COMPLICATING THE PATRIARCHY:

ELITE AND ENSLAVED BUSINESSWOMEN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY ATLANTIC WORLD

by

ALISHA MARIE CROMWELL

(Under the Direction of Allan Kulikoff)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on how elite and enslaved businesswomen successfully participated in both the Atlantic market and the local marketplace. Based on extensive archival research throughout the U.S. South and Jamaica, this project traces the complicated movements of Mary Anne Cowper and her enslaved domestic from Jamaica, Flora. Mary Anne was slaveholder who was able to take part in male-dominated commerce due to her elite familial networks that flowed around the Atlantic World. Her status provided benefits for Flora, who helped to transform traditional European and African gender roles in the Savannah marketplace. By means of a fictive kinship system, Flora contributed to the public market, earned a small income, and maintained certain freedoms in a slave society. The intertwined lives of Mary Anne and Flora provide a unique example of the economic relationships that slavery created among women in the Atlantic World.

INDEX WORDS: Slavery; Freedom; Capitalism; Gender; Women; Market; Marketplace; Economy; Elite; Enslaved; Jamaica; Savannah; Kinship; Slaveholder

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DEDICATION

To Dawn, Jon, and Stella

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INTRODUCTION

Modern capitalism is built on a foundation of slavery. Elite women from across the Atlantic World helped to construct this base, and they were just as ruthless and economically self-serving as men. Enslaved people also contributed to modern economic culture by incorporating African trading techniques into American marketplaces. Although the economic history of the Atlantic World has been portrayed as deriving solely from English commerce, the reality of our past is much more diverse. Muslims, Africans, and women were all significant contributors in shaping our economy, and this study situates their experiences within a new interpretation of American history.

Through a microhistory of gender, economics, and slavery, this dissertation focuses on the economic relationship between Mary Anne Cowper and her enslaved domestic, Flora. Looking at Africa, Jamaica, and Savannah, I argue that elite and enslaved women in urban environments contributed to the commercial culture of the Atlantic World and did so independently from men. Women from opposing social statuses worked together to transform how domestic goods were bought and sold in the local marketplaces of the Caribbean and the American South by acculturating both European and African gendered traditions. Mary Anne and Flora illustrate how personal relationships established economic motives for maneuvers of women in a male-dominated society. Monetary transactions between mistresses and enslaved workers fueled an internal local economy that functioned alongside the emerging global capitalist market of the nineteenth century. This "parallel economy" allowed enslaved individuals to participate in the process of supply and demand, and their contributions have been hidden in

plain sight.[1] Historical records reveal ample evidence of female participation in the Atlantic World economy. Historians just need to look more closely to find them.

The actions of many women remain concealed in the historical record because their work was so natural to the gendered order of society that they went unmentioned by the powerful. However, a Common Place Book and many letters of Mary Anne Cowper offer a picture of the lives of single, slave-holding women. She never married, and the only reason Mary Anne's economic records survived at all was because of her cousin Eliza McQueen Mackay. When Eliza died in 1862, her children kept her papers and passed them down to succeeding generations. The Mackay - Stiles Family Papers were donated to the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill by Mrs. Phoebe Elliot, Mrs. F.B. Screven, Mrs. Clinton Lockwood, and Mrs. Clifford Carlton during the 1930s and 1940s. Robert Mackay's letters were donated by Elizabeth Mackay Screven to the Georgia Society of Colonial Dames, and they were published in 1949. These southern women made sure that their heritage was archived, and family members like Mary Anne's nephew twice removed, Hugh Stiles Golson, continue to organize documents and uncover information in attempts to understand their family's past in ways that reflect our shared future.

While Mary Anne Cowper was not the main subject of any of these collections, her letters, Common Place Books, plantation registers, and other miscellaneous documents were shuffled in with the other familial papers. In some instances, like with her Common Place Book, the archives did not identify her as the primary author in the finding aids, so the statements of credit, accounts, and other financial transactions that showed her keen business sense were instinctively contributed to Robert Mackay. Now that these records have been properly attributed

[1] A more complete definition of the "parallel economy" is provided in Chapter 4, page 110.

to her, they show that Mary Anne conducted much business on the global market and in the local marketplace, and her Common Place Book offers the initial evidence for an investigation of elite women and their connections to the economy of the Atlantic World.

The Cowper family's adventures were a topic of great interest to Eliza and Robert Mackay. Personal correspondence from several family members was published in the *Letters of Don Juan McQueen to His Family* and the *Letters of Robert Mackay to His Wife*. By utilizing the methodology of a microhistory, recognizing the nicknames for the Cowpers, and identifying in the letters the dates and places they visited, I was able to piece together the trajectory of Mary Anne's life. To corroborate the information in these letters, I conducted research throughout the American South and Jamaica. In these locales, I found court documents, inventories, slave schedules, and other primary documents that enabled me to trace the movements of Mary Anne and Flora as they traversed the Atlantic Ocean. Their lives became connected as their names appeared together on a combination of documents from England to Jamaica to Savannah.

Mary Anne's life was not the only one to have been resurrected by microhistory. In order to uncover the lived experiences of enslaved people, historians must look beyond the silences that seem to leave these people with no voices of their own. Like Carlo Ginsburg's Italian miller Menocchio, Natalie Zemon Davis's French peasant Martin Geurre, and Alfred F. Young's revolutionary George Robert Twelves Hewes, non-elite people had been integral participants in history, but their stories were only discovered through microhistory.[2] By investigating private letters of the elite, local newspapers, public records, and government documents, historians found the voices of previously unknown figures who had participated in significant events – like

[2] For more information on Microhistory, see Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory" in Peter Burke, *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 93-113.

the Italian Inquisition, the Hundred Years' War, and the Boston Tea Party -- and created new interpretations of these events that included the perspectives of everyday people.[3]

Similarly, the enslaved people owned by Mary Anne and her family members become noticeable in letters, account books, and plantation documents. The "common people" of the American South were enslaved.[4] Their stories are told in scattered form by the people who owned them. Receipts for slave sales, contracts for hiring-out bondsmen, names on lists for the blankets and shoes given out on plantations, and casual mentions in personal letters provide details about the people who were owned by Mary Anne's family and thereby could not leave their own records. When I began to use microhistory as a model and looked at "the everyday life and lived experiences of concrete individuals" in these documents, I realized that the families and kinship networks of the enslaved people owned by the Cowper family could be traced out.[5] By combining different research methods as microhistory does, I reconstructed the histories of enslaved people like Flora, who have otherwise been excluded from economic narratives.

In order to uncover the gendered silences of women in the Atlantic economy of the nineteenth century, this study joins together the categories of race, class, and gender to examine how both elite women and enslaved individuals contributed to the economic culture of the American South, regardless of their sex or skin color. Most studies of slavery and gender have

[3] Carlo Ginsburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller*, translated by John and Anne Tedeschi (NY: Penguin Books, 1982), xiv; Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 2-5; Alfred F. Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1999), x.

[4] According to Al Young, the "Common People" were those who had no history because they could not read or write so did not record their own lives in any type of primary source document. This term can also refer to enslaved individuals as well.

[5] Geof Eley, *A Crooked Line: From Cultural History to the History of Society* (University of Michigan Press, 2008), 157.

pushed economics and class position to the background. In the early 1980s, Catherine Clinton was one of the first historians to look seriously at women and their relationship to slavery, asking "Where were the women?" in the abundant scholarship on American slavery. In order to rectify this situation, she found women's voices everywhere in southern archives and pieced together an array of sources that added the perspective of women to slave studies. *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South* (1982) demonstrated that elite women were important in maintaining the southern slave system; however, for Clinton, elite and enslaved women developed intimate relationships, and she claimed that they both suffered equally under the patriarchal yoke of slavery. [6] Her focus tended to remain on elite mistresses and did not include enslaved women as serious participants in their own stories.

Deborah Gray White amended the lack of agency attributed to African and African American women in the plantation South with *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (1985). She found that enslaved people had their own unique culture that was separate from their mistresses and that these bondwomen played important roles as mothers, lovers, and skilled workers on plantations. She found that "many first-generation African women raised their children without male assistance," which "helped to preserve that part of African culture that put emphasis on motherhood" that women passed down to future generations.[7] This cultural continuity in addition to a lack of enslaved male control over women created an egalitarian quality that meant "in her relationships with a lover or husband she was an equal partner."[8] White argued that enslaved women created kinship networks across plantations to pass

[6] Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South* (NY: Pantheon Books, 1982), xii.

[7] Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South, Revised Edition* (NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 69.

[8] White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?*, 158.

on their African heritage and to resist the degradation of slavery. This bold study gave African and African American woman a history that was connected to the African motherland, which paved the way for future studies that argued enslaved people had cultures separate from their masters' or mistresses' beliefs.

Elizabeth Fox Genovese combined these two groups of plantation women into one study, looking at how elite and enslaved women interacted on the plantation. *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (1988) established the "household" as a category of analysis.[9] By claiming that the southern household was the "dominant unit of production and reproduction" that "guaranteed the power of men in society," Fox-Genovese showed that the model of public/private spheres that had been so prominent in current feminist scholarship did not actually work for the South.[10] Her reinterpretation of the southern household as "in but not of the bourgeoisie world" explained how social relations were predicated on the "master-slave" relationship and not on the growing capitalist mode of production.[11] Like Catherine Clinton and Deborah Gray White, Fox-Genovese found ample evidence of the gender dynamics between elite and enslaved women. However, similarly to Clinton, she focused more attention on elite women's self-perceptions in relation to their male counterparts and simplified their complicated relationships with enslaved women.

One of the most recent commentaries on women and slavery in the American South has come from Thavolia Glymph, who challenged the romanticized notion of the plantation mistress as a gentle paragon of female virtue that both Clinton and Fox-Genovese attempted to portray.

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[9] The "Household" had yet to be taken seriously by scholars as a part of the social structure of the Old South.

[10] Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 38.

[11] Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 55.

In *Out of the House of Bondage: the Transformation of the Plantation Household* (2008), Glymph connected "white women's exercise of power in the domestic realm to black women's understanding of the kind of freedom they wanted to have and build."[12] For Glymph, elite and enslaved women had no intimate bonds because both were subservient to male power. Regardless of their own suffering under the slave system, elite women used their power to maintain authority and to define themselves from enslaved women, which they often did violently. She argued that violence "permeated the plantation household, where the control and management of slaves required white women's active participation and authorized the exercise of brute or sadistic force."[13] By destabilizing the façade of the elite mistress as a southern belle, Glymph established a new interpretation of the plantation household as a place of contested power. In this setting, elite women used force to maintain control, and enslaved women resisted through various means, including maintaining kinship ties and family networks.

My study is built on the works of these historians but differs in two important respects. First, I have moved the study of gender and slavery from the plantation to the urban environment. The women that I focus on neither lived in rural isolation nor depended on men for support. These women lived independently from the patriarchy and maintained their own economic affairs throughout the Atlantic World. Although she owned many enslaved individuals, Mary Anne did not grow up on a plantation. Mary Anne spent the majority of her young adulthood in London, and she was cosmopolitan in a way that her plantation sisters could never have been. For years at a time, she was never in close contact with her chattels and managed them from afar. Accordingly, she had no need to learn the lessons of violence as a

[12] Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: the Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 11.

[13] Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, 33.

means of control that the women in Glymph's study did. Mary Anne's version of slave management was predicated on notions of the feudal aristocracy, and she treated her enslaved workers in a manner similar to English serfs. Whereas plantation mistresses used violence to maintain their status, Mary Anne and absentee slaveholder who utilized economic incentives to keep control over her chattels, allowing them to participate in the local market economy in ways that contradicted the most basic tenets of slavery.

Second, I argue both elite and enslaved women's economic independence permitted them commercial experiences that influenced the social relations of production. These relationships began to reflect a more capitalist organization for enslaved workers than what was expected in a slave society. Mary Anne hired-out many of her skilled laborers, and she expected them to provide a stipulated sum to her monthly. She became the owner of the means of her urban workers' production, extracting their surplus value in a way that could not have happened in a plantation regime. While she sold her cotton on the global market, she also used her profits to purchase stocks in banks, railroads, and other capitalistic ventures. She did not reinvest her money back into more land or slaves; instead, she diversified her portfolio to weather financial storms, like in the Panic of 1819. Mary Anne controlled labor in a way that was reminiscent of the factory owners in England, and she became a wealthy woman doing so. Through her elite status, the enslaved workers connected to her could participate in the local marketplace, which allowed them to create a parallel economy that benefited them and functioned specifically for a slave society. Mary Anne and her enslaved workers pushed the boundaries of economic participation, and their relationships allowed elements of free wage labor into the southern marketplace through both independent economic production and consumption.

The major studies of slavery and capitalism, from the influential work of Eric Williams to more contemporary studies from Sven Beckert and Edward Baptist, have also omitted the contributions of women to the growing capitalist economy that developed during the long nineteenth century. While slavery is used as an analytical model to show the rise of capital accumulation through the physical and reproductive labor of enslaved people, male scholars seldom consider gender to be an important element in this story. Ignoring gender distinctions from an analysis of the market implies that capitalism sprung about solely from the minds and machinations of European men. In these new studies, enslaved people are either field slaves or domestic servants who were confined to the plantation. Historians do not see elite women and enslaved people as autonomous economic actors. Those working in the urban environment are completely ignored since they do not fit the typical slavery/capitalism model. Enslaved women have been completely excluded from the story, and only their reproductive labor, a violent and brutal business of creating new workers, is discussed in the context of the plantation economy. The majority of urban slaveholders in the certain areas of the Caribbean were women and by investigating female slaveholders in the urban areas of the South, this study details how the relationships between elite and enslaved women in West Africa were transferred to, and then acculturated in southern cities.[14] By focusing on female slaveholders and their hired-out workers, a new interpretation of how capitalism entered into slave society will show that both groups were integral in shaping the local economies of the South. Women managed the intrusion of capitalist behaviors into the local southern marketplaces.

[14] For further information about female slaveholders in the Caribbean see: Pedro Welch, *Slave Society in the City: Bridgetown, Barbados 1680-1834* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2003); Hilary McD. Beckles, "An Economic Life of their Own: Slaves as Commodity Producers and Distributors in Barbados" in *The Slaves Economy: Independent Production by Slaves in the Americas*, ed. by Ira Berlin and Philip Morgan (Frank Cass, 1991); Hilary McD Beckles, *more than cha* (Kingston, JA: Ian Randle Publishers, 1999); *More Than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas*, eds. David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

Scholars have also disregarded of female contributions to the economic culture of the Atlantic World in Britain, the West Indies, West Africa, and mainland America. Women were more than just the bakers of pies and the tillers of fields; they were also integral to the formation of a separate and distinct southern economy. Through a household mode of production, women created a "mediating link between slavery on the one hand and capitalism on the other," which Michael Merrill claims could "overcome not only the pronounced sectional bias of much of historiography, but also the ahistorical separation of slavery itself from other parts of Southern history."[15] According to David Eltis, given "the centrality of the role of women in West African agriculture and textiles, the work of women was closer to the core of the African economy than was its English counterpart."[16] European women did not come to the New World to labor in any skilled fields, and Eltis has pointed out that "the migration data thus suggest that women of European descent were never a significant part of the labor force of the export sectors of the Atlantic economies."[17] Due to the differences in African and European gender roles and conceptions of gender, enslaved women moved more freely in a commercial sphere, whereas elite women could not participate in regular market activities without causing a scandal.

These societal roles reflected those of elite Muslim women living in West African purdah and their enslaved domestics. Muslim women of all classes came involuntarily to the shores of the New World during the Atlantic Slave trade, and they subtly influenced American economic culture. Historians have argued that Muslims were given more "responsibility and privileges"

[15] Michael Merrill, "Cash is Good to Eat: Self-Sufficiency and Exchange in the Rural Economy of the United States," *Radical History Review* 13 (1977): 42-71.

[16] David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 92.

[17] Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery*, 99.

than other enslaved people and that their religion affected both African American art and southern Christianity, but economics has not yet been considered an important factor for acculturation.[18] With the support and encouragement of their urban mistresses, some women with Islamic roots helped to control the local food markets, and together they fashioned a very specific economic system that reflected the marketing practices of Muslim women in West Africa.

To develop the connections between West African economic traditions and those in the American South, I have used a wide range of non-traditional sources and methodologies that trace out women's commercial roles in the African past. Anthropologists have attempted to locate women in the material culture and historical record of pre-colonial Northern Nigeria, and researchers have begun to look for alternative types of evidence about businesswomen. In order to provide a comparative approach for this study, I have used examples from different African time periods. This method should not be taken to suggest that Africa was unchanging in the pre-colonial era; instead, women and their place in African societies must be researched in more depth in order for scholars to understand the historical context, even if they have to be extricated from their time periods to do so. Pulling sources from different eras has provided a way to illuminate a trajectory of African women's participation in trade, in long-distance markets, and in local marketplaces.

Women in West Africa have had a long history of market participation, but the sources needed to understand their roles in society are hard to access. Archival restrictions, the harsh climate of West Africa, and multiple wars have made it difficult to find sources for constructing the daily lives of female business owners prior to British colonization. Although family archives

[18] Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 82.

contain many scholarly texts created by elite women, western researchers seldom receive access to those collections. In addition, women did not sign their written work in the Islamic historical record, so many scholarly interpretations of the Quran were not attributed to the women who authored them. Further, West African ecology and different types of paper-eating insects have also helped to destroy written records that were stored in non-climate controlled facilities. Finally, several local wars have been fought in major cities and towns, which have caused the destruction of many public sites, archives, and museums.

Like Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, the chapters of this dissertation are arranged in tandem to show how Mary Anne and Flora influenced each other as well as southern economic culture. The first and third chapters introduce Mary Anne Cowper and explain her participation in the both the Atlantic economy and the local labor market of Savannah. From Africa and the Caribbean to the American South, elite women like Mary Anne benefited from and sustained slavery. Through a culture of inheritance, women could own as well as manage property, which allowed many to participate in the economy of the Atlantic World. Mary Anne utilized her familial connections to participate in this male-dominated world of global commerce, and her wealth allowed her to make economic decisions that were not possible for most women during the nineteenth century.

The second and fourth chapters introduce Flora and explain how she developed kinship networks, participated in the Savannah public market, earned a small income, and maintained certain freedoms in a slave society. The name Flora appeared in multiple places throughout the letters, accounts, legal documents and the Common Place Book of Mary Anne Cowper, while my trip to Jamaica revealed that she had a mother and brother and family members on the Barron Hill plantation, which thus gave her a family history. Enslaved women like Flora used their kinship networks and gendered status in a slave society to participate in local food markets.

These women could move about urban areas unmolested and conduct economic transactions on their own behalf because they had the power of their mistresses behind them. Mary Anne's influential status provided benefits for Flora as she performed and transformed traditional European and African gender roles in the marketplace. The intertwined lives of Mary Anne Cowper and Flora are a unique example of the economic relationships that slavery created.

In each chapter, I have created visual representations of Mary Anne's movements and the informal or "parallel" economy that Flora maneuvered in to show the gendered connection that existed between the rural and urban areas of Charleston and Savannah. Enslaved men traveled the routes, but enslaved market women controlled the distribution of goods once they hit the cities. Both elite and enslaved women contributed to the economic culture of the Lowcountry, one in the Atlantic World economy, the other in the local Savannah marketplace. Although scholars have thoroughly searched archives for information about slave life, no one has analyzed the movements of enslaved women outside of the plantation and plotted their movements on a map.

Scholars are just beginning to understand the power of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to quantify historical data, to perform spatial analysis, and to create interactive maps. Through GIS, I have created an interactive dissertation, **https://tinyurl.com/lys9trs.** Clicking the link will bring the reader to the ARC GIS website where the content for my maps, "Atlantic World Connections" is stored. The presentation link (**https://tinyurl.com/mgaof2m**) shows a series of maps that exemplify the analysis in this text. I have provided visual evidence of both Mary Anne's movements around the Atlantic World and Flora's around Savannah. I have also created a visual representation of the ships that moved twenty percent or more women from West Africa to Charleston and Savannah from 1752-1807. Hovering over each point will offer the

reader further data about each attribute. This study has allowed me to combine historical research methods with modern technology to push the study of history into the digital age.

This dissertation challenges the current narrative of a dominant patriarchal economic structure with evidence that female power was also an important element in the rise of capital accumulation in the Atlantic world. Women's labor, both productive and reproductive, has been placed into the private sphere for too long, which has enabled modern societies to pay women less than men for equal work and attempt to control women's reproductive choices. These constructs have also contributed to women remaining second-class citizens. Through uncovering the economic realities of both elite and enslaved women's lives, we can provide a more conclusive history that validates the contributions of women to the wealth and status of modern America.

CHAPTER 1

THE LIFE AND TRAVELS OF MARY ANNE COWPER

Mary Anne Cowper was a woman of the Atlantic World. She was born on the Savannah River at the dawn of the Revolutionary War, spent an aristocratic childhood near London, and passed her adolescence in the hot isolation of the Barron Hill pimento plantation in Jamaica.[19] After her father's death in 1802, Mary Anne, her younger sister Margaret, and their mother traveled from place to place, dependent on their investments, plantation holdings, and the political winds of the Revolutionary Atlantic to keep them afloat.[20] Settled in Savannah, Georgia and still unmarried at 65 years old, Mary Anne Cowper had inherited properties and plantations along with hundreds of human bodies with a total value of over two million dollars. With a keen business sense and her male relatives acting as surrogates, she directed an economic empire that stretched across the Greater Caribbean, from Savannah to Jamaica and even into England (Slide 1). By the time of her death at 80 years of age in 1856, Mary Anne had successfully navigated the plantation economy of the Atlantic World as a "femme sole" and could bequeath hard cash, liquid capital, several plantations, urban houses, cotton bales, and even the unborn children of enslaved bodies to her primarily female relatives.[21] Mary Anne Cowper was a successful

[19] *The Letters of Don Juan McQueen to His Family*, ed. Walter Charlton Hartridge (The Georgia Society of the Colonial Dames of America, 1943), 27. *The Letters of Robert Mackay to His Wife*, ed by Walter Charlton Hartridge (The Georgia Society of the Colonial Dames of America, 1949), 254-55,274.

[20] Mackay-Stiles Papers, #3145, Vol. 470, Series E.6 (Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; hereinafter cited as (SHC))

[21] A *femme sole* is a single woman who does not depend on a male to provide for her, nor does any male have authority over her.

participant in the emerging capitalist global market that relied on cotton and rice, but it was her relationship to slavery that allowed her, and many other single, elite females of the Atlantic slave-holding societies, to remain independent of male control. In the process of utilizing slavery for their economic gain, these women and their enslaved workers complicate the narrative of the South and exemplify how both elite and enslaved women could move in and out of capitalistic and non-capitalistic environments together due to their perceived gendered positions in a slave society.

Throughout her life, Mary Anne would own people, property, and stock in England, Jamaica, New York, South Carolina, and Georgia. She also travelled extensively to each of these places and visited Florida and Barbados as well. At the age of 42, she would make her permanent home in Savannah, Georgia, where her familial roots had been deeply planted. By 1819, Mary Anne had chosen to settle down as an independent woman to manage her global affairs from her large house on the bustling corner of Abercorn and W. Bay, directly across from the wharves and the Georgia customs house. She had inherited this prime piece of real estate from her aristocratic British Aunt, Lady Sarah Williamson Wright, who had inherited it from her mother, Elizabeth Williamson Smith, the wealthy native daughter of some of the first slave owners in South Carolina (Slide 5). Mary Anne Cowper was raised in a family of plantation owners and merchants who had connections to many wealthy and prosperous businessmen and women throughout the Atlantic economy. At the time of Mary Anne Cowper's death in 1856, she had amassed a 2-million-dollar fortune. Her wealth, privilege, and aristocratic upbringing in England allowed Mary Anne Cowper to live her life with choice, which was a rare thing for a woman to have in the nineteenth century. She chose not to marry, she chose to live in Savannah, and she chose how to invest her wealth. She also chose to hire out many of her enslaved workers to

skilled jobs and to let an overseer deal with her plantation holdings. Mary Anne Cowper participated, and succeeded, in the global market as a single woman. However, histories of single and widowed elite women have yet to explore how they propped up this system of human exploitation in order to remain independent of the patriarchy.

Mary Anne's interpersonal connections to slavery were limited by the standards of women like Mary Boykin Chesnut because she spent many of her adolescent and adult years in England and did not personally interact with any of the people over whom she had mastery for a decade at a time, relying on surrogates and the enslaved themselves to adhere to her orders.[22] She relied on the profits of slavery to allow her to live like a proper single lady in elite society. Mary Anne Cowper was a keen woman who understood business. The style of slave management she practiced for her urban and domestic enslaved workers allowed for much independence, which reflected the style of Jamaican slave owners. By the 1770s, both Charleston and Savannah had developed into very West Africanized ports, where bondspeople dominated the market place as both vendors and consumers.[23] Much of the wealth Mary Anne created and inherited was directly related to the initial settling and use of slave labor in Georgia, from which she profited greatly, but she understood an economic nature of slavery that shifted beyond the plantation and cash crops.

Mary Anne was raised in England, but she did not take on the abolitionist sentiment that ignited many British women into political action in the nineteenth century. Fanny Kemble, the famous stage actress and diarist, noticed the lack of European servants in the South when she

[22] For more information on Mary Boykin Chesnut, see C. Vann Woodward, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, reprint (Yale University Press, 1993).

[23] Betty Wood, *Women's Work, Men's Work: The Informal Slave Economies of Lowcountry Georgia* (University of Georgia Press, 1995), 81.

brought her own Irish maid, Margery O'Brien, to her husband's plantation on the Georgia Sea Islands in 1838.[24] She stated that her chattels "have no idea, of course, of a white person performing any of the offices of a servant" and that they were perplexed by the position that Margery held.[25] For these Sea Island plantation workers, the sight of a European woman performing the duties of a maid was unsettling. "Fanny," the beautiful and accomplished stage actress from England, lived for five years on the Butler Island plantation, where she wrote her famous *Journal of a Residence on a Georgia Plantation* that outlined the deprivations and horrors of slavery. She was born in 1809 in London to a theatrical family and came to America as a queen of the stage in 1832, playing to audiences that included Dolly Madison and John Quincy Adams.[26] Mrs. Francis Anne Kemble married Pierce Butler on June 7, 1834. At that time, she did not realize that her husband's wealth was derived from slavery.[27] This woman from England spent her days on the Georgia Sea Island plantation reading, writing, and thinking about slavery and its abolition at the same time that Mary Anne Cowper was in Savannah inheriting more and more slave property from her female relatives. The distinction between the two seemingly similar women of the elite class can be found in the language that they used to describe their human property. Throughout her *Journal*, Fanny Kemble never wrote about her enslaved chattels as "servants" or "domestics," whereas Mary Anne only referred to them in those terms, never stating in her letters that she owned "slaves."[28] The obfuscation of language

[24] Francis Anne Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgia Plantation in 1838-1839,* ed. by John A. Scott (Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), xv.

[25] Kemble, *Jour*nal, 82.

[26] Kemble, *Journal*, xxxvi

[27] Kemble, *Journal*, xvi

[28] Kemble, *Journal*; Hugh Stiles Golson Collection of Stiles Family Papers, MS #1624 (Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, GA; hereafter cited as GHS).

by Mary Anne had roots in her interpretation of female gender roles in the early British economy and through her words, she attempted to maintain the fiction that her slaves were in fact very amiable servants.

