex- British consul Turnbull, or Turnbal, [sic] addressed to some whites and mulattoes there, which prove him to have been, if not at the bottom and main instigator, at least a most active and influential exciter of the contemplated insurrection. We should not be at all surprised if he were.¹⁰²

The *Baltimore Sun*, printed news from Cuban newspapers which stated that Mr Turnbull was 'openly accused of instigating the slaves to insurrection with a design to overthrow the white government and open the way for England to 'divide and conquer' that fertile and valuable possession. It appears to have been a desperate plot to rehearse the bloody and atrocious scenes of the St Domingo massacre, in which British emissaries figured so conspicuously.'¹⁰³ Washington D.C.'s *Daily Globe* and *Weekly Globe* printed a long article entitled 'Turnbull the Abolitionist' accusing him of being the 'cause of the recent horrible and bloody scenes in Cuba,' and the 'chief instigator in this dark plot, which was meant to renew all the butcheries of St Domingo.' Blaming the 'English government' for sending Turnbull to Cuba with the intention of making a 'breach with the Spaniards to give the English naval force in the West Indies a pretext for seizing it,' the article went on to argue that the outcome of *La Escalera* was still negative despite the failure of the planned insurrection:

The result, at all events, shows the philanthropy of abolition missions in slave States in the present condition of things. Revolt and massacre can only be the consequence. If the slaves succeed, the white race must be exterminated as in St Domingo. If they fail, multitudes are made victims, after war has done its worse, as examples to prevent future insurrections and the weight of servitude is increased tenfold by the hostile feelings which take the place of those of mutual kindness which gradually grow up between master and servant, when the ties become at last those of mutual interest.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² 'Consul Turnbull,' *The Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), 23 June 1844.

¹⁰³ 'Important from Cuba,' *The Sun* (Baltimore, Maryland), 31 July 1844.

¹⁰⁴ 'Turnbull the abolitionist,' *The Daily Globe* (Washington, D.C), 3 August 1844; 'Turnbull the abolitionist,' *Weekly Globe* (Washington, D.C), 10 August 1844.

Such commentary must have been a powerful and fearful message for southern slaveholders; it warned them of abolitionist activity and the potential for associated black resistance, even if unsuccessful, as a force eroding the paternalistic relationships between slave and master/mistress that many slaveholders in the South said they believed in and which they relied on to justify slavery.

In early October 1844 the *North Carolina Standard* printed an editorial arguing for the annexation of Texas. The editor argued strongly that British abolitionism was a vital threat to the South and offered *La Escalera* as a key example of British involvement in stoking slave insurrection:

The British government is opposed to the reannexation of Texas to the United States, from a natural jealousy of the spread of our democratic institutions; from the wish to monopolize her trade; to maintain her as a rival to us, thereby to control the price of our agricultural products; and as a point whence her plans of abolition may be carried on with secrecy and effect, on our southern borders... We have no enemy to dread in this matter, but Great Britain. She intrigues where she can, and wars where she dare. Has she not announced lately to our Government at Washington, with cool impudence, that she does not like one of our political institutions; that it ought to be reformed; and that she will exert her steady efforts to abolish it, wherever it is to be found?...But who can confide in her sincerity or benevolence...We point you to the late servile insurrections in the Island of Cuba, which were instigated by her Consul at Havana, David Turnbull, a distinguished abolitionist.¹⁰⁵

The *Charleston Courier* printed a letter from a reader who requested that it print from the letter that Alexander H. Everett, a pro-annexation former US minister to Spain, had written to the editor of the *Democratic Review*. The reader argued that the United States needed to secure Texas, otherwise England would do so and that the consequence of her doing so would, in time, lead to the 'entire protraction and ultimate destruction of the slaveholding interests of the South.' Begging the editors to print Everett's letter and referring to them as the 'guardians of the rights and interests of the South,' the reader

¹⁰⁵ 'An address to the Freeman and voters of North Carolina,' *North Carolina Standard* (Raleigh, North Carolina), 2 October 1844.

draws attention specifically to the letter's references to British involvement in the attempt to 'overthrow of the institution of slavery in Cuba.'¹⁰⁶ The *Courier* did print from the letter, which made numerous references to the recent insurrectionary movements in Cuba and how this concerned Southern safety in relation to British interference in Texas and the possible implications for the Southern institution of slavery. Describing David Turnbull as the 'chief manager of the operations of the abolitionists, as well as of the government' in Cuba, the letter went on to describe how his activities had resulted in:

A conspiracy, including the whole colored population of the island, and a small portion of the creoles, having for its object the emancipation of the slaves and the independence of the island, and including among the ways and means of effecting these objects, a general massacre of the whites. An explosion precisely like that of St Domingo, would have occurred, had not the plan been discovered before it was quite ripe for execution.

That the British may have been key instigators of such a planned 'general massacre of the whites' was clearly of intense interest to southern slaveholders for whom the potential of slave rebellion as close as Cuba would have sent shockwaves through the slaveholding community. Indeed, the fear that full-scale black resistance to enslavement might occur in Cuba and what this might mean for the South was summed up by Everett as he described the 'state of things in Cuba:'

A moral and political volcano, teeming, under an outside of forced tranquility, with a fiery ocean of insurrection and massacre, ready at any moment to spread, by explosion, its boiling lava over every thing in its neighborhood- separated from our Southern States by a channel that may be traversed in a few hours- this is an object to which statesmen, and particularly Southern statesmen, cannot well be indifferent.

¹⁰⁶ 'The Texas Question,' *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina), 3 October 1844. The original was published in Alexander Everett, "The Texas Question," in *The United States Magazine, and Democratic Review*, Vol. 15 (New York: Henry G. Langley, 1844), pp. 250–270.

Everett was keen to highlight that British abolitionist involvement in Cuba had led to *La Escalera* and that unless Texas was annexed by the United States, British abolitionist activity would spread into Texas. Everett argued that the British threat was very real and unless the United States acted soon, the danger of abolitionism would be closer than Cuba; it would be within the South itself:

If the South does not secure Texas- if Great Britain obtains that country and continues to prosecute her destructive machinations against the security of our Southern institutions, it is as plain as the noon-day sun, that the South is lost forever! The question of annexation is not so much a question of strengthening the institution of slavery, and the balance of power, as it is a question of political existence. In this light it ought to be viewed by every Southern patriot and in this light, I believe it ere long will be viewed by every friend of the South.¹⁰⁷

By November, Washington D.C.'s *Daily Globe*, reprinted from the New Orleans *Morning Herald*, which itself was reprinting from the *Natchez Free Trader*. The published article, entitled 'A Warning Voice' expressed concern over the settlement of western Texas with non-slaveholders and the possible infiltration of abolitionist sentiments.

Thus, then, it is evident that the non-slaveholding population will very soon preponderate in Texas, and in all human probability, acting under European influence, will proceed to *abolish slavery*. What then will be the condition of the South, and especially of Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas? We address the question to the calm and dispassionate consideration of men of all parties. We appeal to their patriotism, to their sense of the common safety and to their individual personal interest, as slaveholders.

The article makes clear reference to the fears of black soldiers under the command of an abolitionist foe, as discussed in Chapter Three. Deep concern is expressed over how Britain is surrounding the South with abolitionist activity and black troops. Real fear for the future of the southern system of slavery is evident:

¹⁰⁷ 'The Texas Question,' *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina), 3 October 1844.

Just look at the *cordon* that England is stretching around us! The Canadas garrisoned by black troops, regularly drilled; Jamaica and her other West India possessions converted into non-slaveholding colonies, with ten thousand black troops kept continually under arms... Her emissaries and propagandists, even her consuls and commercial agents, are at work in Cuba, in Texas, and, as has been proved, in our southern States, to ascertain the number and disposition of the slaves, and sow discontent among them. In Cuba, they fomented a bloody insurrection, which has just been quenched... If Mr Clay is elected, Texas will become a non-slaveholding State under British influence; and in twenty-five years more, slavery will not be allowed to exist in the United States. And what will fill up the interval? *War, rapine, conflagration, blood, the desolation and subjection of the South.*¹⁰⁸

By the end of 1844, the events in Cuba were still being discussed in newspapers. The Washington D.C. *Globe* warned of British interference in the Southern states by giving the example of Cuba. The writer warned that it had been common practice for years amongst both US and foreign abolitionists, 'to employ *freed* negroes in the slave states to go among those of their race not free, exciting discontent and organizing insurrection.' Stoking fears amongst the readership that abolitionists were spreading ideas amongst the southern slaves, the report went on to argue that 'the late events in Cuba show what fatal results were produced by such means, under the encouragement of the late British consul (Trumbull) [sic] whose machinations there gave birth to two conspiracies of the blacks to exterminate the whites on the island.' Further stoking fears, the writer of the report noted that it was only through the discovery of the main plot in Cuba that led to its prevention, otherwise it would have 'reproduced the scenes of St Domingo.'¹⁰⁹ Once again, the spectre of Haiti's revolution overshadowed the entire report and hinted at the potential for such scenes in the southern states. It is interesting to note that the *Arkansas Intelligencer* in March 1845 reported that five thousand muskets had been discovered in two mines in Cobre, Cuba, which were for the 'support of any insurrection which might

¹⁰⁸ 'From the New Orleans Morning Herald,' *The Daily Globe* (Washington, D.C.), 1 Nov 1844. Italics in original.

¹⁰⁹ 'Hartford Convention disaffection at work in Massachusetts,' *The Globe* (Washington, D.C.), 12 December 1844.

occur in the island and thus make an opening for England to come in.’¹¹⁰ Clearly, the idea that the British were waiting for their chance to take control of Cuba and spread their abolitionist agenda to the southern states was an immense form of anxiety to southern slaveholders.

* * * * *

The intense focus of the southern newspapers on British involvement in *La Escalera* is indicative of southern slaveholder belief that slaves were naturally happier under the control of a master and only likely to rebel with outside influence. The news of *La Escalera* presented by southern newspapers provided southern masters with two points of confidence in their own system. First, they could blame the rebellious activity of slaves in Cuba on the meddling of British abolitionists, something they worried deeply about in regard to their own slaveholding society, as discussed in Chapter Three. In this sense, they could remind themselves that it was outside influences that would lead to insurrectionary movements in their own society rather than something that their own slaves might do independently. Second, by representing Cuban masters as ‘bad masters’, who unwittingly encouraged their slaves to rebel, southern slaveholders were bolstered in the belief that they were ‘good masters’ and therefore that their slaves would have no reason to rebel.

Just as the southern slaveholding mind was split between self-deceiving confidence and fear, between apathy and horror, so the news from Cuba portrayed both sides of that dichotomy. Visions of a world turned upside-down were frequently described, with images conjured of rebellion in the South and black resistance. On the other hand, reporting of *La Escalera* also highlighted the ability and strength of white power to regain control and repress black resistance. The southern newspaper coverage of *La Escalera* portrays this conflicting confidence and paranoia of proslavery ideology in support of white supremacy, and the slaveholders self-deceiving belief in such ideology in order to sleep well at night.

¹¹⁰ ‘From Cuba,’ *Arkansas Intelligencer* (Van Buren, Arkansas), 29 March 1845.

Part Three

Sepoys, Slaves and the Global Colour Line: The Indian Uprising of 1857 in Southern Newspapers

Chapter Five

Sepoys and Slaves: The 'darker races' and the White Man's World in Southern Newspapers, 1857-8

The final part of this thesis will show how news of one specific foreign event, the Indian Uprising of 1857, was reported and read across a global colour line, which posited the superiority of the white or 'European' against the 'darker races,' thereby developing a framework through which southerners could amplify their own internal fears about the possibility of slave rebellion. Part Three will show that in the same way that Paul Naish described how Latin America was used as a screen upon which to project both proslavery and abolitionist approaches to the southern system of slavery, India and the specific example of the Uprising of 1857, were also used as a form of contextual substitution.¹ How southern slaveholders reflected upon the events in India affected how they understood slavery and racial hierarchy in the South. This chapter will show how news printed in southern newspapers about the events in India can be analysed as part of a wider global system of nineteenth-century white supremacy. Crucially, this case study provides a clear picture of the global colour line existing in the minds of the southern elite. This line signified the superiority of whiteness and the 'European' against the 'darker races' of the world, whether that was the African American slave or the Indian Sepoy.

In the decades prior to the Civil War, the American slaveholding South witnessed numerous slave insurrection panics. After Nat Turner's Rebellion of 1831, the South saw no actual large scale slave rebellions, and yet, while slaveholders tried to convince themselves that their slaves were faithful and trustworthy, rumours of poisoning, arson and planned slave rebellions continued to circulate.² The autumn and winter of 1856 in particular saw rumours and insurrection panics sweep the South as fear spread that slaves, inspired by the presidential election campaign of the Republican abolitionist candidate, Frémont, would rebel.³ Part Three of this thesis argues that just months after these panics gripped the southern states, stories printed in the press about foreign

¹ Naish, *Slavery and Silence*

² Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, p. 197.

³ Douglas, R. Egerton, 'The Slaves' Election: Frémont, Freedom, and the Slave Conspiracies of 1856,' *Civil War History*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (2015), pp. 35-63.

events were used as a framework through which southerners could amplify their own internal fears and anxieties. The Indian Uprising, otherwise known as the First War of Indian Independence, the 'Indian Mutiny', or 'Sepoy Rebellion,' of 1857, is one such example.

On 10th May 1857, the Sepoys (native Indian soldiers employed by the British East India Company) murdered their officers in the northern Indian city of Meerut, also killing all British and Christian civilians whom they came across. Proceeding to Delhi, which became the uprising's symbolic centre, the mutineers set off a chain of unrest that spread across northern India, in many places 'taking on the character of a popular rebellion.'⁴ A month later, the town of Kanpur, an East India Company garrison, was taken by the rebels, led by Nana Sahib, a Peshwa prince. Most fleeing men were killed, and the remaining 120 British women and children were captured and held by the Sepoy rebels. By July, in what has become known as the 'Cawnpore Massacre', these women and children were killed, and their bodies hidden in a local well.⁵ Both the rebels and the British committed atrocities, and the rebellion continued for almost a year before the British brutally defeated the rebels in March 1858.⁶ The British then reestablished power in the form of a far more centralised imperial structure under the Crown, rather than the previous somewhat informal control exercised by the East India Company that had lasted for more than a hundred years.⁷

The American press followed the Indian Uprising closely, with the first report appearing in the *New York Daily Times* on 6 July 1857, only two months after the outbreak of the uprising. As Britain and the United States were not yet telegraphically linked, Americans still relied on shipping for news of events in India.⁸ Historians and literary scholars have

⁴ Kim. A. Wagner, *The Great Fear of 1857: Rumours, Conspiracies and the Making of the Indian Uprising* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), p. 1.

⁵ For more on the Cawnpore Massacre see Barbara English, 'The Kanpur Massacres in India in the Revolt of 1857,' *Past and Present*, Vol. 142 (1994), pp. 169-178.

⁶ For more on the Indian Uprising see: Wagner, *The Great Fear of 1857*; William Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi, 1857* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006). For an overview of the historiography of the Indian Uprising, see: Kim. A. Wagner, 'The Marginal Mutiny: The New Historiography of the Indian Uprising of 1857', *History Compass*, Vol. 9, No. 10 (2011), pp. 760-766.

⁷ Jill C. Bender, *The 1857 Indian Uprising and the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 7.

⁸ Peter Putnis, 'The International Press and the Indian Uprising,' in Marina Carter and Crispin Bates, eds, *Mutiny at the Margins: New Perspectives on the Indian Uprising of 1857*, Vol 3:

analysed the reception of news from India and the subsequent memory of the Indian Uprising in the American context. Sangeeta Mediratta has considered the ways in which Northern US writers discussed the Indian Sepoy rebellion and the ways it was 'deployed as a mobile and contested sign in debating a range of national and imperial concerns.'⁹ She highlights the importance of understanding the reporting of the Indian uprising as a means of removing its 'primary historical positioning as a geographically contained colonial event and focusing on its global trajectory and metaphorical career' helping to 'underline the need for an imbricated national and global approach to both event and metaphor.'¹⁰ Whilst Mediratta's work focuses on the uprising as a theme in writings about the Civil War and its aftermath, her work is useful in the way it highlights the Indian Uprising as a 'colonial event with metaphorical and metonymic meanings that filtered into the popular imagination and served various social agendas.'¹¹ This was certainly the case in the southern states in the years preceding the Civil War.

Many contemporary Americans drew parallels between the British in India and America's southern slaveholding states. Indeed, Elizabeth Kelly Gray notes that an already 'apparent resemblance' between the system of racial hierarchy in British India and that of the American South 'turned ominous' in 1857, with many Americans viewing the Uprising as 'akin to a huge slave rebellion.' Seeing this foreign event 'through a domestic lens,' meant that American's differing views on the institution of slavery were reflected in how they interpreted the Indian Uprising.¹² Gray comments that, 'As with Toussaint's Haitian revolution in the 1790s, the Indian Uprising inspired fear of slave revolts for its generation of white American southerners.'¹³ In her study of the responses to the Indian Uprising in various colonies of the British Empire, Jill Bender has shown how news of the perceived 'mutiny' of colonised people created an atmosphere of intense anxiety and fear amongst British colonial authorities that colonised people would rebel elsewhere.¹⁴ The role of the press in reporting the news from India played a crucial role in shaping the

Global Perspectives (New Delhi: Thousand Oaks, 2013), p. 9. The transatlantic telegraph connection was established in 1858.

