

# Ideology and Death on a Savannah River Rice Plantation, 1833–1867: Paternalism amidst “a Good Supply of Disease and Pain”

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IN RECENT YEARS, HISTORIANS HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY AWARE THAT NORTH American slavery evolved differently within disparate geographic contexts.<sup>1</sup> In particular, scholars have begun to emphasize the ways that slavery in the Carolina and Georgia lowcountry deviated from the mainstream North American experience of African-American bondage. Unlike the vast majority of nineteenth-century southern masters who planted cotton and resided among their slaves, the tidewater slaveowners planted rice and lived away from their coastal estates for much of the year. Concentrating on this physical separation between master and slave, historians such as Margaret Washington Creel and Charles Joyner have demonstrated that slaves in coastal South Carolina and Georgia enjoyed a relatively large measure of cultural and emotional autonomy from their absentee masters.<sup>2</sup> These scholars have done much to illuminate the

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Ira Berlin, “Time, Space, and the Evolution of Afro-American Society on British Mainland North America,” *American Historical Review*, LXXXV (February 1980), 44–78. Berlin lamented the lack of “temporal and spatial specificity” (p. 44) in such works as Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York, 1974). I would especially like to thank James L. Roark for his comments on numerous drafts of this article. I have also benefited from suggestions and support offered by Cynthia A. Bansak, Ellen Barnard, Dan Costello, Sarah E. Gardner, Eugene D. Genovese, Andrea E. Kluge, Randall M. Packard, Susan M. Socolow, Mart A. Stewart, Sharon T. Strocchia, and the editorial staff of the *Journal*.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Washington Creel, *“A Peculiar People”: Slave Religion and Community-Culture Among the Gullahs* (New York and London, 1988); Charles Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana and Chicago, 1984). Also see Julia Floyd Smith, *Slavery and Rice Culture in Low Country Georgia, 1750–1860* (Knoxville, 1985); Berlin, “Time, Space, and the Evolution of Afro-American Society”; Thomas F. Armstrong, “From Task Labor to Free Labor: The Transition Along Georgia’s Rice Coast, 1820–1880,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, LXIV (Winter 1980), 432–47; Philip D. Morgan, “Work and Culture: The Task System and the World of Lowcountry Blacks, 1700 to 1880,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., XXXIX (October 1982), 563–99; and Morgan, “The Ownership of Property by Slaves in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century Low Country,” *Journal of Southern History*, XLIX (August 1983), 399–420. Even historians critical of the historiographical trend toward portraying the slave communities as relatively autonomous have acknowledged the special circumstances of the Carolina and Georgia lowcountry. See Peter Kolchin, “Reevaluating the Antebellum Slave Community: A Comparative Perspective,” *Journal of American History*, LXX (December 1983), 591.

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world of the tidewater slave, but they have not considered the unique lowcountry communities in the wider context of the southern slaveowners' devotion to a shared set of values.

Despite their own regionally distinct brand of slavery, the lowcountry masters committed themselves deeply to a paternalist ethos that could be found all across the nineteenth-century South—an ethos that hinged on the notion of reciprocal responsibilities for master and slave and on the implicit recognition of the slave's humanity. To be sure, this commitment thoroughly contradicted the especially grim conditions that African Americans faced in the coastal swamps.<sup>3</sup> But, as the following examination of one Savannah River rice plantation will reveal, the unhealthy lowcountry environment did not prevent masters from embracing a cohesive set of paternalist values that were, indeed, antithetical to their specific geographic situation. In fact, only by exploring the tension between the slaveowners' paternalism and the physical reality of tidewater slavery can one appreciate the dedication of the master class to an ethos that transcended the tangible boundaries between upcountry cotton and lowcountry rice.

Charles Manigault became a planter in 1825 when his father-in-law presented him with Silk Hope, a Cooper River rice and indigo plantation forty miles above Charleston. At the age of thirty, the prominent descendant of one of South Carolina's wealthiest colonial merchants began planting rice and managing slaves. Like many of the Charleston planters, however, Manigault soon grew frustrated with his upcountry property's marginal soil. In 1833 he turned to the rich tidewater land near the Savannah River and purchased Gowrie plantation for forty thousand dollars.<sup>4</sup>

Continuing to live in and near Charleston for most of the year, Manigault nonetheless took a keen interest in the daily affairs of his Georgia plantation. In numerous letters to his overseers and to his son Louis, who started to manage the property in 1852, Charles Manigault articulated a philosophy

<sup>3</sup> Of course, the paternalist ideology always contradicted the reality of African-American bondage. As Genovese has observed, "the problems inherent in the contradiction in the slave's legal existence as man and thing constantly emerged." *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 88. Still, conditions on the coastal rice estates deviated from the plantation reality that spawned the paternalist ethos in the first place—a reality that supposedly hinged on the face-to-face relationship of resident masters and their slaves. See *ibid.*, 4–5; Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (Baton Rouge and London, 1979), 4–5; Genovese, *The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation* (Middletown, Conn., 1988), 96–97; and Michael Wayne, *The Reshaping of Plantation Society: The Natchez District, 1860–1880* (Baton Rouge and London, 1983), 24.