Mary Anne was able to refer to her enslaved chattels as servants because her family had been connected to slavery for generations, and they had established a paternalistic landscape on their plantations that moved through kinship networks. Her grandfather, John Smith, was a Scottish emigrant who had "come over to this country in company with General Oglethorpe on his second voyage" to Savannah in 1736.[29] Smith was granted "Lot One, Second Tything" of the "Reynolds Ward," which had been laid out in 1734.[30] This property would eventually pass to Mary Anne, who would, in turn, bequeath it to her nephews William and Robert Mackay. This would be the only property out of many given to male relatives in her Last Will and Testament. John Smith would amass a very nice fortune from which he could grant his granddaughter such a prime piece of Savannah real estate, and his wealth would be derived from the enslaved workers who toiled on his many plantations. When he arrived in Savannah from Scotland, the trustees still believed that Georgia would become a colony of yeoman farmers. General Oglethorpe "put into effect three new laws that had been enacted by the British Parliament: regulation of the Indian trade, the prohibition of African slavery, and the prohibition of spirits and liquors" that, along with drought, devastating conflagrations, and the failure of white indentured servitude as a reliable labor source gave rise to a faction of malcontents who split the city in regard to the three

[29] Georgia Court of Ordinary, Chatham County, GA., *Wills Vol 1, 1852-1862*, Last Will & Testament of Mary Anna Cowper, 23 April 1856, 201-206. Ancestry.com. *Georgia, Wills and Probate Records, 1742-1992*. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015.

[30] Last Will & Testament of Mary Anna Cowper, 1856.

new laws.[31] At the time of John Smith's arrival, Savannah was in a state of dysfunction.

King George's War and an ensuing economic depression did not help matters, and by 1740, the population of Savannah had dwindled precipitously. Oglethorpe's carefully laid-out squares had "been overgrown with tall weeds," and there were stretches of vacant lots.[32] Savannah was not the place for a newly emigrated young man to make his fortune. Smith made his way to the more prosperous port city of Charleston, and by 1749, Smith married a native belle, Elizabeth Williamson of Spoon Savannah, in Colleton County, South Carolina.[33] With the help of the Williamson family fortune, Smith became a productive planter, owning rice plantations on the Coosawhatchie and New Rivers in South Carolina as well as along the Savannah River in Georgia.[34] Family memoirs indicate that he was "a common man only in his name," and his patriotic actions during the Revolutionary War proved that Mary Ann Cowper's Grandfather was indeed an American founding father, which thus ensured her elite status in Savannah.

In 1773, the American colonies were incited with talk of revolution. The Massachusetts Bay colony had started the revolt with the destroying of tea, and an army to fight the British was being mustered by General Washington all across the colonies. Smith was deeply committed to the revolutionary cause, and in July of 1774, he left South Carolina for Georgia to sit in General Assembly, where he felt he would be of more use. The next year, he was appointed to the Council of Safety and then to the Provincial Congress, which gave power to local farmers and artisans to enforce the Association's ban on trade with Britain. Smith was a true Republican and

[31] Fraser, Walter Jr., *Savannah in the Old South* (University of Georgia Press, 2003), 19-20.

[32] Fraser, *Savannah*, 29.

[33] *The Letters of Don Juan McQueen*, xxii

[34] *The Letters of Don Juan McQueen*, xxiii

did not waver in his loyalty to the Patriot Cause. His son-in-law John "Don Juan" McQueen, also fought for American Independence. He served as a trusted ship captain during the war effort and even performed secretive services for General Washington. Interestingly enough, though, not all of Smith's family members were so steadfast in their support of the Republican cause.

One of his daughters, Sarah Williamson, married Loyalist Lord James Wright, Jr. in Charleston at the height of the revolution in 1781. Wright was the son of the current royal Governor of Georgia, and this union would prove to be a very advantageous for Lady Sarah Williamson Wright. After the British defeat, she returned to England with her aristocratic husband and became known as a very pleasant hostess throughout London, entertaining mayors, politicians, and religious figures at her grand estate west of London, Little Ealing. Lady Wright would play a very pivotal role in Mary Anne's upbringing, allowing the Cowper girls access to the most privileged circles in England. However, Lady Wright was not the only Smith daughter to marry a Tory.

Mary Anne's mother and Smith's eldest daughter, the "accomplished young lady" Mary "Polly" Smith, was also caught between familial and patriotic duties. She wed prosperous merchant Basil Cowper in 1769.[35] He was initially a supporter of his father-in-law and the revolution, but when the British had completely overrun Savannah in 1779, all seemed lost. For switching his loyalty to the British, Basil Cowper was chosen to serve with Lord James Wright, Jr. in the Georgia Loyalist House of the Assembly.[36] The decision to shift sides and join his Brother-in-law cost Basil and Polly Cowper dearly. According to his petition to the "Honble

[35] William, Harden, "Basil Cowper's Remarkable Career in Georgia," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (1917): 25.

[36] William Harden, "Basil Cowper's Remarkable Career in Georgia," 27.

Comissioners" appointed by an "Act of Parliament for inquiring into the losses & Services of the American Loyalists," Cowper had an estimated 33,102 pounds and 10 shillings of property, including humans, and merchandise confiscated after he was convicted of treason and expelled from the state of Georgia in 1782.[37] Although he would eventually recover a percentage of his confiscated property, this price was quite steep at the time. Cowper left with his family to England, where he retained many business partners, friends, and family members (Slide 2). Even with this sudden loss of capital, Cowper maintained an entrepreneurial spirit that he undoubtedly passed on to his daughter Mary Anne. By 1791, he would be running a pimento plantation in Jamaica, purchased with a settlement from the US government (Slide 10).[38]

Like Mary Anne's grandfather John Smith, her father, Basil Cowper, had also emigrated to the American South from Scotland in 1764. Basil was from the Scottish gentry and was sent by his prosperous uncle, Sea Captain William Thomson "to superintend the work of collecting payments on his extensive property in Georgia and selling bankrupt estates."[39] By 1766, Basil had built up a successful trading company partnering with brothers William and Edward Telfair in Savannah by utilizing the tremendous capital from Captain Thomson. Through his uncle, Cowper had made many strong connections in England as well as in the Caribbean and was respected throughout the British business community.[40] For a time, he was a partner in the richest merchant firm in Savannah. The Cowper, Telfair, and Telfair trading company

[37] American Loyalist Claims, 1776-1835, AO 12-13. The National Archives of the United Kingdom, Kew, Surrey, England, 305. http://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/ssee.dll?indiv=1&db=CanadaAmericanLoyalist&h=17124.

[38] Harden, "Basil Cowper's Remarkable Career," 30.

[39] Paul M. Pressly, *On the Rim of the Caribbean: Colonial Georgia and the British Atlantic World* (University of Georgia Press, 2013), 101.

[40] Harden, "Basil Cowper's Remarkable Career," 25-6.

participated in several types of commerce, including the selling of African bodies. As early as 1768, these merchants provided the capital for ships like the *Nancy* to deliver captives from places like the Windward Coast to sell in the slave markets of Charleston, Savannah, and Kingston.[41] The ads for this human cargo ran in local newspapers, including the *Savannah Gazette*, several times a year. Slavery was very much a part of how Cowper accumulated his wealth and was directly related to the rise of bondage as the preferred labor system in colonial Georgia. Although he was a native of Scotland, he quickly acclimated to the southern slave society that his wife and children were born into. Cowper hoped to gain more wealth and status from a rice plantation on the edge of the Georgia wilderness.

In order to capitalize on the influx of slaves cultivating rice, Basil Cowper had expanded his title from "merchant" to "planter."[42] He purchased a 500 acre rice plantation that was called "The Grange" from James Port in 1774. Interestingly enough, the place where Basil decided to raise his family was originally called Cowpens, and it had been the home of successful Native American businesswoman Mary Musgraves.[43] Mary Anne Cowper's first home was the historic site of massive trading between Europeans and Indians for many years prior to her birth.

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[41] Elizabeth Donnan, *History of the Slave Trade to America: The Border Colonies and the Southern Colonies* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1935), 624.

[42] Georgia Port Authority, "Archaeological Data Recovery at the Cowpens/Grange site," (CH2M Hill/Lockwood Greene, 2013), 25.

[43] Originally named Coosaponakeesa, Mary Musgraves was born in the Creek town of Coweta in about 1700. She was the product of a relationship between an Englishman, John Griffen, and a Creek woman. In 1707, her father took her to Pon Pon, South Carolina to be baptized and educated at a school run by Ross Reynolds. She became fluent in several languages and a devout Christian. In order to satisfy a peace treaty between the Creeks and Europeans, Coosaponakeesa married another 'mustee' John Musgraves, and thus became Mary Musgraves. This interracial couple settled at what was then referred to as Cowpens in 1732 and organized a healthy trade between the Native Creeks and the English, mostly dealing in deerskins and cattle. Massive bovine disease had ravaged Europe so deerskin was in high demand across the Atlantic as well as the need for fresh beef in local settlements. The Musgraves profited handsomely from the trade relationships between Natives and Europeans and they were on hand to meet General Oglethorpe when he initially landed at the site that would be Savannah. Mary Musgraves would prove to be an indispensable translator for the General and like many elite women, sacrificed her people to the coming of the Europeans to maintain her wealth and status.

Cowpens was located in advantageous spot along the Savannah River, which allowed easy access by boat to the city of Savannah. As the Natives were pushed further back and more and more acreage was cleared, the use of the land changed from keeping cattle in pens to flooded rice pastures. The structures on the Grange property also shifted from the simple wattle and daub buildings to more permanent wood and then brick constructions.[44] Along with the shift in building materials, there was also a movement in who was living and laboring on the land. While indentured servants initially worked on the property, including Mary Musgraves's second husband Jacob Mathews, enslaved Africans had become a legal and much larger portion of the Georgia workforce by the time Basil Cowper purchased The Grange in 1774.[45]

The main house structure sat on a beautiful bluff overlooking the Savannah River. Built of wood with a brick foundation, the small but sturdy house became the Cowpers' homestead during the tumultuous Revolution.[46] The Smith sisters had very deep connection to the Grange plantation (Slide 6). Polly Cowper and her sister Anne McQueen lived out the start of the revolution at The Grange until 1782. Mary Anne was born there in 1776; her sister Margaret in 1777; and their cousin Eliza McQueen Mackay, daughter of patriot Don Juan McQueen and Anne Smith, in 1778.[47] The close relationship that these girls developed on The Grange would remain throughout their lives, and Eliza would preserve the letters, accounts, and Common Place Book of her cousins. The formative years of these colonial southern-born women were surrounded by the beauty of the natural wilderness, the brutality of plantation slavery, and war.

[44] "Archaeological Data Recovery," 145-152.

[45] Georgia Port Authority, "Historic Property Treatment Plan: Archaeological Data Recovery at The Grange Plantation Site" (Lockwood Greene, 2002), 4.

[46] "Historic Property Treatment Plan," 5.

[47] *The Letters of Don Juan McQueen*, xxv.

When Basil was convicted of treason, The Grange, which saw soldiers from both sides come through, was confiscated. Major Peter Deveaux purchased the land and the original Africans who worked it in 1783. He owned the property until his death in 1813.[48] At this point, Robert Mackay, Mary Anne's business agent and the husband of Eliza McQueen Mackay, purchased the plantation on which his wife and cousins had been born. Robert Mackay kept a plantation journal that largely contained lists of cloth given to the workers twice a year, but he also organized the names of his enslaved workers into households and provided yearly birth and death tallies. An enslaved cook named Mary Anne appears throughout the journal, listed with yards of cloth next to her name and the names of her children written under the birth and death columns as well. From the original purchase of the property by Basil Cowper in 1774 to the eventual selling of the property by Eliza McQueen Mackay in 1832, the plantation workers at The Grange were linked to Mary Anne Cowper both economically and socially in a way that could only exist in a slave society.

Mary Anne Cowper would have been in close contact with West African people during her first six years at the Grange as her nursemaids, cooks, or housekeepers. For her, slavery was intimate and contained to the household, where enslaved Africans took care of her most basic needs. As a small girl, Mary Anne most likely did not associate with the reality of the plantation slavery that existed miles down from her door on Argyle Island, where the rice fields were located. As a proper southern protocol dictates, Mary Anne and her little sister would not have been allowed to venture into the swampy rice fields where malaria and the truth of the plantation system lay. Her view of slavery would not have been stained by the violence needed to maintain the system on the fields, but she would have undoubtedly observed "corrections" to the

[48] *The Letters of Robert Mackay*, xxviii

household staff that might have included physical as well as physiological assaults on the people who were in the closest contact with her.[49] The historical record does not account for what Mary Anne Cowper actually thought about slavery, because she never discussed the subject, but she did keep accounts later in her life that exemplify her confidence in the system and in her bondspeople.

Mary Anne Cowper would have initially learned what it meant to be a proper southern mistress at the Grange. Polly and Anne Smith were raised in the South Carolina plantation household of the successful planter John Smith, and they would have undoubtedly explained the prevailing social and racial hierarchy to their young daughters. These women did not need to "marry up" as they were already a part of the upper echelons of Southern society and had extensive kinship networks based on their maternal grandparents, John and Mary Williamson, who had owned multiple plantations in South Carolina since 1733.[50] In contrast to their Northern counterparts, the ways that these women maneuvered in Southern society were very much predicated on the household. As Elizabeth Fox Genovese pointed out, the "persistence in the South of the household as the dominant unit of production and reproduction guaranteed the power of men in society," which women like Mary Anne Cowper were able to circumvent by assuming control of familial wealth and remaining unmarried.[51] However, social etiquette and the management of enslaved bodies through force, coercion, or kindness were central to Mary

[49] Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, 72.

[50] Victoria E. Bynum, *Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South* (University of North Carolina Press: 1992), 18; Charleston County, South Carolina, *Wills and Miscellaneous Probate Records*, 1671-1868, Last Will and Testament of John Williamson, 83-4. Ancestry.com. *South Carolina, Wills and Probate Records, 1670-1980*. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015.

[51] Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 112-13.

Anne's initial interactions with the West African people at the Grange plantation. Most slaveholding daughters "grew up in their mother's shadows," and plantations were the spaces where "young women's training from their future household responsibilities clearly embodied the basic assumptions of slavery as a social system: Slaves performed the labor that executed slaveholding women's skills."[52] Mary Anne and Margaret only lived for a few years at the Grange plantation. As adults, they were much more cosmopolitan in the ways that they benefited from the labor of their enslaved workers. Most studies of slave-owning women tend to focus specifically on those who were born as well as raised on isolated plantations, whereas Mary Anne, Margaret, and Eliza were much more traveled and were integrated into an Atlantic World that saw England, Jamaica, and Florida as all parts of the same whole.

Mary Anne only spent her first six years or so on The Grange plantation. Basil Cowper was banished in 1782 and unlike poorer men, he was able to absorb the economic hit of confiscation and take his family to England. The everyday connection between slave and master was dissipated for the two girls as they grew into adolescence apart from the racial hierarchy of a slave society. The women that Elizabeth Fox Genovese described in her analysis of the plantation household were not Mary Anne and Margaret. The sisters were urban, elite, and aristocratic. Mary Anne and Margaret benefited from the slave system without having to be present in the violence that maintained it. In many ways, these women lived in the best of both worlds as they were given choices that few women in the South were able to have, including whether to marry or where to live. The property and wealth that were accrued by Mary Anne assured her status as well as allowed her to make choices that required her head but also her heart. The ability to be a part of the slave system without having to participate directly in

[52] Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 112.

enforcing it made the world of Mary Anne Cowper one of privilege and urbanity, which was very unlike those who lived directly on isolated southern plantations.[53]

Although his plantation property was confiscated, Basil still had plenty of friends and business opportunities in other parts of the Atlantic World. Mary Anne, Margaret, and Eliza left the plantation atmosphere with their mothers and entered the elite social society of London in early 1783 (Slide 2). The group stayed with Polly Cowper's younger sister, the Lady Sarah Williamson Wright and her husband Sir James Wright, at their semi-rural country estate in Little Ealing, Middlesex County, just west of London. Lady Wright was known "for her social graces and was hostess to many persons of note," including Sir Charles; the late Lord Mayor of London; and his wife, Lady Price.[54] While at Little Ealing, Mary Anne, Margaret, and Eliza were taught to be perfect aristocratic English ladies and were tutored in a classical education that included literature and music. Mary Anne and Margaret excelled at playing the harpsicord, of which they were very fond. Living only a few miles from London allowed them the ability to participate in the culture and pretentiousness of British life where, regardless of their treatment, there were only servants and not slaves.

Unlike their counterparts on the isolated plantations of the American South, these women were able to benefit from slavery while also living in an urban setting. They were not closed off from the world with minimal education surrounded by those who they claimed to be superior to. These women would not be as intimately connected to the enslaved bodies that they controlled and were able to support their claims to mastery by providing protection to their enslaved workers through the hiring-out system, while also granting them some forms of independence.

[53] See Fanny Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgia Plantation in 1838-39*.

[54] *The Letters of Robert Mackay*, 136, 253.

Although there is no such thing as a good slave owner, Mary Anne's records show that her enslaved workers were very valuable to her, and she treated the wealth they accrued accordingly.

Margaret Cowper seemed to be much more outgoing than Mary Anne, and they both provided their family members with many examples of their genial nature as they traveled around the Atlantic World. Their uncle, Don Juan McQueen, was very taken with the pleasant demeanor of his nieces when they visited him in Spanish Florida. He complimented both girls for their beauty and musical prowess in the letters he wrote to his daughter, Eliza McQueen Mackay. Although he was a war hero and a true patriot for the American cause, he was not a great businessman and lost many of his land holdings in Georgia to creditors for bad speculative deals. He had owned a plantation on Thunder Bluff near Savannah, and the homestead was called the "Cottage" (Slide 8). By 1789, he had been tax delinquent for many of his property holdings, and the Cottage was put up at public auction. John Smith purchased the property for his daughter, Anne McQueen, "thus assuring a home for her and her children."[55] Eliza McQueen Mackay would retain this property until her death. Don Juan fled his creditors in Georgia and found new fortune in Spanish Florida, where he would regain some wealth in plantations holdings and where he would stay for the remainder of his life. His female family members – including Eliza, Polly, Mary Anne, Margaret and Lady Wright – would visit him throughout the years, but his wife would only visit him once. Don Juan had become a Catholic, which greatly disturbed his Protestant wife, Anne, and she chose to stay in the Cottage near Savannah until her death in 1809. At his plantation home in Florida, Don Juan McQueen would entertain many Atlantic visitors, including the "amiable" Mary Anne and Margaret Cowper.[56]

[55] *The Letters of Don Juan McQueen*, xxviii

[56] *The Letters of Don Juan McQueen*, 96.

Don Juan McQueen adored these girls. He was overjoyed when first Margaret and then Mary Anne visited him at his homestead in St. Augustin.[57] Regarding Margaret Cowper in a 1795 letter, McQueen wrote that "I always expected great things from her from the example of her Mama but I assure you on my word she exceeds greatly every expectation I had formed and this is without flattery one of the most amiable accomplished beautiful young ladies I have ever met with." McQueen went on to speculate about Mary Anne, claiming "What must Coz. Mary be Who has Lived a year longer, I wish much to see her." His wish was soon granted as Mary Anne and Lady Wright made a visit to Florida in 1796. Both girls were accomplished musicians, with Don Juan detailing that he longed "to hear Coz Margt play sweet Robin but when, or shall I ever have that pleasure again." He also sent word to Eliza that Mrs. Atkinson, wife of his business partner, had wanted to send acknowledgements to Mary Anne for a song called "Go George, I can't endure you." According to the Vocal Library, this is an old English/Scottish folk song about a woman who is in love with a man who does not treat her respectably.[58] This specific song choice is interesting in that Mary Anne did not ever marry and might have had very romantic notions about love. However, her participation in the slave system allowed her to act on her own interpretations of love and marriage because she could remain economically independent.

The descriptions of Mary Anne and Margaret provide enough clues to know that they were very beautiful and talented girls who did not lack eligible suitors. Letters that Robert Mackay wrote to his wife Eliza are full of innuendo about Margaret's romantic dalliances with prominent bachelors from wealthy families. She was considered a "reigning belle" with her

[57] *The Letters of Don Juan McQueen*, 19-20.

[58] *The Vocal Library: Being the Largest Collection of English, Irish and Scottish Songs* (London: J. and C. Adlar, ND), 327.

"popularity extending beyond Savannah, which she often visited, and the Island of Jamaica, where her parents lived, to the larger circles of London and Liverpool."[59] Margaret had been courted by William Scarborough, who at the time was on the verge of a great career, but died in ruin. The break up between Scarborough and Margaret must have occurred in 1799 as Robert Mackay wrote Eliza that "I however hope to hear eventually that he (Scarborough) has acted towards Miss Cowper as in his situation he ought to do- & that whether a reconciliation is ever effected or not, her feelings may in some measure be gratified."[60] For whatever reason, it seems that Scarborough chose to marry Ms. Julia Bernard, whom Robert McQueen referred to as "the Countess" in regard to her solecisms and "whose ambition was to become the leader of Savannah society."[61] The close business partnership between William Scarborough and Mackay made for an uncomfortable social setting when Mrs. Scarborough visited Eliza in England. Robert Mackay wrote "Mrs. S. no doubt will expect you to shew her all the fine things in London as she goes there a perfect stranger, but your situation is a good excuse, & will save you a vast deal of trouble, however you will of course be as civil and attentive as circumstances will admit of, though Miss Cowpers being in the same house will make matters a little awkward."[62] With several failed relationships already behind her, Margaret would marry her cousin, John McQueen, Jr. in 1810 at the age of 33.

John McQueen had been attempting to woo Margaret since 1792, when he arrived in England at the age of 19. According to Margaret Mackay Elliot, McQueen "renewed a fancy he

[59] *The Letters of Robert Mackay*, 252.

[60] *The Letters of Robert Mackay*, 13.

[61] *The Letters of Robert Mackay*, 29.

[62] *The Letters of Robert Mackay*, 66.

had always entertained for his lovely cousin Margaret. After some time he addressed her, she refused him, but years after, when neither party was young, she rewarded his long attachment by the gift of her hand."[63] Margaret was under no economic pressure to marry, yet since her role as an unmarried belle had been long past, she might have succumbed to social pressures and married the person with whom she was most comfortable. Margaret did, in fact, have a choice about whom and when to marry, and she chose to marry John McQueen in 1810. The marriage must have caught the family by surprise as Eliza wrote to Robert Mackay that "I am sorry to find that I raised your curiosity with respect to my Brothers marriage it was unintentional for I considered what would take it as a mear joke," and then she further stated "I am angry that I did not act differently, it was contrary to my inclination at the time as it has really taken place the reserve appears now to have been unnecessary." [64] Eliza thought the marriage would not work, but Margaret and John McQueen were married until his death in 1822. They spent the first years of their marriage with John traveling and Margaret in Savannah, Kingston, and then England. While she visited often, Margaret would never stay long in the United States.

Unlike her sister, Mary Anne never accepted a marriage proposal. Between 805-1807, she was actively courted by William Mein, a Scotsman and another of Robert Mackay's business partners. In 1806, Mackay stated that Mary Anne was not being as forthcoming about her feelings for his partner or his declarations of love and stated that "Mein will certainly go to England with me next summer & will no doubt lay himself at her feet (or in any other pleasing situation that she may admit of) & between this and then she has time to make up her mind, which betwixt you & I appears to be very luke warm on the subject & should it ever be a match,

[63] *The Letters of Robert Mackay*, 252-53.

[64] *The Letters of Robert Mackay*, 173.

will as far as it has already progressed look more like a match of convenience than any I have known."[65] William Mein had purchased the Colerain plantation in addition to the rice fields at Onslow and Argyle Islands. He was a prosperous planter and hosted many "fetes champetres" at Colerain that were attended by the most prosperous of Savannah society. After the death of Robert Mackay in 1816, Mein "settled their join affairs, sold his plantation and the rice islands, and returned to Scotland. He bought an estate Ormeston in Roxburghshire, the management of which gave purpose to his declining years."[66] Like Mary Anne, he would never marry and after her refusal, focused on his plantation rather than his love life. Spending her childhood and some of her teenage years on a plantation might have also soured her outlook on becoming the mistress of a plantation as large as Colerain. Mary Anne was used to urban life in London, the hub of the empire, and the thought of living a rural life, with many duties as hostess to parties and mistress to enslaved people in both the domestic and agricultural capacities, might have influenced her refusal. Mary Anne would have been 30 years old at the time of their courtship, and she was seemingly unwilling to accept a marriage offer for "convenience." She was living in England and was receiving profits from her family's plantation in Jamaica. Mary Anne was not in any financial trouble, and so the decision to remain single could have reflected her economic security.

Basil Cowper's Jamaican plantation, Barron Hill, would provide Mary Anne, Margaret, and Polly with a basic income from the time of his death in 1802 to 1817, when they liquidated the plantation and left Jamaican life behind. The women had originally joined Basil in the parish

[65] *The Letters of Robert Mackay*, 46.

[66] *The Letters of Robert Mackay*, 254.

of Trelawney in the Northwestern part of Jamaica in about 1791. [67] Trelawney was a combination of St Anne and St James, splitting portions of their parishes off to form a new one, which was named after the British Governor of Jamaica, William Trelawney. The city center was Falmouth, at the northern tip of Jamaica. There was a bustling marketplace in addition to a profitable port. The teenaged girls were expected to be a part of the high society in Falmouth while also participating in events at the parish capital, Martha Brae. Margaret writes about not being able to attend private events and balls due to Polly's ill health.[68] They were isolated on Barron Hill since it was at the edge of "cockpit country," which was a region with rolling hills and natural defenses that housed many maroon communities. The move from cosmopolitan England to the hot isolation of the Barron Hill plantation was not necessarily the most exciting development for teenage girls used to living society life in London. The large number of Africans laboring on the Island would have also been a bit unusual to them as well. Margaret noted in a letter to Eliza that "it appears very strange to me, to see nothing but black faces all around us, and I did not know one from another, or understand them at all. Indeed, I was ready to laugh, for they speak such strange jargon."[69] The Africans that lived at the Grange when Mary Anne, Margaret, and Eliza were little were not the same people who lived at Barron Hill. The customs, including language, of both the enslaved and the elite of Jamaica were foreign to Margaret and Mary Anne, who had spent very little time on rural plantations since leaving the Grange as children.

[67] *The Letters of Robert Mackay*, 255; Chloe Northrop, "Styling the Loyalist Diaspora: Fashion and Material Goods in the Post-Revolutionary British Atlantic World" *Dress* 41, no. 2 (2016): 134.

[68] Margaret Cowper to Eliza McQueen, July 1791 (GHS).

[69] Margaret Cowper to Eliza McQueen, July 1791 (GHS).

Less than two years after their arrival in Jamaica, the Cowper women traveled back to Savannah to spend time with the ailing John Smith. The distinguished old man would pass away at the Cottage near Savannah in November 1793. When Polly, Mary Anne, and Margaret begrudgingly returned back to Jamaica, Margaret lamented in letters to Eliza the lack of social interactions they had living on a rural plantation. After having spent time in New York, Savannah, Florida, and England, the high society in Jamaica seemed very provincial. Margaret stated that they have not been to the balls in Falmouth because she "would not enjoy them much."[70] Although they were isolated, Mary Anne and Margaret still maintained the behaviors of proper English ladies. They played the harpsicord, wrote letters to their family members, practiced their needlework, and read out loud to each other to pass the time. They lived in a domestic world of slavery that was exemplified by the girl that waited on them and the other enslaved house workers, not the plantation workers who lived a few miles off in cabins or shacks nearer to the coffee, pimento, and sugar fields.

Mary Anne's first few years in Jamaica would have been her first real encounter with the system of slavery that moved her view from the purely domestic to the agricultural dimension of the plantation regime, and thus she would have seen the business aspect of running a successful estate. Although Basil did not participate much in the sugar trade, focusing on more stable crops like pimentos and coffee, the sisters did visit surrounding sugar plantations. Instead of a place of human bondage and suffering, Margaret stated in a letter to Eliza that the sugar mill was "very curious & pleased us much."[71] Like many plantation owners of the time, the girls failed to acknowledge the exploitation in front of them. They lived in a social world that focused on the

[70] Margaret Cowper to Eliza McQueen, July 1791 (GHS).