⁹ Sangeeta Mediratta, 'The Affair of the Greased Cartridge: Travelling Stories, Unraveling Empires and the Sepoy Revolt of 1857,' *Harvard Asia Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (2012), p. 8

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹² Elizabeth Kelly Gray, "'Whisper to him the word 'India:'" Trans-Atlantic Critics and American Slavery, 1830-1860' *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 28. No. 3 (2008), p. 381.

¹³ Gray, "'Whisper to him the word 'India:'" p. 399.

¹⁴ Bender, *The 1857 Indian Uprising and the British Empire*, p. 79.

narratives of the Uprising and inciting fear, both throughout the British Empire, but also throughout various other parts of the world. A few studies have discussed how the American press reported the events in India. However there has been no detailed analysis of the response to the Uprising by the southern press.¹⁵ Part Three of the thesis bridges this gap by considering the importance of analyzing a distinctly southern response to the Uprising and what this can tell us about the South's internal anxieties on the eve of secession.

The Indian Uprising and the American South

In his analysis of the Indian Uprising in the American Press, Nikhil Bilwakesh has argued that newspaper coverage of the events in India varied widely across the country. American newspaper editors sensationalised the story and used different literary devices to "translate" the story to the public. Bilwakesh argues that distinct groups - democrats, southerners, African Americans, abolitionists and Irish Americans - described the uprising differently, framing it in ways that furthered 'their own domestic goals.'¹⁶ Whilst Bilwakesh's article is helpful in uncovering the range of responses and reporting of the uprising, his analysis of a 'southern' response is not comprehensive. Despite explicitly mentioning that press reporting of the uprising reveals an anxiety concerning slave revolts at home, Bilwakesh makes the argument that Southerners, rather than empathizing with the British 'dilemma of a coloured and rebellious populace rising against them,' instead condemned the British 'for their hypocrisy in criticizing American

¹⁵ See for example: Mediratta, 'The Affair of the Greased Cartridge'; Nikhil Bilwakesh, "Their faces were like so many of the same sort at home': American Responses to the Indian Rebellion of 1857," *American Periodicals: A Journal of History & Criticism*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (2011), pp. 1-23; Putnis, 'The International Press and the Indian Uprising'; Gray, "'Whisper to him the word 'India'"; Gerald Horne, *The End of Empires: African Americans and India* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), p. 24, Harilaos Stecopoulos, 'Indian Knives and Color Lines: Mark Twain from Hannibal to the Jim Crow Raj,' in Fred Hobson and Barbara Ladd, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of The Literature of the US South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 196. There are a number of studies and edited volumes that analyse responses to and representations of the Uprising in the British context and globally, both contemporarily and over time. See: Gautam Chakravarty, *The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Bender, *The 1857 Indian Uprising and the British Empire*; Astrid Erll, 'Remembering across Time, Space and Cultures: Premediation, Remediation and the 'Indian Mutiny,'" in Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, eds., *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009); Carter and Bates, eds., *Mutiny at the Margins*; Shaswati Mazumdar, ed., *Insurgent Sepoys: Europe views the Revolt of 1857* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2011).

¹⁶ Bilwakesh, "Their faces were like so many of the same sort at home," p. 1.

slavery whilst practicing racial violence in India.¹⁷ Yet Bilwakesh has examined only a few Mississippian newspapers, a sample not representative enough to claim it was a typical southern response to the uprising.

As discussed in Chapters Three and Four, the South manifested strong feelings of Anglophobia and was deeply paranoid about British abolitionist involvement in the Atlantic world and the possible repercussions for the southern system of slavery. This chapter argues that southern newspapers could simultaneously criticize the British in different respects, whilst also condemning the notion of a 'coloured and rebellious populace' rising against the white race. This dualism was not always expressed within editorials neatly for the historian to clearly see. Rather, the practice of reprinting from other papers meant that editors chose stories from various sources, so whilst editorials might for example, criticize the British, other stories printed throughout the newspaper framed the British as the masters of a rebellious underclass, obviously drawing parallels with the situation in which southern slaveholders found themselves. To add to this dualism, even where the British were criticized, this chapter will show that this could also be read through a particular southern, slaveholding lens that focused on what it meant to be a good master. Rebellion by a subordinate race could be understood when bad mastership was involved. By implication, this congratulated the slaveholding masters of the South for their prime example of good care of slaves and eased their worries that slaves in the South might want to rebel.

There was widespread interest across America in the news from India, with many newspapers reprinting sensationalist stories from the British press.¹⁸ This was certainly the case with much of the southern press. This makes it hard to argue, as Bilwakesh does, that the southern press was unsympathetic to the British dilemma. Most reporting about the Indian Uprising in the southern press was reprinted from the British press. Antebellum newspaper editors compiled their papers 'with both "scissors and the quill," borrowing from and contributing to regional, political, religious and even national newspaper networks.'¹⁹ These networks used 'textual borrowing', with 'circulation often

¹⁷ Bilwakesh, "Their faces were like so many of the same sort at home." First quote: p. 1, Second quote: p. 10.

¹⁸ Mediratta, 'The Affair of the Greased Cartridge,' p. 11.

¹⁹ Cordell, 'Reprinting, Circulation and the Network Author in Antebellum Newspapers,' p. 434.

substituted for authorship.’²⁰ Ryan Cordell has argued that antebellum newspaper readers were ‘accessing an imagined, collective authorial presence’ because of the number of articles which were reprinted.²¹ Importantly, Cordell explains that this system of news circulation and exchange, created a feedback loop, in which texts were circulated throughout the network due to their inferred worth to the readership. In their decision to reprint pieces from elsewhere, Cordell argues that editors assumed a collective authority, each seeing their own paper as a cog in the wider newspaper network; with their content drawing from and adding to the wider debates within the news system.²²

Importantly, the re-printing of news from the British press meant that Anglo-Indian newspaper narratives were ‘highly influential in framing perceptions’ of the events in India throughout the rest of the world and, as Peter Putnis has shown, they led to a specific discourse within the newspaper press in which the sensational atrocity narrative, whether based on primary accounts or rumour, took centre stage.²³ Concentrating on *The New York Times*, Putnis shows how much of what was printed was based extensively on the content of the London *Times* and of English language Indian papers. In so doing, the *New York Times* utilised the same news frames and sensationalist language from the British press, which were then transferred and woven into the American newspaper’s own editorials and reporting.²⁴ This was also the case with much of the southern newspapers, as will be demonstrated.

Many southern newspapers, particularly in the first wave of news after the outbreak of the Uprising, printed news that took up whole columns of the paper.²⁵ The desire for more information can be seen by the fact that the papers often pointed out that they were waiting for more news, explaining in detail to their readers the ways in which news was reaching their editor. The *Richmond Whig* for example, stated that ‘the atrocities

²⁰ Cordell, ‘Reprinting, Circulation and the Network Author in Antebellum Newspapers,’ p. 417.

²¹ Ibid., p.430. Cordell suggests that this is similar to the ‘Imagined Community’ as described by Benedict Anderson in his *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

²² Cordell, ‘Reprinting, Circulation and the Network Author in Antebellum Newspapers,’ p. 418.

²³ Putnis, ‘The International Press and the Indian Uprising,’ p. 6.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 10.

²⁵ See for example: *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina), 6 Oct 1857, *The Daily Journal* (Wilmington, North Carolina), 20 July 1857, *Georgia Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia), 13 Oct 1857, *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia), 20 Oct 1857.

believed to have been committed at Cawnpore, the actual condition of Delhi, the real extent of Gen. Havelock's success and whether he was in time to relieve Lucknow...are points on which we can receive no further information until the arrival of the next steamer.'²⁶ Wilmington's *Daily Journal*, reprinting from the *Richmond South*, noted that the latest English papers were 'strangely destitute of details in regard to the fall of Delhi... It will disappoint public curiosity; for beyond the simple announcement that Delhi is taken, we have no circumstances of particular interest.'²⁷

Some southern newspapers, clearly aware of their readers' interest in the story, and also their unfamiliarity with the region, chose to print articles describing the geography of India. The *Richmond Whig* noted that 'the accounts of the extensive revolt in British India and the movements which are in operation to suppress it, are more or less confused and unintelligible to American readers from the constant occurrence of names of places with which they are unacquainted and the mention of localities, with the geographical position of which they are not familiar.' They included a geographical description of India to 'facilitate a clearer understanding of these now universally interesting matters.' The *New Orleans Price Current* printed a forty-eight word index for the 'names of frequent occurrence in the accounts from India' so that readers could better understand the vocabulary used in news reports reprinted from the British press.²⁸ After months of reporting what was happening in India, many newspaper news sections made reference to a main leader of the rebellion, Nena Sahib, with little context, often referring to him metaphorically in pieces unrelated to news from India, or in updates on the British quest to capture him, suggesting a good knowledge of the news from India and that readers knew exactly who Nena Sahib was.²⁹

Crucially, at the time news from India started appearing in the American Press, the southern states were still in the grip of a period of intense paranoia. The autumn of 1856

²⁶ 'The War in India,' *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia), 18 Sept 1857.

²⁷ 'The Fall of Delhi- Aspects of Affairs in India,' *The Daily Journal* (Wilmington, North Carolina) 18 Nov 1857.

²⁸ 'Geography of India,' *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia), 27 Nov 1857, 'Names of frequent occurrence in the accounts from India, with their meaning,' *New-Orleans Price-Current* (New Orleans, Louisiana), 26 Dec 1857.

²⁹ For example, *The Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana) of 28 July 1858 included just one sentence within a news section which stated that: "The Nena Sahib has blown from a gun in the neighbourhood of Bareilly, a person whom he suspected of corresponding with the British Government."

through to early 1857 saw slave insurrection panics sweep the South, as fear spread that slaves, inspired by the presidential election campaign of the Republican abolitionist candidate Frémont, would rebel.³⁰ Douglas Egerton argues that ‘overheated Democratic rhetoric convinced defiant bondmen in parts of the South that 1856 was a moment of opportunity and that these pockets of rebelliousness in turn terrified whites into conjuring up imaginary conspiracies across the South.’³¹ Blaming the unrest on both Republicans and Abolitionists (as though they were one cohesive grouping) was politically advantageous for Democrats whose rhetoric in newspapers and fiery political speeches swayed many of those who may have voted for Frémont. However, it is also highly likely, as Egerton has shown, that this rhetoric also ‘helped spark several legitimate incidents of slave unrest’ and in turn, certainly incited white paranoia.³² The news from India arrived in the South in the aftermath of this atmosphere of fear, anxiety and conspiratorial paranoia.

Anglophobia and the White Man’s World

It would be easy, as Bilwakesh has done, to jump to the conclusion that the South had little sympathy for the British in the context of the Uprising. Indeed, as Chapter Three and Four both highlighted, the South’s fears of British involvement in southern affairs was a pressing matter for the southern elite and therefore it would not be surprising to find southern commentary which criticized British actions in India. Scholarly attention has been paid to the southern response to Britain’s role in India, particularly in relation to the South’s increasing Anglophobia over the course of the antebellum period. In placing the antebellum American debate over slavery in an international context, specifically the context of the Indian world, Elizabeth Kelly Gray has shown how antebellum Americans closely followed news from India, seeing events as relevant to their own society. Gray highlights how abolitionists bolstered their position by highlighting the British efforts to bring indigenous slavery to an end, whilst proslavery advocates focused on what they believed to be British hypocrisy.³³ Indeed, as the slavery debate intensified to the ‘rancorous’ level of the 1850s, defenders of southern slavery

³⁰ Egerton, ‘The Slaves’ Election.’

³¹ Ibid., p. 39.

³² Ibid., p. 57, p. 61.

³³ Gray, “Whisper to him the word ‘India.’”

criticized a 'British double standard,' arguing that slavery under British rule in India still existed 'in fact if not in name.'³⁴ The Indian Uprising certainly became a pivotal moment in which both proslavery and abolitionist newspaper editors could accuse one another of hypocrisy.³⁵

In his study of the Caribbean roots of the American Civil war, Edward Rugemer has shown how 'southern interpretations of British abolition led to a perception of the British that permanently altered the course of American history.' Southern slaveholders believed Britain's abolition of slavery in 1833 was part of a grand conspiracy designed to weaken the South.³⁶ Such Anglophobia caused a certain amount of paranoia amongst southern politicians, many of whom came to believe in a British plot described by the Washington D.C. *Madisonian* in 1842 as a plan for 'the destruction of slave labor in America' in order for Britain to eradicate 'the cotton culture to which this country is the successful rival of her East India possessions.'³⁷ As Matthew Karp has argued, despite the fact that Britain attempted to use India as an alternative cotton source after 1830, and despite the fact that the British government put obstacles in the path of Atlantic slaveholders after 1833, there is no evidence of a 'nefarious conspiracy that linked the two policies, unless, perhaps, it was the nefarious conspiracy of global capitalism itself.'³⁸ As Karp concludes, the fear that Britain had a plan up its sleeve to end southern slavery had become a source of great anxiety: 'With its murmur of false pretences, dark machinations, and ambitious schemes, this southern explanation for British abolitionism reflected the anxious, if not paranoid, temper of slaveholding classes across the Age of Revolutions.'³⁹ After the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1833, southern Anglophobia ramped up and Southerners were convinced that the English abolitionist threat to southern slavery was intensifying.

Yet, despite such a strong sense of southern Anglophobia, many Southerners simultaneously looked towards Britain's dealings in India with a sense of admiration,

³⁴ Gray, "Whisper to him the word 'India.'" p. 393.

³⁵ Bilwakesh, "Their faces were like so many of the same sort at home," p. 16.

³⁶ Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation*, p. 180.

³⁷ *Madisonian* (Washington, D.C.), 1 April 1842, cited in Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire*, p. 27.

³⁸ Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire*, p. 28. For more on Anglophobia in the antebellum period, see chapter 'From Anglophobia to New Anglophobia,' in Greenberg, *Masters and Statesmen*, pp. 107-123, see also chapter 'Confronting the Great Apostle of Emancipation' in Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire*.

³⁹ Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire*, p. 28.

which serves as an insight into southern notions of whiteness.⁴⁰ In discussing the larger relationship between global imperialism and American slavery, Matthew Karp highlights the way that many proslavery Southerners saw the spread of European imperialism, the developing racial order of white men's countries and the 'vision of worldwide white supremacy, empire and commercial exploitation,' as 'an international vindication of their own slave system.'⁴¹ Virginian planter, Edmund Ruffin, celebrated the spread of British imperial power in Asia, despite the fact that he was simultaneously highly critical of British abolitionism and what he deemed the cruelties of British Imperialism (not to mention wary of British encroachment into the Western hemisphere). On hearing the news of the Indian Uprising Ruffin criticised what he deemed to be British abuses, yet warned that a revolution by the native population would be a disaster for the 'civilised world'; only with the dominance of the 'European and superior race' and with the conquest of 'mongrel and semi-barbarous communities' would humanity thrive.⁴²

Such an economy of whiteness (as exemplified in Ruffin's sentiments) can be seen clearly in the southern press coverage of the Indian Uprising of 1857. Whilst nationalistic, and specifically southern, Anglophobic fears were rife, a notion of a transnational imagined

⁴⁰ The African American Sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois, writing in the 1920s, first critically examined the notion of 'whiteness.' He argued that the 'discovery of personal whiteness among the world's peoples...is a nineteenth and twentieth century matter.' W.E.B. Du Bois, 'The Souls of White Folk,' in *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (London: Verso, 2016 [1920]), p. 17. Du Bois also declared that, 'the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour line.' W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007 [1903]), p. 3. The colour line was the way in which Western empires had divided the world into blocs of dark and light 'races' for the basis of imperial subjugation and capitalist exploitation. In considering the jostling between European powers that led to the First World War, Du Bois contended that the primary cause was the 'jealous and avaricious struggle for the largest share in exploiting darker races.' Du Bois, 'The Souls of White Folk,' p. 27. Discussing the notion of whiteness in the period after the civil war in European settler colonies, Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds expanded upon Du Bois' work by describing the 'white man's country' as 'a paradoxical politics, at once transnational in its inspiration and identifications but nationalist in its methods and goals'. Such a form of politics created an 'imagined community of white men' that 'was transnational in its reach, but nationalist in its outcomes, bolstering regimes of border protections and national sovereignty'. Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 3-4. For a discussion of nationalism and whiteness during the Belle Époque, see: Musab Younis, 'United by blood': Race and transnationalism during the Belle Époque,' *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 23, No. 3, (2017), pp. 484-504, particularly pp. 485-9. The same economy of whiteness and same basis of 'geo-political alliances' and a 'subjective sense of self' can be seen in the late antebellum South. Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, pp. 3-4.