<sup>4</sup> Maurice Alfred Crouse, "The Manigault Family of South Carolina, 1685–1783" (Ph. D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1964); James M. Clifton, "A Half-Century of a Georgia Rice Plantation," *North Carolina Historical Review*, XLVII (October 1970), 392–95; and Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor on Argyle Island: Letters and Documents of a Savannah River Rice Plantation, 1833–1867* (Savannah, 1978), xvii–xx. Manigault was one of only many South Carolina rice planters who turned to more fertile property in Georgia. See Smith, *Slavery and Rice Culture*, 34.

of plantation ownership that can only be described as paternalism.<sup>5</sup> For the Manigaults, slavery necessarily entailed the notion of reciprocal responsibilities. As masters, they expected their slaves to work obediently and efficiently; at the same time, both men explicitly acknowledged their duty to treat their bondservants with compassion. In 1845, for example, Charles Manigault instructed his overseer to "be Kind in word & deed to all the Negroes for they have always been accustomed to it."<sup>6</sup> Likewise, in 1848, Manigault informed his new overseer that "I expect the kindest treatment of them [the slaves] from you—for this has always been a principal thing with me."<sup>7</sup> By 1853 reference to proper treatment of the slaves had made its way into the contracts that the Manigaults' overseers signed as a prior condition of employment. The overseers agreed that they would "devote all . . . experience and exertions to attend to all Mr. Manigault's interests . . . and to the comfort and welfare of his Negroes . . . treat[ing] them all with kindness and consideration in sickness and in health."<sup>8</sup> And the Manigaults by no means regarded these contracts as empty formalities. On at least one occasion, a potential employee was turned away when he refused to sign one.<sup>9</sup>

Charles Manigault's desire to provide appropriate clothing for his slaves typified his family's paternalism.<sup>10</sup> "My Negroes are very knowing by this

<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the Manigaults make numerous appearances in Genovese's examination of the paternalist ethos. See *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 15, 19, 100–102, 112, 386–87, and 555; for evidence that other coastal planters subscribed to this ideology, consult Arney R. Childs, ed., *Rice Planter and Sportsman: The Recollections of J. Motte Alston, 1821–1909* (Columbia, 1953), 36 and 108–9; Archie Vernon Huff, Jr., *Langdon Cheves of South Carolina* (Columbia, 1977), 169; Duncan Clinch Heyward, *Seed From Madagascar* (Chapel Hill, 1937), *passim*; Malcolm Bell, Jr., *Major Butler's Legacy: Five Generations of a Slaveholding Family* (Athens and London, 1987), 138–40; J. H. Easterby, ed., *The South Carolina Rice Plantation as Revealed in the Papers of Robert F. W. Allston* (Chicago, 1945), 16–17 and 95; Theodore Rosengarten, ed., *Tombee: Portrait of a Cotton Planter* (New York, 1986), 347–48; Miles S. Richards, "Pierce Mason Butler: The South Carolina Years, 1830–1841," *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, LXXXVII (January 1986), 27; and John Solomon Otto, *Cannon's Point Plantation, 1794–1860: Living Conditions and Status Patterns in the Old South* (Orlando and other cities, 1984), 125.

<sup>6</sup> "Instructions for Sub-overseer," prepared by Charles Manigault for Mr. Papot, 1845, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 23.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Manigault to Jesse T. Cooper, January 10, 1848, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 61. Also in Ulrich B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor As Determined by the Plantation Regime* (Baton Rouge, 1969), 255.

<sup>8</sup> Overseer Contract between Charles Manigault and Stephen F. Clark, 1853, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 135. The Manigaults were certainly not unique for inserting such language into their contracts. Robert F. W. Allston, a rice planter in South Carolina's Georgetown District, insisted in 1822 that his employees "oversee the two plantations . . . with moderation & humanity to the negroes . . ." See Easterby, ed., *South Carolina Rice Plantation*, 245.

<sup>9</sup> See four letters from Charles Manigault to Louis Manigault, December 28, 1858, and January 10 and 14 and March 27, 1859, all in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 267, 270–71, 272–73, and 283–85 respectively. According to Genovese, southern "slaveholders . . . regularly fired their overseers for cruelty." See *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 14 (quotation)–15. For a similar observation from a contemporary traveler, see Basil Hall, quoted in Willie Lee Rose, ed., *A Documentary History of Slavery in North America* (New York and other cities, 1976), 306.