[71] Margaret Cowper to Eliza McQueen, September 1791 (GHS); Northrup, "Styling the Loyalist Diaspora," 135.

household, and the plantation fields were only for elite women to tour through once or twice and to manage from afar, not for them to witness the everyday horrors of oppression.

The Cowper women interacted with the system of slavery in ways that were detached from the realities of the plantation and were based on their gendered status as elite women. They lived oceans away from their property and did not have to participate in the day-to-day workings of their pimento factory in the Jamaican fields or the cotton plantation in Houston County, Georgia. Unlike Fanny Kemble, Mary Anne was too far removed, both physically and emotionally, from the majority of her chattels to physically administer punishments, or to witness the maladies of the people on the plantations who provided her with the ability to maintain her elite status.

Two years after Basil's death in 1802, the Cowper women sailed to Savannah, and by 1806, they had returned to England. These women rented homes in different places, depending on the weather and the flow of their social circles. They would spend a season at the spas in Cheltenham; travel to the ocean for a few months; or just take a few weeks rest at the Kensington Gravel Pits, a metropolitan suburb of Middlesex in Kensington Parish.[72] In 1812, they had moved about 10 miles to the home of Lady Wright in Little Ealing, who had suffered a stroke and was in need of assistance. No longer a young woman, Mary Anne complained to Eliza that she had no time to write because she was so busing "being nurse, maid, governess & fine lady" to other women in her life.[73] Eliza's daughter, the aptly named child Mary Anne, attended school periodically in London and was under the supervision of her Aunt Cowper. In 1813, Both Mary

[72]*The Letters of Robert Mackay*, 145; Mary Anne Cowper to Eliza McKay, 8 June 1812, Folder 44, Mackay-Stiles Papers, #3145, Vol. 470, Series E.6 (Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; hereinafter cited as (SHC)), 118

[73] Mary Anne Cowper to Eliza Mackay, June 8, 1812, (SHC).

Anne and her younger namesake spent over twelve months helping to take care of Mrs. Deborah Malbone Hunter, Robert Mackay's aunt, at "M House" in London.[74] Originally from Newport, Rhode Island, Mrs. Hunter traveled with her children to England after the death of her husband. She moved in the most prominent social circles in London. Mrs. Hunter was such a woman that in 1796, Daniel O'Connell, the future liberator of Ireland, stated that "She has one foible…she is fond of telling of the rank she very probably did in reality possess in her native country. But to perceive even this foible one must be considerable time acquainted with her; nay, must have gained her confidence."[75] Her funeral was attended by many prominent people and was performed "with every proper attention" for a woman of her rank.

After the death of this remarkable woman, Mary Anne wrote to Eliza that she was privately concerned about the financial well-being of Mrs. Hunter's single daughter, Eliza Hunter, due to war with American and the "rigid economy."[76] Mary Anne wanted to make sure that Robert Mackay was aware of Mrs. Hunter's death and that Eliza Hunter's brother William would be informed. Eliza Hunter was unmarried, and with the loss of her mother, she was free from familial control in England. Mrs. Hunter was "desirably against her (Ms. Hunter) living with her brother" in America, although she was considering going. Mary Anne pointed out that "There is a Lady in the house with whom Mrs. H is confidentially intimate & who has jointly with Ms. H taken the same apartments as she occupied with her mother" and that "sleeps with her to." While there is no direct evidence of a lesbian relationship between the Ms. Hunter and her roommate, she was a single woman and thereby did not have the same economic

[74] Mary Anne to Eliza, October 22, 1813 Folder 44, Mackay-Stiles Papers, #3145, Vol. 470, Series E.6, (SHC).

[75] Houston, Arthur. *Daniel O'Connell: His Early Life, and Journal, 1795-1802*. (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, LTD. 1906), 109

[76] Mary Anne Cowper to Eliza Mackay, Oct 22, 1813, (SHC).

expectations that a married or widowed woman with children would have. Mary Anne seemed to think that Georgia would not be a good place for her. She wrote that "I am confident Georgia would not suit her. She had not be pleased with the state of society at heart & you and I know single women are regarded indeed as mere lumber"[77] The single Mary Anne, however, did not have these same economic woes. She would go back to Savannah with a strong investment portfolio that would only increase through inheritance as her female family members passed away.

In 1809, the Cowper women were living comfortably off of the profits of the Jamaican plantation in England when the matriarch of the family, Elizabeth Williamson Smith, died at the Red Bluff Plantation in South Carolina. Smith had over 17 stipulations in her Last Will and Testament, which divided up her plantations and real estate holdings in Savannah and South Carolina among her 6 children. She bequeathed 54 human beings to be distributed among each family group, maintaining that "the Negroes are not to be split up until after her death" and that her daughter, Miss Elizabeth Smith, was to "get all wages from the carpenter Luke"[78] In many ways, Smith's will shows how elite women were able to maintain wealth amongst their female relatives and allow for both widowed and single women to keep their status through slaves and plantations. The idea of humans as property to be bequeathed as a form of wealth to other female family members was very strong in the Smith line, and it was how these women maintained their familial wealth and elite social status until the Civil War.

[77] Mary Anne to Eliza, Oct 22, 1813, (SHC).

[78] Georgia Court of the Ordinary, Last Will and Testament of Elizabeth Smith, 1810., 5 March 1810, Georgia Wills & Probate Records, 1742-1992; *Wills Vol. E-F, 1807-1827*, 135-139. Ancestry.com. *Georgia, Wills and Probate Records, 1742-1992*. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015.

By the time of Elizabeth Smith's death in 1809, rice had become a global commodity. The boom began in the middle centuries, and in 1789, over 100,000 pounds of rice had been exported from Charleston, SC. The number only rose as more land was swamped in for rice cultivation.[79] Smith owned plantations and city houses from Georgia to South Carolina, and he also owned the people who worked in these places. Her son, Archibald Smith, was also a wealthy planter and merchant in Savannah, who took care of exporting his mother's crops and procuring her payments. Elite women like Elizabeth Smith had inherited as well as purchased many acres of land without having a male head of household present to make business decisions for them, and through surrogates like Archibald, these women were independent of the prevailing patriarchal system. Slavery, however, was the pedestal for their own economic freedom.

Elizabeth Smith bequeathed property and enslaved bodies to her children in order to concentrate familial wealth. Instead of granting her son, Archibald, complete control, she also appointed "my Daughters Mary Cowper, Jane Bourke, Elizabeth Smith, Lady Wright" as equal executors, even though two of them were currently in England. The ability to give mastery to women who were not even in the same physical location as the people they physically owned shows how complicated the slave system was in the Atlantic World. Elizabeth Smith's will exemplifies all of the grace and generosity one in her position would bestow upon her family members. For instance, she granted each granddaughter "$20 for a ring" and bequeathed $100 dollars to the Ferndale Asylum, but she also granted "freedom and emancipation of my old

[79] Bureau of the Census. *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970. Bicentennial Edition, Part 2*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1975, Chapter z, Colonial and Pre Federal Statistics, 1192.

trusted servants Buba and Dinah of which freedom is absolute three months after my death."[80] The ability to emancipate an enslaved couple and then bequeath another 54 individual souls and "their future increase" in the same document was only granted to elite woman like Elizabeth Smith, who had lived all of her 78 years dependent on slavery.

Elizabeth Smith outlined her will from oldest child to youngest, granting lands, humans, cash, and jewelry to all of her family members. The eldest, Polly Cowper, inherited "the following Negroes: Tom Bricklayer, Caesar, Roger and his wife Venus with their children Racheal, Mag, Caesar, Sandy, Ansel and two young children with their future increase also a lott of land and the buildings therein in the town of Beaufort South Carolina."[81] The skilled bricklayers that she bequeathed to her daughter undoubtedly lived on their own and performed their duties without the constant supervision of a master, especially considering that Polly Cowper was in England at the time of her mother's death. The ability for enslaved workers to provide for themselves was a common way to organize skilled labor in the South, and someone like Tom the Bricklayer might have been a slave in name only with the power of his female owners allowing him to live independently in a slave society. The relationship between Tom the Bricklayer and Ms. Polly Cowper would have been based on economics, and it is highly unlikely that the two had any relationship beyond monetary transactions.

Not only did Smith give these people and this property to Polly, but she guaranteed that Mary Anne and Margaret were also included in her will since neither had married at this point. In order to make sure that her two unmarried granddaughters would receive a portion of her estate,

[80] Last Will and Testament of Elizabeth Smith, 1810., 1810.

[81] Georgia Court of the Ordinary, Last Will and Testament of Mary Cowper, January 18, 1821, Georgia Wills & Probate Records, 1742-1992; *Wills Vol. E-F, 1807-1827*, 135-139. Ancestry.com. *Georgia, Wills and Probate Records, 1742-1992*. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015.

she bequeathed them "a lott of the land in the City of Savannah No 12 Washington Ward now called the Hawthorn Lott," including the enslaved domestics.[82] This insured that Mary Anne and Margaret would be provided the income from the rent of a properly-maintained property. The sisters became the owners of people that they might not have ever met or at least had not interacted with for many years. Their status as elite women would have carried over the Atlantic, and they would have had managers or family members taking care of their accounts and providing them with sums of money predicated on the cash produced by their enslaved laborers as well as the house rents. In this way, they remained tied to slavery without having to be present, while they also benefited from the monetary rewards of the slave system.

Prior to her death, Smith had already distributed certain enslaved people to her relatives, where they most likely worked as domestics. Bondspeople like "Old Phillis, Carpenter George, Sabrina his wife, Winter, Morrice, Harriet, Nanny, Maria, Flora and her two children" were already under the control of her widowed daughter, Jane Bourke, and the will just legalized the relationship.[83] The names of these enslaved individuals would appear in other records of other family members. Robert Mackay noted to Eliza that he had spent a Sunday in Savannah "shaking hands with numerous complimenting visitors from the different plantations" and that "Old Phillis is so delighted to hear of you, that she almost danced, says she must stay here until Tuesday to hear all about you."[84] Carpenter George and Flora also appear in other places, including in Mary Anne Cowper's Common Place Book. For Elizabeth Smith, the enslaved people that she owned were connected to the properties that she owned. People like Old Phillis could move about

[82] Last Will and Testament of Mary Cowper, 1821.

[83] Last Will and Testament of Elizabeth Smith, 1810.

[84] *The Letters of Robert Mackay*, 90.

freely from one location to the other and even chose to "stay until Tuesday" because she had the power of her mistress to justify her movements.[85]

Elizabeth Smith bequeathed Jane Bourke more than just people. She also gave her "all that lot of land and buildings therein known as (no8) Reynolds Ward near the filature in the City of Savannah." Smith made sure to include Jane's unmarried daughters in her will and stipulated that "in case of the death of their sibling, that it is my will that the said House and lott do go to the survivor, I give to my Granddaughters Elizabeth and Catherine Bourke for their own separate use and their heirs or as they may choose to with them to be equally divided young tom and Daphne with their children Joe, princess, Mary, Nelly, Ned, Billy with their future increase." She not only granted her daughter and granddaughters property but also the future unborn children of the people who resided in the house. The practice of giving her unmarried and widowed family members property and people allowed these women to participate in slave owning without a male present. This situation demonstrates that these women were capable of making their own decisions, but they relied on the wealth accrued from the labor of their enslaved workers to maintain their independence.

Smith changed her language when discussing her only daughter whose husband was still alive, Lady Sarah Williamson Wright. Smith added a very specific clause, which Mary Anne would copy in her own will, when bequeathing property to her married female relatives. Smith stated that the house and the enslaved people who went with it were for Lady Wright's "sole, separate and independent use free from any control management or claim of her said husband, or any person claiming or to claim under him."[86] Elizabeth Smith guaranteed that Lady Wright

[85] *The Letters of Robert Mackay*, 90.

[86] Last Will and Testament of Elizabeth Smith, 1810.

would have income independent of her husband, Sir James Wright, and the wealth was derived from not only property but also the labor of enslaved bodies. Elizabeth Smith bequeathed an entire family of enslaved workers, including "their children and all future increase" as well as the John Smith's original Savannah property, lot 1 in the Reynolds Ward, to Lady Wright, who lived in England.[87] It seems that Old Ismael, Minty, Jesse, Joe, Adam, Diana, June and Hagar were connected to the house but not necessarily to their master, whom they rarely met and who resided in a different country. At the time of her death in 1816, Lady Wright would give the property to Margaret's husband, John McQueen, and the enslaved bodies would be bonded over to Mary Anne, who had yet to return to Savannah.[88]

Elizabeth Smith also made sure that her unmarried daughter and namesake was sufficiently provided for. At the time of her mother's death, "Aunt Betsy" was 53 years old and spent a majority of her time at the Cottage at Thunderbolt Cliffs near Savannah. Her mother gave her mastery over "Old Cesar, Old Lucy, & Venus with all the children she has and may have, Luke (the carpenter), Isaac, London, Anney and Child and future increase"[89] Even though she was childless, Betsy claimed ownership over seven enslaved children, "Sam Grace, Mary, Charles, Nanny, Betty, Sammy," who most likely resided at the lot "known as No 2 Reynolds Ward containing forty five feet front on the bay and ninety feet in depth." Betsy would own these people as well as "all improvements and buildings thereon to hold during the term of her natural life." She was thought to be "infirm in health," and to help her financially, Betsy was granted

[87] Last Will and Testament of Elizabeth Smith, 1810.

[88] Georgia Court of the Ordinary, Last Will and Testament of Lady Sarah Wright, 26 August 1813, Georgia Wills & Probate Records, 1742-1992; *Wills Vol. E-F, 1807-1827*, 248-9. Ancestry.com. *Georgia, Wills and Probate Records, 1742-1992*. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015.

[89] *The Letters of Robert Mackay*, 271; Last Will and Testament of Elizabeth Smith, 1810.

"for time of six years the rent of my store and brick building standing on Lot Number One Reynolds Ward fronting the Bay and now occupied by Mr. Steinhert," which, along with Lot Two, would have given her control of very valuable property in the business district of Savannah.[90] Her mother understood that in order for her to remain an elite Southern woman, she would need to have control of property, human bodies, and rents. The elder Smith made certain that her daughter would also be a participant in business activities by providing her with a steady income through rents. This was the business model that Mary Anne Cowper followed when she returned in Georgia in 1819 and would continue to follow until 1856.

At the time of her death in 1823, Aunt Betsy would make sure that all of the wealth that she inherited would be passed down to her female family members. She originally granted the majority of her property to Jane Bourke's daughters, Elizabeth and Catherine, but stipulated that "if they die before coming of age, then the property go to my niece Mary Anne Cowper."[91] Elizabeth died sometime before 1830, and Catherine married but passed away soon afterward. Due to the language of the will, Catherine's husband did not have a claim on the property. Betsy also stated that after all of her stipulations had been carried out that "I leave the rest of my negroes to be equally divided between my niece Mary Anne Cowper, Margaret McQueen and Eliza Mackay."[92] At this point, Mary Anne, Margaret and Eliza were the mistresses of well over a hundred slaves, having inherited people, properties, and capital from the Smith sisters.

[90] Georgia Court of the Ordinary, Last Will and Testament of Miss Elizabeth Smith, 10 June 1821, Georgia Wills & Probate Records, 1742-1992; *Wills Vol. E-F, 1807-1827*, 259. Ancestry.com. *Georgia, Wills and Probate Records, 1742-1992*. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015.

[91] Last Will and Testament of Miss Elizabeth Smith, 1821.

[92] Last Will and Testament of Miss Elizabeth Smith, 1821.

While Mary Anne and Eliza continued to exact wealth from enslaved workers until their deaths, Margaret divested from slavery sometime after 1826 and gave complete control of her chattels to her sister. When her cousin and husband died in 1822, Margaret returned to Jamaica to settle some of his affairs by selling off the majority of their plantation in St. Andrews. She had retained mastery over two women who were born in Africa, Grace Hyde McQueen and Juliana Duff McQueen, and she would claim them as taxable income on her return of slaves until 1826, when she left Jamaica for England.[93] The records go silent for Grace and Juliana, but it is interesting to note that they took two surnames, with McQueen being one. These women could have had a familial connection with Margaret that would have helped them once Jamaican emancipation was declared in 1834. Once a widow, Margaret settled in Barnestaple, on the very northwestern part of England in the County of Devon. She died there on September 30, 1841 without leaving a will.[94] Mary Anne petitioned both England and New York, where she was granted as the administrator of Margaret's estate.[95] Unlike her sister, mother and grandmother, Margaret did not dictate where human bodies were to be distributed. Margaret had shifted her investments from people to stocks, including Bank of America as well as Utica and Schenectaday Railroad that ran from St. Johnsonville to Schenectady, New York starting in 1836.[96] Mary Anne took control of Margaret's affairs by hiring surrogates, like the New York

[93] Office of the Registry of Colonial Slaves and Slave Compensation Commission, Records Class T71, (The National Archives of the United Kingdom, Kew, Surrey, England), 00314. Ancestry.com. *Slave Registers of former British Colonial Dependencies, 1813-1834*. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2007.

[94] Commissioner of Records, Surrogates' Court, County of New York, "Administration Bonds, 1753-1866," Box 8-28975, Vol 0042-0044, 1842-1844. Ancestry.com. *New York, Wills and Probate Records, 1659-1999*. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015.

[95] Commissioner of Records, Surrogates 'Court, County of New York, "Petition of Letters of Administration," Box 8-28975, Vol. 0042-0044, 1842-1843. Ancestry.com. *New York, Wills and Probate Records, 1659-1999* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015

[96] *Rome Telegraph*, July 26, 1836.

lawyer Mr. Curtis Bolton, to handle the affair. As the only surviving Cowper, Mary Anne was made executor of Margaret's estate. Mr. Bolton closed Margaret's accounts, paid her debits, and transferred the remaining capital to Mary Anne.

Like her other female relatives, Mary Anne utilized the relationship between enslaved people and the market economy to her advantage as she inherited more and more property, plantations, and slaves. Mary Anne only discussed the physical aspect of slavery when she was detailing economic output of hired-out slaves or her returns on her crop yields in her common place book. Her relationship to slavery was based on profits and losses when she listed the names of other people's children birth years and their deaths with X's in her Oatlands plantation ledger.[97] In all of her letters, Mary Anne only discussed enslaved people in relation to their economic input and never described any type of sentimental attachment or personal relationship with any of them. Mary Anne Cowper was fully aware of the enslaved workers in her Last Will and Testament as humans with families and desires, but her relationship to slavery required her to distribute her wealth in flesh to her surviving female relatives so that these single women could maintain their elite status.

Although Mary Anne Cowper was not an overtly political woman, she had witnessed invading armies camping on her homestead during the Revolutionary War, dealt with several wars across the Atlantic, and died before the Civil War emancipated her wealth. The Cowper women had learned that wars disrupted business. When the war between Great Britain and France broke out in 1803, they were stuck in Jamaica with very little hard cash. Margaret stated in a letter to Eliza that "War stares us in the face with all its terror & can 3 unprotected women

[97] "Mary Anne Cowper Common Place Book, 1847-1851," Mackay-Stiles Papers, #3145, Vol. 470, Series E.6 (SHC), 79.

venture in danger of the sea & of the Enemy?"[98] Basil was dead, they could not leave the Island due to disruptive nature of the war, and their access to hard currency was limited. While they did eventually make their way back to England, Mary Anne understood that it was her economic security that protected single women in times of political crisis, and she maintained an empire of capital, currency, and humans across the Atlantic. At the height of the War of 1812, she was "disgusted by American politics" and did not want to return to Georgia, where both her sister and cousin lived. By 1819, however, Polly Cowper was in very ill health and wanted to return to her home country. Mary Anne accompanied her back to Savannah, where she had already inherited both people and property from her aunts and grandmother.

After Polly's death in 1821, Mary Anne continued to live in Savannah, even after John McQueen died and Margaret left for England. After Margaret's death in 1841, Mary Anne was the sole owner of a vast amount of wealth and continued to control her many properties, plantations, and people. When she died in 1856, Mary Anne expected slavery to remain constant in the South, and her will reflected that belief. She was born an elite woman of the South and like her Grandmother, provided money for the philanthropic adventures in her will. She donated the "sum of four thousand dollars for the benefit of seamen visiting the port of Savannah."[99] As Marcus Rediker pointed out, "sailors in the slave trade were poor, wages were usually low, and the mortality rate was high," and Mary Anne must have had sympathy for these men as she was a frequent traveler of the Atlantic world by ship.[100] Her estate was such that she could pay off all

[98] Margaret Cowper to Eliza MacKay, October 21, 1812, (GHS).

[99] Last Will and Testament of Mary Anna Cowper, 1856.

[100] Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2007), 7.

of her debts, gift her family with wealth and property, and give such a large sum to a philanthropic cause. Mary Anne epitomized the image of an elite woman in the Atlantic World.

Interestingly enough, the only men to receive anything from her estate were Eliza's sons, William and Robert Mackay. She granted them the original lot of her grandfather, "No One, Second Tything Reynolds Ward," but they had to maintain the property as "tenants in common."[101] The rest of her possessions went to her female relatives, including Eliza's two unmarried daughters, 45-year-old Catherine and 41-year-old Sarah. Mary Anne stipulated that the women were to receive "all that island known as Oatlands Island, situated in Chatham County in the State of Georgia with all it appurtenances of Hammocks and marshes and also all my cattle and stock of every kind" and that it was to be "divided between them equally…to their sole and separate use and not subject to the death, contract or control of any future husband" (Slide 7).[102] Mary Anne also put in a stipulation that would protect the property from the legal challenges of any male, stating that "in case of the marriage of either the said Catherine or Sarah Mackay, I direct that this property be settled in trust for their sole and separate use."[103]

Oatlands Island had originally been owned by Don Juan McQueen prior to the Revolutionary War. When Don Juan took off to Florida, his wife, Anne McQueen, refused to raise her children in a Catholic country and stayed at The Cottage near Savannah. She and her children spent much time at Oatlands, which was only about a mile from the Cottage at Thunder Bluffs.[104] She gifted Oatlands plantation to her son, John McQueen, Jr., when she died in 1809,

[101] Last Will and Testament of Mary Anna Cowper, 1856.

[102] Last Will and Testament of Mary Anna Cowper, 1856.

[103] Last Will and Testament of Mary Anna Cowper, 1856.

[104] *The Letters of Don Juan McQueen*, xxxi.

and it was here that he first tried his hand at planting Sea Island cotton. When he died in 1822, the land became part of his wife Margaret's estate. Mary Anne must have run the plantation while Margaret was in England and took over management when she died in 1841. According to family history, "the McQueen and Smith families spent much time in the comfortable dwelling on Oatlands, and took pride in their extensive Kitchen garden."[105] The fresh vegetables and livestock at Oatlands would have supplied the families with food but also allowed participation in the marketplaces of Savannah for the enslaved workers.

Along with the plantation at Oatlands, Mary Anne also gifted Catherine and Sarah fourteen human lives. Although her focus was economic, she did act as a generous master and stated that "namely Old Maurice and Judith his wife, John Blacksmith and Daphne his wife. These four I desire shall be permitted to remain at Oatlands and have comfortable homes there as long as they live. Flora, Stephan, Elsey and Lucinda, these four together with the proceeding four I desire earnestly shall be permitted all such privileges and indulgences and freedom as use not inconsistent with the laws of the state of Georgia."[106] While on the surface, this might seem like she was doing so because she was a nice person, the reality is that these people were much older and would probably not fetch much on the market. She was assuring a workforce for her relatives, while also maintaining her responsibilities as a beneficent master to her enslaved workers.

In keeping with her status as an elite slave owner, Mary Anne also stated that another group of people were to be sold in order to satisfy the debts. She expected the executors of her estate to sell her skilled laborers, including the carpenters Young Jack; Mulatto George; Harriett

[105]*The Letters of Robert Mackay*, 268.

[106] Last Will and Testament of Mary Anna Cowper, 1856.

and her daughter, Pricilla; her daughter, Lavinea; her husband, Smart; their seven children; and Oliver. In keeping with her position, Mary Anne stipulated that each of them should have "the privilege of selecting a master, and when they shall have been sold, each grown person shall receive from my executor the sum of fifty dollars and ten dollar shall be spent or used for the benefit of each child so sold."[107] Mary Anne expected her orders to be followed and provided her workers with some freedom of choice. She understood that her enslaved workers were in fact humans, and she relinquished a certain amount of autonomy to the people who lived at Oatlands. Even in death, Mary Anne Cowper exemplified the elite Atlantic World Woman in how she organized and treated her chattels. In total, Mary Anne determined the fate of over 67 individuals that she personally name plus hundreds of others who remained nameless plantation workers. Mary Anne continued to own human beings because their labor allowed her choices that other women did not have, including the enslaved women who were granted some freedom to participate in the marketplace to maintain her household. The relationship between elite and enslaved urban women has yet to be fully explored, and the cultural influences of the Atlantic World in the United States South have been conveniently left out of our shared history.

Mary Anne, Margaret and Eliza represent how slavery in America allowed urban women to remain widowed or unmarried and to provide their own financial support. These women of the Atlantic World maintained their wealth and elite status through slave ownership. They were participating in a global economic enterprise that did not require them to physically be present in order to glean the capital from enslaved workers' bodies. Mary Anne Cowper had a choice of whether she would marry or not, and slavery allowed her this choice. She had a choice of where to live, and slavery gave her this choice. Mary Anne Cowper and women like her have been lost

[107] Last Will and Testament of Mary Anna Cowper , 1856.

in the historical record, yet her relationship to slavery had a direct effect on the economic outcome of the South and the issues that lead to the American Civil War. More focus on how gender, slavery, and the marketplace were socially and economically connected will provide a more nuanced view of elite and enslaved women's contributions to Atlantic World history.

CHAPTER 2

FLORA IN FOUR PERSPECTIVES

Flora was a woman of the Atlantic World. In fact, she was many women. Born free in Africa but enslaved in Jamaica and Georgia, Flora represents the women ripped from their homes and forced to make the sugar, cotton, coffee, tobacco, and indigo on plantations in the New World.[108] Like her sisters Venus, Dido, Diana, and Calista, she was stripped of her original identity, and the Latin name for the Roman Goddess of flowers was forced upon her by ship captains, slave merchants, and plantation owners.[109] Flora worked as a field laborer, a domestic, and skilled market woman. She gave birth to enslaved sons and daughters, some of whom did not make it to adulthood and others who lived long enough to experience the freedom granted by emancipation. From 1804 until 1856, four different women named Flora appeared repeatedly in the accounts, plantation ledgers, slave schedules, and wills of the Cowpers as they managed plantations from Jamaica to Georgia. These four women were part of a fictive kinship network that moved with the Cowper family around the Atlantic World. Flora, in all her humanity, became liquid capital that paid dividends, a woman whose profits enriched her mistress. Her experiences exemplify how African women connected their children with their homeland through naming practices and forced African cultural constructs into the plantation systems so

[108] Melville J. Herskovits, "Some Psychological implications of AfroAmerican Studies" in *Acculturation in the Americas: Proceedings and Selected Papers of the XXIXth International Congress of Americanists*, ed. by Sol Tax (NY: Cooper Square Publishers, INC., 1967), 152-155. Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power* (Penguin Books, 1985).

[109] Saidiya Hartmann, "Venus in Two Acts" *Small Axe*, No 26 (Vol 12, Number 2), June 2008, 1-14.

seemingly controlled by European masters. Atlantic World kinship networks allowed Flora to maneuver unmolested in a slave society while she performed and transformed European and African gender roles in the marketplace of Savannah, Georgia (Slide 11).