⁴¹ Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire*, p. 159.

⁴² Ibid., p. 159. Karp cites: Diary entries, 10 Aug 1857, 20 April 1858, 26 April 1858, *The Diary of Edmund Ruffin*, Ed. William K Scarborough (Baton Rouge, 1972), 96-97, 179, 182.

community of white men can also be seen in the often supportive rhetoric of some southern editors and in the choice that editors made to reprint reports of the Uprising from the British press. An article in the *Charleston Courier*, translated from *La Presse*, referred to the belief that the 'English would succeed in stopping' the uprising, 'because we know the immense superiority of Europeans over Asiatics and the tenacity of the people of Great Britain.'⁴³ The *Richmond Whig*, reprinted from the *London Times*, an article entitled 'Barbarism of the Hindoos,' which argued that:

The Indian Mutiny is eminently a barbaric movement. It is such as what we call civilised states have always been liable to from the ruder nations whom they held in subjection...the Asiatics were always especially barbaric...The barbaric element is one of inevitable weakness and is the very reason of our dominion of the east... it is the weak old Asiatic, the traitor and the slave, who has been playing against us.⁴⁴

The *Richmond Whig*, in particular, expressed its sympathy for the British in its editorials and made direct comparisons between the slaveholding South and the British in India, as will be discussed later. While its editor was explicit in this regard, the readership of other southern newspapers received similar underlying messages, which fed into deep-seated fears of slave rebelliousness and highlighted the possible fragility of the slaveholding system. Many descriptions in the British press would have struck a chord with southern slaveholders; particularly the way that the global colour line could be read into much of what was printed and reprinted in the southern press.

The 'Darker Races'

Studies of proslavery and intellectual thought highlight the antebellum debates over slavery and the southern justifications for enslavement of African Americans.⁴⁵ Within many proslavery narratives there was a clear racial defence of slavery. The logical conclusion of this was a 'Herrenvolk Democracy,' – the enslavement of what was

⁴³ 'Situation of the English in India,' *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina) 31 Aug 1858.

⁴⁴ 'Barbarism of the Hindoos,' *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia) 18 Sept 1857.

⁴⁵ See for example: Young, *Proslavery and Sectional Thought in the Early South*.

deemed an inferior race as the foundation of an egalitarian white democracy.⁴⁶ The American South was a white supremacist society; whiteness was privileged and the status differences between whites therefore lessened in importance, thereby elevating race above class in constructions of social hierarchy.⁴⁷ This was strengthened in the 1840s and 1850s by a greater emphasis on scientific racism, which stressed the inherent inferiority of the 'black race' based on apparent scientific wisdom. This scientific ethnology was spearheaded by individuals such as Dr Samuel George Morton of Philadelphia and Dr Josiah C. Nott of Mobile, Alabama, whose 'research' provided proslavery advocates with the scientific evidence related to skull capacities and supposed intelligence to back their racist beliefs.⁴⁸ The hardening of racial prejudice over the course of the nineteenth century in both Colonial India and the United States encouraged the rhetoric of the 'White Man's burden'. This developed alongside a widely held conviction, promoted by contemporary theorists, that the 'darker races' of the world (a categorisation that included both African Americans and Indians) were inferior to white skinned peoples. For southern Americans, the importance of a 'distinctly "Anglo-Saxon" whiteness' grew, particularly as a backlash against the spread of abolitionist rhetoric.⁴⁹ Crucially, the development of regimes of racial hierarchy and the ways in which white people set themselves as the 'ruling race' in British India and the United States, and in the South in particular, were strikingly similar.⁵⁰

As Peter Putnis has pointed out, British press accounts of the Indian Uprising reveal an intensification of racial discourses, which 'emphasised notions of "native savagery" and legitimised the British Army's brutal retaliation in the name of vengeance.'⁵¹ Within southern press coverage of the news from India, many descriptors are used which would have drawn the reader's attention to the supposed similarities of the 'darker races' in

⁴⁶ Parish, *Slavery: History and Historians*, p. 142, See Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*.

⁴⁷ Brown and Webb, *Race in the American South*, p. 101. Lockley, *Welfare and Charity in the Antebellum South*. For more on how white workers identified as 'white,' see: David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991); for an overview of whiteness studies in relation to American history, which discusses Roediger's work see: Kolchin, 'Whiteness Studies.'

⁴⁸ Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, p. 2, pp. 71-96.

⁴⁹ Nico Slate, *Coloured Cosmopolitanism: The Shared Struggle for Freedom in the United States and India* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2012), pp. 8-9. See also Rosemarie Zagarri, 'The Significance of the 'Global Turn' for the Early American Republic: Globalization in the Age of Nation-Building,' *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (2011), pp. 32-33, p. 36.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁵¹ Putnis, 'The International Press and the Indian Uprising,' p. 1.

direct opposition to those of 'European' ancestry. Wilmington's *Daily Journal* spoke of the 'black faces' of the 'native portion' of spectators at the public killing of a Sepoy rebel at Peshawar.⁵² The same paper, reprinted from the *Baltimore Sun* the following account by a British 'civil officer of the government' who described how he and others had fought against the rebels:

When we could once get out of the fort we were all over the place, cutting down all natives who showed any signs of opposition...One trip I enjoyed amazingly: we got on board a steamer with a gun...when we went ashore and peppered away with our guns; my old double barrel that I brought out with me, bringing down niggers, so thirsty for vengeance was I.⁵³

Interestingly, the exact same story was printed in the *Charleston Courier*, under the title 'British Atrocities in India' and referring to 'the conduct of the British troops in India, which are not very much to the credit of the present age of civilisation.'⁵⁴ Whilst seemingly criticising British heavy-handedness, the *Courier* also printed articles on the exact same page of the newspaper, in which it explicitly stated that whatever wrongs the British had done in terms of their governing of India, 'all these grievances cannot justify the terrible cruelties of the insurgents'.⁵⁵ Furthermore, on the same page the *Charleston Courier* included an extract of a letter written by the wife of a British officer reprinted from the *Inverness Courier*. She describes the mutineers as being 'transformed into perfect tigers.' In deciding what to do, she comments, 'for myself, I would certainly adopt any plan rather than trust in the tender mercies of "niggers" after all that has happened.'⁵⁶ Nico Slate has shown how the 'transnational prominence of the word 'nigger' epitomized the conflation of dark-skinned people,' especially in India where the British 'inspired by white Americans, increasingly denigrated Indians as "niggers."'⁵⁷

Within the same piece in the *Daily Journal*, a letter from another British soldier described his escape from Delhi. He explains how he was 'shot at by a black' as he tried to leave his

⁵² 'Blowing from Guns at Peshawar,' *The Daily Journal* (Wilmington, North Carolina), 5 Dec 1857.

⁵³ 'The Revolt in India,' *The Daily Journal* (Wilmington, North Carolina), 11 Sept 1857.

⁵⁴ 'British Atrocities in India,' *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina) 16 Sept 1857.

⁵⁵ 'Arrival of the Europa's Mails,' *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina) 16 Sept 1857.

⁵⁶ 'The Rebellion in India,' *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina), 16 Sept 1857.

⁵⁷ Slate, *Coloured Cosmopolitanism*, p. 9, see also Bender, *The 1857 Indian Uprising and the British Empire*, p. 111.

house: 'The blacks came rushing in pell-mell and were rushing up the passage, when my friend and two servants came from their concealment and fired at them steadily which brought three of them down, then clubbing their guns, they rushed on the surprised blacks...At last there were but five blacks left.' In his attempt to disguise himself in order to escape, the soldier explains that he 'discoloured' his face and put on the clothes of one of the 'dead blacks.' He remarks that he was able to speak the language of the 'blacks' and could therefore 'pass for a black.' His description of his pretending to be an Indian has a rather animalistic tone, as he describes how he 'began hallooing and hooting and running.' His hatred for the Indian rebels is clearly expressed as he declares how he 'met two or three times with a single black in a lonely place and such was my hatred of them that I could not restrain myself from killing them.'⁵⁸

Slate argues that 'like the word "nigger" notions of blackness linked Indians and African Americans, while disparaging both as filthy, evil or primitive.'⁵⁹ Importantly, much of what the southern newspapers printed was re-printed from the British press, which was often, in turn, material re-printed from English language Indian newspapers. Peter Putnis shows how important these accounts were in shaping the dominant understanding of the events in India around the world: 'The force of these initial accounts was such that a racialised narrative of native atrocity overwhelmed any other possible interpretive framework.'⁶⁰

Furthermore, Slate explains how 'scientific theories of racial hierarchy bound together the trajectories of white supremacy in both colonial India and the US, linking Indians and African Americans within the 'darker races.''⁶¹ Such scientific hierarchies legitimated a racial order based upon what were considered inherent differences in physical characteristics.⁶² The *Richmond Whig* alluded to these scientific theories when it printed a letter which described the 'Hindoo population' as men who were:

...square shouldered, flat and thin chested, hollow-thighed, big-kneed, large-footed, lank heeled...Some wear a turban of the same material; some their

⁵⁸ 'The Revolt in India,' *The Daily Journal* (Wilmington, North Carolina), 11 Sept 1857.

⁵⁹ Slate, *Coloured Cosmopolitanism*, p. 9.

⁶⁰ Putnis, 'The International Press and the Indian Uprising,' p. 15.

⁶¹ Slate, *Coloured Cosmopolitanism*, p. 10.

⁶² Zagarri, 'The Significance of the 'Global Turn' for the Early American Republic,' p. 36.

natural coarse black hair...Some are blacker than the darkest Ethop, others are colored like the tawny moor'...There is one who has... a stupid and ugly look in his dull dark eyes... The women though more decently clad, seems to be more wild and savage than the men.⁶³

In the same paper, on a different page, is an article which describes how 'there is all the difference in the world between the white man and the negro. God, the creator made them different...The woolly head, the black skin, the thick lips, flat nose, the muzzle-mouth.' The similarity in the way that these physical attributes are described negatively is not a coincidence, particularly because the article concerning the difference between 'white and blacks' goes on to explain how the 'white man, on the other hand, created in the image of god, is gifted with endowments intellectual and physical which aid and adorn each other.'⁶⁴ As these two examples show, across this issue of the *Richmond Whig*, the inferiority of the 'darker races' is identified in opposition to the superiority of whiteness.

Anglophobia or Sympathy for the British?

Whilst Bilwakesh's article seems to suggest that southern newspapers were not supportive of the British, a wider reading of southern newspapers for 1857, tells a different, and more nuanced, story. Many newspapers reported the events in India as a mirror in which their own fears of slave rebellion were magnified. This is not to say that southern newspapers did not use the story to criticize the British; many did. However, it was perfectly possible to report the events in India with both disgust for the rebels and as an opportunity to lambast the British. Indeed, The New Orleans *Times-Picayune* told its readers that 'the present is not the fitting moment to review the policy that has ever been pursued by the British Government towards the population of its Indian possessions. There will come a time.' Instead, it suggests that the current 'crisis of affairs' in India should enlist 'the sympathies of all civilized nations.' It is, indeed, critical of the British yet notes that it is not the time to 'criticise the culpable over-confidence on the part of the invaders and conquerors of India, out of which it [the uprising] has arisen and made such frightful headway.' Rather than making such a criticism at this juncture, the

⁶³ 'Interesting Letters from India,' *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia) 11 May 1858.

⁶⁴ 'The great question for the South,' *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia) 11 May 1858.

writer argues that 'we have only to deal with the complication in its present aspect. Humanity doubtless requires that this revolt should be put down by the strong arm of power at any cost.'⁶⁵

A letter to the editor of the *Times-Picayune* also gives us an insight into general opinion at the time. The writer, from San Antonio, Texas, admits that they are 'almost certain that I shall be ruled out when I say that I cannot get up any great amount of sympathy for the English government in its present contest in India.' The writer comments that whilst they have sympathy for the hapless hundreds who have fallen under Sepoy vengeance,' they have very little sympathy for the British government due to the fact that 'her whole system of governing India has been one of fraud, violence and oppression.' The writer expands upon this point, explaining that they do not wish to 'attempt to palliate or justify the atrocities of Nena Sahib and other native chiefs,' but rather to 'assert my belief that these acts of bloody vengeance have been brought about by a long system of tyranny and misrule, and that had England governed from the first with more humanity and forbearance, these deeds of retributive cruelty would never have been enacted.' Crucially, the writer gives us an idea of which way public opinion was leaning on the matter at this time. The writer notes that it is 'useless for me to go into any lengthy argument on the subject, or to attempt to change public opinion.'⁶⁶ From this statement we can deduce that public opinion, at least in Texas at the time, was in sympathy with the British and did not blame British conduct in India for the actions of the rebels.

On the other hand, some newspapers were not just critical of the British in India prior to the rebellion, but also commented on the British treatment of rebels and punishments inflicted on those involved in the uprising. However, as the following example shows, criticism did not necessarily imply support of the Sepoys' cause. The *Memphis Daily Eagle and Enquirer* printed a report from the New Orleans *Bee*, noting that the 'Bee has a thrilling article... which fully embraces our views in relation to the Indian mutiny.' The report's writer was very clear that, 'In reviewing the atrocious features which characterise the rebellion in India, we have not scrupled to censure the British for the vindictive system of retaliation practised by them...These summary and unnatural

⁶⁵ 'British Policy in India,' *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), 3 Oct 1857.

⁶⁶ 'Editorial Correspondence,' *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), 24 Jan 1858.

punishments are unworthy of a humane and enlightened nation.’ Yet despite such criticism, the writer is also understanding of the British response, noting that ‘the course pursued by the British may find some palliation in the hideous torments deliberately inflicted by the rebels on every white-skinned individual who has fallen into their power, without discrimination of age or sex.’ The writer is explicit and highly emotive in his description of the violence of the rebels:

Such horrors have been perpetrated; such refinements of torture; such exquisite skill in procuring thrills of agony from nerves benumbed by protracted suffering; such diabolical malignity in rendering the dearest and most sacred affections the instruments for producing intolerable anguish as scarcely leave room for wonder at the exasperation of the English troops, or the merciless severity they display towards offenders.⁶⁷

Whilst the British are heavily criticized for the punishments meted out to rebels, there seems to be a clear understanding that the ‘horrors’ committed against white-skinned people were so awful as to almost excuse the immediate reactions of the ‘exasperated’ British troops.

The Georgia Telegraph

Macon’s *Georgia Telegraph* is an interesting example of a newspaper that displayed a fair amount of contempt for the British while simultaneously supporting the racial hierarchy between the British and the Sepoy rebels. Looking at what the editor of the *Georgia Telegraph* chose to reprint illuminates the dual concerns of the southern slaveholder: on one hand, nationalistically Anglophobic, whilst, on the other hand, also in support of the maintenance of power by fellow white men over darker skinned ‘races;’ thereby bolstering confidence in their own system of oppression. Importantly, where criticism was leveled at the British, it was often focused through a narrative that portrayed them as bad masters, thereby creating a sense of moral superiority. This is especially important as the logic of southern paternalism required a constant

⁶⁷ ‘Sympathy for the Sepoys,’ *Memphis Daily Eagle and Enquirer* (Memphis, Tennessee) 14 Oct 1857.

confirmation that masters and mistresses were 'good' slaveholders who cared for their family of slaves. A comparison with the British in this context could extend their belief and confidence that their own system of racial hierarchy was truly benevolent.