<sup>10</sup> Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, xxxii–xxxiii.

time, & will only value what is first Rate," wrote the planter to his supplier in 1847. "I therefore beg your usual care . . . in selecting what you know will give me & them perfect satisfaction. Let the flan[n]el shirts be . . . of the best quality . . . or they will have to send them back to you—as occurred once before."<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the actual distribution of slave clothing served to reinforce the bond between servant and master. Manigault stressed the importance of personally giving the slaves "their clothes, blankets, etc., *calling each by name* and handing it to them." In that moment, the fulfillment of the master's duty toward his slaves brought them face-to-face, in a situation that affirmed the master's self-image as the benevolent patriarch.<sup>12</sup>

Implicit in the Manigaults' attitude toward their slaves was the recognition that blacks were human. By acknowledging that their slaves were people, the Manigaults were conforming to a dominant, nineteenth-century trend among American masters—a trend away from considering African-Americans as savages and toward viewing them as permanently immature but decidedly human beings. "In earlier, harsher times, [black slaves] had been seen as luckless, unfortunate barbarians," Willie Lee Rose has asserted. "Now they were to be treated as children expected never to grow up."<sup>13</sup> The planters' agricultural journals certainly corroborate this observation. "The master should remember," wrote a Georgia slaveowner in 1851, "that whilst . . . his slaves [are his] . . . property, and as such, owe him proper respect and service . . . they are also persons and have a claim upon his regard and protection." In a similar fashion, a planter reminded the readers of *DeBow's Review* in 1852 that "we should all remember that our

<sup>11</sup> Charles Manigault to Mathiessen and Co., September 1, 1847, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 58. Also see Charles Manigault to Mathiessen and Co., September 15, 1846, *ibid.*, 39.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Genovese's examination of the importance of ritual in the allocation of slave clothing. See *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 555. For similar discussion, consult Joyner, *Down by the Riverside*, 109–10; and Drew Gilpin Faust, *James Henry Hammond and the Old South: A Design for Mastery* (Baton Rouge and London, 1982), 103.

<sup>13</sup> Willie Lee Rose, *Slavery and Freedom*, edited by William W. Freehling (New York and other cities, 1982), 25. Also see Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 6; Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South* (Madison, Wisc., and London, 1989), 9; Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Masters and Statesmen: The Political Culture of American Slavery* (Baltimore and London, 1985), 96–100; and Joyce E. Chaplin, *An Anxious Pursuit: Agricultural Innovation and Modernity in the Lower South, 1730–1815* (Chapel Hill and London, 1993), 53–65 and 124–28. The slaveowners' gradual abandonment of inhumane punishment like burning at the stake and branding indicates their recognition that they shared a common bond of humanity with their slaves. See Daniel C. Littlefield, *Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina* (Baton Rouge and London, 1981), 124; Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*, 497; and Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 37. George M. Fredrickson has argued that the image of blacks as savages retained its currency. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (New York and other cities, 1971), Chap. 2. Also see James L. Roark, *Masters Without Slaves: Southern Planters in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York, 1977), 71–72.

slaves are human beings as well as ourselves, and heirs of the same glorious inheritance."<sup>14</sup> And James O. Andrew, a Methodist minister who visited Gowrie in 1857, observed that "the negro is a man, an immortal man, redeemed by Jesus Christ, and cared for by that God who is the universal Father of all men, whatever may be their color."<sup>15</sup> Louis Manigault, for his part, referred to his slaves as "the people" when describing them. "I am now in good trim all day with the people," he wrote his father in 1852, "the only thing I like after all. I sometimes think I could live here with pleasure for six Months without leaving Argyle Island [where the plantation was located]."<sup>16</sup>

Like many other southern planters, the Manigaults did not simply think of their slaves as childlike human beings; rhetorically at least, they regarded their bondservants as their own children, black extensions of the Manigault family. Once again, the Manigaults reflected a larger nineteenth-century southern trend in which slaves were deemed members of their masters' household.<sup>17</sup> Invoking the wisdom of the era, one southern planter asserted that "the first law of slavery is that of kindness from the master to the slave. With that . . . slavery becomes a family relation, next in its attachments to that of parent and child."<sup>18</sup> "Plantation government should be eminently patriarchal, simple, and efficient," maintained a Georgia physician in 1860. The "head of the family, should, in one sense, be the father of the whole concern, negroes and all."<sup>19</sup>

In keeping with this conception of slaves as part of the master's family, Charles Manigault associated his slaves' shortcomings as workers with his own youthful transgressions. "Any accidental stopping [of work] pleases them all I fear," he observed, "just as it used to be with us all at school I

<sup>14</sup> First quotation from Nathan Bass, "Essay on the Treatment and Management of Slaves," Southern Central Agricultural Society of Georgia, *Transactions, 1846-1851*, pp. 195-201, in James O. Breeden, ed., *Advice Among Masters: The Ideal in Slave Management in the Old South* (Westport, Conn., and London, 1980), 12; and second quotation from "Management of Slaves," *De Bow's Review*, XIII (August 1852), 193-94, in Breeden, ed., *Advice Among Masters*, 45.

<sup>15</sup> James O. Andrew, "Our People of Color" in Charles F. Deems, ed., *Annals of Southern Methodism for 1857* (Nashville, 1858), 310. William R. Erwin kindly brought this source to my attention.

<sup>16</sup> Louis Manigault to Charles Manigault, December 31, 1852, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 135; also see Louis Manigault to Charles Manigault, December 24, 1852, *ibid.*, 131-32.