Flora's voice was silenced by her status as an enslaved woman, but her life echoes throughout the written records of Polly, Mary Anne, and Margaret Cowper.[110] As these women traveled, they wrote many letters to their friends and family members. They described their mundane household activities and sometimes mentioned the people whom they had enslaved. Polly and Mary Anne also kept precise records to maintain their people and properties throughout the Atlantic World. Through these documents, the everyday lives of these women and their enslaved workers can be brought into focus.

After Basil Cowper was convicted of treason during the Revolutionary War and banished from America, he moved with his family to England, where he jumped back into business. They initially lived with Lady Wright, and her husband, Sir James Wright, at Little Ealing, their country estate near London, but Basil grew restless in that aristocratic life.[111] For the next few years, the Cowper family would live in and around London, the urban center of the Atlantic World, divested from the actuality of plantation slavery that paid for their trips to Spanish Florida, Bermuda, and Cheltenham, England.[112]

The Cowper disconnect from slavery would not last long. According to family history, Basil Cowper purchased the Barron Hill plantation in 1791 with a settlement from the U.S.

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[110] The investigation of the stories of ordinary people by looking for clues in the records of the elite is the model used for this interpretation and is based on Alfred Young's *Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution* (Beacon Press, 2000) and *Masquerade: The Life and Time of Deborah Sampson, Continental Soldier* (Vintage Press, 2005).

[111] *The Letters of Robert Mackay*, 254-55, 274.

[112] *Robert Mackay*, 47.

government for property they had confiscated from him for his Tory sympathies during the Revolutionary War.[113] Whether or not that was true, the profitability of pimento, or "allspice," a type of pepper whose trees were indigenous to Jamaica, enticed him from his comfortable exile in England.[114] Unlike the labor-intensive rice plantation he owned along the Savannah River in Georgia in the 1770s, the labor needed to run a successful pimento plantation "was thought to be minimal," and the trees were "said to be seeded by birds in ruinated land."[115] Barron Hill was not like a monoculture rice or sugar plantation but was diversified in its output. Cowper grew pimento and coffee, while also allowing his enslaved laborers to tend their own garden plots. While he could not compete with vast wealth of the large sugar barons along the north coast, Basil Cowper had made a good investment and was garnering profits.

The Cowper women had joined Basil in the parish of Trelawney in the northwestern part of Jamaica in about 1795.[116] Polly, Mary Anne, and Margaret had come from "the Cottage, near Savannah," where they had spent a little over a year attending to their dying patriarch, John Smith.[117] Unlike the Cottage, a small plantation on Thunderbolt Cliff less than a mile from Savannah, they were isolated on Barron Hill.[118] The move from cosmopolitan England to the hot loneliness of the Barron Hill plantation was a difficult adjustment. They had also just spent a

[113] William Harden, "Basil Cowper's Remarkable Career in Georgia," 27.

[114] B.W. Higman, *Slave Population and Economy in Jamaica*, 1807-1834 (The Press University of the West Indies, 1995), 24-25.

[115] Higman, *Slave Population*, 24.

[116] Northrop, "Styling the Loyalist Diaspora," 134.

[117] *Letters of Robert Mackay*, 255.

[118] *Journals of the Council*, October 1792- December 1793, Vol. 1B, Folder 5/4/18 (Jamaican National Archives, Spanish Town hereinafter cited as JNA)

year in the social circles of Savannah with Eliza McQueen Mackay.[119] Even though Georgia's slave population was burgeoning, the large number of Africans laboring on the Island of Jamaica would have also been a bit unusual from the perspective of urban London dwellers. The customs, including language, of both the enslaved and the Jamaican elite were foreign to the Cowper daughters, who were both unmarried at 26 and 25 years old and had spent the majority of their lives in England. Even though they had been born on a Georgia plantation, Mary Anne and Margaret had spent very little time in rural areas. In 1802, Basil Cowper died from an unexpected illness without a will.[120] Two years later, Polly was named the administrator of the estate, and Barron Hill was assessed by Cowper family friends, John Mitchell and William Baker. By 1812, Polly, Mary Anne, and Margaret had left the management of Barron Hill to these friends and went back to England.[121]

The Inventory of Basil Cowper's Estate valued his total property as 17,713 pounds and 15 shillings, which would be the equivalent of 1,390,000 pounds in 2014.[122] Along with a cedar dressing table, mahogany dining chairs, silver spoons, cows, horses, pigs and pimentos, there were also 166 enslaved people listed by name with prices listed for each person.[123] Cowper had double the average of 86 enslaved workers on his pimento plantation, some of whom were of no

[119] *Don Juan McQueen*, 255.

[120] Probate Records, Trelawney Parish, Anno 1804, "Basil Cowper Inventory" No. 101 (JNA) 22-25.

[121] Mary Anne Cowper to Eliza McKay, 8 June 1812, Folder 44, Mackay-Stiles Papers, #3145, Vol. 470, Series E.6 (Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; hereinafter cited as (SHC)), 118.

[122] https://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/result.php?year_source=1804&amount=17713.75&year_result=2014

[123] Basil Cowper Inventory (JNA).

value, and "six mulattoes" who were "not in the immediate procession of the estate," including a woman named Molly Gordon who worked in Falmouth (Slide 10).[124]

As enslaved Africans acculturated to their new environments on plantations, they developed certain cultural constructs, like naming practices, that allowed them to maintain some connections to their homelands. On the 1804 inventory of Cowper's estate, two women named Flora appeared, one worth $60 and the other worth $40.[125] No further information was provided about either Flora. The next mention of Flora occurred when Parliament required the Jamaican colony to carry out a census of all slaves living there. J. P. Utten took the Return of Slaves at Barron Hill on June 28, 1817.[126] The Return segregated enslaved people by sex but registered their "colour, age, African or Creole" status. In the "remarks" column, Utten listed their mother's name in a familial order.[127] Flora was now present three times, as a sixty-nine-year-old woman, a twenty-one-year-old new mother, and as a three-year-old child.

The Cowper 1804 inventory and the 1817 Return of Slaves reveal extensive kinship networks among the bondspeople at the Barron Hill plantation. As Michael Craton pointed out in 1978, enslaved people were very much in control of their own families in the West Indies, including on Flora's home plantation.[128] Due to the instability of plantation life, enslaved people developed communities through the use of "Fictive Kin," or familial relationships that were not

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[124] Basil Cowper Inventory (JNA).

[125] Basil Cowper Inventory (JNA).

[126] Office of the Registry of Colonial Slaves and Slave Compensation Commission, Records Class 771, "1817 Return of Slaves for Mary Cowper in the Parish of Trelawney, Jamaica," (The National Archives of the United Kingdom, Kew, Surrey, England), 227. (hereinafter cited as NAUK) Ancestry.com. *Slave Registers of former British Colonial Dependencies, 1813-1834*. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2007.

[127] A Return of Slaves, 1817 (NAUK).

[128] Michael Craton, "Changing Patterns of Slave Family," in *Empire Enslavement and Freedom in the Caribbean,* (United Kingdom: James Currey Publishers, 1997), 243.

predicated on blood connections.[129] The three Floras were seemingly not related by blood. The eldest Flora had no sons listed, and neither of her daughters named their children Flora. The two women, Juliet and Grace, who named their daughters Flora did so eighteen years apart and made conscious decisions to perpetuate the name Flora in the slave community of Barron Hill, which followed a much different pattern than the patriarchal lineages that Herbert Gutman found on American plantations.[130] These women kept their fictive kinship networks organized in matrilineal patterns similar to those of West Africa.

One hundred and four people listed on the 1804 Barron Hill inventory survived until the 1817 Return of Slaves, which enabled them to sustain intergenerational family bonds. 65% of the enslaved people on Barron Hill lived in the same place as their mothers.[131] Some women, like Grace, had over nine living children, whereas other women, like Juliet, only had two. Most of the enslaved workers on Barron Hill had been born in Jamaica prior to the closing of the slave trade in 1807, yet about ten people claiming an African birth still resided on the plantation in 1817, including the elderly Flora. A type of fictive kinship network developed among Barron Hill enslaved laborers through naming practices that showed reverence for their African ancestry and for the elderly people in their slave community.

Naming children after people they respected or keeping traditional naming practices from Africa alive were ways that enslaved people created community relationships. The first generation of African men and women on Barron Hill had names that were either taken from antiquity or popularized in England. These new names were forced upon them somewhere along

[129] Daina Remy Berry, *Swing the Sickle for the Harvest is Ripe* (University of Illinois Press, 2007), 53.

[130] Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1976).

[131] 203/132= .65

the way, including the African coast, a slave ship, a port in the New World, or a plantation. The types of names were picked by slavers from "a desire to identify slaves uniquely" to conduct business on the plantation without confusion, yet several monikers like Caesar, Cato, Belle, and Flora were passed down to a younger generation on the Barron Hill plantation.[132] This pattern suggests that a group of people established relationships with one another, developed a community, and perpetuated it by naming their children for other community members. In 1804, 23 out of 166 enslaved people at Barron Hill shared a name with at least one younger person on the plantation; by 1817, it was 35 out of 203. By giving children names of their elders, enslaved parents connected their offspring with their communities irrespective of blood relations.

Not all enslaved workers chose to perpetuate names given to them by their captors. Some of these people gave their children traditional West African day names like Quasheba, Mimba, and Quaco. In 1803, Queen, a fifty-four-year-old African woman, named her only son Cudjoe, a version of Kojo, the Akan day name for Monday. Thirty-eight-year-old Creole-born Clara had a son on the same day as Queen and also named her child Cudjoe. Considering there is no record of another person named Cudjoe on the plantation prior to these boys being born, both Queen and Clara gave their children names that had specific cultural meaning to West Africans. These names allowed Queen to retain some connection to the culture of her birth, while Clara, who had been born on the plantation, mimicked her. There were several West Africans on the Barron Hill plantation and their children and grandchildren who retained African cultural affiliations through their names. Dido gave her daughter the name Abba for Thursday. Abba, in turn, named her son Christmas, an "Anglicized day-name."[133] While the meanings of the day names might have been

[132] Cheryll Ann Cody, "There Was No "Absalom" on the Ball Plantations: Slave-Naming Practices in the South Carolina Low Country, 1720-1865," *The American Historical Review* 92, no. 3 (1987): 572.

[133] Basil Cowper Inventory (JNA); A Return of Slaves, 1817 (NAUK); Cody, "There was no Absalom," 573.

lost as the generations passed, the connections to the people who shared those names were carried over to future offspring, establishing kinship networks on Barron Hill.

The first-generation Flora, probably born somewhere in West Africa around 1748, had given her eldest daughter the Latin name Maria and her youngest daughter the African day name for Sunday, Quasheba.[134] Whether it was biological or a choice, Maria had no children, but Quasheba had three sons, Prince (11), Johnny (9), and James (3). There was a fifty-six-year-old man named Prince and a thirty-two-year-old man named Johnny at Barron Hill in 1817. Although there is no way to tell if these men were the fathers of the boys, their shared names speak to a community or mutual respect on the plantation. In reusing the names Prince and Johnny, Quasheba made sure that her children were connected to past generations.

Flora's kinship network also included a Creole woman named Juliet. She was born on the island sometime in 1770 and grew into adulthood under the yoke of slavery. She was most likely an enslaved field laborer on the Cowper pimento plantation, and she appeared in both the 1804 inventory and the 1817 Return of Slaves. Juliet had two children: a daughter when she was twenty-six and a son four years later. Juliet must have had some type of relationship with the elder Flora because she named her only daughter after her. Juliet is unusual in that she gave birth to her two children late in comparison to the average lifespan of an enslaved plantation worker in Jamaica. Historians have argued that "conditions of life and work for slave women physically discouraged reproduction." These conditions "led to the emergence of a dominant ideology in which both masters and slaves found the costs of bearing and rearing children greater than the

[134] A Return of Slaves, 1817 (NAUK).

benefits," which thus granted the enslaved woman more agency in her reproductive choices. [135] Creole-born populations of certain islands in the Caribbean did not began to increase until after 1834, but Barron Hill had an excellent record of live births and a low death rate, circumstances that made it an outlier compared to sugar plantations on the Island. Juliet's late births might have been related to her working conditions and/or diet as many historians have postulated. However, other women in her age group had an average of four children at Barron Hill, and she did not.[136]

While Juliet could very well have not wanted to bring enslaved children into the world, had a bad diet, or worked in harsh conditions, some evidence suggests that she controlled her own reproductive choices. B.W. Higman discovered that there were higher rates of fertility among field laborers compared to domestics, which he explained largely in terms of their "opportunities to establish co-residential unions within the slave community and had little to do with any differences in their material conditions of life."[137] Higman specifically rejected harsh living conditions and slave agency as factors in low Caribbean birth rates, but he did attribute disease and poor medical attention to the bulk of infant deaths, which were another cause of population decline. Juliet was most likely a field worker, so having access to a partner would not have been that much of an issue since men outnumbered women. Further, the sources suggest that she might have had a longstanding relationship. Once again, Prince, the son of Esther,

[135] Rhoda E. Reddock, "Women and Slavery in the Caribbean: A Feminist Perspective," *Latin American Perspectives* 12, no. 1 (1985): 67-8.

[136] Reddock, "Women and Slavery," 67; Herbert S. Klein and Stanley L. Engerman, "Fertility Differentials between Slaves in the United States and the British West Indies: A Note on Lactation Practices and Their Possible Implications," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, 35, no. 2 (1978): 357-374; Herbert Klein, *African Slavery in Latin American and the Caribbean*. (Oxford University Press, 1986), 132-133.

[137] Higman, *Slave Populations*, 376.

becomes a candidate. The 1817 Return listed people in family groups based on gender. Prince is listed directly above Juliet's son Sam, which indicates that they were in some way related. Prince's mother, Esther, was a ninety-year-old African woman who had two surviving sons, fifty-six-year-old Prince and forty-six-year-old Will. There is no way to determine if Prince was the father of Juliet's children, but the fact remains that she was able to control, for at least a time, some aspects of her family life.

In an unusual statistic for the Caribbean, more children were born on Barron Hill between 1804 and 1817 than died during this time period. In 1796, the second-generation Flora was born into slavery on this plantation, surrounded by her fictive and real kin.[138] Once her daughter had been weaned, Juliet most likely did not live in the same place on the plantation as her child Flora. In the 1804 inventory, Flora was not listed in the same group as her mother but was recorded with other young girls toward the end of the document.[139] The seven girls in her group ranged in age from eight (Flora) to twelve (Tinah).[140] According to the going rates, eight-year-old Flora was worth 60 pounds Sterling, and Tinah was worth the price of a fully-grown woman at 120 pounds. The total worth of the seven girls together was five hundred and ten pounds. These creole-born Jamaican girls – Tinah, Hannah, Flora, Hagar, Hester, Kate and Lovice – were listed on the 1804 inventory as children, and all but Hester and Kate would appear on the 1817 Return as new mothers, producing nine children for the Cowper family coffers. Like their mothers, these girls' bodies created more wealth for Polly, Mary Anne, and Margaret. Each enslaved child

[138] Basil Cowper Inventory (JNA); A Return of Slaves, 1817 (NAUK).

[139] Basil Cowper Inventory (JNA).

[140] Basil Cowper Inventory (JNA).

added to the funds that paid the rents and bills of the Cowper women as they travelled in the most luxurious social circles around England.

Maternal affiliations were important on the Barron Hill plantation. In the 1817 Return, the elder Flora was listed with her daughters, Maria and Quasheba, below her. Twenty-one-year-old Flora was listed directly between her mother, Juliet, and her year-old daughter, Sue, in her family group. Another Flora, age three, was also listed on the Return with her many siblings. Her mother, Grace, was listed in the same gang as Juliet in the 1804 inventory and had a total of nine children while on the Barron Hill plantation. Grace, nine years younger than Juliet, was only twenty when she had her first child. She participated in the lactation practices of traditional African societies as two years lapsed between each of her children. She gave Nimrod (17) and Grasse (15) original names, but her younger son, Cato (7), shared a name with an elderly man, and James (5) shared his name with two other children on the plantation who were only a few years older than him. A man named James worth $140 was listed on the Inventory but not on the Return. His death might have been a reason to give his name to three boys so close in age. Grace also gave her daughters, Daphne (18) and Violet (11), original names, as well as Fanny (9) one of her twin girls. The name Fanny was very popular on Barron Hill in 1808-09 as three girls were given that name, but there was no record of anyone else named Fanny on the plantation. The other twin was called Juliet (9), and her youngest child born in 1815 was named Flora (3). Grace had named her last two daughters after the family unit of Juliet as well as in relation to the eldest Flora.[141] The perpetuation of the name Flora between generations exemplifies how kinship networks, both blood and fictive, operated on the Barron Hill plantation.

[141] Basil Cowper Inventory (JNA); 1817 Return of Slaves (NAUK).

This third-generation Flora was born into a community, and she was instantly connected to it through her name. As John Inscoe stated, enslaved people "were able to create a distinct identity through their names," and the name Flora connected her with two older women who had some type of loving relationship with her mother that was forged into kinship.[142] There is no way to tell exactly what types of emotions existed between the women listed on the 1817 Return, but respect definitely existed among the elder Flora, Juliet, and Grace, which was manifested in their child-naming decisions. Together, these three generations of Floras became part of the lines in a kinship network at Barron Hill that gave enslaved people purpose and familial roots from which they could momentarily escape the brutality of slavery.

As long as the plantation was running smoothly and the coffee and pimento crops were succeeding, the Cowper women had no reason to become involved in naming babies or commenting on the personal relationships among their enslaved workers. However, when they were at Barron Hill, they did occasionally take an interest in the children born there. A few months after her father had died, Margaret, then twenty seven, wrote to her cousin that "we have a little Negro child…who I often play with & think of your dear child & regret that I cannot metamorphise this little black boy in his exact resemblance tho' as it is I seem to have a real affection for the child, a pretty, engaging little creature."[143] Neither Margaret nor Mary Anne would ever have any children of their own. Their engagement with this child shows that they were willing to develop some emotional attachments to the people that they held in bondage, but both women were keenly aware of the system on which that they had been living so well.

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[142] John C. Inscoe, "Carolina Slave Names: An Index to Acculturation," *The Journal of Southern History* 49, no. 4 (1983): 527-54.

[143] Margaret Cowper to Eliza Mackay, August 7, 1812 (GHS); Northrop, "Styling Loyalist Diaspora," 140.

Margaret never gives this child a name in her letter, and she did not speak of him in any further correspondence. While Margaret was fixated on this nameless boy long enough to include him in her letter to Eliza, she refused to recognize him as a real person. Further, she was only using him as a placeholder for the real baby she hoped to hold. Her longing for her family and the sentimentality of nineteenth-century slave owners clouded her image of the small boy she saw in front of her. Eliza Mackay, Margaret's cousin in Georgia, had given birth to her first child, Robert Mackay in 1800. There would have been nine baby boys born at the plantation who were two years old, the exact age as Robert Mackay, Jr. when she wrote the letter in 1802, including Sam, Juliet's son.[144] Like so many other unnamed domestics, the mystery boy appeared for a few lines in Margaret's letter, and then he disappeared back into historical silence.

Just prior to the global financial panic of 1819, the Cowper women recognized the need to liquidate some of their plantation holdings, and by October of 1818, the Cowper women were ready to leave England, where they had lived since 1806 and return to America.[145] The harsh reality of life as a plantation slave had begun to manifest on Barron Hill, and regardless of the freedom of naming, all 203 people came to understand that the Cowper women made the ultimate decisions about their lives. Ignoring the deep kin ties of their slaves, Polly and Mary Anne Cowper liquidated the Jamaican plantation and sold a majority of their workforce to nearby planters. The first- and second-generation Floras and their family units were purchased by Joseph Travers, an absentee British planter who owned land in Trelawney Parish.[146] Grace and only one

[144] A Return of Slaves, 1817 (NAUK).

[145] "Mary Anne Cowper Common Place Book, (SHC), 12.

[146] Registry of Colonial Slaves and Slave Compensation Commission, Records Class 771, "1820 Return of Slaves for Joseph Travers" (NAUK), 230.

of her children, Nimrod, were purchased by John Samuells, also of Trelawney Parish.[147] The records are unclear on where the other seven of Grace's children went, but one thing is certain: the Cowper women took four-year-old Flora with them from Jamaica to Savannah.[148] Like the nameless child for whom they had developed an affection in 1802, they had undoubtedly connected with the little girl Flora and decided that they had some use for her across the Caribbean Sea.

The Cowper women also took at least eight other people with them.[149] Along with young Flora, they also brought six-year-old Lucinda. She had been named by her Creole mother, Yabba, after a childless sixty-eight-year-old woman. A mulatto woman named Molly Gordon, who did not live on Barron Hill but rather in Falmouth, was also brought from Jamaica. Unlike Grace or Yabba, Molly Gordon was allowed to bring her sons with her. The oldest boy, William, was listed as a mulatto, but his two younger brothers, George and Sam, were listed as quadroons. Their father was obviously European, but no records indicate his identity. Nancy, an eighteen-year-old mulatto woman who was listed directly underneath Molly Gordon also made the trip from Jamaica to Savannah.[150]

Molly Gordon, Nancy, and the children would have stepped off the ship in the Savannah harbor and witnessed a sight that was not very unlike Falmouth. While the water was not crystal blue and the mountain range did not loom in the distance, they recognized the hustle and bustle

[147] Registry of Colonial Slaves and Slave Compensation Commission, Records Class 771, "1820 Return of Slaves for John Samuells" (NAUK), 233. *accessed through Ancestory.com

[148] Mary Anne Cowper Common Place Book, (SHC), 12.

[149] Georgia Court of the Ordinary, Last Will and Testament of Mary Cowper, 1821, Georgia Wills & Probate Records, 1742-1992; *Wills Vol. E-F, 1807-1827*, 135-139. Ancestry.com. *Georgia, Wills and Probate Records, 1742-1992*. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015

[150] Last Will and Testament of Mary Cowper, 1821; 1804 Inventory (JNA); 1817 Return of Slaves (NAUK).

of a port city.[151] Polly, Mary Anne, and Margaret were already known as part of the elite in Savannah. Along with plantations in both Georgia and South Carolina, the Cowper women also owned several buildings in Savannah. Elizabeth Smith had bequeathed Mary Anne and Margaret "a lott of the land in the City of Savannah No 12 Washington Ward now called the Hawthorn Lott," where Flora and Lucinda initially lived when they arrived from Jamaica.[152] Smith also bequeathed a property at No. 8 Reynolds Ward in Savannah to her daughter, Jane Bourke. At this point, the enslaved people who lived there were not physically removed from that location, but "Old Phillis, Carpenter George, Sabrina his wife, Winter, Morrice, Harriet, Nanny, Maria, Flora and her two children and their future increase" were "equally divided" among the three Bourke grandchildren.[153] Elizabeth Smith owned another Flora, who had two children and lived at No. 8 Reynolds Ward in 1809. There is no way to tell if the child from Jamaica ever met the Flora from Savannah, but the older woman already had a kinship network that the younger Flora would have been able to tap into because they were connected by name and were both under the authority of the Smith family heirs.

The early movements of the Flora from Savannah become as murky as the flooded rice pastures that lined the Georgia coast. Unlike the 1817 Return of Slaves that provided so much detail about each enslaved person, the only records that account for Flora's existence are in Elizabeth Williamson Smith's will and the ledgers kept by both Robert and Eliza Mackay for the

[151] Betty Wood, *Women's Work, Men's Work: The Informal Slave Economies of Lowcountry Georgia*. (University of Georgia Press, 1995), 81.

[152] Last Will and Testament of Elizabeth Smith, 1810.

[153] Last Will and Testament of Elizabeth Smith, 1810.

Grange plantation from 1813 to 1832.[154] Between 1800 and 1865, Flora was the fifteenth most-popular name for enslaved people on the Ball family plantations in South Carolina.[155] Although the name Flora was quite common in both Jamaica and the southern Lowcountry, only one Flora was noted in the records at the Grange, and she neither passed her name on to any of her children nor did anybody name a child for her there.[156]

Elizabeth Smith gave Flora and her two children to her recently-widowed daughter, Jane Bourke, in 1809. They most likely stayed at No. 8 Reynolds square until Robert Mackay purchased the Grange Plantation in 1813, and some of these people, including Flora, were sent by Jane Bourke to work in the rice fields in order to support Mackay's new venture (Slide 11). The Grange was located in advantageous spot along the Savannah River, which allowed easy access by boat to the city of Savannah (Slide 6). The structures on the Grange property also shifted from the simple wattle and daub buildings to more permanent wood, and then brick, constructions.[157] Along with the shift in building materials, there was also a movement in who was living and laboring on the land. Indentured servants initially worked on the property, yet enslaved Africans had become a legal and much larger portion of the Georgia workforce by the time Basil Cowper purchased The Grange in 1774.[158] The first and second generations of

[154] Robert and Eliza Mackay, "The Grange Plantation Journal," *The Records of the Antebellum Southern Plantations from the Revolution to the Civil War* ed. Kenneth Stamp, microfilm: F213.R43 1985 Series J, pt. 4, r 1-7 (University of Georgia Main Library, hereafter cited as UGA); "Georgia Archaeology Report, D1-D52.

[155] Cody, "No Absalom," 587.

[156] Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser, May 1, 1779-March 25, 1780, microfilm: 962, (University of the West Indies, hereinafter cited as UWI).

[157] "Georgia Archaeology report," 145-152.

[158] *Historic Property Treatment Plan*, 4.

enslaved workers in this location had already established a slave community that remained more or less intact as the plantation shifted ownership.

Family members responded to Mackay's purchase of the Grange by offering enslaved bodies to perform back-breaking labor in the rice fields. When Flora arrived at the Grange, she lived with a partner, Forrest. They were both field laborers and lived together as a unit from 1815 until "Old Forrest" died on April 21, 1825.[159] "Old Flora" would follow him into the grave almost an exact year later on April 14, 1826.[160] No evidence suggests that Flora's two children came with her to the plantation as she is listed solely with Forrest for the majority of the time. In 1820, a nameless child is listed in the same household as Flora and Forrest, but this child did not appear in any other years. Between 1814 and 1829, there were 50 births and over 54 deaths on the Grange, which kept the slave population somewhat stable. Ex-slave narratives complied by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930's recall that the nurses in charge of enslaved children were usually elderly women, crippled people, or other small children who could not contribute their physical labor to the profits of the plantation. Many people "remembered raising children and being raised by older children" without any adult supervision.[161] The child could have been orphaned, and an older couple like Flora and Forrest could have helped to care for the youth, which would have maintained a kinship network on the Grange plantation.

Flora was not the only person on the plantation who had a name associated with the Cowper women. An ageless woman named Mary Anne appears throughout the ledger. Listed with yards of cloth next to her name and the names of her children written under both the birth

[159] "Georgia Archaeology Report," D30.

[160] "Georgia Archaeology Report," D32.

[161] Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 508.

and death columns, Mary Anne was recorded in a household with a man named Tom for the twenty years she resided at the Grange. She had two children, Charles and Pricilla, but they never made it out of childhood. Charles was born in 1817 and died in July of 1819. Pricilla was born in 1821 and died in July of 1823. Both of her children died in the summer when the disease environment on wet, humid plantations was at its highest.[162]

The death of an infant or child most likely ended the succession of the name Mary Anne. Cambridge and Lucy, an enslaved couple who lived at the Grange until their deaths, had a daughter they named Mary Anne. According to the plantation ledger, the child "had never done work of any kind" and died on February 19, 1814.[163] Most enslaved people avoided naming children after deceased siblings, and the kinship network on the Grange plantation might have been strong enough to prevent anybody else from naming their child Mary Anne after the death of Cambridge and Lucy's daughter.[164] Enslaved people also did not name their children for their masters; however, the name Mary Anne had become associated with the enslaved community at the Grange. Without knowing her age, it is difficult to determine if the Mary Anne listed in the plantation journals was born during the Cowper family residency, but it is clear that someone gave her a name that was directly connected to the eldest daughter of Basil and Polly Cowper. From the original purchase of the property in 1774 to the eventual selling of the property by Eliza McQueen Mackay in 1832, the Grange plantation workers were linked to Mary Anne Cowper both economically as well as socially in a way that could only exist in a slave society.