In August 1857, the paper reprinted from the *Philadelphia Press* a report about the uprising, noting that, 'A few weeks ago, England was startled by the intelligence that an extensive revolt in the Indian-army had occurred, and that the continuance, the very existence of British sway in Hindostan was in imminent peril.' From this early article, it is clear that there is no sympathy for the British at all:

Such are the circumstances of this insurrection. What the consequences may be we can only surmise, as yet. But believing that Providence carries out the principles of retribution with nations as with individuals, and knowing with what pertinacity of misgovernment, what ingenuity of misrule, what utter contempt for even seeming humanity and justice, England has crushed India to the dust, we come to only one strong conviction- that the period has arrived, when British sway in Hindoostan will be met by hands with swords in them. It is allowed in the philosophy of politics, to judge of the future by the past, and we know that the great empires of the world fall- fall suddenly, fall disgracefully, fall unlamented- after they reach the summit of renown, dominion, riches and pride. England seems to have reached the culminating point- from that, the path is down hill.⁶⁸

Yet, just a week later, the paper printed an article in which the actions of the Sepoys are not seen in a favorable light. The British are still deemed to be holding India in 'subjugation', suggesting that they have brought on the uprising themselves:

Most sickening details are published of the atrocities committed by the Sepoys in India in the Delhi district, upon the English residents. Men, women and children, were all indiscriminately butchered in sportive barbarity- tortured and tormented to the latest gasp. None were spared... The whole fabric of British domination in India seems to be tottering to its fall. If the revolt ends in subjugation it will be at an enormous expense of money and life, and after a

⁶⁸ 'England and Hindostan,' *The Georgia Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia), 18 Aug 1857.

retaliatory warfare of which humanity shudders. These subjugated millions of India- sullen and vengeful- must then be kept under the yoke by a powerful army of foreign soldiery, maintained there at an enormous outlay, and an oppression more than ever devilish in the ingenuity of its details must be kept up to wring from the exasperated Hindoos a revenue to meet the exaggerated expense.⁶⁹

Over the next few weeks, the news from India concentrated largely on military information rather than opinion pieces.⁷⁰ By 13 October 1857, more news reached the southern states about what was happening in India. The *Georgia Telegraph* printed numerous articles in which the tactical military movements of British troops under the leadership of General Havelock were discussed. An article reprinted from the *Bombay Telegraph*, included details of the horrible scenes discovered by Havelock and his troops upon entering Cawnpore, remarking that ‘accustomed, as they had been, to scenes of slaughter, the sight that met their eyes nearly petrified them with horror.’ The report noted that the British soldiers ‘marched straight to a place where they were told one hundred and seventy-five women and children were confined, but on their arrival they found that they had come too late!’ The powerful visual messages in such reports must have been shocking to southern readers when they read that the soldiers ‘only found the clothes of the poor victims strewn over the blood stained ground.’⁷¹

Further articles in this issue discussed more military information and how the mutiny was spreading.⁷² Two pages into the newspaper, the editor commented on the large amount of information printed about India in the issue: ‘Our readers will perceive, from extracts in our issue, that the revolt in India is becoming more general.’ The editor makes a strong statement by remarking that ‘the power of England is evidently on the wane, and many are doubtless now living who will see the day when the “mistress of the seas” will be stripped of all her colonial possessions.’⁷³ The editor is unclear whether this apparent waning of British power in India was deemed a good thing or not- or rather just a factual news item. Two weeks later, the paper discussed the refusal of the East India

⁶⁹ ‘The Atrocities in India,’ *The Georgia Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia), 25 August 1857.

⁷⁰ ‘The Mutinies in India,’ 8 Sept 1857, ‘Arrival of the Arabia,’ *The Georgia Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia), 5 Oct 1857.

⁷¹ ‘Progress of the rebellion in India,’ *The Georgia Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia), 13 Oct 1857.

⁷² ‘Critical Position of Gen. Havelock,’ ‘The Mutiny spreading in Bombay,’ *The Georgia Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia), 13 Oct 1857.

⁷³ ‘The English in India’ *The Georgia Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia), 13 Oct 1857.

Company to pay Nena Sahib a pension as being 'the particular grievance of which Nena Sahib complains.' The article pointed out that 'it is worthy of note that two of the most frightful massacres which have taken place, have been in districts where Indians of rank have been treated with this kind of injustice.' Despite this obvious criticism of the British, it went on to say that: 'no papers acknowledge more frankly than the English the gross mismanagement of the Indian empire by the East India Company, whilst, however, none, not even the Sepoys themselves, pretend it is an excuse for their mode of revenge.'⁷⁴ Here, we see that it was perfectly possible to criticize the British role in India, yet still feel sympathy with the plight of the 'European man, woman and child' during the rebellion.

A few weeks later, three whole columns of the newspaper were taken up by a reprint from the *Pastor's and People's Journal*, discussing the death of American missionaries in India: 'The revolt in India continues to be a topic of general discussion and absorbing interest in the Christian world. There is now but little remaining doubt that our missionary families of Futteharh have all perished.'⁷⁵ This long article outlines what the author believes to be the culpability of the British in India for the cause of the uprising:

The deep and thrilling and long sustained interest which the awful tragedies connected with the mutiny have awakened, and the magnitude of the consequences which are yet to flow from it, have led to a very thorough discussion of its causes, in which much light has been shed upon the character and condition of the people of India, and the nature of the British rule over them.

The article highlights that the American 'Dr Duff- the most distinguished missionary in India' had 'no hesitation in saying, with the utmost emphasis, that the whole is the result of a long concocted Mohammedan conspiracy against the British power...'⁷⁶

Despite printing Dr Duff's lengthy commentary concerning his belief in the cause of the uprising, the article goes on to argue other viewpoints as to the causes, such as 'a tale of wrong in the government of British India, which must bring a blush to the face of every one in whose veins flow English blood.' Here, the article frames the British in India as the

⁷⁴ 'Nena Sahib,' *The Georgia Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia), 27 Oct 1857.

⁷⁵ 'India and our Missionaries Again,' *The Georgia Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia), 17 Nov 1857.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

masters of Indians. Despite chattel slavery not existing in India, the British are deemed to be a self-serving people, exploiting their racial subordinates:

The wrongs of the African have been a ceaseless theme of philanthropists in Europe and America, but according to the showing of the English themselves, the African slave must now deliver up his mourning weeds to the down-trodden and outraged East Indian. It is not made to appear that the barbarities of the frenzied people which have shocked the civilized world, are but the repetition—the attitude of the parties being revered—of what has been before enacted in India; that even the refined cruelties of the mutineers have been learned from their English masters—that the atrocities now perpetrated, are but the fearful revenge of similar atrocities continued through successive generations--- that the English governors of India have themselves been preparing the people for this outbreak of outraged and frenzied feeling.⁷⁷

The article went on to describe in detail horrific tortures carried out by the British and abuses against Indian women long before the mutiny. Throughout, there is a clear notion that the British have been bad masters for not fulfilling their role to both rule over their subordinates and to provide a level of 'care' that their subordinates required from the superior race:

The British Standard, says: -- "Let it never be forgotten that in the terrible events which have recently transpired in the East, the English have been the tutors, and the Sepoys their pupils; they have only been exemplifying the lessons [sic?] taught their fathers and themselves."⁷⁸

The words of Judge Luard, a British judge from Bombay similarly argued that "It is not, therefore, greased cartridges, attempts at conversion, or the assumption of native states...which has caused our downfall in India, but long-continued, corrupt, irresponsible, resistless tyranny." He went as far as to argue that in light of this "it was indeed high time for the natives of India to take matters into their own hands." Indeed, whilst he "deeply deplore[d] the barbarities which have disgraced this mutiny," he

⁷⁷ 'India and our Missionaries Again,' *The Georgia Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia), 17 Nov 1857.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

pointed out that “even in the sufferings of these innocent victims I can trace the vengeance we have been slowly but surely drawing down upon ourselves for the deliberate brutality that native women have received at our hands, without ever once creating an emotion in the hearts of those whose duty it was to protect them on the spot...” Notions of care and love for subordinates was hugely important to the southern slaveholding elite. The paternalistic vision of the benevolent master, played a vital role in the psyche of the slaveholder, who could convince themselves of the care they were providing to the enslaved. Despite this criticism of British ability to behave as proper social and racial superiors, the belief in a global racial hierarchy, based upon whiteness and Christianity, remained intact. The article ends with the clear belief that the British must succeed in ending the rebellion, restore their power over Indians and behave as better ‘masters’.

According to these confessions the causes of the revolt are much deeper than that popularly received. This does not at all detract from the enormity of the barbarity that has been displayed... Notwithstanding the iniquity and wrong of the past, the temporal interest of India itself and the interests of civilization and Christianization seem to be identified with the success of the British arms. India will know no repost or stable government for generations to come, unless the British ascendancy is restored; and once restored, after such a rebuke, it may be reasonably hoped that the government will be more worthy of a Christian nation.⁷⁹

In the same newspaper issue, two pages later, an article included the letter of ‘Rev Mr. Scudder of India’ to the *Christian Intelligencer*, which celebrated the ‘remarkable instances of heroism’ shown by British troops:

Let Americans never be ashamed that Englishmen are their forefathers. England is a noble country. Her sons are heroes and her daughters are heroines. This rebellion has brought deeds that deserve to be associated with those valorous actions, which we with throbbing pulses, read in history. In one place a lady and her husband fled in their carriage. He stood upright. She lashed the horses through a band of mutineers, while he, with cool aim, shot dead one who seized

⁷⁹ India and our Missionaries Again,’ *The Georgia Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia), 17 Nov 1857

the horses' heads and another who climbed upon the carriage behind to cut him down...In another place, a young lady, the daughter of an officer, shot seven mutineers before they killed her. A captain, pressed by his Sepoys, with his good sword, slew twenty-six of them before he fell!⁸⁰

Therefore, in the same issue of the newspaper, readers of the *Georgia Telegraph* received two distinct messages. The first, that the British had been 'bad masters' in India and therefore it was not surprising that their subordinates would rise against them. Such bad government of India, was enough to 'bring a blush to the face of every one in whose veins flow English blood.' Yet, on the other hand, because of the valiant actions of British troops in suppressing the uprising, they were also told to 'never be ashamed that Englishmen are their forefathers.' The British were deemed to not have behaved as well as they should have done as white men, yet, when the power associated with this whiteness was threatened, their actions as white men compared with the actions of their racial subordinates was deemed heroic.

By the end of 1857 and entering 1858, articles seemed to look more at the depravity of the Sepoys, describing them as a 'miserable race of idle loafers.'⁸¹ The heroism of British military leaders and the British army was celebrated further. General Havelock was mentioned for his 'deeds of bravery in India,' and reports praised the military prowess of Sir Colin Campbell.⁸² The uprising was judged to have 'settled into a mere guerilla struggle, in which the work of the British army will be to hunt down and exterminate predatory bands of the insurgents.'⁸³ A long account was given of the 'Relief of Lucknow,' in which Jessie Brown, the wife of a Corporal, hiding from the rebels, delights in hearing the Scottish bagpipes of the troops led by Sir Colin Campbell approaching to relieve Lucknow.⁸⁴ The narrative of the white troops searching out 'predatory bands' of rebels and coming to the rescue of young British women, provided powerful imagery which set apart the heroic European from the rebellious 'darker race.'

⁸⁰ 'Remarkable Instances of Heroism,' *The Georgia Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia), 17 Nov 1857.

⁸¹ 'The Bengal Sepoys,' *The Georgia Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia), 1 Dec 1857.

⁸² 'Gen. Havelock,' *The Georgia Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia), 1 Dec 1857, see also 'The death of Gen. Sir Henry Havelock,' 9 Feb 1858, 'Sir Colin Campbell's Escape,' 9 Feb 1858.

⁸³ 'From India,' *The Georgia Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia), 2 Dec 1857.

⁸⁴ 'The Indian Mutinies-Thrilling account of the relief of Lucknow,' *The Georgia Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia), Jan 12 1858.

In the same issue that Jessie Brown's story was printed, an article entitled 'Decay of the Asiatic Races' described explicitly the perceived differences between the white 'European' and the 'Asiatic races.' This same article was printed in New Orleans' *Daily True Delta*. Both papers introduced the words of the British *Friend of India* newspaper by highlighting how the Indian Uprising was an example of the differences described:

The friend of India, by far the ablest of the papers in India some months since had a very able and eloquent examination of the hitherto dominant races throughout the whole continent of Asia... Since then the Bengal mutiny, which must end in giving British India completely into the hands of its conquerors, serves to confirm the following conclusions of the article referred to:

All history shows that indigenous Asiatic races require the directions of a dominant class. Industrious, hardy and with many of the qualities essential to the development of civilisation, they seem to lack social force... They do not advance- and need the directing force of a progressive race.⁸⁵

By May, an article reprinted from the *Atlanta Intelligencer* declared 'England triumphs in India,' and celebrated 'the news that the great warrior, Sir Colin Campbell, at the head of the most splendid army ever seen in India, attacked, stormed and captured, the entrenchment of the Sepoy rebels of Lucknow, and thus achieved the greatest of all the victories that have yet signalized British power in its Indian dependencies.'⁸⁶ This 'crowning triumph' was deemed to be the result of the 'great military genius' of Campbell. The celebration of white military success fed the notion of the superiority of the 'European race.'

Yet, despite the comradeship expressed towards the British in racial terms - the global colour-line - there still remained a clear animosity towards the British in terms of comparing the moral superiority of white men and white nations. In November 1858, the *Georgia Telegraph* reprinted the following article from the *Richmond Dispatch*, which again, expressed a feeling of moral superiority in terms of the notion of good masters:

⁸⁵ 'Decay of the Asiatic Races,' *The Georgia Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia), 9 Feb 1858; 'Decay of the Asiatic Races,' *The Daily True Delta* (New Orleans, Louisiana) 3 Jan 1858.

⁸⁶ 'England Triumphs in India- Fall of Lucknow,' *The Georgia Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia), 4 May 1858.

The Negroes of India. A special correspondent of the London Times in India gives some facts in regard to the treatment of the natives by their Masters, which deserves the attention of those English Philanthropists who concern themselves greatly about the fancied miseries of the American slave. The writer thinks that the arrogant and repellent manner in which natives of rank in India are often treated, and the unnecessary harshness to inferiors had much effect in producing the sympathy which the mutineers and Rebels have received throughout the districts they have traversed.

The use of the word 'master' clearly outlines the comparison between the treatment of the Indians by the British as described in the article and the 'good masters' of the South. The article portrays the British as uncaring and violent towards 'natives:'

The correspondent mentions the case of a respectfully dressed native, whom he met at a bazaar, whose temple was cut open and bleeding, and who, on being interrogated as to the cause, said, with evident reluctance, that he was walking down the bazaar, when a 'sahib' who was riding by, gave him a blow across his temple with the butt end of his whip, without the slightest provocation... The writer says he knows of several such cases, which were either compromised for money, or suppressed through fear; and one flagrant instance is mentioned of an Englishman who shot his native servant with a revolver in his cups, but the man, though badly wounded, did not complain.

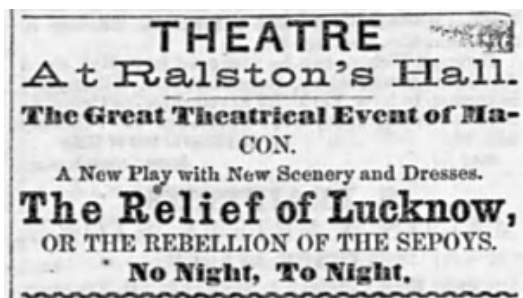
Interestingly, the article points out that 'the writer notices the abhorrence of dark complexions, and the contemptuous manner in which the word "nigger" is applied to natives. These insults and wrongs have been remarked, and, in his opinion, account for the fact that the domestic servants of India were among the foremost in deeds of bloodshed during the revolt.'⁸⁷ Whilst the word 'nigger' was used in the South and a dark complexion was synonymous with being enslaved, the way in which the article suggests these were negatively used by the British, in terms of 'abhorring' darker skinned individuals or using the word 'nigger' in a 'contemptuous manner,' fed into the picture of the British as unable to show a compassionate oversight of a racial underclass- something that southern slaveholders proudly believed they achieved very well.

⁸⁷ 'The Negroes of India,' *The Georgia Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia), 23 Nov 1858.

Maintaining White Power

It is not possible to know with certainty how southern slaveholders may have felt when reading such news from India. Nor is it possible to know whether all readers made a direct link in their minds between the events in India and the possibility of slave rebellion at home. Yet we can gain an indication that many must have made the comparison given what we know of Mary Chesnut, the southern diarist who drew the parallels very clearly. After watching an 1862 performance of Dion Boucicault's play *'Jessie Brown: or, the Relief of Lucknow'* in Washington D.C., Chesnut exclaimed in her diary:

'I read a book called *'Wife and Ward'* the scene laid at the siege of Cawnpore. Who knows what similar horrors may lie in wait for us? When I saw the siege of Lucknow in that little theatre at Washington, what a thrill of terror ran through me as those yellow and black brutes came jumping over the parapets! These faces were like so many of the same sort at home...'⁸⁸



Advertisement for the *'Relief of Lucknow'* play at Ralston's Hall Theatre in Macon, 29 March 1859

It is interesting to wonder whether Macon residents thought the same as Mary Chesnut when they watched the play in March 1859, which was advertised in the Georgia Telegraph.⁸⁹ The parallels drawn by Chesnut can also be seen in the southern press. The idea of the global colour line can be read into news reports and editorials, as can the notion of white power maintaining its control over the 'darker races'. Elizabeth Kelly Gray has argued that supporters of southern slavery used the uprising in India as an example of why firm control needed to be maintained over southern slaves.⁹⁰ Many slaveholders

⁸⁸ Diary entry 5 July 1862, C. Vann Woodward, ed., *Mary Chesnut's Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 409.

⁸⁹ 'Theatre at Ralston's Hall,' *The Georgia Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia), 29 March 1859.