<sup>17</sup> In particular, see Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill and London, 1988), 24-30; and Genovese, "'Our Family, White and Black': Family and Household in the Southern Slaveholders' World View," in Carol Bleser, ed., *In Joy and in Sorrow: Women, Family, and Marriage in the Victorian South, 1830-1900* (New York and Oxford, 1991), 69-87. Of course by considering slaves members of their masters' households, slaveowners managed to avoid the obvious fact that bondage entailed oppression. See Kenneth S. Greenberg, "Revolutionary Ideology and the Proslavery Argument: The Abolition of Slavery in Antebellum South Carolina," *Journal of Southern History*, XLII (August 1976), 365-84.

<sup>18</sup> J. B. O'Neill in J. B. D. DeBow, ed., *Industrial Resources of the South and West*, Vol. II (New Orleans, 1852), 278, quoted in Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*, 513.

<sup>19</sup> "The Peculiarities & Diseases of Negroes," *American Cotton Planter and Soil of the South*, n. s., IV (February through December 1860), quoted in Breeden, ed., *Advice Among Masters*, 59.

suppose. When any thing happened . . . so as to cause a stoppage we subordinates all looked at each other & grinned with delight, &c." Even when he chose to discipline his workers with physical force, Manigault stressed the similarities between such punishment and the floggings his son received from the schoolmaster "Mr. Cotes." Punishment played a role in education and by no means indicated that the recipient was inherently defective. Flogging a particular slave, according to Charles Manigault, did not "take from her value, but only puts you on your guard respecting her, while her good qualities render that a trifle. I did not think it necessary to disclose it to anyone when you used to get so flogged by Mr. Cotes as to leave the black & white marks on your arms & back for some time afterwards."<sup>20</sup> When they "misbehaved," the Manigault slaves were still considered part of the household; when they were whipped, Charles Manigault still associated them with his own son.

Although the Manigaults recognized their slaves' humanity and deemed them members of the household, the owners of Gowrie never assumed that their slaves would work faithfully and efficiently without supervision. As Charles Manigault observed in 1844, his slaves were "cunning enough" to avoid work whenever possible.<sup>21</sup> "Oh! these Negroes," he would later complain to his son, "when they get out of sight of white control."<sup>22</sup> But, in the Manigaults' opinion, careful management and vigilant protection from the corrupting influence of the outside world would offset the slaves' tendency toward laziness and result in an efficient and happy work force. Like many paternalist masters, the Manigaults sought to isolate their plantation—a measure that would both increase their control over their own household and protect their slaves from outside corruption.<sup>23</sup> "My very quiet & orderly crowd of servants," noted Charles Manigault in 1860, "cannot be trusted with any innovation, strange or unused to them, in their

<sup>20</sup> Charles Manigault to Louis Manigault, October 18, 1856, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 230; and Charles Manigault to Louis Manigault, January 26, 1860, *ibid.*, 292.

<sup>21</sup> Plantation Journal of Charles Manigault, [May 5], 1844, *ibid.*, 8.

<sup>22</sup> Charles Manigault to Louis Manigault, February 20, 1853, *ibid.*, 138.

<sup>23</sup> Traveling through the southern states in 1853, Frederick Law Olmsted observed that most slaveholders discouraged "intercourse" between their own slaves and "those of other plantations." Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States . . .* (New York and other cities, 1963), 448. For a specific example of a planter seeking to isolate his property and thereby intensify his own control over his slaves, see Faust, *James Henry Hammond and the Old South*, Chap. 5; also see Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 44; and Mart A. Stewart, "Rice, Water, and Power: Landscapes of Domination and Resistance in the Lowcountry, 1790–1880," *Environmental History Review*, XV (Fall 1991), 57. For contemporary examples of planters stressing the benefits of an isolated plantation, see R. King, Jr., "On the Management of the Butler Estate . . ." *Southern Agriculturist*, I (December 1828), 233–34, in Breeden, ed., *Advice Among Masters*, 246; and "On the Management of Slaves," *Southern Agriculturist*, VI (June 1833), 281–87, in Breeden, ed., *Advice Among Masters*, 240. For a discussion of the ways in which a fear "of being infiltrated, of being secretly penetrated, seized and overthrown at one's most vulnerable point" entered the master class ideology, see David Brion Davis, *The Slave Power Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style* (Baton Rouge, 1969), 35.

monotonous hum drum routine."<sup>24</sup> Likewise, Charles Manigault informed his overseer in 1848, "I allow no strange Negro to take a wife on my place, & none of [my slaves] to keep a boat," which would have afforded them access to other slave communities.<sup>25</sup> Fearing that even his white overseer could be corrupted by the outside world, Charles instructed Louis to "think twice" before sending the man to Savannah. In order to maximize the attention given to their own affairs, the Manigaults attempted to keep both overseer and slaves "ignorant" of the nearby city.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, Gowrie was to be isolated even when contact with the outside world might have helped the Manigaults control their slaves. For example, Louis Manigault refused to acknowledge the local slave patrol's jurisdiction over the Savannah River estate. Although "true it is that Law & Order should ever reign paramount," he testily informed his neighbor, "still the Master when on his place is the one to examine into his property . . . & I Can not allow any new regulations on this place."<sup>27</sup> Insulated within the plantation, the slaves were to be influenced only by their masters' benevolent intentions.<sup>28</sup>

Just like slaveowners all across the South, the Manigaults clearly conceived of themselves as paternalists and acknowledged their duty to treat their slaves in a humane fashion. Yet, simply by virtue of being lowcountry rice planters, they experienced a physical reality that differed greatly from the average southern plantation. Geographically, the crop could be successfully cultivated for profit only on a thin strip of land running down the coast of South Carolina and Georgia.<sup>29</sup> This was the lowcountry, a swampy

<sup>24</sup> Charles Manigault to Louis Manigault, March 16, 1860, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 293. For a disdainful reference by Charles Manigault to "aliens to our climate, & to our society," see Charles Manigault to Alfred Huger, April 1, 1847, *ibid.*, 53.