[162] "Georgia Archaeology Report," D30.

[163] "Georgia Archaeology Report," D30.

[164] Cody, "Slave Naming Practices," 595.

At least five slave cabins have been excavated at the Grange site, and they stood to the southeast of the main plantation house. These were most likely the wooden cabins of the domestics as the rice swamps were miles away at the south end of what is now Argyle Island.[165] Although the majority of artifacts date to 1817-1832 when Eliza and Robert Mackay owned the plantation, the original slave cabins were most likely built during Basil Cowper's ownership. [166] Telfair, Telfair, and Cowper, one of the largest human traffickers in Savannah, dealt in slaves mainly from the Windward Coast. Basil would have had his pick of prime West Africans to work at his newly acquired rice plantation, and these people formed the original slave community on The Grange.[167] The artifact assemblage of the slave cabins contained many day-to-day items that would have been used by acculturated Africans, like coins, several types of pottery, including cream and pearl wares, padlocks, keys, glass beads, scissors, thimbles, and even gun flints.[168] Excavations of the soil surrounding the site determined that the Grange enslaved workers had small gardens next to their cabins as well.

As evidenced by these artifacts, enslaved people on the Grange plantation were fully aware of private property, money, and consumerism.[169] Basil Cowper as well as Robert Mackay

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[165] "Georgia Archaeology report," 199-226.

[166] "Georgia Archaeology report," 218.

[167] *Georgia Gazette*, 1768.

[168] "Georgia Archaeology report," 202-208.

[169] For further analysis of enslaved Southerners' willingness to contribute to a larger market economy, see Philip Morgan, "The Development of Slave Culture in Eighteenth Century Plantation America" (Ph.D. diss., University College, London, 1977), 136-139; Lawrence T. McDonnell, "Money Knows No Master: Market Relations and the American Slave Community," in *Developing Dixie: Modernization in a Traditional Society,* eds. Winfred B. Moore, Jr. , Joseph F. Tripp, and Lyon G. Tyler (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1988), 77; *The Slave's Economy: Independent Production by Slaves in the Americas*, eds Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan (London: Frank Cass & Co. LTD, 1991); Larry E. Hudson, Jr. "All That Cash: Work and Status in the Slave Quarters" in *Working Toward Freedom*, ed. Larry E. Hudson, Jr. (University of Rochester Press, 1994), 36; Robert Olwell, "Loose, Idle and Disorderly," in *More Than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas*, eds. David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 99-100; Dylan Penningroth, *Claims of Kinfolk: African American Property and Community in the Nineteenth Century South* (The University of North Carolina

allowed their enslaved workers to participate in the local market system. Through gardening, fishing, raising livestock, and making items from chairs to pottery, the enslaved people at The Grange were able to provide items for sale at the local marketplace in Savannah, where they acquired the coins, padlocks, beads, and guns. As a small child, Mary Anne Cowper would have lived amongst these African people that her father had brought to his plantation, and as an older woman, she would eventually inherit as well as bequeath these African people's children and grandchildren to her female relatives. Enslaved women like Flora would have recognized Mary Anne as an important person on the Grange plantation.

The relationship that bound the youngest Flora to the Cowper women was not based on a long-standing emotional connection but rather an economic one that required Flora to produce wealth for her mistresses. In return, she gained the independence of a skilled worker who participated independently in the local economy. Flora and her female owners were playing out an economic construct that had existed between elite and enslaved women in both European and African societies, providing an example of the economic relationships that slavery created between seemingly opposite groups.[170] While the Flora at the Grange had died in 1826, the Flora from Jamaica was eventually settled on Margaret's small plantation, Oatlands Island, about four miles down the Savannah River (Slide 7).[171] The enslaved workers on this small plantation originally grew Sea Island cotton, but that venture did not prove to be profitable for the McQueens, so Oatlands Island was transformed into an agricultural center that grew staple crops, like corn and cabbage, for the family's larger plantations in the more rural areas of Georgia. The

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Press, 2003); Kathleen M. Hilliard, *Masters, Slaves, and Exchange: Power's Purchase in the Old South* (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[170] Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (Oxford University Press, 1986).

[171] Mary Anne Cowper Common Place book, 1847-1851 (SHC), 79.

surpluses could have also gone up the river to the Savannah public market.[172] Soon after the death of her husband in 1822, Margaret returned to England, leaving Flora and several others under the control of her sister, Mary Anne.[173] By 1846, Flora was a frequent traveler from the plantation to the city center, a trusted market woman carrying out Mary Anne Cowper's business, and her own, in the urban marketplace (Slide 12).[174]

The last mention of Flora is in Mary Anne's will from 1856, which bequeathed her to Catherine and Sarah Mackay, who had taken over management of Oatlands Island.[175] Mary Anne specifically requested that Flora "remain at Oatlands" in a comfortable home for the rest of her life and that she should be "permitted all such privilege and indulgences and freedom as use not inconsistent with the laws of the state of Georgia."[176] Mary Anne, however, did not grant Flora freedom from bondage. Her story, like those of her fictive kinship network, then goes silent.

As Flora grew into enslaved adulthood, she probably combined the elite status of the Cowper family with her own notions of gender and the marketplace to conduct business as an agent of her mistress, which granted her such freedoms as conducting transactions in her own favor. With her proximity to the city and access to the surplus food being grown at Oatlands, Flora participated in Savannah's food marketplace. As customary in many slave societies in West Africa and Jamaica, she provided Mary Anne with a portion of her proceeds, and, in return, she was granted a type of autonomy that existed specifically for female economic actors in the

[172] *The Letters of Don Juan McQueen*, xxxi.

[173] *The Letters of Robert Mackay*, 234.

[174] Mary Anne Cowper Common Place Book, 1847-1851 (SHC), 83-87.

[175] Last Will & Testament of Mary Anne Cowper, 1856, 203.

[176] Last Will & Testament of Mary Anne Cowper, 1856, 207.

marketplaces of the Atlantic World. Although Flora did not leave any written evidence herself, Mary Anne frequently recorded her economic interactions with Flora in her Common Place Book. In 1846-47, Mary Anne kept records of the amount of money that she paid to Flora for food items that she brought into the household. On February 16, 1847, Mary Anne subtracted a dollar from her Common Place Book for "Marketing- Seasoning & Onions pd by Flora while in town."[177] These transactions occurred frequently, and Mary Anne made careful notes about Flora's purchases throughout the remaining pages in her Common Place Book. Flora was an adept market woman, entering shops and participating in the food trade. Flora understood math, knew how to count, and could competently participate in a monetary exchange. Mary Anne trusted Flora to purchase different things from the urban center, including red flannel cloth, fruits, sugar, and bread. She had enough money in her possession to purchase items for her mistress and to be paid back.[178] The economic relationship that had developed between these two women allowed Flora to live independently from Mary Anne and provided her a measure of freedom in a slave society.

Elite women like Mary Anne Cowper would have never entered into the marketplace to sell the food crops that were being grown on her Oatlands Plantation, but enslaved women like Flora were able to move from plantation to urban market with the support and protection of their mistresses. The power that Mary Anne possessed through her gender and class privilege was in some ways transferred to Flora through this economic partnership, which provided Flora with a way to earn money, to move about unmolested , and to make her own market-based decisions on what she was buying and selling. African, Afro Caribbean, and African American women

[177] Mary Anne Cowper Common Place Book (SHC), 13.

[178] Mary Anne Cowper Common Place Book, (SHC), 12-17.

utilized their strangely privileged positions in the market place to reinforce a type of internal economy and to create a version of southern commerce that reflected West African customs.

About 12% of the total enslaved population of South Carolina and Georgia were urban and about half of them were women, yet these women stood at the heart of the southern informal economy. They were responsible for connecting with producers from plantations, distributing food, and acting as surrogates in the marketplace for their elite female owners. Through an exploration of the economic relationships among enslaved market women and their wealthy urban mistresses, a more nuanced picture emerges of capitalism in slave societies that highlights women as important contributors to both the local marketplace and the global market. Enslaved women like Flora worked within the system of slavery to create a type of local commerce that combined many old-world elements from African and Europe to become a unique feature of the New World plantation societies.

CHAPTER 3

MARY ANNE'S KULLE

The global market was an ephemeral thing that floated in liquid arrangements across the ocean, interacting simultaneously with millions of people. Human capital traveled in the form of enslaved people's flesh, blood, and "future increase."[179] Slave traders and planters turned these people into assets that were bought, sold, and traded on plantations in the Atlantic World, but human bodies were also equated with liquid stocks and bonds on the European market. In the Americas, single and widowed elite women used enslaved capital on the plantation to become participants in the global economy. These women also generated cash through hiring-out enslaved labor in the local marketplace, which provided a much-needed labor force for municipalities. Many savvy Atlantic World businesswomen, from pre-colonial Muslim West Africa to the nineteenth-century American South, invested in slavery in order to increase their familial wealth, which allowed them to live comfortable lives without depending on a male head of household. Slave-owning mistresses from different cultures complicate economic arguments that leave women out of the creation of global capitalism. By focusing on how Mary Anne Cowper's contributions to the global economy and the local labor market were an acculturation of European and African economic structures, scholars can create a history of Atlantic World commerce that becomes a more diverse and gender-fluid space than has previously been considered.

[179] Term used to identify enslaved people's children in the Last Will and Testaments of the Smith/Cowper/McQueen and Mackay Families.

Mary Anne Cowper was a keen nineteenth-century businesswoman who amassed capital in both its liquid and physical form. Throughout her long life, she would inherit "steamboat stocks," "thirteen shares in the capital stock of the Bank of America, and … twenty four shares in the capital stock of the Utica and Schenectaday Railroad," as well as shares in a British "building and insurance company."[180] Her holdings also included a "Jamaican estate," several plantations and urban residences in Georgia and South Carolina, along with a farm in New York.[181] In addition, she would also inherit hundreds of people, many of whom worked on the plantations she never visited, while others were tied to her urban properties. She hired-out the labor of skilled workers, like her enslaved carpenter Mulatto George, to other people and then collected a specific amount of his cash wages. Through the hiring-out system, the hard coin that Mary Anne required from her skilled enslaved workers allowed her to sustain her comfortable lifestyle and freed up her liquid capital for other purposes, like purchasing stocks, maintaining her vast property holdings, and retaining lawyers to keep her capital flowing around the global economy. Slavery allowed Mary Anne Cowper to become a successful participant in the emerging Atlantic World capitalist system, while her enslaved workers performed vital labor for local economies.

In order for Mary Anne to participate in the global market, she relied on her male family members to sell her cotton, to oversee her plantations, and to procure her legal and financial paperwork. She understood kinship and relied on her own familial networks – like her brother-in-law John McQueen, her cousin Robert Mackay, and her nephew William Mackay – to conduct business transactions on her behalf. While only a handful of the letters she wrote to Robert

[180] Curtis Bolton, "Letters of Administration," Archdeacons Court of Barnstaple, England, August 20, 1842.

[181] Mary Anne Cowper Common Place Book, (SHC), 45; Curtis Bolton, "Letters of Administration," 1842.

Mackay were saved by family members, these letters occasionally hinted at business opportunities and discussed the markets for pimento and cotton.[182] She most likely wrote more detailed letters in regard to her business dealings directly to the merchant firms; however, these letters have been lost. Mary Anne's familial connections to British and American merchant firms enabled her to maneuver through the male-dominated global economy with authority. The ability for elite women like Mary Anne to participate in the capitalist global market and local labor market through both elite male and enslaved surrogates had an established precedent in other parts of the Atlantic World.

While slavery had only existed for a few centuries in the New World, this system had a long historical tradition in Africa. In the 1760s, Mary Anne's father had contracted with many West African ports, including Bunce Island, and ships like the *Nancy* brought hundreds of Africans to the shores of the Savannah River under the auspice of the Telfair, Telfair, and Cowper Trading Company.[183] These Yoruba, Igbo, Mande, Wolof, Fulani, and Hausa people all maintained aspects of their traditional cultures, which they passed down to their American-born kin. African economic structures were thus transferred to the slave-owning societies of the Caribbean and American South. As enslaved groups outnumbered free, African customs were undoubtedly perpetuated by the very people who had lived in slave societies, albeit ones organized far differently than in the Americas. An economic partnership requires the willingness of both parties, and enslaved Africans, especially those who possessed skills, could have influenced their own terms of enslavement as exemplified by their ability to maintain some independence through their vegetable gardens. Although masters benefited from not having to

[182] Mary Anne Cowper to Robert Mackay, 8 June 1812, (SHC).

[183] Donnan, *History of the Slave Trade to America*, 624-5.

provide food to their workers, enslaved people agitated for the ability to sell their surplus agriculture in local markets. In the Caribbean and American South, the urban area became a space where skilled enslaved workers and their masters created economic partnerships that were strikingly familiar to the organization of urban enslaved labor in West Africa.

Mary Anne initially participated in the global economy by entrusting her business transactions to John McQueen. In 1818, she allowed him to sell 140 bags of pimento to merchants Williamson and DeVilleus for 741 pounds and 3 shillings.[184] She also sold them 54 puncheons of rum, 2 puncheons of molasses, and 27 hogshead of sugar for a total of 5,403 pounds and 1 shilling.[185] Mr. McQueen was paid 2,544 pounds and 56 shillings for his efforts.[186] After the death of John McQueen, Mary Anne contracted with Robert Mackay's merchant firm, Meins and Mackay.[187] She had since sold her Barron Hill plantation, and the Savannah firm sold, as well as consigned, the cotton crop from her plantation in Houston County.[188] While she neither oversaw her plantations personally nor participated in all contracts and negotiations with English bankers, both she and the Meins and Mackay merchant firm received healthy profits from these ventures.

The way that Mary Anne utilized male surrogates to conduct her business in the global market is comparable to pre-colonial Muslim women who conducted long-distance trade from West to North Africa and beyond through the Trans-Saharan trade.[189] These women were

[184] Mary Anne Cowper Common Place Book, (SHC), 73

[185] Mary Anne Cowper Common Place Book, (SHC), 72

[186] Mary Anne Cowper Common Place Book, (SHC), 74

[187] *The Letters of Robert Mackay*, xxviii.

[188] Mary Anne Cowper Common Place Book, (SHC), 75-77.

[189] The African pre-colonial period was prior to the British colonization of Northern Nigeria around 1890.

invested in the supply lines for things like salt, kola nuts, cloth, and dyes. Although many of these women lived in seclusion, they had established relationships with merchants in the Middle East and the Mediterranean that were cultivated through their enslaved caravan workers.[190] Elite women utilized their profits to purchase luxury items, to enhance their class position, and to provide inheritances and dowries for their children. The history of Muslim women in West Africa has tended to "focus on women's marginalization and oppression in Islam," and scholars have often defined these women's relationship to their religion as a negative or have presented Muslim women's activities as primarily "forms of resistance against patriarchy."[191] Much like Mary Anne, West African women were not seeking to resist the patriarchal nature of slave ownership. However, they did complicate it by making economic decisions about how they organized their enslaved agricultural workers, their skilled laborers, and their long-distance trade operations.

As Europeans expanded trade networks into the coastal areas of West Africa, women became known for their business acumen. Mãe Aurélia Correia was an African-born woman from Guinea-Bissau who, together with her husband, Caetano Jose Nozolni, from Cape Verde, dominated the commerce of the Geba-Grande area and the Bissagos archipelago during the first half of the nineteenth century.[192] She was not unusual, and Europeans referred to businesswomen like Correia as "*nharas* in the Guinea-Bissau region, *signares* in Senegal and *senoras* along the

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[190] Ahmed Beita Yusuf, "Capital Formation and Management among the Muslim Hausa Traders of Kano, Nigeria," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 45, no. 2 (1975): 168.

[191] Britta Frede and Joseph Hill, "Introduction: En-gendering Islamic Authority in West Africa" *Islamic Africa* 5, no. 2 (2014): 132.

[192] George E. Brooks, "A Nhara of Guinea-Bissau" in *Women and Slavery in Africa*, ed. by Claire Robertson and Martin A. Klein (University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 301.

Gambia River."[193] These titles reflected the wealth and power that certain women commanded while conducting trans-Atlantic trade for slaves, salt, gold, and metals with European powers like the Portuguese. During this time period, these coastal societies were converting to Islam, which did not yet restrict female participation in business ventures.

In Northern Nigeria, women also conducted long-distance trade, yet it was usually predicated on the trans-Saharan rather than the coastal trades of the trans-Atlantic. For instance, a woman named Mai Beza owned a slave estate in Dorayi, just outside of Kano, where she successfully traded salt independently from her husband in the late nineteenth century. In 1976, anthropologist Polly Hill found twenty-six decedents living on land Mai Beza had given or sold to three of her enslaved caravan workers in Dorayi.[194] The fact that Hill was a female researcher who could conduct anthropological interviews with Muslim women allowed her access to information about Hausa businesswomen and slave owners that could not be obtained by male researchers. The structures of social organization in Muslim West Africa have been excavated by contemporary scholars, and older interpretations of female traders, slave owners, and women in general have begun to give way to a more nuanced view of businesswomen and Islam in Africa.

Elite slave-owning Hausa women were akin to their counterparts in the Caribbean and the American South in how they organized enslaved labor to remain financially independent in patriarchal societies. Due to the religious practice of Purdah or *Kulle*, which kept married women tied to the home and secluded from the public sphere, women in West Africa were thought to have very little power in their households. However, recent studies have challenged that

[193] Brooks, "A Nhara," 295.

[194] Polly Hill, "From Slavery to Freedom: The Case of Farm-Slavery in Nigerian Hausaland," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 18, no. 3 (1976): 420.

analysis.[195] Scholars have found that households in modern Hausaland have "evolved through centuries of complex interaction between Islam and African models" and that women in pre-colonial Africa might not have been marginalized to the extent that colonial British observers had reported.[196] Systems like *adashi*, a rotating credit banking system, allowed women to deposit (*ajiya*) savings as well as provided them with "mother capital" or *uwa* when they needed an injection of hard cash to purchase goods or services.[197] Through male or enslaved surrogates, Muslim women in *Kulle* conducted business transactions and trade that provided some economic independence from their husbands.

Space in Muslim societies is often segregated by sex. Modern researchers have had a hard time understanding how class privilege and female power are constructed in these isolated environments through basic historical or anthropological methodologies. An archaeological study of the area in sixteenth-century Kano revealed that although royal wives were secluded, they maintained structures of power in the *cikin gida*, or inner house, where they "worked in tandem through administrative hierarchies to achieve state-household reproduction."[198] Even in their isolation, royal women ensured the daily reproduction of the Kano state through their administrative activities. Much like plantation mistresses in the American South and the Caribbean, the royal wives of Kano directed the labor of their enslaved domestics in ways that reaffirmed the superiority of the elite. They also depended on enslaved women to act as

[195] Callaway, Barbara J., "Ambiguous Consequences of the Socialisation and Seclusion of Hausa Women," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 22, no. 3 (September 1984), 431.

[196] *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Culture, Vol. II: Family, Law and Politics* (Boston: Brill, 2005), 258.

[197] Yusuf, "Capital Formation," 169-70.

[198] Heidi Nast, "Islam, Gender, and Slavery in West Africa Circa 1500: A Spatial Archaeology of the Kano Palace, Northern Nigeria," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 86, no. 1 (1996): 65.

surrogates in the public arena, which gave lower class women a certain power through this connection to their patrons.

While custom in Kano relegated royal wives to female-only spaces in the palace in order to assure that the King maintained his lineage, all the children of enslaved women were the property of the King regardless of their paternity. Therefore, these women's bodies and sexual relationships were not as highly valued or controlled. Enslaved women worked as guards, couriers, or tax collectors, and many of them carried out errands in the surrounding area for their royal mistresses.[199] The lowest class of enslaved women, *Kuyangi*, performed menial labor like threshing grain and doing laundry in public areas where they occupied both the male and female spheres of the palace. The *Kyuangi* were also the only class of women who were able to "work marginal farm plots in the western palace fields for their own discretionary purposes."[200] Through these plots, enslaved women supplemented their family's food intake and generated independent income through market participation. The *Kyuangi* and their royal mistresses performed traditional customs that gave enslaved people certain rights to the products of their own labor. These traditions were carried over to New World plantations.

During the nineteenth century, both male and female plantation workers in West Africa, the Caribbean, and the American South expected and received customary rights to grow their own produce on plots of land provided by the slave owner. In 1906, a British Colonial Administrator, F. D. Lugard, stated that a "farm slave" in Bauchi State of Northern Nigeria "is given a separate plot of land for his own use, and is allowed to sell the produce [sic] of it, after

[199] Nast, "Spatial Archaeology," 66.

[200] Nast, "Spatial Archaeology," 66.

his master has sold his own."[201] This tradition had survived from the fifteenth century *Kyuangi* and had become a central part of Islamic law. The Maliki School, which prospered in West Africa in the ninth century, created legal precedent that stipulated that slave owners "had a duty to give their slaves farm plots, where they could grow crops for sale or for their own consumption."[202] This system crossed the Atlantic. In 1832, Robert Scott noted that enslaved people in Jamaica were granted plots of land to grow vegetables and that "a great bulk of the provisions are raised by negroes belonging to plantations."[203] During his wanderings of the American South in 1853, Fredrick Law Olmsted pointed out that slave gardens were very common and remarked that each enslaved workers' cabin at a rice plantation in South Carolina were provided with "gardens-a half acre each."[204] Slave holders in the Atlantic World profited from this system because enslaved people grew their own food, which thus freed up capital for their owners to reinvest in trading networks or other business ventures. Enslaved people benefited because they could participate in the local market economy by selling their surpluses.

An economic relationship between elite women and their enslaved domestics could be found in many places in Africa, but the similarities between elite Hausa women and American plantation mistresses are remarkable. Between 1803 and 1808, South Carolina and Georgia imported over 40,000 Africans from the Bight of Biafra, many of whom could have been war

[201] Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Characteristics of Plantations in the Nineteenth-Century Sokoto Caliphate," *The American Historical Review* 84, no. 5 (1979): 1284.

[202] Hill, "From Slavery to Freedom," 399.

[203] Higman, *Slave Population*, 30.

[204] Fredrick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States; With Remarks on their Economy* (New York: Dix and Edwards, 1856), 422.

captives of the "jihads" occurring in Hausaland.[205] In 1804, Shehu Usman dan Fodio initiated the Sokoto "jihad" against the Hausa in what is now northern Nigeria.[206] He waged war, in part, to reduce peasant Hausa women's unlimited freedom in local markets, which contradicted his interpretation of a female's public place under shari'a law.[207] Unlike some of their more urban Fulani neighbors, Hausa women had bought, sold, and controlled agricultural surpluses from the rural areas to the city markets for generations. The Sokoto Caliphate attempted to push non-elite Hausa out of the markets, and women who did not adhere to the new laws were most likely sold to slave traders. Once in the United States, these newly-enslaved women would have recognized their mistresses as living in a type of purdah on the plantation, similar to the elite women in Hausaland who might have been their suppliers, customers, or patrons. While the environment would have been new, the social relationships that existed between females of different status in a slave society would have looked familiar.

Like southern planters, the Hausa kept enslaved people to work as domestics and farm laborers. Strong paternalistic ties bound the dominant group to their chattel, and enslaved women in both societies were permitted to participate in small-scale economic activities. Although married Hausa women lived in *Kulle*, they were still able to access the trans-Saharan trade networks through skilled enslaved men who journeyed with the caravans and conducted business on the behalf of their mistresses. Elite women also engaged in the local market and sold products through established kinship networks with young girls who had not yet reached puberty,

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[205] G. Ugo Nwokeji, "African Conceptions of Gender and the Slave Traffic," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no.1 (2001): 47-68; David Eltis, "The Volume and Structure of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Reassessment," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2001): 17-46.

[206] Robert O. Collins, *Problems in African History* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968).

[207] Beverly B. Mack and Jean Boyd, *One Woman's Jihad: Nana Asma'u, Scholar and Scribe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

with older women who had gone through menopause, and with their enslaved female domestics. Market participation was informed by social class and age in Muslim societies, whereas women in *Kulle* were allowed, and even encouraged, to generate their own income.

By the time that the British colonized Hausaland in the twentieth century, Hausa women who lived in *Kulle* had been accessing the local market through established kinship networks for generations. An ethnography by an old Hausa woman Baba, who lived in Karo, detailed interesting relationships between women and small-scale trade in the Hausa regions of Northern Nigeria. Baba remembered that as a young girl, she and her companions would go on "trading expeditions."[208] Since these girls were not married and had not yet reached puberty, they could move freely in the Kano marketplace. In ways that reflect enslaved women's participation in the local economies of the Lowcountry South, these girls would buy different foods, like calabashes or sweet potatoes, then go home and cook them to sell the next day. The girls would spend their profits on the Bori dancers, a spiritual cult, who performed in the market squares.

As an upper-class Hausa woman, Baba provided a unique perspective about her relationships with enslaved people, which is what scholars have focused on in their analysis of her testimonial.[209] Few, if any, have explored her consistent references to items that she and other women purchased "with her own money."[210] During the early colonial period, cash money was given as a gift, used to buy a gift, or was presented as an appeasement among the Hausa. As exemplified by Baba choosing to spend her coins on Bori dancers, women in early twentieth-

[208] Mary F. Smith, *Baba of Karo: A Woman of the Muslim Hausa*, (Yale University Press, 1954), 60.

[209] Catherine. Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women: A Modern History*, translated from French by Beth Gillian Raps (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 22.

[210] *Baba of Karo*, 188.

century Northern Nigeria could do what they wished with their profits and participated in the market economy independently from men. While this independence had been common in generations prior to 1900, the dual threat of Islamic extremism and colonization soon changed the openness with which Muslim women engaged with the market.[211]

While modern interpretations of women and Islam tend to focus on their marginality and inequality, pre-colonial understandings of West African women have dismissed or not taken seriously female economic participation in religious doctrine. The Qur'an guaranteed women economic rights through inheritance. Chapter 4, verse 11 stipulates that:

> God directs you
> As regards your children's inheritance
> To the male a portion equal to
> That of two females.[212]

Women cannot get less than a 2:1 share of familial wealth and are considered "Qur'anic heirs" that cannot be legally excluded from inheritance.[213] While the apportionments are mathematically unequal, the fact that the Qur'an provided women with a specific percentage of familial wealth independent of a male heir in the seventh century enabled Muslim women to become successful participants in trade and business. Women like Bi Aisha, a middle-ranking member of the Mombasa society along the Swahili coast, did not inherit from her family because they were not wealthy enough to provide for her, but after the death of her second husband, she exercised "her rights under Muslim Law to own property in her own name," and she was able to

[211] Emmanuel Akyeampong and Hippolyte Fofack, "The Contribution of African Women to Economic Growth and Development in the Pre-Colonial and Colonial Periods: Historical Perspectives and Policy Implications," *Economic History of Developing Regions* 29 (2014): 61.

[212] Hafiz Nazeem Goolam, "Gender Equality in Islamic Family Law," in *Understanding Islamic Law: From Classical to Contemporary*, ed. by Hisham M. Ramadan (AltaMira Press, 2006), 129.