⁹⁰ Gray, "Whisper to him the word 'India,'" p. 381.

believed that the 'purity of whites' would be threatened by the demise of slavery and a violent race war would spread across the South.⁹¹ This was especially frightening to slaveholders as proslavery ideology encouraged the idea that as a result of emancipation, slaves, who were contented and 'civilised' under the progressive guidance and firm hand of their masters, would regress to the 'natural' state of barbarism and savagery they had apparently experienced in Africa.⁹² Bender has shown how throughout the British empire, narratives of the perceived 'mutiny' represented the colonised as innately barbaric, as demonstrated in the violence committed against the British, whereas British violence was explained as the only sensible option for regaining control.⁹³ In the southern press' reporting of how the Indian Uprising was contained and defeated, slaveholders would have recognized the need to maintain the power of the southern slaveholding system in order to avoid similar scenes occurring in the South. Indeed, newspaper coverage of slave rebellions or threats of black resistance in the South included accounts of similarly violent responses from white authorities.⁹⁴

White southern slaveholders may have been encouraged in their belief that they must maintain their own power at a time when anxieties abounded from the perceived threat of northern abolitionists, and when the foundations of southern slaveholding felt unsteady. This encouragement was based upon a global white supremacist underpinning in much of what was written in both the British and southern presses. Other papers allude to the same thing. The *Alexandria Gazette*, reporting on the defeat of the rebels in Delhi, remarked: 'The great feature of the late foreign news is the fall of Delhi, of which the British are again masters.'⁹⁵ The *Charleston Mercury*, reprinting from the *New York Commercial Advertiser*, referred to the way in which the Sepoy rebels and Nana Sahib 'hastily fled back through Cawnpore, the scene of their late atrocities' leaving the British General Havelock 'to reoccupy it as its undisputed master.'⁹⁶ The *Daily Journal*, reprinting from the London *Times*, pressed forth the notion of maintaining control over a subordinate group when it exclaimed that 'the moment has arrived for action- sharp, stern and decisive... in the first place the mutiny must be suppressed and in such a

⁹¹ Oakes, *The Ruling Race*, p. 233.

⁹² Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Fatal Self-Deception*, p. 109.

⁹³ Bender, *The 1857 Indian Uprising and the British Empire*, p. 4.

⁹⁴ Gabriel, *The Press and the Slavery in America, 1791-1859*, p. 110.

⁹⁵ 'The Fall of Delhi,' *Alexandria Gazette* (Alexandria, Virginia), 16 Nov 1857.

⁹⁶ 'Correspondence of NY Commercial Advertiser,' *The Charleston Mercury* (Charleston, South Carolina) 6 Oct 1857.

manner as shall impress the minds of the natives with the nature of the power they have defied.’⁹⁷

Wilmington’s *Daily Journal*, reprinted an article from the *Richmond South*, which seems to declare an understanding for Britain’s violent retribution based upon what has been inflicted by the rebel Sepoys upon ‘the dominant race.’ The writer declares that the English soldier ‘is suppressing a mutiny; he is contending with rebels and with rebels who have aggravated the guilt of treason by incredible outrages upon the dominant race. He has not only to punish sedition, but to avenge the assassination of his comrades, the violation of his women, and the cruel agonies of his helpless children.’ The writer remains confident that ‘England’s ascendancy will be re-established in India without difficulty and on a more solid basis than ever.’⁹⁸

The Times-Picayune reporting on events in India in September 1857, described the ‘general state of fright and alarm among all classes of the foreign population... increasing confidence of the successful rebels themselves and the influence of their example and counsel upon a bigoted and priest ridden race.’ The notion of a rightfully insubordinate race of people can be seen here, and once again, the idea of the British as the ‘natural’ benevolent masters of Indians can be seen as the article progresses: ‘The general feeling of personal insecurity in a state of things so uncertain and among so fanatical and barbarous a people; just and reasonable fear and alarm for the personal safety of family and friends at a distance, or it may be, which is far worse, at home, their brutal insult beneath the very eye of their natural protector.’ Finally, full confidence is given to the British, that despite it being ‘undoubtedly a serious, a momentous crisis...there is every where in England an unwavering confidence in the final issue of this great struggle; and when Englishmen- fully appreciating the importance of a crisis and conscious of their ability to meet it- apply themselves, as in the present instance, vigorously and determinedly to the work, there is with them no such word as fail.’⁹⁹

⁹⁷ ‘From the London Times,’ *The Daily Journal* (Wilmington, North Carolina), 13 July 1857.

⁹⁸ ‘The Fall of Delhi- Aspects of Affairs in India,’ *The Daily Journal* (Wilmington, North Carolina) 18 Nov 1857.

⁹⁹ ‘Affairs in India,’ *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana) 6 Sept 1857.

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When southern slaveholders read the news from India, the powerful narrative of a global colour-line may very well have made them think, as Mary Chesnut did a few years later, that: 'These faces were like so many of the same sort at home.' Chapter Six will show that it would have been difficult for southern slaveholding newspaper readers *not* to have had their heads filled with imagery with which to draw such parallels. Indeed, as Southerners tried to sooth their fears of slave rebellion and boost their faith in the trustworthiness of their slaves, seeing parallels in the 'faces' not only highlighted a rebellious racial underclass in Slaves and Sepoys but, by implication, drew attention to the white faces of those butchered and violated.

Chapter Six

The Indian Uprising as a Metaphor for Slave Rebellion in the South

It is possible to identify visions of slave rebellion in the South through much of what was printed in the southern press about the Indian Uprising. The 'Mutiny' can be seen as a powerful signifier of the potential for black resistance. The events in India became incredibly powerful for that very reason. They signified both the strengths and the possibly fragility of international white supremacy, but also the power of white supremacy in the South and the paranoia on which it rested. The newspaper reports offered a direct reflection of possible slave rebellion at home and how it would be dealt with. It also offered the vision of the indiscriminate killing of whites, the violation of women and children and the rise to power of slave rebel leaders. Ultimately, the Indian Uprising, as represented in the southern newspapers, confirmed to the southern elite that despite any Anglophobic sentiments, slave and subject peoples of the darker races should be kept under the control of white men.

For southern slaveholders, the very idea of slave rebellion represented a world turned upside down. Slaveholders understood that slave rebellion, and its immediate consequences, would likely include the violent deaths of themselves and their families. If emancipation occurred, the breakdown of the social order would follow. They dreaded race war and the immense disorder and ruin it would bring to their current economic and social standing.¹ Slavery was a way of life for southern slaveholders and the ramifications of emancipation were therefore immense.² Much of the news from India described scenes akin to a general uprising that may have drawn parallels with the feared prospect of slave rebellion in the minds of southern readers. This chapter will examine such news and show how these metaphors were articulated. News included descriptions of how the populations of Bengal had begun to 'rise and were killing the English; and that the revolution was becoming more general.'³ Descriptions of 'the massacre at Delhi' explained how 'the whole city was up in arms, every European residence was searched, the troopers declaring that they did not want the property, but life' and crucially the

¹ Parish, *Slavery: History and Historians*, pp. 22-23.

² Kolchin, *American Slavery*, p. 111.

³ 'Four days later from Europe,' *The Daily Journal* (Wilmington, North Carolina), 14 Oct 1857.

uprising had spread more widely as ‘people of the city and bazaar appear to have been very active and to have aided the mutineers in their bloody work.’⁴ The use of terms such as the ‘armed rabble’ who joined the Sepoys and the description of how local people had ‘committed atrocities far greater than those of the Sepoys’ may have brought to mind the spreading of a slave revolt beyond its initial organisers.⁵

The *Richmond Whig*

Whilst many newspapers alluded to the need for the British to maintain power over a subordinate race of people, one paper, the *Richmond Whig*, was explicit in its support of the British. An editorial of 11 September 1857 argued strongly that the British would be able to crush the rebellion: “The question has been asked, will England be able to put down this insurrection? We ask in turn, why not? ...Her sons are descended of a race the most persevering, the most indomitable...” In referring to the uprising as an ‘insurrection,’ and the editor’s belief in the racial superiority of the British compared with the Sepoy rebels, the South’s own awareness of the threat of slave revolt is expressed. The editor goes on to say that, ‘England will take severe vengeance for the atrocious cruelties to which her children have been subject in India, and she will lay the foundation of her power too deep to be shaken again.’⁶ The following month, the paper noted that ‘the authority of Great Britain over her Indian possessions arises from no compact with the governed. It was obtained by the sword, and by the sword it has been and must be maintained.’⁷ A belief in the necessity of a superior race to forcefully rule over those deemed racially inferior to them, for the supposed benefit of those below the colour line, would have met with understanding from southern slaveholders.

In an editorial in early September 1857, the editor expressed bemusement at ‘the sympathy expressed by a few- a very few, we rejoice to say- of the American journals in behalf of the Sepoys of India in the present war.’ However, he found it ‘stranger still’ that a Virginia paper, the *Lynchburg Virginian* had shown sympathy for the Sepoys, noting

⁴ ‘The Massacre at Delhi,’ *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana) 7 August 1857.

⁵ First quote can be found in ‘India News,’ *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina), 31 May 1858 and ‘Late Foreign News’ *Alexandria Gazette* (Alexandria, Virginia), 29 May 1858. Second quote: ‘The Mutiny in the Indian Army,’ *The Daily Journal* (Wilmington, North Carolina), 20 July 1857.

⁶ ‘The Troubles in India,’ *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia), 11 Sept 1857.

⁷ ‘Proselyting in India,’ *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia) 2 Oct 1857.

that 'we did not expect to see any Whig journal looking with complacency and approval upon the barbarities and atrocities of the brute Sepoys. Yet it is so.' The article goes on to highlight the sympathiser's arguments:

The Lynchburg Virginian expresses the opinion that "a majority of the people of the United states have their sympathies excited in behalf of the rebels" and adds thoughtlessly, we trust- "the undeniable atrocities of British rule in India, as well as the jealousy with which the people of this country regard the extension or the establishment of British power, incline us to view, with something of satisfaction the revolt which is made in India against the supremacy of British power."

Expressing disappointment in a fellow editor, the Whig editor noted 'we repeat that we hope our Lynchburg contemporary is really not in earnest in the "satisfaction" it expresses at the revolt in India.' The *Whig* editor goes on to suggest that the only other 'sympathizers' will be found amongst 'a few infuriated Irishmen' who are 'delighted, rejoiced and gladdened beyond measure when they hear of the torture and humiliation of their ancient foe.' Despite this, the editor argues that sympathy for the Sepoys will be found 'scarcely anywhere else.'⁸

Just a week later, the *Whig* was exclaiming that England would have no problem dealing with the Sepoy rebels as 'Old England's day is not come yet.' The writer editor is highly critical of the rebels, declaring that:

When she [England] sinks, it will not be under the blows of these pure patriots, who inaugurate the new millennium by murdering unarmed men, violating women and then cutting their throats, cutting to pieces mothers, and forcing their children to eat their flesh, dashing infants against the wall, to prove how worthy they are of the sacred boon of political freedom?

A clear solidarity with England is expressed by the editor who remarks that, 'he must have a very contracted notion of England's power, who believes her incapable of overthrowing 250,000 Sepoys!'⁹ Emotive language and the vivid description of scenes of

⁸ 'The War in India,' *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia), 6 Oct 1857.

⁹ 'England to be used up,' *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia) 13 Oct 1857.

violence are used by the editor to make his point more powerful. Portraying events of this kind must have raised the prospect of similar violence in the South in the minds of many slaveholding readers.

Indeed, adding to a growing sense of racial solidarity with the British, an editorial in the *Richmond Whig* of 16 October 1857 entitled 'Sepoy Sympathy,' is explicit in its comparison between the events in India and Virginia's own history of slave rebellion:

We believe the British prints, both in England and in India are perfectly correct in the declarations which they are continually making, that the world has never witnessed such atrocities as those which have been perpetrated in India, since the beginning of the present revolt... Even the insurrection of the slave population in San Domingo was a mild and merciful movement in comparison... We are surprised to find that a cause so infernal should find sympathizers here in Virginia- among men of intelligence and worth- among men who have resided all their lives in a slave-holding community- among men who are familiar with the designs of Gabriel and who remember the atrocities of Nat Turner. The British in India, are placed in almost the identical position, morally, that we are placed in here in Virginia. Physically, the difference is that we are the more numerous class as compared with the inferior race which we govern, while the English in Hindostan are but as one to several thousand of the Hindoos. But in both cases, a great, powerful, intellectual race holds in subjection one which is inferior to it in all mental and moral attributes. The class to which the slaveholder belongs in Virginia, is the class to which the Englishman belongs in India.¹⁰

The global colour line is expressed explicitly here, with the southern slaveholder and white 'Englishman' at the top of a racial hierarchy. The editorial ends with a forceful demand that the issue of whether one empathises with the British or not was:

¹⁰ 'Sepoy Sympathy,' *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia) 16 Oct 1857. As well as the *Lynchburg Virginian*, the 'sympathisers' who the Whig Editor refers to, are likely also the editor and contributors of the *Richmond South* newspaper, who expressed sympathy for the Sepoys in their criticism of the British, for more information see: Gray, "Whisper to him the word 'India,'" p. 396 and Bilwakesh, "'Their faces were like so many of the same sort at home,'" p. 17.

...well worthy of every southern man's consideration. He may hate Great Britain as much as he may think proper. He may take sides with Russia against her, because the Russians though somewhat barbarous, and living under a despotism, are white men. But we suggest that when he sympathizes with the Sepoys, he takes sides against his own cause.¹¹

This 'cause' of course, was that of the maintenance of the institution of slavery. It is quite clear from what the editor says in regards to Russians being 'white men,' that a very clear notion of the global colour line is being expressed, in which southern slaveholders should be in unity with other white men across the world, in pursuit of their racially superior destiny.

By December, the *Whig* was celebrating what it believed to be British successes in India in quelling the rebellion: 'In spite of evil, angry and almost mathematical demonstration, the Sepoy affair has turned out a complete failure. Old England stands as firmly as she ever did and refuses positively, though requested by all Continental Europe and a few prints in this country, to acknowledge that she is whipped.' The use of the word 'whipped' here is interesting, as it must have conjured the image of a typical 'punishment' meted out to slaves by masters in the southern states. By creating this image of the British refusing to be whipped by their racial subordinates, the *Whig* editor highlighted the global colour line, in which the slaveholder's position was similar to that of the British in India. The notion of the racially superior, being whipped by the racially inferior, fed the southern fear of slave rebellion- of a world turned upside down. The editor commented that the 'day of [Britain's] destruction seems as far off as ever.' They criticised those 'certain classes of persons in the Northern cities, and even to some extent in the South' for believing that 'a revolt of the Sepoys would shake the deep foundations of British power,' commenting that such ideas were based upon the 'result either of hatred so intense as to approach hallucination, or of ignorance the most profound.' Interestingly, in this description the editor could well have been referring to the southern institution of slavery and what the editor believed to be its own unshakable foundations.

¹¹ 'Sepoy Sympathy,' *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia) 16 Oct 1857.

In an editorial the following June, the *Richmond Whig* once again made an explicit comparison between the Sepoy rebels and rebellious slaves in the southern states:

‘We beg leave to express the opinion that it is a crime to murder women and children, even though their parents be English and although their countrymen forty and sixty years ago may have been guilty of the greatest atrocities recorded in the history of the world. {--} when we recollect that popular indignation has {-} in this country, taken instant vengeance upon negroes who have cruelly murdered their masters or their mistresses, can we find it in our hearts to look {--} at the punishment of the Indian mutineers.’¹²

The editor of the *Richmond Whig* in another editorial discussed the ‘vast superiority of the British troops over those of Asia’ and that ‘she [Britain] must depend on white men alone.’¹³ The editor clearly had immense sympathy for the British and saw all violent retaliations by the British troops as totally necessary to put down a rebellion by a racially subordinate underclass, which he deemed to be akin to the South’s own slave community.

The Spectre of the Brutality of Slave Rebellion

Historian, Winthrop. D. Jordan, described the fear felt by southern slaveholding whites of a future ‘appalling world turned upside down, a crazy nonsense world of black over white.’¹⁴ Slaveholders would have recognized the descriptions of such a future in a report on the massacre of Europeans at Delhi which explains how ‘ladies remained eight and ten days in the jungle, trusting to the natives for protection.’¹⁵ The *Memphis Daily Eagle and Enquirer* also carried similar news, reprinted from the *London Daily Times*, which claimed that ‘some of the ladies escaped nearly naked, lived in the jungle for days with their infant children, starving and rarely able to get a handful of rice to satisfy the

¹² ‘A Second Didymus,’ *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia) 18 June 1858. Due to a poor scan of the newspaper in the archive, some words here are not clear.

¹³ ‘The English Government in India,’ *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia), 7 Dec 1858.

¹⁴ Jordan, *White Over Black*, p. 111, p. 114.

¹⁵ ‘The Massacre at Delhi,’ *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), 7 Aug 1857 and 8 Aug 1857.

cravings of hunger.¹⁶ That white women had to escape and hide in the jungle was entirely at odds with the slaveholders' notion of white power over the darker races. In the southern states, it was fugitive slaves, Maroons, who hid and lived in the swamps.¹⁷

Other survival stories included that of an English Officer, a 'boy of nineteen years' who wrote to his sister describing his escape from Delhi: 'for three days and nights we wandered in the jungles, sometimes fed and sometimes robbed by the villagers, till at length [sic], wearied and footsore, with shreds of cloths on our backs... we used to ford streams at night and then walk on slowly in our dripping clothes, lying down to rest every half hour, for you must remember that some of the ladies were wounded, and all so fatigued and worn out that they could scarcely move.'¹⁸ To add to this picture of power structures overturned, several papers carried the description of 'wives and children of the officers and soldiers' who were 'taken into Cawnpore and sold by public auction and were treated with the highest indignity.'¹⁹ The *Richmond Whig* reprinted a story from the London *Times* that claimed that Nana Sahib had sold white women 'openly in the bazaars to his soldiers.'²⁰ Slaveholders were accustomed to public auctions in which the bodies of enslaved African Americans were traded.