<sup>25</sup> Charles Manigault to Jesse T. Cooper, January 10, 1848, *ibid.*, 62.

<sup>26</sup> Charles Manigault to Louis Manigault, February 21, 1856, *ibid.*, 210. Seeking to place his slave with another master for the summer, Louis Manigault purposefully chose one who lived away from the corrupting influence of the city: "You too reside in the country & for that reason we know she will not make acquaintances &c, in town. . . . I would never . . . for a moment allow her to remain at all in Savannah." See Louis Manigault to Thomas M. Newell, March 22, 1860, Louis Manigault Papers (Manuscript Department, William R. Perkins Library, Duke University [DU], Durham, N. C.).

<sup>27</sup> Louis Manigault to C. W. Jones, December 17, 1855, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 202. For a description of the slave patrols, see Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 617-19; and Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South since Emancipation* (New York and Oxford, 1984), 18-19. Other prominent planters likewise refused to participate in the local slave patrols. See Ralph Bett Flanders, *Plantation Slavery in Georgia* (Chapel Hill, 1933), 277.

<sup>28</sup> There is evidence to suggest that the lowcountry planters were at least partially successful in isolating their slaves. By the nineteenth century the Gullah dialects of the sea island slaves varied by location, suggesting that the masters had effectively sealed their plantations off from outside linguistic influences. See Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 Through the Stono Rebellion* (New York, 1974), 190.

<sup>29</sup> By the mid-eighteenth century rice growers had begun to take advantage of tidewater planting, in which the flow of water from coastal rivers was controlled by an elaborate system of floodgates. The process could work, however, only on land that was close enough to the ocean for

environment particularly conducive to disease.<sup>30</sup> Here, the specific labor demands of rice-planting heightened the slaves' risk of becoming ill. Standing knee-deep in the periodically flooded fields, lowcountry rice slaves were directly exposed to a host of water-borne infections.<sup>31</sup> The high population density of the rice plantations made the problem more severe. Whereas cotton planters in the mid-nineteenth century owned an average of twenty-four slaves, rice planters employed an average of two hundred and twenty-six.<sup>32</sup> Once contracted, disease could easily pass through the entire plantation population.<sup>33</sup> Because of the crowded and wet environment, slaves toiling on rice plantations experienced far greater mortality than did their counterparts on cotton fields across the South.<sup>34</sup>

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the tidal forces to operate but far enough from the coast to avoid contaminating the crop with salt water. See Mart Allen Stewart, "Land Use and Landscapes: Environment and Social Change in Coastal Georgia, 1680-1880" (Ph. D. dissertation, Emory University, 1988), 235-46; Lewis Cecil Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860* (2 vols.; Washington, D. C., 1933), II, 721-23; Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*, 88; and Joyce E. Chaplin, "Tidal Rice Cultivation and the Problem of Slavery in South Carolina and Georgia, 1760-1815," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., XLIX (January 1992), 29-61. Georgia and South Carolina accounted for 95 percent of the South's antebellum rice production. See Henry C. Dethloff, *A History of the American Rice Industry, 1685-1985* (College Station, Texas, 1988), 46.

<sup>30</sup> Low summer water levels resulted in pools of standing water, the perfect breeding ground for amoebic parasites and disease-carrying mosquitoes. See Stewart, "Land Use and Landscapes," 134. As Kenneth Kiple and Virginia King observed in their study of cholera among southern blacks, those living along the rivers were hardest hit by disease. Kenneth F. Kiple and Virginia H. King, *Another Dimension to the Black Diaspora: Diet, Disease, and Racism* (Cambridge, Eng., and other cities, 1981), 152-54.

<sup>31</sup> See Leslie Howard Owens, *This Species of Property: Slave Life and Culture in the Old South* (New York, 1976), 21; and Kiple and King, *Another Dimension to the Black Diaspora*, 156.

<sup>32</sup> Smith, *Slavery and Rice Culture*, 9. Smith calculated these numbers using the 1850 census returns. The intensive labor demands of the rice crop necessitated larger work forces. In keeping with economy of scale, the largest rice plantations were the most profitable. See Dale Evans Swan, *The Structure and Profitability of the Antebellum Rice Industry: 1859* (New York, 1975), 104-12; and Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*, 89.