[213] Richard Kimber, "The Qur'anic Law of Inheritance*" Islamic Law and Society* 5, no. 3 (1998): 291.

purchase enough "slaves and farms, which in turn produces enough money to support" herself in her widowhood.[214] Along with inheritance rights, widows in Muslim societies were granted economic privileges that assured their survival and lessened their dependence on family.

The rights to inherit and to control property in their own names allowed Muslim women and to support themselves without relying on their husbands or kin for economic security. Slave-holding women who were either single or widowed in the Caribbean and American South followed in the footsteps of their West African counterparts. Like Baba of Karo, Mary Anne Cowper was born into wealth and privilege on a plantation, but unlike Hausa women, Mary Anne did not live in close contact with the people she owned. After the death of her father in 1804, her mother, Polly, took control of their Jamaican estate and ran it successfully through an overseer. For twelve years, the women traveled around the British Isles and Europe, attending lavish balls, visiting with notable people, and participating in the elite lifestyle of absentee plantation owners. After the death of Mary Anne's grandmother and several of her aunts, the properties, plantations, and people they had inherited in America could no longer be successfully managed from England. Mary Anne and Polly liquidated their Jamaican plantation in 1817.[215] By the panic of 1819, Mary Anne had returned with her mother and sister to Savannah, Georgia, where they lived out the economic crash in comfort due to their smart investments and the structure of female landownership in the American Lowcountry.

In a situation that reflected Muslim inheritance laws, Mary Anne inherited great wealth from her female relatives, and she was able to manage that wealth independently of male control.

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[214] Margaret Strobel, "Slavery and Reproductive Labor in Mombasa" in *Women and Slavery in Africa*, eds. Claire Robertson and Martin A. Klein (University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 114.

[215] Mary Anne Cowper Common Place Book, (SHC), 118.

Mortality rates for European men in places like South Carolina, Georgia, and Jamaica were extraordinarily high, which created a space for women to inherit land and wealth as well as assume control over their deceased fathers' or husbands' business dealings. From 1760-1799, only 38% of males of European descent from the Southern Atlantic States were expected to live past twenty years of age and even less than that were expected to survive in the Caribbean.[216] When Basil Cowper had died unexpectedly in Jamaica, he did not leave a Last Will and Testament. The local government offered no opposition to Polly assuming ownership of her late husband's property or his debts.

The social order in environments dependent on slave labor could not realistically sustain the laws of coverture practiced in England since men died too frequently to maintain strict patriarchal control. Women in Jamaica, for instance, could "transact business as men did, drawing on or extending credit, signing contracts, authoring wills and devising property as they chose" to keep the British Empire flowing smoothly across the Atlantic Ocean.[217] The bankers of Britain didn't care about the sex of successful planters because women in the Caribbean were outliving men and producing wealth for the British economy. Inheritance in a slave system created a way for elite women to become the sole heirs of both enslaved people and the plantations they lived on. Therefore, their decisions about how to invest and spend that wealth had an impact on the global economy.

European immigrants to the Caribbean suffered high mortality rates with men dying at a much faster rate than women. In Barbados during the 1680s, immigrant men dominated the

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[216] Clayne l. Pope, "Adult Mortality in America before 1900: A View from Family Histories," in *Strategic Factors in American Economic History: A Volume to Honor Robert W. Fogel*, eds. Claudia Goldin and Hugh Rockoff (University of Chicago Press, 1992), 286.

[217] Christine Walker, "Pursuing Her Profits: Women in Jamaica, Atlantic Slavery and a Globalising Market, 1700-60," *Gender & History* 26, no. 3 (2014): 481.

population of Bridgetown, but by 1802, women outnumbered men two to one. Women became widows soon after their first marriages, which made them attractive prospects for single men who wanted to make their fortunes without an initial outlay of capital. Barbadian legal culture was predicated on English common law that gave control of all "conjugal property fully in the hands of the males."[218] Married women were under complete coverture, having little legal standing to amass or to dispose of property. They were considered subordinates of their husbands and "incapable of autonomous action."[219] Widows, on the other hand, were given certain protections under the Barbados Act of September 27, 1661.[220] Like the English Law of Succession, a widowed woman would be entitled to one-third interest in the real property owned by her husband at his death; however, this did not extend to personal property. This legal precedent was the one on which the courts were supposed to act, yet the high mortality rate for men enabled women to retain some autonomy by refusing to remarry. By 1791, women owned more than a 20% share of property levies in Bridgetown, a number that increased steadily each year thereafter.[221] Female slaveholders were involved in the "petty retail business as shopkeepers, tavern keepers, and in the rental of slaves."[222] Although the laws did not recognize women as important contributors to the local economy of Bridgetown, wills and other records show that widowed and single women dominated urban commerce through enslaved labor.

[218] Pedro Welch, *Slave Society in the City: Bridgetown, Barbados 1680-1834* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2003), 111.

[219] Welch, *Slave Society in the City*, 129.

[220] Welch, *Slave Society in the City*, 128.

[221] Welch, *Slave Society in the City*, 131.

[222] Welch, *Slave Society in the City*, 133.

Due to its proximity to French and Spanish territories, Jamaica was a more unstable colony than Barbados. English common law did not take root there like it did in other British colonies because of the large enslaved population in relation to free people and the high immigrant mortality rate. People, especially men, just didn't live long enough to maintain a consistent legal system, and merchant businesses needed to continue after their owners had died. This vacuum allowed widowed women, like the successful merchant Anna Hassall, to play "an active part in constructing the trade networks that undergirded European projects of empire during the early modern period."[223] After her husband, Arthur, died in 1748, she assumed ownership over his storehouse in addition to his forty-three enslaved workers. Like Polly Cowper's continuation of Basil's plantation business, Anna Hassall's sex did not preclude her from utilizing slave labor and the capital accrued to participate in the global market. These businesswomen did not "merely step into male roles or perform masculinity as slave owners."[224] Through their ability to inherit and then successfully manage businesses and plantations, women like Polly Cowper and Anna Hassall challenged the "patriarchal principles" that early modern society was based on and did so through the authority of slave ownership.[225] Sex was not as important a factor for success in the global economy as British businesses began to rely on females in plantation societies more frequently in the nineteenth century.

The same types of labor organization and inheritance legacies in West Africa and the Caribbean could be found among women in the Lowcountry South.[226] By 1791, South Carolina

[223] Christine Walker, "Pursuing Her Profits," 479.

[224] Walker, "Pursuing Her Profits," 496.

[225] Walker, "Pursuing Her Profits," 496.

[226] Inge Dornan, "Masterful Women: Colonial Women Slaveholders in the Urban Low Country," *Journal of American Studies*, Vol 39, No. 3, British Association for American Studies 50th Anniversary (Dec., 2005), 383-402.

had shifted away from English laws of intestacy, and the post-revolutionary statutes "gave sons and daughters equal shares of real and personal property and granted widows outright ownership of one-third of their husband's real property, rather than merely a lifetime interest in it."[227] In a more dramatic shift from English legal precedents, Lowcountry testators were generous in allowing women to maintain their husband's property and assets because they preferred "widows to step in as guardians of children and property and promoter of familial wealth when no adult sons were available."[228] Widowed and single women owned grocery shops; music schools; taverns; and butcher shops, all of which they frequently advertised in Lowcountry newspapers. They also put out ads for the sale of lands and workers in addition to "desperate messages to have their runaway slaves returned to them, dead or alive."[229] While the image of the plantation mistress was one of gentility and elegance in popular culture, the reality of female slave ownership was far more brutal. Women in the Lowcountry helped perpetuate the system of slavery through their ability to control both male and female slaves, and they transcended the gender norms of Europe through their violence and economic autonomy.

The way Mary Anne acquired her initial wealth exemplifies how elite women in the Lowcountry maintained their familial fortunes by legally bequeathing property to their female heirs. Mary Anne's grandmother, Elizabeth Williamson Smith, was from one of the original slave-owning families in South Carolina. She had inherited several plantations and their enslaved people from both her husband and her father. When she died in 1809, Smith's property was divided up equally among her daughters and her only son. In South Carolina, she owned the

[227] S. Max Edelson, "Reproducing plantation society: Women and land in colonial South Carolina," *The History of the Family*, 12 (2007), 131.

[228] Dornan, "Masterful Women," 384.

[229] Dornan, "Masterful Women," 386.

Red Bluff plantation and a house in the city of Beaufort. She also owned a few smaller plantations in Georgia, including Oatlands Island, and several houses in Savannah that incorporated one section of Reynolds Square at the corner of Bay and Abercorn Streets, in the heart of the financial district. Along with the hundreds of people she owned on her many plantations, Elizabeth Smith also owned fifty-four enslaved men, women, and children whom she named individually throughout her will that "were not to be split up until after her death."[230] Although the majority of this wealth was not bequeathed to Mary Anne directly, she would eventually inherit all of her grandmother's Savannah properties, including Oatlands Island, in addition to several enslaved family members who had been tied to each residence (Slide 4). Mary Anne's elite kinship networks established her with wealth in the form of rents from those properties as well as a monthly income provided by hiring-out her skilled enslaved workers. Mary Anne was not unusual in her methods of extracting income from her urban enslaved workforce. Many women throughout the Atlantic World hired-out their enslaved workers in order to generate cash, and by 1820, this practice had become entrenched in southern slave society.

Elite kinship networks provided widowed and single women with enslaved bodies and the ability to shuffle them around from plantation to plantation or to hire them out. One example in Savannah could be found in the relationship between Mary Anne's cousin Eliza and their aunt, Jane Bourke, who had been widowed in 1803. She had three adult children: Thomas, Elizabeth, and Catherine. When Bourke's mother, Elizabeth Smith, died in 1809, she and her children were gifted eleven humans, who were to be "equally divided between them and willed as they please," along with the "lot and lands of No 8 Reynolds Ward."[231] Thomas died very young, and

[230] Last Will and Testament of Elizabeth Smith, 1810.

[231] Last Will and Testament of Elizabeth Smith, 1810.

Catherine married a "Mr. Odell" sometime after 1810.[232] Elizabeth Bourke never married. In order for Jane and Elizabeth Bourke to sustain themselves in the large house on what is now Abercorn and Bay Streets in Savannah, they needed to maintain an income. They accomplished this feat by hiring-out their enslaved workers to family members. Bourke's niece, Eliza Mackay, and her husband, Robert, had purchased the Grange plantation a few miles north of Savannah in 1813. Jane Bourke separated enslaved families in order to send several workers to the Grange to help the Mackays cultivate rice. While no formal document provided terms for the enslaved employment, Jane Bourke most likely expected a certain portion of the proceeds from the sale of the rice. By allowing her niece access to her laborers, Bourke was keeping all of her enslaved laborers busy as well as concentrating the wealth of the plantation into the hands of her family. Jane Bourke was assuring that Elizabeth would have access to some type of income through the employment of their enslaved inheritance. When first Jane and then Elizabeth died, Eliza took charge of the enslaved people at the Grange, and Mary Anne assumed control of the Reynolds Ward property, which thus ensured that enslaved people and real estate were contained within the Smith familial unit.

The same types of economic networks between women and slavery could also be found in Charleston, South Carolina. In 1841, Lydia Jane Waring, a member of the elite Ball family, died in Charleston from an illness. She was the older half-sister of Keating Simmons Ball, the owner of the Comingtee plantation along the east branch of the Cooper River in South Carolina. As fourth-generation descendants of Elias Ball, the founder of a dynasty of rice planters in South Carolina, both Lydia and Keating were part of the small percentage of elite families in the

[232] *The Letters of Robert Mackay*, 275.

Lowcountry.[233] They grew up in luxury derived from the labor of their enslaved workforce, both those on the plantation and others who lived and worked around Charleston. Lydia died just a year after her husband, Francis Malbone Waring. In order to support her children, John, Anne, and Francis, her estate relied on enslaved workers Fredrick, Philip, Sander, Portius, Billy, Violet, and Dorcus to hire-out their own time and to return a stipulated sum each month in order to pay for the children's expenses.[234] Her estate was managed her sister, Anne Deas, until 1844 and then by her brother Keating.[235] Lydia Waring's siblings were expected to make sure that the Waring children were provided with the proper upbringing to maintain their elite station.

In cases such as Lydia Waring's, the enslaved workers listed in her account book were responsible for the financial well-being of her children. In September of 1841, Fredrick brought in $6.69, Dorcus and Violet $6.00 each, and Philip $5.50.[236] On one side of the account ledger, the monthly stipends are written out next to each persons' name; on the other side, a tally sheet listed the expenses for each child. In the name of "John Waring, a minor," his estate paid out $2.02 for summer clothing for Dorcas and also gave her $3.67 for cleaning out the privy at the house on Charlotte Street, but other purchases were also listed for John Waring, including $5.25 for "6 silk handkerchiefs, $1.62 for pocket money, $5 for an umbrella," and so on. Fredrick, Dorcus, Violent, and Philip worked all month in order to provide John Waring with what he needed to provide him with an education and to maintain his position in society, even though he

[233] Edward Ball, *Slaves in the Family* (Ballantine Publishing Group, 1998), 146.

[234] Lydia Jane Ball Waring Papers, 1807-1841, "Lydia Jane Waring Estate Book, 1840-1847" 34/333 (South Carolina Historical Society, hereinafter cited as SCHS), 16-123.

[235] "Lydia Jane Ball Waring Estate Book" (SCHS), 85.

[236] "Lydia Jane Ball Waring Estate Book" (SCHS), 20-1.

was an orphan.[237] The network of elite kinship among the Ball family made sure that the Lydia Waring's children were raised with the decorum, education, and manners that befitted their status. Enslaved people delivered the cash these children needed to maintain their social roles.

However, some interesting variations are present in the incomes listed among the accounts as Lydia's death became a memory, and these shifts exemplify that enslaved people could perform acts of economic autonomy. The wages of the men increased and decreased with each month, whereas the wages of Dorcus and Violet decreased steadily from 1841 to 1842. By September of 1842, Dorcas's monthly wage had dropped from $6 to $4. Violet hadn't brought any money in since June, and then she disappeared completely from the record. [238] Did the death of Lydia allow Dorcas and Violet more autonomy? Did the women pocket more money each month for their own families? Did Violet run away? These are all questions that the records leave unanswered, but the active resistance of these enslaved women through a gendered economic relationship is on full display in Lydia Jane Waring's account book. The wages that these workers brought in provided the comfortable lifestyle for the Waring children, including paying for their schooling, their pocket money, and their silk stockings. Fredrick, Dorcus, Violet and Philip each knew where their wages were going, and this knowledge could have affected their performance in the local labor market.

Slave-owning women usually acquired their enslaved workers through an inheritance designed to keep them afloat if their husbands died early or fell into financial ruin. Nine of the enslaved people who had been listed in Lydia Waring's account book were derived from her

[237] "Lydia Jane Ball Waring Estate Book" (SCHS), 16-21.

[238] "Lydia Jane Ball Waring Estate Book" (SCHS), 38-54.

father's estate and were given for her sole use as part of her dowry.[239] There was even a stipulation included that stated executors "do not undertake to decide whether they pass by the will or not," which meant that these enslaved people were Lydia's property, guaranteed to her by legal means in her 1835 marriage settlement and that they could not be used to pay for any of her husband's debts. Fathers made sure that their daughters would not have to become financially ruined because of their husbands' bad business decisions. Enslaved bodies were the most commonly bequeathed item for elite families in slave societies to provide for their female relatives.

Like in other parts of the Atlantic World, the practice of conferring enslaved people to women of elite families was and an established practice in the Lowcountry. Mary Anne followed the customs of the South when she bequeathed property and people to her unmarried nieces Catherine and Sarah Mackay. She stated that "the said Catherine and Sarah Mackay and their heirs forever to their sole and separate use, and not subject to death, contracts, or control of any future husband and in the case of the marriage of either the said Catherine or Sarah Mackay I direct that this property be settled in trust of their sole and separate use."[240] In order to maintain the elite status of her unmarried nieces, Mary Anne made sure that her wealth remained with her female relatives and could not be accessed by their future husbands. Through very specific legal language in her will, Mary Anne Cowper made sure that her female relatives would be able to maintain their inherited enslaved property, and the revenue provided through their labor, to support their elite class positions.

[239] "Lydia Jane Ball Waring Estate Book" (SCHS), 11.

[240] Last Will and Testament of Mary Anna Cowper, 1856

Urban slave owners in the southern Lowcountry, many of whom were women, benefited from hiring-out enslaved workers to both private industries and public works. Due to damaging fires or tropical storms, a labor force was always needed to reconstruct southern cities. Local governments offered stable jobs for enslaved workers, and their mistresses benefited from this consistent income. Most of the state-controlled public improvement programs hired or purchased enslaved workers to construct railroads, canals, and other public works throughout the South from 1816 to the Civil War.[241] In August of 1841, Lydia Jane Waring's estate hired-out Fredrick for four months to the Southern Wharf, effectively guaranteeing security and a steady income.[242] Anne Deas made a smart investment with her sister's property by renting skilled workers out for public works projects, which created a steady stream of income for her niece and nephews. These types of labor opportunities for enslaved workers helped to keep the urban slave system running smoothly.

The nature of hiring-out enslaved workers also created a division between master and employer. As Jonathan Martin argued, "Owners were always worried that 'good' slaves might somehow be compromised - in either body or mind - while under the control of other people, but they reserved heightened suspicion for urban hirers, for many slaveholders considered the South's cities to be unquestionable sources of degeneracy."[243] Therefore, when the city council of Charleston called out for enslaved laborers after a fire, they made a point of addressing the issue by stating that in "every case, in which the service of slaves may be offered, their owners may take the direction or superintendence of their labor, if so disposed."[244] Even though the City

[241] Richard Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South (*Oxford University Press, 1970), 31.

[242] "Lydia Jane Ball Waring Estate Book" (SCHS), 18.

[243] Johnathan Martin, *Divided Mastery: Slave Hiring in the American South* (Harvard University Press, 2004), 91.

[244] Martin, *Divided Mastery*, 91; Charleston *Courier*, 30 April 1838.

Council tried to ease the minds of slaveholders, accidents still occurred. The *Courier* reported that a "boy, belonging to Mr. Kennedy, in charge of a cart, employed in carrying rubbish for the city, was severely, if not mortally injured yesterday" when the burnt-out wall of a shop in the market fell on him but luckily "the horse was not injured at all."[245] Slave owners could and did sue for compensation if their enslaved workers were maimed or killed during a government-sponsored project, which gave female owners a sense of economic security when hiring-out labor for public works.

The need for enslaved workers to perform skilled jobs created an entire group of laborers who performed the essential duties of mechanics, carpenters, engineers, and many other important jobs in the urban environment. Fredrick Douglass provided a vivid scene of enslaved workers in Baltimore, stating "a city slave is almost a free citizen…he is much better fed, clothed, is less dejected in his appearance, and enjoys privileges altogether unknown to the whip driven slave on the plantation."[246] Enslaved people were needed to perform specific labor, like shipbuilding, and the structure of urban slavery had to accommodate this type of labor system. Enslaved people in southern cities were able to hire-out their labor and to collect wages. While a stipulated sum went to their masters, these workers were able to purchase of food, clothing, and pay rents. While the southern marketplace was a space of economic emancipation for many skilled enslaved people, these individuals were also able to stimulate the local markets through their consumption.

By the antebellum period, enslaved people were so important to the urban environment that they were able to garner several customary powers in the hiring-out system. Setting wages,

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[245] Charleston *Courier*, 24 May 1838.

[246] Fredrick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (Penguin Classics, 2003), 109-10.

dictating their own time requirements, and taking Christmas or other holidays off were a few of their negotiating tactics. In order to control this type of slave labor, city governments throughout the Lowcountry developed a badge or ticket system that required masters to purchase a type of permit that legally allowed enslaved people to participate in the labor market. If enslaved workers were caught in the city without a badge or ticket, masters could be fined, and their chattels could be whipped. Through the use of slave badges or tickets, women like Lydia Waring and Mary Anne Cowper could profit off of her urban workforce, while also providing much needed skilled labor to the city.

Enslaved men and women were given the option to hire-out their labor as early as the colonial period, but by 1800, city officials increased the use of some type of permit to control slave labor. Slave badges were supposed to be a way for the city government to make a profit and to maintain control over their enslaved working population. However, bondsmen becoming "both labor and capital" enabled them to exploit the dualism of being both people and property.[247] Slave badges allowed the individual wearer to conduct a financial transaction with or without his master's consent, to purchase goods, or to determine the cost of his labor. Through this need for contributions to the market and a strong labor force, a specific type of urban economy developed in the Lowcountry among female masters, the municipality, merchants, and enslaved people that allowed for hired-out slaves to become direct participants in the market through the buying and selling of both labor power and market goods. Once this custom had been introduced, it was incredibly difficult for local governments to manage.

Slave badges were physical ornaments created by local city governments to control urban enslaved laborers throughout American South, but they also gave the wearer a certain freedom to

[247] Martin, *Divided Mastery*, 30.

move about unmolested in a slave society. Badges were used in Savannah but were most likely made of a biodegradable material like paper, so they have not been found in the archaeological record. However, the municipal court system kept track of the fines paid by slave owners whose enslaved workers were caught working without a badge. Mary Anne never appears in that fine book because she would purchase badges for her skilled workers like Mulatto George, Young Jack, and Maurice in early February. Fines were usually imposed on the masters of enslaved laborers working without a badge after March in Savannah.[248] Mary Anne made sure that she followed the city laws and that her workers were always working under legal conditions. She paid for badges from the wages of her enslaved workers and these men were able to move about society with the authority of their mistress presented through a physical badge.

Mary Anne and women like her utilized slave labor in urban environments in a similar way across the Atlantic World, especially if these workers processed a hard-to-come-by skill. Enslaved people who could perform carpentry, blacksmithing, coopering, shipbuilding, butchering, fishing, cooking pastries, or a host of other things understood how to function in a slave-owning society. Skilled Africans enslaved during earlier periods most likely had experience with West African female owners, and that knowledge could have been transferred to their Atlantic World mistresses.[249] The connections between skilled workers and their slave owners was a form of acculturation that incorporated African economic relationships into the New World.

[248] City of Savannah, "Fine Docket Book," 5600CM-10, Research Library and Municipal Archives, Savannah, Georgia.

[249] Humphrey J. Fisher, *Slavery in the History of Muslim Black Africa* (New York University Press, 2001), 218-22.

For each year of her Common Place Book, Mary Anne recorded a badge purchase for her carpenter "Mulatto George." This man lived apart from his mistress and brought in $7 a month for her, which equals about $202 in modern currency.[250] Upon her death, she stipulated that he be given "the privilege of selecting a master" in addition to $50 when sold.[251] Mary Anne Cowper and Mulatto George played out a very specific labor construct that enabled her to benefit from his work, while allowing him certain freedoms in a slave society. George is listed neither on the plantation ledgers for the Grange or Oatlands Islands nor under the allotments of clothing, blankets, or food that were given to plantation workers. Like many other urban slaves, he lived on his own; paid for his own food, clothing, and shelter from his earnings; and gave Mary Anne seven dollars a month. With a slave badge, George was able to benefit from the elite status of his mistress plus the labor shortage of skilled free workers. Through his independent purchases, he contributed to the growing local economy of Savannah.

George had arrived in Georgia from Jamaica in 1818 as an eight-year-old boy with his mother and two brothers.[252] His family belonged to the Cowper women, who had just liquidated their Jamaican plantation holdings and moved from England to Savannah. He was born in Jamaica in 1809 to Molly Gordon. Mulatto George was actually a quadroon as his mother was of both European and African ancestry. His father was European, but records did not provide his name. When listed in the 1804 inventory of Basil Cowper, Molly Gordon was "not in the immediate possession of the state, nor have they been for some years but subject to be claimed."[253] The Cowper women left Molly Gordon to her own devices until they claimed her in

[250] https://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/relativevalue.php

[251] Last Will and Testament of Mary Anna Cowper, 1856.

[252] Last Will and Testament of Mary Anna Cowper, 1856.

[253] Basil Cowper Inventory, 1804 (JNA).

1817. By that point, she had a son named William (13), who was listed as a mulatto and stayed behind in Jamaica, and her two other sons, then George (8), and Sam (5), who were listed as "Quadroon" on the Return of Slaves. When Polly Cowper died in 1821, she gave "Molly and her three sons, viz. George, Sam and Harry" to Mary Anne as part of her inheritance.[254] While it is unclear what happened to William, both Harry and George appear in Mary Anne's will as skilled workers, as "Mulatto George" and "Harry Blacksmith." Interestingly, Harry seems to have been born in America, whereas George was born in Jamaica. Molly Gordon was herself a mulatto, but Harry does not have a color designation, which means he was most likely darker than his mother and his half-brother George. The name Sam also appears in the will with the caveat "Sam…is not to be required to up the country against his will." Mary Anne provided special privileges to Molly Gordon's children in her Last Will and Testament, and these privileges could reflect that more than just an economic relationship connected these families.

George was a carpenter and Harry was a blacksmith, but not all people in the urban environment appreciated the system of labor organization that developed in the South. Both of these men would have been trained in these skilled trades, and like many other enslaved workers, they dominated the trades in the urban South. By the 1850s, urban reliance on skilled slave labor undermined the capability for newly-arrived immigrants of European origins to make a living in the South. The ability for Mary Anne to utilize her labor force by hiring-out workers in and around the city was an established custom that created tensions between free wage workers and enslaved laborers. This dichotomy can be understood through the Charleston City Ordinances. Many companies hired enslaved laborers to perform the essential duties of their craft, and in order to attract more European immigrants, city councils attempted to control the wages of

[254] The Last Will and Testament of Mary Cowper, 1821.

enslaved people through badge laws. Mechanics who utilized slave labor were required both to pay the city tax on their enslaved workers and to procure badges. On February 1, 1830, the city council ratified "An Ordinance to exempt Mechanics under certain circumstances from the Operation of the Badge Law, And for other purposes."[255]

Mechanics were strictly against enslaved workers being allowed badges, and the former agitated against the hiring-out system that was now firmly entrenched in Charleston. In 1858, the officers and members of the Charleston Mechanic Society wrote to the legislature that a "baneful evil exists in our City and State at large, to wit; the hiring by slaves of their own time, affecting not only the interests of the Mechanics and working man, but also of the owner of the slave, as well as the property itself."[256] Many Charleston Mechanics were newly-immigrated Europeans, usually from Ireland, who had known discrimination and racism, and their reactions to enslaved workers hiring-out their own time is a clue to understanding the issues of class that were blanketed by issues of race.[257] Women were among the beneficiaries of the hiring-out system, so these legal arguments could also be viewed under the auspices of gender.

The slave badge was a conduit for constructing a non-free wage labor system in an agrarian society with an enslaved proletariat. The informal economy played an important role in constructing an economic system that could remain viable in a slave society. Merchants, a majority of urban female slave owners, and their enslaved property all contributed to the establishment of a common-law system in which they depended on one another. Mechanics from

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[255] Georgia Eckhard, *A Digest of the Ordinances, 1783 to 1844* (Charleston: Walker & Burke, 1844), 176.

[256] South Carolina General Assembly Petitions, *The Committee on Colored Populations to the House of Representatives, December 7th, 1858*, Series 16505, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, hereinafter cited as SCDAH).

[257] Ira Berlin and Herbert Gutman, "Natives and Immigrants, Free Men and Slaves: Urban Workingmen in the Antebellum American South," *The American Historical Review* 88, no. 5 (1983), Table 9.

foreign lands entered into southern society with notions of free wage labor and were sorely disappointed by the South's dependence on slave labor. Through time, mechanic agitation for tighter labor controls grew, but the entrenched system of hiring-out enslaved labor would not be made illegal.