Southern editors reprinted stories from the British press, most of which focused on the brutality of the rebels. For example, the *Richmond Whig* described how 'children have been compelled to eat the quivering flesh of their murdered parents, after which they were literally torn asunder by the laughing fiends who surrounded them. Men in many instances have been mutilated, and, before absolutely killed, have had to gaze upon the last dishonour of their wives and daughters previous to being put to death. But really we cannot describe the brutalities that have been committed; they pass the boundaries of human belief and to dwell upon them shakes reason upon its throne...'²¹

¹⁶ 'Arrival of Indian Fugitives at Southampton,' *Memphis Daily Eagle and Enquirer* (Memphis, Tennessee), 18 Oct 1857.

¹⁷ Timothy J. Lockley, *Maroon Communities in South Carolina: A Documentary Record* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2009), Sylviane, A. Diouf, *Slavery's Exiles: The Story of the American Maroons* (New York: New York University Press, 2016).

¹⁸ 'The India Mutiny,' *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia), 11 Aug 1857.

¹⁹ Taken from accounts printed in the following pieces: 'Aspect of Affairs in India,' *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia), 11 Sept 1857 and 'News from Europe,' *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), 17 Sept 1857 and 'News from Europe, *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), 18 Sept 1857.

²⁰ 'Barbarism of the Hindoos,' *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia), 18 Sept 1857.

²¹ 'The Recapture of Cawnpore,' *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia) 6 Oct 1857.

Southern slaveholders were acutely aware of the history of slave rebellion in the South.²² Nat Turner's rebellion of 1831 had sent shockwaves throughout the South and despite having occurred three decades earlier, it still loomed large in slaveholders' minds. In Southampton, Virginia, Turner had gathered the support of seventy slaves and killed somewhere between 55-65 white people, including women and children. The rebellion caused immense fear throughout the South with neighbouring states experiencing widespread rumours and panic.²³ The subsequent 1831 publication of the '*Confessions of Nat Turner*' described Turner's rebellion in terms similar to how the press described Nena Sahib's 'rebellion' in 1857. Thomas Gray, a lawyer who met Turner and noted down his apparent confession, provided an introduction to the publication:

...a gloomy fanatic was revolving in the recesses of his own dark, bewildered, and overwrought mind, schemes of indiscriminate massacre to the whites. Schemes too fearfully executed as far as his fiendish band proceeded in their desolating march. No cry for mercy penetrated their filthy bosoms. No acts of remembered kindness made the least impression upon these remorseless murderers. Men, women and children, from hoary age to helpless infancy were involved in the same cruel fate. Never did a band of savages do their work of death more unsparingly.²⁴

Similarities can be seen in the way that Nat Turner's 1831 rebellion was described and the way that the southern press discussed the Indian Uprising. The New Orleans *Daily True Delta* related that during the siege of Delhi, 'the Sepoys took all the wounded Europeans they could catch and burnt them alive! The charred bodies, tied to stakes, were found by the stormers, with the queen's buttons still recognisable.'²⁵

The editor of the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, exclaimed that 'not a mail crosses the Atlantic that does not bring us the most appalling details of the barbarities inflicted upon

²² Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll*, p. 155.

²³ There is an extensive literature on Nat Turner's Rebellion. See for example: Greenberg, ed., *Nat Turner: A Slave Rebellion in History and Memory*; Allmendinger, *Nat Turner and the Rising in Southampton County*.

²⁴ Thomas. R. Gray, 'The Confessions of Nat Turner, The Leader of the Late Insurrection in Southampton, VA,' in Aptheker, *Nat Turner's Slave Rebellion*, p. 130.

²⁵ 'The War in India,' *The Daily True Delta* (New Orleans, Louisiana), 3 Jan 1858.

English men, women and children by the Sepoy insurgents. The atrocities and enormities committed by the mutineers surpass all that have ever before been related as the suggestions of savage fury and evince a ghastly refinement in cruelty and barbarity that the human imagination has never before dreamed of.’²⁶ The *Charleston Mercury* reprinted a piece from the London *Times*, which referred to the ‘tiger-like ferocity of the Indian’ and the ‘indiscriminate massacre of the Europeans...carried out in a manner the most remorseless.’²⁷ The *Charleston Courier* printed news that ‘about six hundred Englishmen, women and children have been put to death....in the most terrible way. The females were violated, tortured, ripped open; the children were butchered or thrown into the fire, and the men cut to pieces.’²⁸

The Honour and Vulnerability of White Women and Children

There are numerous examples of the reprinting of articles that focused particularly on the violence committed against women and children. Many reports lay great emphasis on the rebels’ indiscriminate killing of ‘Europeans...without regard to age or sex.’²⁹ As Alison Blunt has highlighted, British newspaper accounts of the uprising focused on the fate of white women. The severity of the events ‘came to be embodied’ by the defilement of the bodies and homes of British women.³⁰ The *Memphis Eagle and Enquirer* printed a letter from a clergyman in Bangalore who described how the rebels had taken:

Forty-eight females, most of them girls of from ten to fourteen, many delicately nurtured ladies- violated them, and kept them for the base purpose of the heads of the insurrection for a whole week. At the end of that time they made them strip themselves, and gave them up to the lowest of the people, to abuse in broad daylight in the streets of Delhi. They then commenced the work of

²⁶ ‘British Policy in India,’ *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), 3 Oct 1857.

²⁷ ‘The Anti-English Mutiny in India,’ *The Charleston Mercury* (Charleston, South Carolina), 15 July 1857.

²⁸ ‘From Europe,’ *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina), 16 Sept 1857.

²⁹ See for example: ‘Telegraphic News,’ *The Charleston Mercury* (Charleston, South Carolina), 11 July 1857 and ‘Later from Europe,’ *The Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), 8 July 1857. Similar comments can be found in many articles, for example: ‘No tenderness was shown to sex, no reverence to age’ in ‘The Anti-English Mutiny in India,’ *The Charleston Mercury* (Charleston, South Carolina), 15 July 1857.

³⁰ Alison Blunt, ‘Embodying War: British Women and Domestic Defilement in the Indian ‘Mutiny,’ 1857-8,’ *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (2000), p. 403.

torturing them to death, cutting off their breasts, fingers and noses and leaving them to die. One lady was three days dying..... Poor Mrs-- the wife of an officer of the --regiment at Meerut was soon expecting her confinement. They violated her, then ripped her up and taking from her the unborn child, cast it and her into the flames. No European man, woman or child has had the slightest mercy shown them. I do not believe the world ever witnessed more hellish torments than have been inflicted on our poor fellow countrywomen. At Allahabad they have rivalled the atrocities of Delhi. I really cannot tell you the fearful cruelties these demons have been guilty of- cutting off the fingers and toes of little children, joint by joint, in sight of their parents, who were reserved for similar treatment afterward.³¹

Striking similarities exist between the letter from India that was printed in the *Memphis Eagle and Enquirer* and the letter from Columbus (Colorado Country, Texas) reprinted from the *Galveston News* by the *New York Herald*, which describe the 'Contemplated Servile Rising in Texas' in September 1856. According to this letter, slaves had 'a well organized and systematized plan for the murder of our entire white population, with the exception of the young ladies, who were to be taken captives and made the wives of the diabolical murderers of their parents and friends.'³² Reports of the events in India came only months after anxieties had abounded that white southern women were under threat from the enslaved black population. Slaveholders must have noticed perceived racial parallels between their own situation and that of the British in India. Brian Gabriel has argued that newspaper coverage of major southern slave rebellions and conspiracies included the recurring theme of a discourse of racial panic which included concern over the possibility of sexual violence against white women.³³ As Egerton remarks about the 1856 panics, 'as was typical with other North American slave scares, white men found it easier to believe that potential rebels desired white women than admit that blacks hoped to gain freedom and political equality.'³⁴

³¹ 'The Atrocities at Delhi,' *Memphis Eagle and Enquirer* (Memphis, Tennessee), 20 Sept 1857.

³² *New York Herald*, 22 Sept 1856, cited in Egerton, 'The Slaves' Election,' p. 40.

³³ Gabriel, *The Press and the Slavery in America*, p. 106. See also Joshua D. Rothman, *Flush Times and Fever Dreams: A Story of Capitalism and Slavery in the Age of Jackson* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), p. 106.

³⁴ Egerton, 'The Slaves' Election,' p. 40.

The focus on the atrocities against females in particular, would have touched a raw nerve amongst the southern slaveholding readers who feared the prospect of violence against their own women and children. For southern readers, honor was an important guiding principle in life, and the fear of what slave rebellion might mean for white females may have been contemplated when reading the stories of atrocities in India.³⁵ This was especially true as the British press often referred to the violence against women in terms of notions of female honour. For example, the *Charleston Courier* reprinted a piece which referred to the 'valuable lives and the honor of English women.'³⁶ Similarly, the *Charleston Mercury* contained news of British troops discovering the 'naked, mutilated, and dishonoured remains almost still warm, of about two hundred women and infants.'³⁷ Both *Charleston Mercury* and Milledgeville's *Federal Union* printed an account of the atrocities in Meerut, describing how:

The frantic rebels now turned upon the English residents of the station, with the ferocity of tigers..... the wives and children of the English residents were flying in terror before the blood thirsty Sepoys. The scene is described as horrible in the extreme, exhibiting the worst features of Asiatic barbarity. Every English officer that was discovered was instantly shot at by the Sepoys. The defenceless women and innocent children were not only butchered, in attempting to escape from the burning dwellings, but their bodies were horribly mutilated and cut in pieces on the highway, by these Hindoo savages... During the day all the Europeans in the city were butchered by the Sepoys, except some ten or twelve who succeeded in escaping to neighbouring stations. Many of them were surprised and massacred at a dinner party in the Fort; others were massacred at church, in their dwellings and in the public streets. All the savage atrocities at Meerut were repeated, with tenfold madness, on the Christian women and children in Delhi.³⁸

³⁵ On southern honour in general see: Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South*.

³⁶ 'Cawnpore and Lucknow,' *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina), 17 Nov 1857. For more on concern for elite white women see Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Fatal Self-Deception*, pp. 138-139. For more on southern white fear of black men as a sexual threat to white women, see Ronald Takaki, "The Black Child-Savage in Antebellum America," in G. B. Nash and R. Weiss, eds., *The Great Fear: Race in the Mind of America* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), p. 41.

³⁷ 'Correspondence of the NY Commercial Advertiser,' *The Charleston Mercury* (Charleston, South Carolina), 6 Oct 1857.

³⁸ *The Charleston Mercury* (Charleston, South Carolina), 18 July 1857, 'The Revolt in India,' *Federal Union* (Milledgeville, Georgia), 28 July 1857.

The *Times-Picayune* printed telegraphic news about the events at Cawnpore, in which 'the women were stripped naked, beheaded and thrown into a well and their children hurled down alive upon their mangled bodies.'³⁹ To this account, the *Charleston Mercury* and *Richmond Whig* added further description of the 'soul-harrowing spectacle' of the 'fearful massacre at Cawnpore,' in lurid detail:

A wholesale massacre had been perpetrated by the fiend Nena Sahib. 8 officers and 90 men of her majesty's 84th regiment, 70 ladies and 121 children of her majesty's second fort and the whole European and Christian population of the place, including civilians, merchants, pensioners and their families to the number of 400 persons were the victims of this Satan.

The courtyard in front of the assembly rooms which Nena Sahib had fixed his quarters, and in which the women had been imprisoned, was swimming in blood. A large number of women and children who had been cruelly spared after the capitulation for a worse fate than instant death, had been barbarously slaughtered on the previous morning. The former had been stripped naked and then beheaded and thrown into a well and the latter having been hurled down alive upon their butchered mothers, whose blood reeked on their mangled bodies.⁴⁰

The *Daily Journal* also printed an account of the capture of one hundred and twenty-six British women and children near Cawnpore, referring to how 'the representative [Nena Sahib] of the Mehratta ...tied them together one by one and mutilated them.' The piece continues: 'An infant of a month old he took from its mother's breast, pretending to fondle and then cut it to pieces.' Southern slaveholders may have remembered the moment in Turner's 'confession,' when describing the murder of his master's family, Turner mentioned how 'there was a little infant sleeping in a cradle, that was forgotten, until we had left the house and gone some distance, when Henry and Will returned and killed it.'⁴¹ Thomas Gray also noted that Turner had described the details of his killing spree, revealing how he:

³⁹ 'By Steamship Arabia,' *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), 9 Oct 1857.

⁴⁰ 'Further by the Jura,' *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia) 2 Oct 1857; 'Additional by the Jura,' *The Charleston Mercury* (Charleston, South Carolina), 2 Oct 1857.

⁴¹ Gray, 'The Confessions of Nat Turner,' in Aptheker, *Nat Turner's Slave Rebellion*, pp. 139-40.

...sometimes got in sight in time to see the work of death completed, viewed the mangled bodies as they lay, in silent satisfaction, and immediately started in quest of other victims- Having murdered Mrs Waller and ten children, we started for Mr William Williams'- having killed him and two little boys that were there; while engaged in this, Mrs Williams fled and got some distance from the house, but she was pursued, overtaken, and compelled to get up behind one of the company, who brought her back, and after showing her the mangled body of her lifeless husband, she was told to get down and lay by his side, where she was shot dead...⁴²

In referring to another incident, the *Daily Journal* article also contained the account of the capture of a family of a European sergeant by the rebels; 'The parents were tortured to death and the children stabbed with the bayonet till the pain became almost unbearable; they then [squashed] them into a box and placed them over a slow fire'.⁴³ The Richmond Whig printed an account which described vividly the room in which British women were supposed to have been killed: 'I have seen the fearful slaughter-house... the quantities of dresses, clogged thickly with blood, children's frocks, frills and ladies' underclothing of all kinds... bonnets all bloody and one or two shoes. I picked up a bit of paper, with on it 'Ned's hair, with love' and opened and found a little bit tied up with ribbon.'⁴⁴ The *Daily Journal* printed the account of the killing of a Captain's wife who local people, inspired by the rebels, 'pursued and frightfully mutilated... and of Mrs Chambers... who was murdered in her garden during Mr Chambers' absence on duty, her clothes having been set on fire before she was shot and cut to pieces.' The account continued: 'among other instances of frightful butchery was that of sergeant law, his wife and six children, who were living beyond the precincts of cantonments. The state in which the father and three of the infants were found defies description- happily the mother and three other children though grievously mangled, crawled out at midnight to the artillery hospital and it is hoped will recover...'⁴⁵

⁴² Gray, 'The Confessions of Nat Turner,' in Aptheker, *Nat Turner's Slave Rebellion*, p. 142.

⁴³ *The Daily Journal* (Wilmington, North Carolina), 11 Sept 1857, (The print is unclear due to the digital scan- the word is most likely 'squashed'.)

⁴⁴ 'Account by a Native,' *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia), 20 Oct 1857.

⁴⁵ 'The Mutiny in the Indian Army,' *The Daily Journal* (Wilmington, North Carolina), 20 July 1857.

The *Richmond Whig*, printed the story of Clement, a young British woman, noting that it was including the copy of a Paris letter 'at the risk of harrowing the souls of our readers' as it 'describes but one amongst scores of similar atrocities now perpetrated upon women and children.'⁴⁶ The *Memphis Eagle and Enquirer*, reprinting from the *New Orleans Bee*, also contained the same report. The story narrated the death of Clement as 'one of the saddest, cruellest... most diabolical incidents of the Indian mutiny.' The story introduces Clement as the pinnacle of white virtue and female innocence and beauty, describing her at her wedding four years ago as 'a more beautiful creature when in all the pride of eighteen she stood at the altar; it is not possible to conceive.' Adding to this picture of Clement's virtue, is the fact that she was married to 'a gallant young captain of the name of Tower, of the 64th infantry of Bengal.' The reports tells of how Clement's family have recently received news that Clement was 'sacrificed in the following brutal manner:'

her two lovely children, a boy and girl, were massacred joint by joint, while living, before her eyes, after she herself had been delivered over successively to the brutal lust of three fiends in human shape. From the scene of her mutilated children she was carried away and placed in a hot bath, after which a sleeping potion was given to her and she was put to bed. The next day she was brought down again into the presence of other devils in human guise, six of whom having again gratified their diabolical lust, threw her out of the window to be scrambled for by the soldiery. In the evening her head was found impaled on an iron stake. The husband has since blown his brains out.⁴⁷

The *Eagle and Enquirer* went on to argue that 'premising that the ineffable horrors narrated in the foregoing present no isolated and solitary case, but are the normal result of every instance in which Englishmen, their wives and children have been captured alive by the Sepoys, we ask whether such abominable fiends, such pitiless, wolfish hounds, are entitled to the smallest fragments of sympathy...'⁴⁸ It is worth highlighting here that

⁴⁶ 'The War in India,' *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia) 6 Oct 1857.