<sup>33</sup> In her study of South Carolina rice plantations owned by the Ball family, Cheryl Ann Cody asserted that population density might have been a key variable in slave mortality. See Cody, "Slave Demography and Family Formation: A Community Study of the Ball Family Plantations, 1720-1896" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1982), 221. In his examination of Jamaican slave mortality, Barry W. Higman also pointed to a correlation between mortality and the size of the slave community. See Higman, *Slave Population and Economy in Jamaica, 1807-1834* (Cambridge, Eng., and other cities, 1976), 127-28. Also see Richard H. Steckel, "A Dreadful Childhood: The Excess Mortality of American Slaves" in Kenneth F. Kiple, ed., *The African Exchange: Toward a Biological History of Black People* (Durham, N. C., and London, 1987), 200-201; and Steckel, "Slave Mortality: Analysis of Evidence from Plantation Records," *Social Science History*, III (Nos. 3 and 4, 1979), 91-92. Steckel also maintained that slave fertility decreased on the more densely populated plantations. Steckel, *The Economics of U. S. Slave and Southern White Fertility* (New York and London, 1985), 17.

<sup>34</sup> For the higher rate of mortality on rice plantations, see Robert William Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery* (New York and London, 1989), 127; Steckel, "Slave Mortality," 106; and Flanders, *Plantation Slavery in Georgia*, 170-71. Some recent scholars of slavery in the lowcountry, however, have presented a less bleak demographic portrait of the regional slave population. Downplaying the rigors of life in the coastal swamp, Julia Floyd Smith detected no obvious tension between the masters' paternalism and the lowcountry reality. See Smith, *Slavery and Rice Culture*, 140: "The familiar claim that nutritional deficiencies,



Slaves at Gowrie died in appallingly high numbers.<sup>35</sup> The Manigaults' paternalism could not protect their population of workers from the specters of yellow fever, dysentery, pneumonia, and cholera.<sup>36</sup> During the Manigaults' antebellum tenure as owners of Gowrie, the plantation's

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poor housing facilities, unsanitary living conditions . . . and strenuous work assignments adversely affected the physical health of slaves cannot be substantiated for slaves in the low country, where the system was economically rational and efficient, and where the environment and an elitist type of owner had a positive effect upon the slave's way of life." Charles Joyner acknowledged "the relatively short life span of rice plantation slaves" in All Saints Parish, South Carolina, but also asserted that these slaves experienced a "demographic pattern of a steady natural increase." See *Down by the Riverside*, 105. Using the limited evidence available for the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Philip D. Morgan made a valiant effort to uncover lowcountry demographic patterns. See "Black Society in the Lowcountry, 1760-1810," in Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman, eds., *Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution* (Charlottesville, 1983), 85-93. Nevertheless, his assertion that demographic conditions throughout the state were generally improving by the early 1750s should be viewed with suspicion because of circular reasoning. Figures for slave importation used by Morgan to estimate the slave population's annual rate of natural increase (Table 4, p. 89) were themselves calculated from an assumed rate of natural increase (Table 3, p. 87). H. Roy Merrens and George D. Terry, on the other hand, found that South Carolinians' lifespans were indeed increasing during this period, but they attributed greater longevity to an increasing awareness and avoidance of the dangerous environment of the coastal swamplands. Consult Merrens and Terry, "Dying in Paradise: Malaria, Mortality, and the Perceptual Environment in Colonial South Carolina," *Journal of Southern History*, L (November 1984), 546-47. Also see Wood, *Black Majority*, 151-65; Peter A. Coclanis, *The Shadow of a Dream: Economic Life and Death in the South Carolina Low Country, 1670-1920* (New York and Oxford, 1989), 38-47; John E. Crowley, "The Importance of Kinship: Testamentary Evidence from South Carolina," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XVI (Spring 1986), 567; and Creel, *Peculiar People*, 118: "Repression, severity, high mortality, and overwork was the fate of slaves inhabiting the rice and indigo regions in the last half of the [eighteenth] century."

<sup>35</sup> I computed mortality and fertility rates from reconstructed biographical data on 337 Manigault slaves. The data was drawn from correspondence and slave lists produced by the Manigaults between 1833 and 1867. See Gowrie slave lists dated January 1 and November 14, 1833, September and October 1834, January 1, 1835, January 7, March, April 23, and December 1 and 10, 1837, November 18, 1838, February and November 17, 1839, December 2, 1840, December 9, 1841, December 7, 1842, December 10, 1843, December 1, 1844, December 7, 1845, April 7, 1849, January 1, 1850, April 27, 1851, April 18, 1852, April 15, 1853, April 23, 1854, April 22, 1855, April 30, 1856, April 30, 1857, April 18, 1858, April 24, 1859, April 22, 1860, and April 21, 1861, all in the Manigault Papers (Southern Historical Collection [SHC], University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, N. C.). Also see slave lists dated December 1844, December 22, 1844, December 3, 1848, and April 1849, Louis Manigault Papers (DU). Sometimes incomplete transcriptions of many of these lists are available in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 3-8, 20-21, 31-32, 64-68, 77-78, 95-96, 128-29, 151-53, 183-86, 193-94, 220-21, 248-50, 265-66, 288-89, 295-97, 317-19, and 323-324. Because slaves were repeatedly listed in household groups, I was able to distinguish between slaves with the same name. *Ninety-nine percent of the slave deaths used in my demographic calculations were confirmed by the Manigaults*, who either scratched the names of the deceased off the lists or explicitly referred to the deaths in correspondence.