Cities were constantly attempting to refine or define how the hiring-out system should work. The 1858 South Carolina House of Representatives focused on several topics regarding enslaved laborers, which included a "bill to prevent Negroes from carrying on Mechanical pursuits" and another request to prevent "slaves from hiring their own time," to determine how to handle the perceived problem. The Committee on Colored Populations carefully reviewed the petitions received from the South Carolina Mechanics Association, the Mechanics and Working Men of the City of Charleston, and the Memorial of the Charleston Mechanics Society that had been presented to the Charleston City Grand Jury. In their opinion, the baneful evil the mechanics sought to dispose of "lies in the breaking down of the relations between Master and slave" due to the "removal of the slave from the Masters [sic] discipline & control and the assumption of freedom & indifference on the part of the slave."[258] Due to the dependence of the city on slave labor, the committee was not prepared to answer the mechanics' call for the abolition of slave hiring. They stated that to "carry out the provisions of the Acts of 1822 & 1849 to the full, would be to drive away all slave labor from any employment in the towns & villages of the state--there must be inevitably an exception to the Rule which prohibits the slave from working out" and validated the need for enslaved workers to exist in the slaveholding market economy.[259] The Committee on Colored Populations succeeded in allowing the continuance of

[258] *The Committee on Colored Populations to the House of Representatives, December 7th, 1858* (SCDAH).

[259] *The Committee on Colored Populations to the House of Representatives, December 7th, 1858* (SCDAH)

slave hiring by directing the blame for the enslaved workers who broke laws onto their masters. This practice solidified Southern dependence on paternalistic notions of control and reinforced a non-wage labor social system to the detriment of white workers.

Although Mary Anne Cowper was a devout Christian, she performed her duties as a slaveholder like a Muslim woman from West Africa. She benefited from the system of slavery and did little to upset the status quo. She allowed her enslaved workers certain freedoms as long as they provided her with an economic return. While she did not wear a hijab or live in *Kulle*, her social status dictated where she could and could not go. As a spinster, she was also placed in a very special sphere of independence, but that did not mean that she could move out of her place as a woman and participate in male activities. The urban environment was segregated for her, and as an elite slaveholder, Mary Anne would never have gone to the Savannah marketplace and purchased her own sundry items, cooked her own meals, or washed her own clothes. Like a Muslim woman, she was relegated to her household and depended on her enslaved domestics, namely Flora, Sandy, and Elsey, to perform public duties for her. Mary Anne earned enough income through her hired-out enslaved workforce to participate in the global market, while also allowing her enslaved people to stimulate the local economy. Mary Anne was not unique, and this system of labor helped to establish women as independent economic actors in the growing capitalist economy of the nineteenth-century Atlantic World.

CHAPTER 4

GENDER AND HYBRID MARKETPLACES

Women utilized provision markets to gain individual power throughout the Atlantic World, and female traders in pre-industrial England, pre-colonial Africa, colonial Jamaica, and the antebellum southern United States were remarkably similar in some of their marketing techniques. Both European and African women were expected to participate in small-scale food trade in order to maintain their households, and the sight of women selling homegrown vegetables, cooked foods, and other perishables throughout the Atlantic World was common. Preindustrial peasant women in Britain were responsible for the buying and selling of the majority of food in urban and rural areas.[260] In large West African cities like Eko, Whydah, and Kano, women also controlled vending in the local markets. Enslaved women in Jamaica were the prime marketers of perishable vegetables, and their dominance existed well after emancipation.[261] In the urban South, social mores kept the unmarried sisters and widows of slave-owning men in a type of purdah that enabled their enslaved domestics to participate in the local marketplaces in their stead. As elite and enslaved women moved around the Atlantic World, they relied on both British and African gender roles in the marketplace to create an economic system from which they could maintain modicums of freedom from the patriarchal

[260] E.P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* 50 (1971); Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Howe, 1920).

[261] Sidney Mintz, "The Jamaican Internal Marketing Pattern: Some Notes and a Hypothesis" *Social and Economic Studies* 4, no. 1 (1955): 95-103.

confines of a slave society.

Mary Anne Cowper spent the majority of her adolescence and young adulthood in England, were she learned to model her behavior with her enslaved workers after the mistress/servant relationships of Europe. For the first twenty-seven years of her life, she was not in close contact with the enslaved people who toiled on her familial plantations, and this absence from the brutal realties of plantation slavery shaped her conceptions of slave ownership. Mary Anne, her sister Margaret, and their mother Polly frequently referred in their correspondence to the people they kept in bondage as "servants" or "domestics," whereas her father and brother-in-law referred to their enslaved workers as "Negroes" or "slaves" with specific instructions or prices attached to human bodies.[262] The difference in the women's choice of language when referring to their enslaved workers is specific to their gendered status as privileged European females. They envisioned a paternalistic relationship with the people they owned and maintained this intimate fallacy by simply refusing to refer to the people they owned as "slaves." The Cowper women retained romantic notions about their positions of power, and they attempted to curtail the brutality of slave life by renaming their chattel with European terms for free-wage workers. The specific language of labor softened the stings of slavery for owners by renaming their bondsmen and women with traditional English titles like servant and domestic. This language reflected the gender roles that the Cowpers expected their enslaved female workers to perform. The slave-holding class expected enslaved women to adopt their romanticized versions of women's work in pre-industrial England.

Mary Anne recognized her place as a woman of the elite class, and treated her enslaved workers in a way that was similar to the patron relationships between the English elite and the

[262] Family Archive of the Andrew Low House, "The Mackay-McQueen Family Papers," Folders 57-65 (GHS).

working class. The obvious difference was that she had the ability to sell off people when she needed funds, something that she could not do with her hired-out British servants. Mary Anne, and many European and African immigrants to the American South, viewed women in the marketplace as socially acceptable, and she specifically encouraged her enslaved female workers to participate in the market with the assurance that her status would reflect on them as well. The fact that the South had an entire class of enslaved women instead of lower-class women to perform basic household duties created a specific space based on English identity that allowed African and African American women to acculturate their own versions of commerce into local market economies.

Like in many parts of Africa, the buying and selling of provisions in the British economy were the traditional duties of women due to the close association of food and the household. In nineteenth-century London, women of the lower classes sold cooked foods, flowers, and other small items in city streets in ways similar to enslaved women in the Caribbean and American South. The gendered culture from which Mary Anne was borrowing from was actually a much older interpretation of a British economy that existed prior to the emergence of capitalism. As the British market shifted from a feudal system to a capitalistic one, peasant women lost individual power in the marketplace. Prior to this transformation, early medieval laws, called "Customs of the Boroughs," granted women in the provision trades the use of the law as "though she were a femme sole, and provide that her husband shall not be responsible for her debts."[263] While this guaranteed women certain financial freedoms, it also cleared her husband of all liabilities his wife might incur when conducting her business. This allowed women to participate in economic life independently from their husbands. As the free market began to dictate more and more of the

[263] Clark, *Working Life of Women*, 152.

commerce conducted in English towns and cities, these older laws were challenged as wealth was transferred into the hands of the male head of household. These types of gender roles were reversed when Mary Anne conducted her business through her enslaved workers without relying on a male head of household.

The shift from female to male control of the English market occurred in tandem with the capitalistic organization of commerce in the late eighteenth century. In the early modern period, a considerable number of widows were engaged in the brewing and/or baking business because these tasks related to "the domestic arts pertaining to women."[264] Since these items were important in English life, the women who produced and vended these products maintained authority in the food dynamics of the early modern era. As the free market began to take root in commerce, bakeries that had once been closely monitored by the Assize of Bread and other food production units became for-profit enterprises controlled by men. The feudal system began to dissolve, and males began to take over these female professions. Husbands employed their once independent wives in baking, brewing, fish mongering, and other food production businesses. While widows were still able to eke out a living in these trades, a married market woman was no longer considered the "femme sole," and she lost whatever rights she once possessed. The skill acquired "domestically was not sufficient to establish a woman's position in the world of trade, and that actually in the seventeenth century, it was difficult for her to become a baker as a butcher."[265] England's shift from mercantilism to capitalism affected women of all social classes as "the wife of the prosperous capitalist tended to become idle, the wife of the skilled journeyman lost her economic independence and became his unpaid domestic servant, while the

[264] Clark, *Working Life of Women,* 178.

[265] Clark, *Working Life of Women,* 211.

wives of other wage earners were driven into the sweated industries of the period."[266] By choosing not to marry and to remain independent from male control, Mary Anne created her own category in the emerging capitalist regime: a slave-holding businesswoman.

Antebellum women like Mary Anne become the link from which slavery and capitalism began to merge, until capital killed slavery in the bloody American Civil War. Women who depended on hired-out enslaved workers to provide them with cash were in many ways sucking the labor from them through a direct transfer of their wages. The hiring-out system allowed for elite and single women to generate income without having to depend on a male partner, only an enslaved worker. This type of labor organization worked because a mistresses' elite status extended in some ways to her enslaved workers, which granted them the ability to participate in the local market economy on her behalf. With the support of their masters and the lower merchant class, enslaved people were able to create a "parallel economy" that existed within the formal confines of the local marketplace. Some historians, like Betty Wood, have referred to this unique economic construction as an "informal slave economy" and others, like Robert Olwell, have called it a type of "moral economy," yet those terms do not encompass the extent of how enslaved people shaped the local marketplaces of the Caribbean and American South. By focusing on how enslaved women established money making ventures through marketplace activity, historians can identify a new type of economic system that ran parallel to the formal economy of the Atlantic World.

Local marketplaces depended on the skill and support of enslaved people to provide as well as purchase foodstuffs. This necessity created a very distinct problem for slave society. The "Slaveholders' Dilemma," which was "one part chattel bondage, add one part liberal capitalism

[266] Clark, *Working Life of Women*, 235.

and stir endlessly," created a contradiction that provided enslaved people with certain power in the marketplace.[267] This is how a "parallel economy," one that was perpetuated by traditional gendered marketing techniques from both England and Africa, emerged. Eugene Genovese estimated that between "5 and 10 percent of the slaves of the South could expect to be hired out during any given year in the late antebellum period," which created a class of workers who did not fit into the plantation system because they participated in the labor market independently from their masters, acquired their own capital, and made their own decisions in the marketplace.[268]

By 1848, Mary Anne was a seventy-two-year-old spinster who lived with her widowed cousin Eliza on Broughton Street in Savannah.[269] Mary Anne contributed things like coffee, molasses, and butter for the household's for daily use.[270] She didn't physically go to the "market" to get these items; instead, she depended on a network of enslaved workers to produce as well as purchase these things for her. While Mary Anne retained mastery over her urban enslaved workers by law, her economic influence ended once coins shifted hands and thus helped to legitimize the parallel economy of enslaved workers in the South. On October 8, 1848, Mary Anne gave Flora $1.50 for "marketing till Saty 16th" and by the eighteenth, Flora had paid her back with "1 Doll'r worth br. Sugar."[271] Mary Anne paid her enslaved workers for their goods, and they spent their money in the local marketplaces. Through a system of trade and barter, Flora

[267] Lawrence McDonnell's review of James Oakes, *Slavery and Freedom: An Interpretation of the Old South* (New York: A. Knopf, 1990) in the *Journal of Southern History* 58 (1992): 522-3.

[268] Eugene Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll*, 390.

[269] Savannah Census Records, 1840.

[270] Mary Anne Cowper Common Place Book, (SHC), 17-22.

[271] Mary Anne Cowper Common Place Book, (SHC), 19

shifted her cash into goods and then back into cash again, which most likely created a bit of profit for herself in the process. These economic transactions were closer to a type of early capitalism than a strictly slave-based economy.

In many ways, this labor dynamic was gendered, where enslaved men worked in the skilled trades and enslaved women worked as domestic servants and in the local markets. Mary Anne owned several people that she hired-out into skilled work. The money she received from the carpenter George, the bricklayer Jack, and the handymen Maurice and Stephen totaled well over $100 dollars per worker in the year 1847.[272] With this ready money, Mary Anne was able to pay her yearly taxes and to provide everyday items for her Cousin Eliza's household, where she had a small room on the ground floor.[273] She did not have to take out lines of credit or skimp on her purchases because these four skilled workers brought real specie to her doorstep once a month.[274] The wages of George, Jack, Maurice, and Stephen created a way for Mary Anne to maintain a monthly stipend.

Money knew no master, and once these men paid out their stipulated sum to Mary Anne, they were free to spend the rest of their earnings, which were not recorded. They paid their own rent, bought their own food, and supported their own families because Mary Anne does not list these expenditures as part of her accounting. She did pay them back for the cost of their shoes, tools, and work badges, so they had to have purchased these things first, which showed that they did have some money of their own. Mary Anne had no claim over how they spent their

[272] Mary Anne Cowper Common Place Book, (SHC), 13-84.

[273] *Georgia 1850 Census Index*, eds. Ronald Vern Jackson, Gary Ronald Teeples, and David Schaefermeyer (Bountiful, UT: Accelerated Indexing Systems, Inc., 1976), 398.

[274] Mary Anne Cowper Common Place Book, (SHC), 13-84.

remaining earnings.[275] The ability for skilled workers like George and Jack to hire-out their own time and to then make their own decisions on how to spend a portion of their earnings helped to establish a consumer base for the parallel economy.

Mary Anne ensured the loyalty of her skilled male workers by providing them with freedom of choice in several aspects of their lives. She allowed her chattels to make their own decisions from which jobs to take to which women to marry. Even at her death, she insisted that if any of her heirs were to sell "Young Jack" or "Mulatto George," that they must have the "privilege of selecting" their next master as well as each was to receive "a sum of fifty dollars" from her estate for their own personal use.[276] While Mary Anne attempted to soften the blow of slavery for her enslaved workers, she didn't grant any of them true freedom, and they became dependent on her heirs to maintain their livelihoods and their families. Whatever freedom of choice they enjoyed in the local marketplace did not compare with the powerlessness they experienced if and when their families were ripped apart by their new masters. Only through their productivity as hired-out workers could they continue to be providers and keep their families intact.

There was a gendered division of labor in the work that enslaved men and women performed that reflected traditional British ideals, and Mary Anne brought those gender roles into the management of her enslaved domestics. Flora was also not the only enslaved woman who conducted economic transactions on Mary Anne's behalf. A woman named Elsey also featured prominently in Mary Anne's Common Place Book but for different reasons. Elsey lived with Flora at Oatlands Island plantation, where she produced and sold butter to the townsfolk in

[275] Mary Anne Cowper Common Place Book, (SHC), 13-84.

[276] Last Will and Testament of Mary Anna Cowper, 1856.

and around Savannah. Unlike her accounting for the cash she received from George, Jack, and Flora, Mary Anne recorded in-kind payments of butter from Elsey. Oatlands plantation had a few cattle. There are receipts for $3 in "rice flour for the cattle" listed in Mary Anne's Common Place Books for the Island.[277] In an 1816 letter Mary Anne wrote from Barron Hill to her cousin Eliza in Savannah, she mentioned the butter production of Elsey, stating that "Margaret desires me to say she thinks Elsey must have earned some money by disposing of fresh butter thro the summer."[278] She also advised Eliza to "put some up for winter now" in order to make sure that the revenue stream would continue through the next year.[279] At this point, Mary Anne and her mother were in Jamaica with Margaret and John McQueen in order to finalize the sale of Basil's plantation holdings. They were eager to get back to Savannah and take up residence in one of their many properties there. The link among Mary Ann Cowper, Flora, and Elsey is a perfect example of the economic partnerships that demonstrate how Mary Anne incorporated British gender roles into the American South.

Similarly to Flora, Elsey can be found in bits and pieces throughout the letters, diaries, and accounts of the Cowper, McQueen, and Mackay families. An "Old Esley" and an 8-year-old Elsey were listed in a property agreement between Mary Anne and Margaret in 1837. Old Elsey had belonged to Don Juan McQueen, and she came up from Florida when he died in 1807. She became answerable to Margaret Cowper when the latter married John, Jr. in 1810. While Margaret and John traveled the Atlantic World, Eliza Mackay took responsibility for the daily management of her brother's enslaved workers. After John, Jr.'s death in 1822, Margaret took

[277] Mary Anne Cowper Common Place Book, (SHC), 13-86.

[278] Mary Anne Cowper to Eliza Mackay, Dec 16, 1816 (GHS).

[279] Mary Anne Cowper to Eliza Mackay, Dec 16, 1816 (GHS).

over management of her husband's estate, including his enslaved workers, but that did not mean that she was physically present in Savannah.

Butter was a luxury for all people in the Antebellum Lowcountry. Ships like the "Speedy Peace" would land in Savannah and sell butter by the firkin, dry goods stores would sell it by the tub, and smaller merchants or wholesalers would advertise it "in small kegs for family use."[280] On some plantations with cattle, the extra butter could be sold at market, and this seems to have been the case at Oatlands Islands. Most enslaved plantation workers were usually denied milk or butter in their daily diets, but Emma Weeks in Texas detailed her mother selling the excess milk for profit in the marketplace, while Nellie Smith and Della Briscoe talked of having milk and butter to WPA interviewers in the 1930s.[281] In 1847, Mary Anne purchased about a dollar's worth of butter per month directly from her enslaved workers Flora, Jean, or Elsey, which allowed her to acquire butter more cheaply than if she procured it from the grocers and ship Captains.[282] The ability for Elsey to participate in butter distribution was probably rooted in the English romantic view of their own traditional pastoralist societies. Milkmaids were often featured in British books, poems, and paintings where they was "idealized in a pastoral setting, where the pains of farm work and domestic industry were transcended…by a kind of psychic innocence."[283] Women like Elsey were able to participate in the local economy by providing a product that was closely associated with traditional women's work in Europe.

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[280] *Columbia Museum and Savannah Daily Gazette* 3, no. 221, September 15, 1797.

[281] *What the Slaves Ate: Recollections of African American Foods and Foodways from the Slave Narratives*, ed by Herbert C Covey and Dwight Eisnach (Greenwood Press, 1990).

[282] Mary Anne Cowper Common Place Book, (SHC), 13-86.

[283] *Women and Work in Pre-Industrial England*, edited by Lindsey Charles and Lorna Duffin (NY:Rutledge, 1985).

With the knowledge of her absentee mistress, Elsey made and sold butter from the milk cows on Oatlands Island. By this point, "Old Elsey" already had spent many years traveling around Savannah as an independent butter producer. In the process, she also made her own money, which relieved Margaret from having to send money from England for Elsey's everyday necessities. Young Elsey undoubtedly had learned how to produce butter from "Old Elsey" and created a way to make her own living while her owner was across the Atlantic. Margaret allowed Elsey to utilize her butter-making skills to create a revenue stream. This cash enabled Elsey to purchase items in the local market, like food, and she had the power of her elite mistress behind her. Mary Anne claimed her through the Georgia State court when her sister Margaret died in England without a will. Margaret, and then Mary Anne, used established precedents that allowed enslaved workers to hire-out their own time and to produce their own goods for sale. Women like Flora and Elsey were adept at maneuvering through the local Savannah marketplace, and they utilized the gendered nature of food marketing and distribution to establish some economic independence from their mistresses.

The sexual division of labor that directly affected enslaved people's participation in the marketplace also developed in places like Jamaica and was easily transferred to the American colonies by slaveholders themselves. On the island, knowledge of the rules and laws that governed the local market place operations was important for participation, but informal social networks also aided in exchange as well. The people at the center of these networks were "higglers," who were "generally women of African descent," and "they enjoyed a considerable degree of mobility" around the countryside.[284] These women connected rural spaces with urban

[284] Mark W. Hauser, *An Archaeology of Black Markets: Local Ceramics and Economics of Eighteenth Century Jamaica* (University of Florida Press, 2008), 7.

markets and provided a way for enslaved workers to participate in a market economy without leaving their plantations. The majority of the markets were conducted on Sundays, and the laws of Jamaica had established the right for enslaved people to buy and sell as early as 1711.[285] According to Winnifred Brown-Glaude, "Sunday markets were thus necessary evils in the white imagination."[286] The importance of these markets to the enslaved populations was so great that many planters feared the backlash that would ensue if they disrupted it. Slaveholders understood that they were significantly outnumbered by the enslaved and used the marketplace as a sort of appeasement to their chattels.

Slaveholders from the Caribbean to the American South constantly fretted about their enslaved workers' participation in the market economy, but they unknowingly initiated West African customs, like allowing enslaved people to grow their own food on personal plots of land, which they could not easily disrupt. As Hilary McD. Beckles pointed out in Jamaica, the "provision grounds on which Jamaican slaves became proto-peasants constituted the basis of their entry into, and subsequent domination of, the internal marketing system."[287] Plantation owners in the American South had followed the lead of their Caribbean predecessors, and by the antebellum period, enslaved people had gained control of many aspects of the fresh food trade, especially in the local marketplaces. These customs had been established because enslaved Africans acculturated European ideas of women and work into their own versions of commercial

[285] Ann Norton and Richard Symanski, "The Internal Marketing Systems of Jamaica," *Geographical Review* 65, no. 4 (October): 463-75.

[286] Winnifred Brown-Glaude, *Higglers in Kingston: Women's Informal Work in Jamaica* (Vanderbilt University Press, 2011), 72.

[287] Hilary McD. Beckles, "An Economic Life of their Own: Slaves as Commodity Producers and Distributors in Barbados" in *The Slaves Economy: Independent Production by Slaves in the Americas*, ed. by Ira Berlin and Philip Morgan (Frank Cass, 1991), 33.

organization.

Although the laws that regulated the market developed in the slave-holding regions of the Caribbean are a reflection of British romanticized version of a traditional past, African men and women silently adjusted those ideals into something that reflected their own homelands. As evidenced by the laws regarding butchering in both Savannah and Charleston, enslaved males worked prominently in that position. The fish and beef markets in Charleston were physically separated from the other markets around town. The fish market was located on "East-Bay street, east side, between Fitzimons and Williams' Wharf," and the Beef Market was on the "east end of Boundary Street."[288] The vegetable market and the market for already processed meats were on "Market street, between Meeting street and Governor's Bridge."[289] In Savannah, the market was held at Ellis Square, where butchers were to take special care to dispose of the refuse prior to coming to market, and any enslaved butcher was required to have a badge in order to cut or vend any meats.[290] The Statutes of Savannah also stated that enslaved butchers could not carry on business without the presence of their owner, but this law was passed from 1830 to 1853 several times, which shows that these butchers and their owners were hard to regulate. The butchers' stalls were at the opposite end of the market from the vegetable stalls. The produce stalls had been purchased by planters and farmers, but their enslaved workers organized and operated them. Unlike the butchers, women could conduct business without their owners present. Mrs. Burke, a female observer, noted that in "each of the stalls stands a servant woman to sell her master's property, who is careful to deck out his sales women in the most gaudy colors to make

[288] Richard Hrabowksi, *1809 Directory for the District of Charleston*, 56-275 microform, (SCHS).

[289] Richard Hrabowski, *1809 Directory of the District of Charleston*, (SCHS).

[290] Henry, Charles S. Esq., *A Digest of all the Ordinances of the City of Savannah* (Savannah: Purse's Print, 1854), 321-324.

her conspicuous as possible."[291] The ability for enslaved women to express themselves through dress was supported by their masters' desires to maintain a commercial atmosphere.

These divisions in butchering and fishing were gender roles that had existed in England, but the different ways men and women handled meat and fish were also evident in cultures from West Africa. Along the African coasts, men hunted animals or fished, and women processed the flesh, often selling surplus cooked meats or smoked fish in the marketplaces for extra income. In Yorubaland, hunting was a "highly respectable profession" and allowed young men to advance their status by "gaining profound knowledge of the characteristic behavior of animals and plants."[292] Prior to the introduction of outboard motors and larger metal boats in twentieth century Ghana, canoe men had dominated the fishing industry for centuries. There was a "clear cut sexual division of labor," which left the processing and selling of fish "entirely to women" in the fishing communities along the Volta.[293] These types of gendered jobs exemplify the nature of West African social constructs, and their replication in the Caribbean and American South allowed women to maintain some control over their own economic fortunes.

Female participation in the marketing cultures of the Fon, Hausa, and Yoruba, along with many other ethnicities, is evident in the Americas. West Africans had frequent contact with Europeans during the pre-colonial era, and their methods of marketing and trade have been recorded in European travel journals.[294] While Europeans did not necessarily consider women

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[291] Barry Sheehy, *Savannah, Immortal City: An Epic IV Volume History: A City & People that Forge a Living Link Between America, Past and Present* (Emerald Book Company, 2011), 48.

[292] G.J. Afolabi Ojo, *Yoruba Culture: A Geographical Analysis* (University of Ife, 1966), 39-40.

[293] Emile Vercuijsse, "Fishmongers, Big Dealers and Fishermen: Co-operation and Conflict between the Sexes in Ghanian Canoe Fishing" in *Female and Male in West Africa*, ed. by Christine Oppong (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), 182.

[294] *Trade and Market in the Early Empires*, edited by Karl Polanyi, Conrad M. Arensberg, and Harry W. Pearson, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, A Gateway Edition, 1957).

important to the economies of West Africa, female control over local trade did merit comment in their notes. African women who came to the New World melded old and new methods of trade to make the market a gendered space that they controlled during periods of prosperity and times of uncertainty.

The majority of these entrepreneurial women arrived in the New World on slave ships from the West Coast regions of Africa, and their kinship networks influenced and acculturated New World marketplaces into something that was familiar to them. Historians often associate marketing with women in African cultures but fail to differentiate between the multitudes of groups that lived along the entirety of the African coast.[295] Philip Morgan made this mistake when he concluded that a runaway Angolan woman who peddled cakes in and around Charleston represented a "link between an African background and slave marketing" without understanding the divisions of labor and gender roles that existed between Angolans and other African groups.[296]

The African continent is vast with many ecological zones, and environmental factors have contributed to the differing economic structures of African peoples. Due to the wet and humid climate of the savannah and rainforest areas of southwest and central Africa, the Tsetse fly parasite prevented the use of draft animals for agricultural pursuits. In the pre-colonial period, farming without large beasts of burden made the production of cash crops impractical, and West African farms tended to be smaller and more diverse than the plantations of the colonial New World. Farm laborers in these regions were usually women, and while they might

[295] Philip Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 251.

[296] Philip Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 251-2.

not have owned the land, they did control the fruits of their labor.[297] The construction of land tenure and the ability for women to distribute what they produced created a culture that was conducive to female marketing. Unlike the strong agricultural market-based cultures of West Africa, Central Africa developed "cooperatives and not local market places" to diffuse commodities among suppliers and consumers because rainforests prevented large-scale agriculture. [298] This environment precluded the development of a large marketing culture in Central Africa. While many of traditions, like burial practices, drumming patterns, and marriage practices discovered on rural plantations were derived from the Congo region, the concepts of marketing were brought to the Americas by West African women. Through an acculturation of gender roles, women from the Congo region adapted quickly to the new markets that they encountered and followed West African women in advancing their own agendas.

The movement of women from specific regions in West Africa can be visualized through digital mapping (Slide 13). The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade database lists 16 voyages to Charleston and Savannah between 1753 and 1807 that include more than 20 percent of female captives on board. When these same attributes are selected for the West Central African region, there are no results. This does not mean that no women came from these regions, but what these results signify that ship Captains heading to Savannah and Charleston made sure to record the numbers of men, women, and children they brought across the Atlantic from these West African regions. Market forces in the principal ports of landing might have influenced the decisions of these captains, and they were bringing the cargoes for which planters would pay premium prices. With the threat of a closing slave trade per the United States Constitution, planters could have

[297] Esther Boserup, *Woman's Role in Economic Development* (United Kingdom: Earthscan, 1989), 72-93.