⁴⁷ 'The War in India,' *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia) 6 Oct 1857; 'Sympathy for the Sepoys,' *Memphis Daily Eagle and Enquirer* (Memphis, Tennessee) 14 Oct 1857.

⁴⁸ 'Sympathy for the Sepoys,' *Memphis Daily Eagle and Enquirer* (Memphis, Tennessee) 14 Oct 1857.

the comparison with hounds is important in the process of dehumanising the Indian rebels, just as African Americans were routinely dehumanised.

The *Richmond Whig*, added another 'letter from an English officer, published in the London Journals,' in which he described the 'horrible indescribable barbarities' perpetrated by the Sepoy rebels. He insists that he will only 'disgust' his readers with two stories, and narrates the violent scene in which an 'officer and his wife were tied to trees; their children were tortured to death before them and portions of their flesh crammed down the parents' throats; the wife then ravished before her husband, he mutilated in a manner too horrible to relate; then both were burnt to death.' Such shocking and vivid images must have come as a shock to southern readers, for whom such detail of violence against fellow white people was not normally printed so bluntly. Indeed, details of any slave violence in the South was kept to a bare minimum and rarely reported in such violent detail. The officer continues, by narrating the story of two young white 'ladies' who were 'seized at Delhi, stripped naked, tied to a cart, taken to the bazaar and there violated. Luckily for them, they soon died from the effects of the brutal treatment they received.'⁴⁹

The *Memphis Daily Eagle and Enquirer* printed a letter written by 'an officer in Havelock's army...from Cawnpore' giving 'a graphic account of the melancholy spectacle which the place presented.' Describing the destroyed buildings of the army garrison, the officer spoke of the 'tales of woe unutterable' were held within the walls. In the narrated scene, in which the fragility and innocence of white women and children is referred to, and the animal-like, dehuman and violent nature of Indian rebels is emphasised, one can but wonder what southern slaveholders may have read into the events described:

Here might have sat some trembling mother, with her pale and dying children huddled around her... Many a fair girl died there, many a loving mother...The greatest amount of slaughter seems to have taken place in the cooking room. The mats were literally soaked with blood, and in one corner there were numerous sword cuts, as though some of our countrymen had cowered down and there been hacked to death. About the courtyard there are still strewn bonnets, children and women's shoes, blood-stained remnants, clothing, books,

⁴⁹ 'The War in India,' *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia) 6 Oct 1857.

straw hats, papers... After the women were all murdered they were stripped and thrown down the well in the adjoining compound, many of the children were thrown down it alive. While the butchery was going on, the screams and shrieks of the victims were said to be heart-rending but as every 'gentle hindoo' and 'timid musselman' was anxious to flesh his blade in the bosoms of our women, there were plenty of butchers to do the work, so it did not last long.⁵⁰

Reprinting from the London *Times*, the *Richmond Whig*, included an incredibly powerful article, outlining how it deemed the targeting of European women and young girls to be a significant insult to Britain:

England's religion and civilisation have received the most intolerable insult that Mahomedan fanaticism could devise in a systematic series of deliberate brutalities on European women and children. Throughout all the East this is the peculiar mode of expressing the utmost national scorn and defiance...It ought to be known, reluctant as we are to tell it, that the women and unmarried girls who fell into the hands of the mutineers and populace of Delhi were carried in procession for hours through the chief thoroughfares of the city, with every horror that could degrade them in the eyes of the people, previous to the last brutalities and cruelties that then, in the sight of thousands, were perpetrated upon them. It was done of settled purpose, to degrade England, to degrade Europe, to degrade a Christian empire and a Christian queen.⁵¹

Southern slaveholders were accustomed to writing their own journals and so reprints of journal accounts in the press may have given readers an emotional connection with the writer. The *Richmond Whig* reprinted an article from the London *Times* referring to a journal extract found in the 'barrack where the European inhabitants took refuge and were besieged'... 'It is scarcely to be read without tears, as in simple language it notes day after day the death of this or that member of the family of the writer- "Annie died, Mamma died" and then abruptly ceases...'⁵²

⁵⁰ 'India,' *Memphis Daily Eagle and Enquirer* (Memphis, Tennessee) 16 Dec 1857.

⁵¹ 'The Times on Vengeance,' *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia) 18 Sept 1857.

⁵² 'General Havelock's Operations,' *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia) 20 Oct 1857.

Another journal was referenced in Milledgeville's *Southern Recorder*, which reprinted from the *London Chronicle*, a long extract from the writings of Mrs Murray, the wife of Sergeant-Major Murray, who had witnessed the Cawnpore Massacre. The account is yet another example of the narration of explicit and violent scenes, in which white women and children were brutally murdered and tortured. Describing how young European children were shot by the rebels, followed by all the males in the garrison, including her husband and brother, Mrs Murray went on to describe how

‘The women all, high and low, were stripped in open air, a piece of blue cloth of hardly three cubits and less than a cubit in breadth was given to each woman just to cover herself. Then followed the massacre of the children, and I can, without any exaggeration confidently declare that no less than 300 of the innocent angels were destroyed as it were by the spell of magic.’

Such explicit detail of the murder of children must have been shocking to southern slaveholding readers, who read Mrs Murray's account of how white children were ‘bayoneted, shot, dashed on the ground and trampled under foot.’ Mrs Murray went further in her descriptions of violence, describing how her grandsons were both killed, and how her two daughters-in-law, Lewsa and Santa, who were both pregnant were also killed. Santa, she explains, ‘being very far advanced’ in her pregnancy ‘was ripped open and the child came out of her womb, which was cut on the spot.’⁵³ Such scenes of white motherhood under attack by those of a subordinate race, must have hit at the heart of any white supremacist society.

Conspiratorial Paranoia

Fear over abolitionist ‘outsiders’ inciting slave rebellion was a recurring worry among southern slaveholders, particularly in the decade prior to the Civil War. In the aftermath of the insurrection panics of late 1856 and early 1857, many southern editors blamed the recent presidential campaign, arguing that slaves had been excited by secret messengers of the abolitionist Republican candidate, Frémont, who had spread word

⁵³ ‘Another Horrible Story,’ *Southern Recorder* (Milledgeville, Georgia), 5 Oct 1858.

that his election would lead to their liberation.⁵⁴ Such anxiety over rumours of abolitionist plotting was the result of a deep fear that abolitionist outsiders would arm black slaves, initiating general anarchy and the widespread murder of southern whites.⁵⁵

The *Richmond Whig* of 30th October 1857, quoted a letter from a Reverend Alexander Duff who gave a 'detailed account of the terrible rebellion and its fearful scenes.' The *Whig* editor provides an overview of Duff's letter, telling his readers that Duff 'states that the emissaries of the Mohammedan conspiracy, in various disguises, went abroad among the Sepoys,' spreading rumours which led to the uprising. The *Whig* prints from Duff's letter:

The evil minded suggestion gradually spread, and took root in the minds of the deluded Sepoys... At last their minds became inflamed and like so many combustible materials burst forth in open mutiny and rebellion- massacring all the British and other foreigners with native Christians on whom they could lay violent hands and covering the whole land with incendiarism, plunder, devastation and blood.⁵⁶

This sentence from Duff's letter may have had resonance with Southerners whose own anxiety levels over northern abolitionists spreading ideas amongst the enslaved were already raised. Rumours of plots and conspiracies were rampant in the southern press. Indeed, as David Brion Davis has remarked, 'conspiratorial imagery' had become a 'formalized staple in the political rhetoric' used by journalists and politicians.⁵⁷ During the 1856 panics that shook the southern states, masters reassured themselves that slaves would never have acted without outside influence of abolitionists, exemplified in the comments of a journalist in Austin, Texas who believed that 'foreign emissaries' had been 'tampering' with the enslaved.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Kenneth. M. Stampp, *America in 1857: A Nation on the Brink* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 35-6.

⁵⁵ Gabriel, *The Press and the Slavery in America*, p. 107.

⁵⁶ 'The Troubles in India,' *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia), 30 Oct 1857.

⁵⁷ David Brion Davis, *The Slave Power Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), p. 7.

⁵⁸ *Austin Texas State Gazette*, 15 Nov 1856, cited in Egerton, 'The Slaves' Election,' p. 40.

The southern papers printed news from India that included many references to the theme of plotting, outsiders and conspiracy. This is unsurprising, given how much was reprinted from the British press and considering the immense anxiety within the British colonial sphere of 'hidden meanings undecipherable to the authorities', or secret societies plotting the overthrow of colonial rule. The colonial administration was fearful that the indigenous population may be plotting just below the surface. The Uprising of 1857 hit at the heart of this fear and 'constituted the ultimate scenario of colonial paranoia.'⁵⁹ An article in the *Charleston Courier*, translated from *La Presse*, described apparent hidden symbolic messages between the rebel troops in the lead up to the uprising:

Other symptoms, of which no one doubts the importance, seem to indicate an approaching terrible crisis. Everywhere one sees circulating presents, which serve amongst the Hindoos as a circular rally at a certain sign. They have taken place in Goudjerad by sending round a little lamb... At the sound of the Tamtam a prophecy, amounting, that in three months and thirteen days, 'something white will disappear entirely.'⁶⁰

The Georgia Telegraph, reprinting from the *Bombay Times*, made reference to the 'infection' of mutiny and that the 'minds of many have been unsettled and infected with disloyalty.'⁶¹ Both the *Times-Picayune* and *Charleston Courier* printed from Reverend Dr Duff's letter in which he discusses the underlying tensions which led to the uprising: 'So long as the spirit of dissatisfaction in the native army, with its occasional outbreaks, was only circulated about in whispers, I felt it better not to allude to the subject but now that it has broken forth into so many open manifestations of a daring character I can scarcely remain silent.' Duff refers to the apparent 'deep laid plot or conspiracy...to seize Fort William and massacre all the Europeans' and the 'intelligence of a mutinous spirit manifesting itself in diverse ways.' He comments that 'this is not all; the populace generally is known to be more or less disaffected...and 'if there be a general uprising- as any day may be- the probability is that not a European life will any where escape the universal and indiscriminate massacre.' Duff also refers to the rumours that 'already it is

⁵⁹ Wagner, *The Great Fear of 1857*, p. 9.

⁶⁰ 'Situation of the English in India,' *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina) 31 Aug 1858.

⁶¹ 'The Mutiny Spreading in Bombay,' *The Georgia Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia), 13 Oct 1857.

known that the Mohammedans have had several night meetings.’⁶² The *Charleston Courier* printed news that ‘Fears were entertained of outbreaks at other stations... a mohammedan conspiracy had likewise been discovered in the Bombay presidency,’ and ‘a plot had been discovered and thwarted to massacre the Europeans at Benares and Jessen.’⁶³ These comments could very well have drawn parallels with southern elite fears and rumours of slaves plotting uprisings and meeting secretly at night. Indeed, in the panics of late 1856, thirty-two slaves in Alexandria, Virginia were whipped in early December for taking part in what journalists described as a “ball,” a “grand supper” and an evening “religious gathering.” As Egerton has highlighted, in such an atmosphere of paranoia and tension, any threat or act of violence could be seen as part of a larger conspiratorial plot.⁶⁴

Slaveholders also feared that slaves might get hold of abolitionist reading material that might inspire them to rebel. In an editorial in the *Richmond Whig* in October 1857, entitled ‘The Press in India’, the editor made clear his opinion that a free press would not allow the British to maintain control over mutinous Indian troops, nor over the Indian people:

Can it be supposed that these men [literate Indian soldiers] will not imbibe principles from what they read, adverse to the continued dominion of Great Britain in India? To suppose so is to suppose that a subject race will forget that there ever was a time when they were not under the dominion of their actual rulers.... On men situated like the native officers of the Indian army, a single number of the London Times would act like a firebrand thrown into a magazine.⁶⁵

Crucially, the editor ends his piece with: ‘A free press for a subject race! Incendiary pamphlets for our slave population! Was ever such folly heard of?’⁶⁶

⁶² ‘Affairs in India,’ *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana) 1 Aug 1857 and also printed the next day 2 Aug 1857, ‘Rev Dr Duff’s Account of the Mutiny in India,’ *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina) 28 July 1857.

⁶³ ‘The Mails by the Arabia,’ *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina) 6 Oct 1857.

⁶⁴ Egerton, ‘The Slaves’ Election,’ p. 48.

⁶⁵ ‘The Press in India,’ *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia) 20 Oct 1857.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

The Trustworthy Slave versus Nena and Nat

The belief in the trustworthiness of slaves was of vital importance to the maintenance of the system of slavery. Slaveholders wished to present slavery as a benevolent institution in which paternalism ruled. The slaveholder took care of the whole family, white and black, and slaves were happy. In reality, this romanticized picture only existed in the minds of slaveholders who perpetuated the myth because they needed to justify an exploitative system.⁶⁷ Yet slaveholders of the South did not actually need to be paternalistic, as it was possible to rule by intimidation and coercion, and George Fredrickson has argued that rather than being paternalistic, powerful slaveholders felt fear and contempt towards their slaves.⁶⁸ However it is perfectly possible that 'self-deceiving' slaveholders perpetuated the myth of a paternalistic happy plantation life while simultaneously fearing their slaves. 'Self-deception' seems to have intensified over the course of the antebellum period and as the South moved towards secession, arguments in favour of the loyalty and trustworthiness of slaves grew stronger. This assertion grew simultaneously with the representation of black people as racially inferior.⁶⁹ The fear and anxiety that their otherwise loyal slaves might rebel may have been intensified by the 'warning signs' indicated in the news from India in which accounts of the events were framed in paternalistic terms familiar to southern slaveholders. Indeed, a main narrative arc running through many British newspaper accounts displayed 'scenes of domestic horror' and the 'sanctity of domesticity disregarded.' This was linked to a theme of betrayal that runs throughout many of the accounts that situates the Indian rebels as ungrateful to the British who had cared for them.⁷⁰

News accounts described the plotting of those deemed to be loyal to the British. The *Charleston Courier* reported that 'only the day before their outbreak the Sepoys appealed to their officers to recall their wives and families from the hills, where they had been sent for safety and even to the last moment these miscreants swore to protect their officers to the death.'⁷¹ The *Richmond Whig* reprinted from the *London Times* a

⁶⁷ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Fatal Self-Deception*.

⁶⁸ Fredrickson, 'The Role of Race in the Planter Ideology of South Carolina,' pp. 274-6.

⁶⁹ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Fatal Self-Deception*, p. 89.

⁷⁰ Andrea Kaston Tange, 'Maternity Betrayed: Circulating Images of English Motherhood in India, 1857-1858,' *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (2013), p. 190.

⁷¹ 'From Europe,' *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina), 1 Sept 1857.

report on the statement by Dr Hay, an American missionary in India, who claimed that 'it was at one time fully expected that the native Mohammedan servants would rebel in Calcutta. Numbers had been saying to the European children of whom they had charge that all the houses in Calcutta would soon belong to the natives.'⁷² Such news reports should be considered in light of the mind-set in which Southerners would have read them. Egerton has shown that during the slave panics just months before news arrived from India, the intense feelings of anxiety and paranoia amongst slaveholders meant that suspicion was cast upon the activities of slaves by nervous masters and mistresses who 'suddenly regarded trusted domestics as potential assassins.'⁷³

Alongside the paranoia over the trustworthiness of slaves, stood the trope of the powerful black leader of slave rebellion. The memory of Nat Turner, the leader of the 1831 rebellion in Southampton, Virginia, lived long in the minds of southerners who feared the repeat of such an event. Making the link between Turner and Sahib was an important step in making the metaphorical argument that the uprising represented the dangers posed to slaveholders in the South. In most reports, Nena Sahib was described as a monster. The *Alexandria Gazette*, the *Memphis Daily Eagle and Enquirer* and the *Federal Union* all printed an article from the London *Spectator* which described how Nena Sahib should be treated by the British when he was caught. Describing him as a 'wild beast,' the author argues he should 'live out the term of his natural or unnatural life like a monster without sympathy... reduced to the condition of a captured beast of prey.'⁷⁴ It was not uncommon for reports to refer to him as a 'monster' or as the *Augusta Chronicle* described him; an 'inhuman monster.'⁷⁵ This was similar to press coverage of slave rebellion in the South in which slave rebels and any white co-conspirators were cast as 'dire threats to the southern racial order.' Black rebels thus became 'objectified and dehumanized' in the press, in such a way that thoroughly justified the killing of rebels.⁷⁶

⁷² 'Interesting Statement of Dr Hay, An American Missionary,' *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia), 9 Oct 1857.