<sup>36</sup> Scholars continue to debate whether the genesis of paternalism resulted in a higher rate of increase for slave populations. Some historians have argued that as the slaveowners changed their attitudes about their bondservants, the slave populations experienced a higher rate of natural increase. See J. Harry Bennett, Jr., "The Problem of Slave Labor Supply at the Codrington Plantations," *Journal of Negro History*, XXXVII (April 1952), 137. Daniel C. Littlefield cited paternalism as a factor in the increasing rate of natural reproduction for slave populations. See "Plantations, Paternalism, and Profitability: Factors Affecting African Demography in the Old British Empire," *Journal of Southern History*, XLVII (May 1981), 167-82; and Littlefield, *Rice*

average crude mortality rate of 97.6 per 1,000 was two-and-one-half times greater than the average annual fertility rate of 37.4 per 1,000; it was also three times greater than the crude mortality rate for North American slaves in the nineteenth century (see the table and Figure 1).<sup>37</sup> When cholera decimated two-fifths of the Gowrie slave population in 1834, the plantation's mortality rate approached the level experienced in Europe during the Black Death of the mid-fourteenth century.<sup>38</sup> For a slave like Amey Savage, conditions at Gowrie meant that none of her four children would live through adolescence. For a family of slaves obtained from the Ball plantation in 1854, the Savannah River estate was a death sentence: all six of the newcomers died within a year of their arrival. Old George and his thirteen relatives fared no better. The Manigaults acquired them in 1858 but, as Louis Manigault noted, "Cholera took nearly all off!"<sup>39</sup>

In the face of such mortality, the crude fertility rate for the Manigault slave population remained surprisingly high. New children were born at

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*and Slaves*, 62-72. Likewise, see William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion*, Volume I: *Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854* (New York and Oxford, 1990), 60. Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese arrived at a similar conclusion. They observed that the masters' disregard for the suffering of their slaves led to extremely high mortality along the South Carolina coast; however, Genovese and Fox-Genovese implied that as the lowcountry masters developed a paternalist conception of their slaves, mortality was eventually reduced until it matched levels in Virginia. See *Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism* (New York and Oxford, 1983), 55-56. On the other hand, a number of scholars have convincingly argued that planters' attitudes were not a key variable in the slaves' rate of increase. See Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York, 1976), 310; Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract*, 123-29; 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," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., XXXV (April 1978), 357-74; and Kenneth F. Kiple and Virginia H. Kiple, "Slave Child Mortality: Some Nutritional Answers to a Perennial Puzzle," *Journal of Social History*, X (March 1977), 309n11.

<sup>37</sup> James M. Clifton observed, in passing, that deaths outnumbered births at Gowrie. See *Life and Labor*, xxxiv. Also see Edmund L. Drago's review of *Life and Labor*, in the *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, LXXXII (October 1981), 368. For the crude death rate of North American slaves during the nineteenth century, see Jack Ericson Eblen, "New Estimates of the Vital Rates of the United States Black Population During the Nineteenth Century," *Demography*, XI (May 1974), 301-19. Mortality at Gowrie surpassed even the rate experienced in Jamaica, an island known for its particularly grim demographics. See Higman, *Slave Population and Economy in Jamaica*, 108-9.

<sup>38</sup> See Philip Ziegler, *The Black Death* (New York, 1969), Chap. 14; Graham Twigg, *The Black Death: A Biological Reappraisal* (London, 1984), 63; Robert S. Gottfried, *The Black Death: Natural and Human Disaster in Medieval Europe* (New York and London, 1983), 35-76. But even if we disregard the crisis-level mortality experienced during the years in which the plantation was ravaged by epidemics, Gowrie's annual crude mortality rate still averaged 65.5 deaths per 1,000—more than twice the annual crude mortality rate of slaves across the South.

<sup>39</sup> Information about the births and deaths of Amey Savage's children was drawn from the reconstructed biographical information on the Manigault slaves. See note 35 above. For the demise of the Balls and Old George's family, see the Gowrie slave list, April 23, 1854, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 185.