[298] *Markets in Africa: Eight Subsistence Economies in Transition*, eds Paul Bohannan and George Dalton (Garden City, NY: Double Day & Company, 1965), 14.

wanted to import as many women as possible in the waning years of the trade to maintain their enslaved populations. However, G. Ugo Nwokeji has argued that the planters' preferences did not matter in the Bight of Biafra and that place-specific ethnic ideas about the gendered division of labor determined the prices as well as the large amount of women and girls sent into the Trans-Atlantic trade instead of the Saharan.[299] Women were not as important to the agricultural sector in the Bight as they were along the Gold Coast, so selling women and girls into the Trans-Atlantic slave trade did not impact their local labor force as much as selling off males would have. There is still much debate about why the internal African slave market pushed women into the Trans-Atlantic trade in such great numbers in this region, but evidence suggests that several hundred landed in the port cities of Charleston and Savannah from 1753-1807.

These enslaved women shaped the cultural dynamic of the Charleston and Savannah marketplaces by blending both English and African economic traditions. In 1848, 46% of the Savannah's 11,214 residents were descended from Africa, and 3370 of them were women.[300] Many females caught in the slave trade did not bring material objects with them across the Atlantic, but the way that they had traditionally established prices, connected with their suppliers from rural areas, and created economic relationships among themselves survived the Middle Passage through gendered relationships and kinship networks.

There are connections between trade and power in West African societies that influenced female social relationships and the ways women acquired wealth in southern slave societies. Along with the women from the Bight of Biafra, many women from Yorubaland utilized their

[299] G. Ugo Nwokeji, "African Conceptions of Gender and the Slave Traffic," *William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2001): 47-68.

[300] Joseph Bancroft, *A Commercial Directory* (Savannah: Edward J. Purse, Printer: 1848), 7.

long and successful history of market participation to adapt to American marketplaces. Yoruba wives lived in separate houses and paid a majority of their own living expenses as their husbands were not required to contribute to the household. Due to the polygamous nature of Yoruba familial life and female farming traditions, most Yoruba women engaged in some form of commerce in order to sustain their families.[301] The marketplace was viewed as part of "the religious environment that is integrated into the religious pantheon," which allowed women control over market rituals.[302] Almost all women in Yoruba culture participated in some sort of trade from the pre-colonial through the colonial periods, and the gatherings at the local marketplaces allowed women to control how the market functioned economically and socially. Through this type of "space control," patriarchal structures inadvertently allowed women to maintain the spiritual and economic relevance of the marketplace.[303] By doing so, women configured this space to benefit them.

Yoruba women constructed their households in ways that reflected relationships among enslaved men and women, who often did not live in the same locations and were forced in some instances to have multiple partners. Flora had a husband named Ben, who did not live on Oatlands Island with her. This name is not listed on any of the slave schedules, wills, or lists of the Cowper, Mackay, or McQueen families. He appears in Mary Anne's account ledger on March 21, where she recorded that she "lent Flora's husband, Ben $3" and then drew a line through the sentence with a note that she had "rec'd payment" for the debt.[304] There is no

[301] Boserup, *Woman's Role in Economic Development*, 72-93.

[302] Toyin Falola, "Gender, Business, and Space Control: Yoruba Market Women and Power" in *African Women and Economic Power*. Edited by Bessie House-Midamba and Felix K. Ekechi (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 24.

[303] Falola, "Gender, Business, and Space Control," 26.

[304] Mary Anne Cowper Common Place Book, (SHC), 13-86.

indication that Ben was enslaved, yet Mary Anne was willing to lend him cash anyway. Ben curried good favor because he was prompt in his repayment of the debt. Even though she was the property of Mary Anne, Flora was obviously able to pick her own spouse, and she chose someone who was not connected to her kinship network. She was able to provide for herself by maneuvering in the marketplace, and she was also able to help her husband by having a relationship with someone willing to lend him money. Ben's kinship with Flora allowed him access to cash, which inverted the male-dominated head-of-household aspect of their relationship. Ben and Flora utilized traditional African concepts of a woman's place in the market economy to create a way to maintain their precarious relationship.

Beyond the Yoruba aspect of male and female relationships in marketing culture, there was also a similarity between the appearance and physical layout of Atlantic World marketplaces. However, the great markets of West Africa were much larger and were regulated with more authority than the marketplaces in Savannah and Charleston. The port of Whydah and was one of the largest slave-trading centers on the West coast of Africa from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries, and several travelers were so impressed with its magnitude that they wrote down their observations. John Duncan, a British traveler funded by the Royal Geographic Society, toured West Africa from Whydah on the coast to Adafoodia in the interior in 1845-46 and wrote descriptions of the different types of markets he encountered. Whydah appeared to be "superior to any I have seen on the coast, and is better supplied even than Sierra Leone."[305] The Whydah trading center was the "organ of administered trade, a way of trading which appears as general

[305] John Duncan, *Travels in Western Africa in 1845 & 1846*, Vol 1 (London: Richard Bentley, Publisher in Ordinary to her Majesty, 1847), 120.

from antiquity almost to the threshold of modern times."[306]

The Whydah marketplace was controlled by traditional Dahomian authorities who were not interested in commercial relationships with the rest of the world. The Dahomey, a collection of Fon peoples who had gained military advantage over other ethnic groups along the Bight of Benin, controlled the global trade for guns, slaves, silks and spices at Whydah. Further, the free-market ideology that dictated British commerce during the nineteenth century was not prevalent there. Prices were established and enforced by market authorities based on state needs rather than supply and demand. Each seller had to pay a toll and to set up her wares in designated sections of the market.[307] According to John Duncan, market sellers were "subjected to a very heavy duty to the King of Dahomey" and were not permitted any unregulated trade. The legality of all transactions was assured by officials, with the threat of enslavement or even death if those rules were disobeyed.[308] Due to the regulations imposed by the Dahomey, vendors did not have the ability to adjust prices or to create a parallel economy based solely on the gendered aspect of food production.

There were three markets in Whydah with the majority of exchange occurring in Zobeme. As the largest of the three markets, Zobeme was a 14-acre lot in the southwest section of the city with cross streets in a grid pattern.[309] Traveler accounts describe scenes in which swarms "of people, especially women, meet to buy and sell."[310] Zobeme women in mud huts would vend

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[306] Rosemary Arnold, "A Port of Trade: Whydah on the Guinea Coast" in *Trade & Market in the Early Empires,* 154.

[307] Arnold, "Great Market," 185.

[308] Arnold, "Great Market," 184.

[309] Rosemary Arnold, "Separation of Trade and Market: Great Market of Whydah" in *Trade & Market in the Early Empires,* 177.

[310] Arnold, "Great Market," 178.

both raw or cooked provisions, like eggs, fish, shrimp, baked ground nuts, yams and multiple types of meat.[311] John Duncan would have seen a similar sight in the American South sixty years earlier. An observer in 1778 "counted in the market and different corners sixty-four Negro wenches selling cakes, nuts and so forth" in the Charleston marketplace. While the outward appearance of women in the marketplace of Zobeme might have been familiar, the lack of control by market clerks in both Charleston and Savannah left many openings that African women who were used to a strong state-run marketplace could manipulate.

Southern newspapers described the chaos of early American marketplaces with enslaved women being labeled "loose, idle and disorderly" as they became increasingly more dominant in the sales and distribution of foodstuffs, whereas enslaved men were very rarely referred to in these terms.[312] A Presentment of the Grand Jury of the Charleston District in 1768 protested against the "many idle Negro Wenches, selling dry goods, cakes, rice, etc. in the markets" were becoming a nuisance. As evidenced by Mary Anne, many slaveholders were at odds with some of these laws that restricted enslaved peoples' participation in the marketplace because they depended on their enslaved workers to provide for them by going to the market. Some planters simply ignored the laws and their elite status made it difficult for city governments to punish them in any way.

In order to appease slaveholders and maintain some control over enslaved workers, city governments proposed a system requiring slave holders from Richmond to New Orleans to acquire a ticket or badge to identify their enslaved workers as legally able to work with a readily

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[311] Arnold "Great Market," 178.

[312] Robert Olwell, "'Loose, Idle and Disorderly': Slave Women in the Eighteenth-Century Charleston Marketplace" in *More Than Chattel*: *Black Women and Slavery in the Americas*, eds. David Barry Gaspar & Darlene Clarke Hine (Indiana University Press, 1996), 97-110.

verifiable physical marker. Mary Anne made sure to procure badges for all of her male workers who practiced skilled trades like carpentry, brickmaking, and coopering. Enslaved men were much more regulated by government in these positions than their female counterparts. Due to their sheer number, shifting positions from domestic to market seller, and the important service that they provided for the local food market, enslaved businesswomen were much harder to regulate. Combined with their economic relationships with female owners, these women carved out a specific space from which they could infuse their own versions of marketing culture into the Caribbean and American South.

Local markets like those in Charleston and Savannah were especially problematic spaces to control due to the heavy reliance on enslaved female labor for producing and distributing goods. Market women became a point of contention between the elite and less wealthy. One Charleston resident noted that "I have known those black women to be so insolent as even to wrest things out of the hands of white people, pretending they had been bought before, for their masters or mistresses, yet expose *the same* for sale again within an hour after, for their own benefit."[313] Wealthy Charlestonians soon abandoned going to the market altogether to avoid dealing with an enslaved woman as an equal during a financial transaction and preferred to send their own enslaved people to do their shopping for them.[314] "The Laws of Market" were color blind, so "property and price" rather than "deference and duty" determined the relationships that existed in the marketplace.[315] These types of attitudes directly reflected a class structure that put enslaved women working for their elite mistresses in a special category that poor people had to

[313] *South Carolina Gazette*, September 24, 1772.

[314] Robert Olwell, *Masters, Slaves and Subjects: The Culture of Power in the South Carolina Low Country, 1740-1790* (Cornell University Press, 1998), 166-178.

[315] Olwell, *Masters, Slaves and Subjects*, 178-181.

accept, regardless of the color codes that had been legally placed in southern slave society.

In an attempt to control unruly market women and keep the slave system intact, city governments like those of Charleston required masters to purchase a Huckster or Fruiter slave badge that was specifically designed for enslaved female sellers who, along with their masters' products, sold cakes, nuts, their own produce, handmade baskets, and even earthenware vessels.[316] With this physical device, bonded women were able to conduct business without the presence of their owners. Through the use of the Huckster or Fruitier slave badge, African and African-American women were able to participate legally in many aspects of local vending, which slowly developed into conventional buying and selling rights for themselves and became increasingly unenforceable by the municipality.[317]

In order to control this parallel economy that existed alongside the local economy, city government and state legislatures attempted to curb the emergence of a parallel economy by restricting the commercial interactions between enslaved people and the lower classes. The 1840 *Statutes at Large for South Carolina* specifically stated that "no slave or slaves whatsoever, belonging to Charlestown, shall be permitted to buy any thing to sell again; or to sell any thing upon their own account" without a proper ticket or badge.[318] The same law, differently worded, had been passed repeatedly in the Charleston City Ordinances since 1798, which indicates that these laws were consistently ignored by merchants, masters, and their enslaved market

[316] *South Carolina Gazette,* May 17, 1773; David J. McCord and Thomas Cooper, eds. *The Statues at Large of South Carolina, Vol. 7* (Columbia, SC: A.S. Johnson, 1840).

[317] Philip Morgan, "The Development of Slave Culture in Eighteenth Century Plantation America" (Ph.D. diss., University College, London, 1977), 136-139.

[318] David J. McCord and Thomas Cooper, eds. *The Statues at Large of South Carolina, Vol. 7* (Columbia, SC: A.S. Johnson, 1840), 408.

women.[319] A group of citizens from Columbia, South Carolina petitioned the State Senate to enact "severe penalties against supposed offenses, which customs and the feeling of the people sanction, is worse than idle legislation."[320] The state just did not have the resources or the ability to maintain control of these women the way that the Dahomey did at Whydah because the market clerk's main focus was on the wharves where the cash crops were being weighed, loaded and shipped into the global economy.

Savannah was not as populated as Charleston, and although they adopted a badge system as well, it was regulated enslaved women much less than it did enslaved men. The Savannah City Marshall's fine book from 1820 listed fines collected for a multitude of offenses committed by enslaved people. Peter was fined $3 for "working without a badge" on March 22, and he paid half amount of $1.50 the same day himself. His owner was never contacted, and he was not fined again during that year. Interestingly enough, the majority of slaveholders that were identified and fined for enslaved males "working without a badge" were women. In an unusual twist, no enslaved women were ever fined for working without a badge, although several women were fined for conducting marketing transactions on Sundays, which violated the Sabbath ordinance. The Cowpers, Smiths, and Mackays were never listed in the 1820 fine book, but plenty of other female slave holders were. The relationship between female slave owners and their skilled workers is on full display in these dockets, and they demonstrate that women, especially single and widowed, used the hiring-out system as a way to generate and maintain an income. The financial support garnered by these women made enforcing laws that affected their income

[319] Alexander Edwards, *Ordinances of the City Council of Charleston* (Charleston, SC: W.P. Young, 1796), 65; The most comprehensive collection of Charleston City Ordinances are located on microfilm at the Charleston Public Library.

[320] Legislative Petitions to the State Senate, 1824, 199, SCAH

challenging for local and state governments.

While city governments and slave holders wanted to control enslaved people's purchasing power, not all southerners were so willing to regulate their spending. The major beneficiaries of this parallel economy were low-level merchants. Each year, new ordinances were passed in order to control the commerce between not only enslaved African and African Americans but also with small shop owners and grocers. South Carolina tried unsuccessfully to stop trade between enslaved and free people by bringing these buyers and sellers to court. In the Colleton District, the state found James Pendergrass guilty for buying cotton from a "negro without a ticket."[321] Between 1802 and 1810, the state also found Rob Martin of Fairfield County guilty of "dealing with negroes" as well as Thomas Adams of Edgefield County, Joseph McCullough of Greenville, and Joseph Thornton of Camden.[322] These guilty verdicts did little to slow the trade between the two groups as "illegal" trading had already become an entrenched custom in southern slave society.

On many rural plantations, masters and merchants worked in tandem to allow enslaved people to participate in the local economy and thus utilized commercialism to maintain a complaint workforce. John Black was a middling merchant who owned the Saluda General Store in South Carolina. The population was sparse, and he needed to engage with enslaved consumers to generate a profit, which he did with the full knowledge of the plantation owners in the area, even listing them as collateral in case an enslaved customer faulted on his debts. Black's ledgers show that he did not discriminate against ready coin, and he was willing to make trades with

[321] Nov 1802, Colleton District, State V James Pendergrass, Thomas Waites Papers, #177, (South Caroliniana Library; hereinafter cited as SCL).

[322] Nov 1806, Fairfield District, State V Rob Martin, #250; March 1804, Edgefield County, the State V Thomas Adams, #191; April 1810, Greenville District, State V Joseph McCullough, #289; Nov 1810, Camden County, the State V Joseph Thornton, #301, Thomas Waites papers, (SCL).

many enslaved individuals. He sold liquor, wine, sundries, cloth, thread, Egyptian tea, silk, needles and a multitude of other things to people who were enslaved on nearby plantations.[323] These purchases were diverse and exemplify that enslaved people were fully aware of consumerism and that their transactions were welcomed. In some instances, they used cash; in others, they traded things like fowl or wood to acquire the goods they wanted for themselves and their families. By listing the names of his enslaved consumers along with the names of their owners, John Black's ledger exemplified the how the parallel economy functioned with the support of the elite.

The majority of people who purchased items from John Black's store were men. The ability of enslaved men to leave their home plantations and conduct their master's business was well documented throughout the South, and even though city governments passed strict legislation to control their movements, "owners and overseers could do virtually nothing to stop their bondspeople from leaving the confines of the plantation after nightfall."[324] R.Q. Mallard of Liberty County, Georgia observed that "Saturday nights the roads were filled with men" who traveled on horseback and on foot to visit their wives and family members on other plantations.[325] Others traveled in canoes and skiffs on the waterways or contracted with ship Captains to deliver their goods to market. Charles Ball, Solomon Northrup, and Fredrick Douglass all wrote of traveling independently from their masters, yet Harriet Jacobs and Louisa Piquet never traveled very far from their homes. Unlike the mobility that enslaved higglers seemed to have in Jamaica, women in the American South did not openly travel far from their

[323] John Black, Accounts Ledger, (SCL).

[324] Elizabeth Wood, *Women's Work, Men's Work: The Informal Economies of Lowcountry Georgia* (University of Georgia Press, 1995), 88.

[325] Mallard, *Plantation Life before Emancipation*, 51.

homes in either rural or urban areas. Men traveled the waterways, paths, and routes to market, but women controlled the distribution of foodstuffs once these items hit the urban environment.

Marketing in West Africa was very important for the dissemination of goods and foodstuffs but also for the social interactions that accompanied the buying and selling of these items. African women were at the forefront of these social aspects of the marketplace, and they instituted similar social traditions into the Americas. Like both their counterparts in West Africa and the Caribbean, bondswomen in the Lowcountry established economic relationships between themselves and their mistresses but also among groups of people on multiple plantations. While these women did not physically leave the urban areas, they utilized their kinship connections with more mobile males from the rural plantations to develop a supply line of fresh foods to sell in the market. One observer noted that "I have seen country negroes take great pains, after having been spoken to by those women, to reserve what they choose to sell to them only."[326] The task system encouraged enslaved laborers to grow corn, yams, and gourds in addition to keeping hogs, chickens, and cows. The majority of foodstuffs sold in city markets were the products of the plantation workers' personal vegetable gardens, a custom that had become entrenched in southern slave society by the nineteenth century. Similar to the fear expressed by planters in Jamaica on disrupting the Sunday markets, Lowcountry planters were also wary of denying their chattels the traditional rights of a kitchen garden.

Certain plantation owners like Maybank, Phillips, and Gabriel Manigault allowed their enslaved workers to maintain independent fields, or "negro grounds," for the cultivation of their own crops. A property map of the plantation locations imposed onto a modern map creates visual depiction of the movements of a specific enslaved man, Cudjo, from Gabriel Manigault's Silk

[326] "The Stanger" *South Carolina Gazette*, Sept 24, 1772.

Hope plantation at the head of the Cooper River, to the Charleston marketplace. Trusted by his absentee owner, who actually resided at Goose Creek in St. James Parish, Cudjo travelled up to 24 miles on Sundays, an accustomed free day, to sell the surplus produce from the plantation in the urban marketplace of Charleston.[327] Whether Manigault allowed Cudjo or any of his other enslaved workers a part of the proceeds is unclear, but Cudjo's ability to travel such a long distance with goods and then return with the cash money showed that enslaved men traveled southern roads frequently enough to develop connections with people on other plantations.

Like the Fon women who sat along roads to Whydah and waited for their rural kin to deliver foodstuffs, female vendors would meet plantation suppliers along specific routes in or around urban centers and purchase surplus goods to sell in the marketplace. This is probably how Cudjo deposited his goods quickly, got the cash needed, and returned back to Silk Hope during the span of a weekend. Although these relationships were not easily maintained, "the interaction between rural producers and urban vendors was always mutually advantageous and mutually empowering."[328] These trading networks helped the enslaved to sell their produce quickly and allowed them to shop, to engage with friends or family in the city, and to return to the plantation by first light the next day.

These links between market women and agricultural producers enabled both groups to profit without having to include the dominant class. Bondwomen used this strategy to control the rates of particular items, like corn or yams, and influenced their prices. In 1772, a concerned citizen wrote to the *South Carolina Gazette* describing this practice, noting that "I have seen the

[327] Philip Morgan, "Work and Culture: The Task System and the World of Lowcountry Blacks, 1700 to 1880," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (1982): 565; Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll,* 1-7, 535-540; Douglas R. Egerton, "Markets Without a Market Revolution: Southern Planters and Capitalism," *Journal of the Early Republic* 24 (2004): 212.

[328] Wood, *Women's Work, Men's Work*, 93.

country negroes take great pains, after having been first spoke to by those women to *reserve* whatever they chose to sell to them only, either by keeping the particular article in their canows, or by sending them away and pretending they were not for sale."[329] Market women were so adept at these transactions, and the citizen proclaimed that "the wenches so briskly hustle them about from one to another that in two minutes they could no longer be traced."[330] Trade networks allowed bonded laborers and market women to profit without having to include the dominant class in any monetary transactions. Through these processes, urban women and rural plantation workers organized a distinctive parallel economy in southern slave society that was predicated on commerce and a common African kinship.

The lack of women on the open roads and waterways of the South seems to have rendered them invisible to the modern researcher, but traces of an economic relationship that has roots in Africa can be identified. Flora moved all over the city of Savannah, and she did not have a badge to do so (Slide 11). Mary Anne purchased badges for her skilled male workers only. She did not need to purchase a Fruiter, Huckster, or even Servant badge for her enslaved domestics because they were not seen to be moving outside of their allotted positions in Savannah slave society. While Charleston was exceedingly strict about how enslaved women could maneuver in the local economy, Savannah did not have the same level of commitment in enforcing badge laws against market sellers. Flora became "hidden" in the records because her movements did not seem out of the ordinary for a woman of her status.

The throng of bodies jostling for space, the aromas of freshly-cooked foods, and the call of female marketers enticing customers with rows of goods for sale are still common sights

[329] *South Carolina Gazette*, September 24, 1772.

[330] *South Carolina Gazette*, September 24, 1772.

around the world. By reinterpreting the economic analysis of enslaved African women and their contributions to food exchange, historians can examine the connections between Atlantic World markets and the women who controlled them. Such analyses can open up a discourse about how and why the cultural retention of marketing practices from both England and Africa came to dominate commerce in the new world. By exploring the economic relationships among people on plantations, enslaved market women, and their urban southern mistresses, historians can advance an understanding of American history that moves from strictly European origins to include the significant contributions of Africa on our shared past.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this dissertation, I have utilized the theoretical model of *Alltagsgeschichte*, or "the history of everyday life," to create a narrative history for Mary Anne Cowper and Flora that reflects their contributions to southern society and provides them with the economic agency often denied to women in the nineteenth century.[331] Following Joan Scott's advice from "Gender: A Useful Category of Analysis," I wrote this study with the intention of interrogating accepted categories.[332] Throughout this dissertation, I used elements of both the social and cultural historians to deconstruct the binary positions of men and women, slave and free, as well as black and white in the nineteenth-century Atlantic World.

In order to move past the descriptive nature of my subjects, the words "slave," "black," or "white" do not appear in relation to the historical actors in this study. Historians have relied too often on these descriptors to detail the class positions of their subjects; as a result, black has become automatically associated with slavery and white with freedom and prosperity. The actual experiences of these of people have narrowed into predetermined categories that have view all people of African heritage in terms of enslavement, disregard the experiences of poor southerners who did not own slaves or land, and reinforce a narrative of white supremacy.

I specifically omitted the word "slave" due to an argument expressed by Deborah Gray White. In the second edition of *Ar'n't I a Woman*?, she noted that "African and African

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[331] Geoff Eley, *A Crooked Line: From Cultural History to the History of Society* (University of Michigan Press, 2005), 157.

[332] Joan Scott, "Gender As a Useful Category of Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1986): 1053-75.

American women were not born degraded but rendered so by enslavement… the noun 'slave' suggests a state of mind and being that is absolute and unmediated by an enslaver."[333] Accordingly, I do not use the word "slave" to refer to any of the people in this dissertation because they were put into that position of enslavement by their society. In order to establish the humanity of the enslaved, scholars must challenge the language of slavery by ensuring that our words reflect the realities of the past. Africans and African Americans had freedom of mind. They created families, became skilled craftsmen, bought and sold in the marketplace, and created spaces of freedom in a slave society. While these places might not have been physical locations, their resistance to slavery in feigning illness, running away, stealing food, or working slowly show that their minds were fully their own. In refusing to refer to these people as "slaves," I am attempting to provide a history that is more inclusive of the varied roles that African people played in the American past.

In addition, I have excluded specific color-coded words in this study. The language of "black" and "white" stems from slaveholders themselves. They used the language of color to divide people in the very early periods of American history to make sure that their chattels were easily identifiable by their skin color. Slaveholders like George Fitzhugh excited their readers by constantly referring to the South as a steward of the great civilizations of Rome and Greece because of their similar slave society, yet those ancient cultures did not base their concept of slavery on racial categories.[334] Slaveholders in the South intended to keep African and African American people in bondage due to their skin color. In fact, the Acts of the Virginia General

[333] Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South*, Revised Edition, (W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 8.

[334] George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South, Or the Failure of Free Society* (Richmond: A. Morris, Publisher, 1854), 158-9.

Assembly of 1662 declared, "Whereas some doubts have arisen whether children got by any Englishman upon a negro woman shall be slave or Free…that all children borne in this country shalbe held bond or free only according to the condition of the mother."[335] This racial division has seeped into our modern culture, where children do not learn about the contributions to economics, art, music, food, and religion of African peoples in America. Instead, these boys and girls learn a history of degradation through slavery.

I have a decided not to use the language of the slaveholders, focusing instead on the class categories of "elite" and "enslaved" to discuss the people in my study. Many scholars will claim that I am removing race from this narrative, but as anthropologists have argued, race itself is a cultural construct. I examine race by referring to the historical actors in my project through the actual ethnicities from which these people were derived. In African history, people are not referred to by their skin color because they are African above all else and then were categorized into their ethnic groups. The Fon, Yoruba, Hausa, Angolan, or the multitude of other cultures that were introduced into the Americas through the slave trade did not leave their ideas about ethnicity and culture on the shores of Africa. As these people crossed the Atlantic, they would not have just given up their identities and declared themselves "black"; they would have still claimed their ethnic heritage and passed these cultural traits down to future generations.

Flora was born in Jamaica, and her place of birth was her identifying marker rather than the color of her skin. In the 1817 slave schedule, she was listed as "creole," which means that she was born in Jamaica. The Caribbean did not feature the usual identification of "black" that was common in the American South. While there is no way to tell her exact color, but enough evidence exists to determine her ethnicity as a Jamaican born to an African woman. She

[335] *The Old Dominion in the Seventeenth Century, A Documentary History of Virginia, 1606-1700*, edited by Warren M. Billings (Omohonduro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2007), 172-4.

participated in the Savannah marketplace with the support of a kinship community of people who had come from various places, including Spanish Florida, the Caribbean, and Africa. Others were born in the newly-established United States. Without a claim to citizenship, enslaved people created other ways to connect themselves to their homes. Like their African ancestors, their color was probably not as important to their identity as their kinship groups. In making color such an important point of their studies, modern scholars have subsumed mixed-race people into their analysis and have concluded that all enslaved people were black. In reality, many people were both "black" and "white" on plantations.

In many ways, historians have put enslaved people of mixed races into categories of skin color, especially black, which that have lessened the burden of Europeans being in sexual relationships with their enslaved workers. White asserted that "For black women, race and sex cannot be separated," but by claiming that all people with African heritage are somehow "black," she does not contextualize the experiences of mixed race women and other ethnically different groups.[336] Mulatto George moved through the world in a different way than other enslaved people. He was trained in carpentry, lived on his own, and made his own decisions about marriage. He could have been granted these freedoms by Mary Anne because he was a blood relation. While there is no evidence for the particular case of Mulatto George, the WPA slave narratives, ex-slave autobiographies, and personal letters of slaveholders outline the varied responses families had to amalgamation. The modern South is filled with the mixed-race ancestors of both slave owners and the people they enslaved. To ignore the interracial nature of southern society allows historical racism to maintain relevance in modern day society.

[336] White, *Ar'n't I a Woman*?, 6.

This dissertation has grown out of my desire to provide an interpretation of American history that moves beyond racial and gendered divisions. By challenging the language we use to identify ourselves and providing a new story of our shared past, this study breaks from traditional historical analyses and incorporates my own understanding of where we came from and the world we currently live in. Established narratives must be confronted with new ideas in order for the History profession, and American culture by extension, to grow and prosper.

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