⁷³ Egerton, 'The Slaves' Election,' p. 56.

⁷⁴ 'A Terrible Punishment,' *Alexandria Gazette* (Alexandria, Virginia), 8 Oct 1857 and 'A Terrible Punishment,' *Memphis Daily Eagle and Enquirer* (Memphis, Tennessee), 14 Oct 1857, 'A Terrible Punishment,' *The Federal Union* (Milledgeville, Georgia), 20 Oct 1857.

⁷⁵ First quote: 'Nena Sahib,' *The Daily Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), 4 Nov 1857. Second quote: 'Nena Sahib,' *Augusta Chronicle* (Augusta, Georgia), 23 Feb 1859.

⁷⁶ Gabriel, *The Press and the Slavery in America*, p. 110.

The *Charleston Courier* and Milledgeville's *Federal Union* reprinting 'from a Bombay paper', added an account of Nena Sahib: 'it cannot be said the Nena is not a venturous traitor. He has staked his all, which is not a little, upon the die- His game might have been played so as not to have entirely deprived him of the sympathy of those he fought against, but, like every leader the present insurrection has brought to notice, he was unable to resist that propensity to cold-blooded murder which seems to take possession of most natives simultaneously with their achieving power to gratify it.'⁷⁷ The *Richmond Whig*, copying from the London *Times*, referred to Nena Sahib as 'the true barbaric ideal' and stated that 'it is he and his predecessors in the line of treachery who have kept Asia down since the beginning of the world and made her the property and prey of any stronger race...'⁷⁸ A month later, the editor of the *Richmond Whig* exclaimed:

It is strange to us... how any Virginian can sympathize with the atrocities of Delhi, unless he is prepared to sympathize with the massacre of Southampton, or if he thinks Nat Turner was justly hung, does not think that Nena Sahib deserves to be quartered alive...⁷⁹

Here Nena Sahib became a metaphorical black slave rebel in the minds of *Whig* readers, adding to white slaveholders' fears of the stereotyped armed black male and cementing the metaphorical narrative of the Sepoy uprising as a foil for the prospect of southern slave rebellion. In the explicit comparison between slaves and Sepoy rebels, and between Nat Turner and Nena Sahib, the *Whig* editor makes clear the distinct fears of the white slaveholding elite; that in the current southern system, the slaveholder was equivalent to the British in India.

⁷⁷ 'Nena Sahib,' *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina) 12 Oct 1857; 'Nena Sahib,' *Federal Union* (Milledgeville, Georgia) 20 Oct 1857.

⁷⁸ 'Barbarism of the Hindoos,' *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia) 18 Sept 1857.

⁷⁹ 'Sepoy Sympathy,' *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, Virginia) 16 October 1857.

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Chapter Six has shown how the focus of the news upon the dreadful atrocities committed against white Europeans in India, those on the same side of the colour line, provided the southern elite readership with the images of the spectre of slave uprising at home. An analysis of southern newspapers shows how the reporting of the events in India betrayed a deep-seated fear of slave rebellion within the South. It also highlights how pervasive the stereotype of the dangerous armed black male was, as the Indian rebel leader, Nena Sahib, became a metaphorical symbol of the danger that black rebelliousness posed to the southern slaveholding system. This case study also serves as an example of how powerful the press was in amplifying the fears and anxieties of the white slaveholding elite on the eve of secession.

Conclusion: A Stable Instability

This thesis has considered how southern newsprint traversed the stereotyped characterizations of African Americans within proslavery ideology whilst simultaneously portraying the visions of slaveholders' worst nightmares. The newspaper press of the South was crucial to both creating and perpetuating fears and anxieties amongst the slaveholding elite, whilst also bolstering slaveholders' moral justification for their exploitation of fellow human beings. In summation, the thesis has shown that the newsprint of the South reveals a distinct form of 'stable instability,' amongst the slaveholding elite, akin to the two alternating states of mind: apathy and horror, described by Wyatt Brown.¹ The thesis began by considering the way that the southern press from 1830 to 1860 represented African Americans and how it negotiated slaveholder's proslavery ideology. In the same way that John Coward's work considers the role of newspapers in the creation and perpetuation of stereotypes of Native Americans, Part One of this thesis has emphasised the importance of the southern newspaper press to the racist hegemony of the South and proslavery propaganda. Coward's work shows that the press' role in the larger cultural system of the nineteenth century should be better understood in order to consider the way that popular Native American or 'Indian' identities were created and maintained.² This thesis has taken a similar approach through highlighting the role of southern newspapers in the larger cultural system of southern plantation slavery.

The need for hegemonic ideas of white supremacy was rooted in different forms of cultural praxis. The racist hegemony of the South used everyday racism in its press to buttress white supremacy and has highlighted how southern slaveholders encountered a constant reinforcement of racist stereotypes and proslavery propaganda when they read their newspapers. By analysing the representation of African Americans in one newspaper, Macon's *Georgia Telegraph*, over two particular periods of time, the work has explored how slaveholding readers absorbed stereotyped images of black people and how this fed a paternalistic justification for enslavement. Such proslavery

¹ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 156-157.

² Coward, *Newspaper Indian*, p. 229.

propaganda bolstered paternalism which had, by the mid 1830s, become so important to the South's ideological battle to defend slavery. The need for these hegemonic ideas of white supremacy to be rooted in popular culture, as seen in chapter one, was a powerful tool, used to normalise and reiterate racist stereotypes. By exploring the seemingly miscellaneous humour items printed in the newspaper, it is possible to explore how deep such ideology ran, and how important print culture was to the cementing of stereotypes and proslavery ideology. Through the analysis of jokes and comic stories with very clear racist stereotyping, (much of which was influenced by increasingly popular minstrel shows), chapter one was able to show how proslavery ideology infiltrated so many aspects of slaveholding life, even down to those miscellaneous items in the local newspaper.

Chapter Two explored how inclusions of proslavery propaganda in the *Georgia Telegraph* in the form of stories of runaway or manumitted slaves who begged to return 'home' to the plantation, fed a psychological need for the moral justification of slavery for the slaveholding readership of Bibb County, Georgia, and beyond. Through numerous examples of the printing of stories about enslaved people who begged to return to slavery, or who begged not to be freed at all, the *Telegraph* sent a message to readers that African Americans wanted to be enslaved and were content under slavery. Portraying the North (and other places where black people could live freely) as hostile environments in which the black person was unable to prosper, cemented the image of the idyllic southern plantation home, where all members of the family, white and black, could live in harmony and wellbeing. Stories of black people who could not cope in conditions of freedom further emphasized to slaveholders the importance of their benevolence as masters and mistresses and emboldened their belief in the righteousness of slavery as a common good. This constant reiteration of racist stereotypes was required in order to paper over the cracks in slaveholder's confidence in their system of racial oppression. As such, newspaper content, however miscellaneous, should be considered as an important socio-psychological tool in creating the stability that held in check southern slaveholding instability.

On the other hand, instability can also be seen throughout the southern press. Proslavery ideology and propaganda was juxtaposed with news stories that revealed the anxieties inherent in the southern slaveholding system. Despite the attempts of newspapers such

as the *Georgia Telegraph*, to erase the image of the rebellious slave in their midst by wallpapering over institutional contradictions with Sambo-like characterisations of happy southern slaves, it was not always so easy to hide the image of the possibility of slave revolt from their pages when such images came from foreign news. Indeed, many of the planters' own worst fears about the bloody nature of revolt were embodied in the reporting of foreign events by fellow white elites abroad. Part two of the thesis reached beyond the borders of the southern states, to the Caribbean, to consider how two particular news topics were focal points for southern slaveholding readers. These were news topics that drew attention to the inherent instability of the system that their paternalistic ideology attempted to conceal and stabilise. This reveals the nuances and complexities of how foreign news was reported and could be interpreted by the southern elite. The way that news from the Caribbean could be used to bolster both southern paternalist ideology and belief in the trustworthiness of southern slaves by, for example, apportioning blame for slave resistance on 'outsiders' such as abolitionists and British interference. But simultaneously, such news could also reveal the deep anxieties of southern slaveholders in terms of the potential for black resistance in the South.

In chapter three, the thesis considered the fears and anxieties expressed in southern reporting of the activities of the British West India Regiments (from 1839-1860) and the potential that they might invade the southern coastline, in turn inspiring slave rebellion. This provides a fascinating case study of how outside influences, such as the reporting concerning the West India Regiments, can shed light on the various anxieties inherent in proslavery ideology. A key theme of this chapter, was the focus on Anglophobia as a form of psychological crutch in the daily lives of slaveholders in the decades leading to the Civil War. Anglophobic rhetoric allowed fearful slaveholders to believe that any real threat came from beyond their own society. So long as there was no infiltration of abolitionist ideas to their slaves, slaveholders were safe- the real threat was from British and northern abolitionists who might trick otherwise happy slaves into rebelling. Such Anglophobia must have seemed far more threatening when the 'outside threat' was free black soldiers, under the military command of white officers. The fear then was that the enslaved would escape to fight for the British and help end the institution of slavery. In this sense, Anglophobia became both a psychological crutch and a source of incredible paranoia; yet another example of stable instability. It allowed the daily life of the slaveholders to continue without fear of their slaves so long as no British invasion

seemed imminent, whilst simultaneously, it also offered a vision of the cataclysmic destruction of their entire way of life.

The fears expressed about a disciplined black army led by an abolitionist imperial power reveal the true nature of southern anxiety over the stability of the South's own form of white supremacy. Outwardly abolitionist, imperial Britain continued to utilise brown and black bodies for its own benefit while, at the same time, condemning the South's slavery. This was done in the interests of Britain's own form of capitalism and construction of 'whiteness.' The southern press portrayed the West India Regiments as so menacing because the British foe had enabled black men to take on the characteristics of a disciplined and armed white army. Southern newspapers repeated stories suggesting that this efficient and orderly force would invade, and that it would then urge and embolden the enslaved to rebel, thereby unleashing a cataclysm on the slaveholders and slaveholding system of the South. For the elites of the southern states, the threat from the black slave within, which had hitherto been kept in check, combined with the machinations of the imperialist foe and his black troops abroad, created a perfect storm. In different but, for a short time, complementary ways, both challenged the form of white supremacy that underpinned the South and its collective psyche.

Chapter Four also considered the use of Anglophobia to bolster the confidence of a southern proslavery stance whilst simultaneously adding to the innermost anxieties of the southern slaveholding elite. By analysing how Southern newspapers reported the news of a slave rebellion conspiracy, *Conspiracion de la Escalera* in Cuba in 1843-44, the chapter showed that the news from Cuba provided southern slaveholders with a mirror in which to analyse their own form of slavery. The news highlighted to slaveholders the possibilities of slave rebellion at home, whilst also bolstering their reliance on their paternalistic ideology. Southern newspapers were able to criticise the Cuban system of slavery, thereby strengthening the belief in the superiority of the southern form of slavery, whilst simultaneously highlighting visions of black resistance and abolitionist plotting that propagated the fear of slave rebellion in the South. Ultimately, by identifying British interference and poor management of slaves as the explanations for events in Cuba, southern editors were able to reassure southern slaveholders that their slaves would not rebel as they were safe from outside influence and were cared for unconditionally by their masters and mistresses.

As discussed in Part Two, the southern press often portrayed both internal and foreign events within a paranoid style, with clear emphasis on plotting and outside influences. A preoccupation of the southern press was the fear of the British and their role in abolition. Such Anglophobic rhetoric can be seen time and time again and is highlighted in Part Two of the thesis as an important form of slaveholder deflection from the agency and capacity for resistance of enslaved individuals. Reporting of Cuba's slave uprisings in 1843 was a terrifying vision of what was a real possibility in the South, but it also provided southern slaveholders with powerful messages with which to bolster their own ideological justifications for slavery. While Part Two of the thesis discussed how Anglophobia was used as a psychological crutch to bolster slaveholder's belief in their own paternalist ideology and the trustworthiness of their slaves, Part Three of the thesis looked at how global ideas of whiteness could trump Anglophobia in instances where the notion of a global system of white supremacy added further weight to the slaveholding cause, especially where it provided strength to notions of racial hierarchy.

Part Three of this thesis has drawn attention to the importance of challenging traditional views of American, and specifically southern, exceptionalism. Calling for a greater use of a comparative global approach to the study of the early United States, Rosemarie Zagarri argues that the 'global turn will help us to rewrite the history of the early American republic not only as the story of a nation among nations but as of an empire among empires'. Using this approach to look at the Indian Uprising in the southern context allows us to see how 'a discourse of white racial superiority extended across the globe' with similar racial practices emerging in India and the US concurrently.³ Crucially, as Mediratta has argued, 'the Sepoy revolt and its metaphorical travels to the US provide us an interesting lens with which to further complicate the tangled web of nineteenth century imperialism and help showcase the ways these narratives contributed to consolidating an international imperialist vocabulary around race and insurrection.'⁴

The southern form of white supremacy was an unstable formation linked inherently to international events beyond the South. The thesis has stressed how global matters of whiteness ultimately came to structure how the South perceived itself in the lead up to

³ Zagarri, 'The Significance of the 'Global Turn' for the Early American Republic,' p. 36.

⁴ Mediratta, 'The Affair of the Greased Cartridge,' p. 16.

secession. Despite such Anglophobia and fear of abolitionists, southern slaveholders could also find it within themselves to support the British when it came to the maintenance of a global hierarchy of whiteness. This is clearly the case with the sympathy shown towards the British in the case of the Indian Uprising of 1857. News of the Uprising was reported and read across a global colour line, which posited the superiority of the white or 'European' against the 'darker races,' thereby developing a framework through which southerners could amplify their own internal fears about the possibility of slave rebellion. Despite many negative attitudes towards the British, the way that the southern press largely reported the Indian Uprising by way of drawing parallels with their own situation and reprinting British sensationalist accounts, provides us with an example of how competing white elite men, on a global scale, in specific moments, laid their enmity to rest, in the face of a potential challenge to both from those below the colour line. This research shows clearly that Peter James Hudson's criticisms of recent scholarship of slavery's role in the emergence of modern capitalism are valid. Race was not incidental to the rise of capitalism- the whiteness of white men mattered, on a global scale, as did the 'darkness' of people of colour.⁵

Whilst part one of the thesis provides a far clearer understanding of how slaveholding society used its print culture in the form of newspapers to bolster proslavery ideology, parts two and three reveal the underlying instability of southern slaveholders' belief in their 'peculiar institution.' Anglophobia reveals both a form of reassurance and also immense paranoia. Visions of a world turned upside-down are frequently described, with images conjured of the feared spectre of rebellion in the South and black resistance. On the other hand, reporting could highlight the ability and strength of white power to regain control and repress black resistance. Much of the newspaper coverage considered in parts two and three portrays the conflicting confidence and paranoia of proslavery ideology in support of white supremacy and slaveholders' self-deceiving confidence in such ideology in order to sleep well at night. Just as the southern slaveholding mind was complicated between self-deceiving confidence and fear, between apathy and horror, so the news of foreign activity and events could reveal both sides of that dichotomy.

⁵ Peter James Hudson, *The Racist Dawn of Capitalism: Unearthing the economy of bondage*, March 14 2016. <http://bostonreview.net/books-ideas/peter-james-hudson-slavery-capitalism>

Paul Naish argues that Americans of the antebellum period often talked about slavery by discussing it through metaphor and contextual substitution.⁶ This is precisely what this thesis has demonstrated. Sometimes this is open to interpretation, but more often than not, the contextual substitution and the comparisons being made were clearly spelt out for the reader, as shown in many examples in Parts Two and Three of this thesis. Southern slavery, southern white supremacy and the fear inherent in that system, were navigated through foreign news: news showing that black people could be as militarized as white people or that Indian rebels symbolised the slaves that might rebel on southern plantations. Such news coverage reveals how the South was both a local society and a global society. The slaveholding elite were very internationally aware. Given the global interconnection of southern plantation slavery with the wider emerging global capitalist economy of the nineteenth century, it is no coincidence that newspapers in the South were attuned to international as well as local news. It is also no surprise that such reporting made connections with systems of racial domination in other places; the slaveholders of the South were plugged into a system of global white supremacy. The content of southern newspapers, as considered in this thesis, reveal the paradoxes of justifying the enslavement of fellow human beings, the inherent racism at the heart of the development of modern capitalism and how the white supremacist antebellum South functioned in a constant state of stable and neurotic instability.

⁶ Naish, *Slavery and Silence*.

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Standard (Clarksville, Texas)
Star of Florida (Tallahassee, Florida)
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Texian Democrat (Houston, Texas).
The Cecil Whig (Elkton, Maryland)
The Charleston Mercury (Charleston, South Carolina),
The Daily Advocate (Baton Rouge, Louisiana)
The Daily Globe (Washington, D.C.)
The Daily Journal (Wilmington, North Carolina)
The Daily Madisonian (Washington, D.C.)
The Daily Picayune (New Orleans, Louisiana)
The Daily True Delta (New Orleans, Louisiana)
The Federal Union (Milledgeville, Georgia)
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