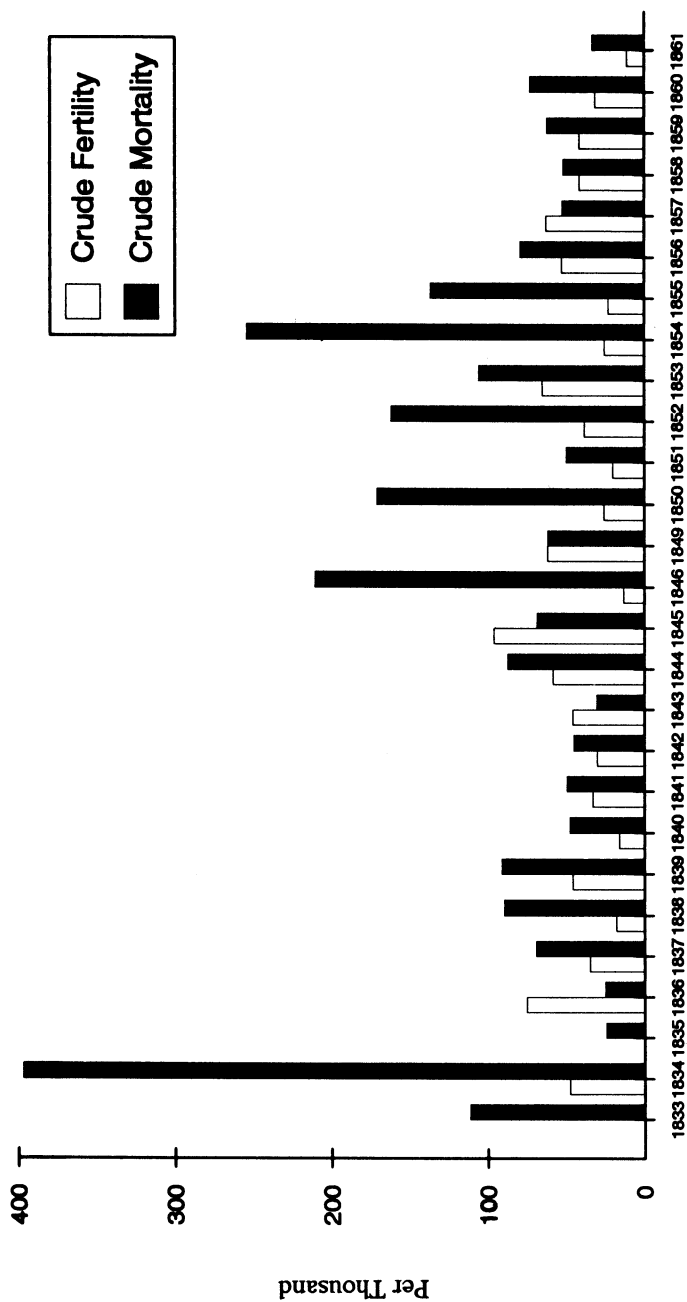
ANNUAL CRUDE MORTALITY AND FERTILITY RATES  
 AMONG THE SLAVE POPULATION ON GOWRIE PLANTATION, 1833-1861

<i>Date</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Births</i>	<i>Deaths</i>	<i>Fertility (births per 1,000)</i>	<i>Mortality (deaths per 1,000)</i>
1833	72	0	8	0.0	111.1
1834	63	3	25	47.6	396.8
1835	41	0	1	0.0	24.4
1836	40	3	1	75.0	25.0
1837	58	2	4	34.5	69.0
1838	56	1	5	17.9	89.3
1839	66	3	6	45.5	90.9
1840	63	1	3	15.9	47.6
1841	61	2	3	32.8	49.2
1842	67	2	3	29.9	44.8
1843	66	3	2	45.5	30.3
1844	69	4	6	58.0	87.0
1845	73	7	5	95.9	68.5
1846	76	1	16	13.2	210.5
1849	114	7	7	61.4	61.4
1850	117	3	20	25.6	170.9
1851	101	2	5	19.8	49.5
1852	105	4	17	38.1	161.9
1853	123	8	13	65.0	105.7
1854	118	3	30	25.4	254.2
1855	88	2	12	22.7	136.4
1856	76	4	6	52.6	78.9
1857	96	6	5	62.5	52.1
1858	97	4	5	41.2	51.5
1859	97	4	6	41.2	61.9
1860	96	3	7	31.3	72.9
1861	91	1	3	11.0	33.0
<b>Average</b>	<b>81</b>			<b>37.4</b>	<b>97.6</b>

SOURCE: See note 35.

NOTE: There is a break in the data between 1846 and 1849.

**FIGURE 1**  
**ANNUAL CRUDE MORTALITY AND FERTILITY RATES**  
**AMONG THE SLAVE POPULATION ON GOWRIE PLANTATION, 1833-1861**



Source: See note 35.

Note: There is a break in the data between 1846 and 1849.

Gowrie in numbers typical for a noncontraceptive society.<sup>40</sup> The Gowrie slave population was composed of roughly the same number of women and men, an important precondition for a naturally increasing society.<sup>41</sup> And even in the midst of the plantation's high mortality, the slaves formed household relationships conducive to large numbers of children. Nevertheless, had Charles Manigault not periodically augmented the Gowrie population with new purchases and with slaves transferred from his upcountry property, his plantation would have lacked workers. The number of slaves at Gowrie remained approximately the same year after year, despite the Manigaults' purchase of sixteen slaves in 1839, sixty in 1849, and twenty-one more in 1857 (see Figure 2).<sup>42</sup> By projecting annual population figures for Gowrie slaves as if they were a closed population—in other words, by excluding from yearly totals the slaves brought to Gowrie after 1833 and their offspring—one can see the natural decrease of Gowrie's inhabitants. By 1849 only twenty-nine of the original seventy-two slaves (and their offspring) remained alive. By 1861 the number had fallen to twelve (see Figure 3).<sup>43</sup>

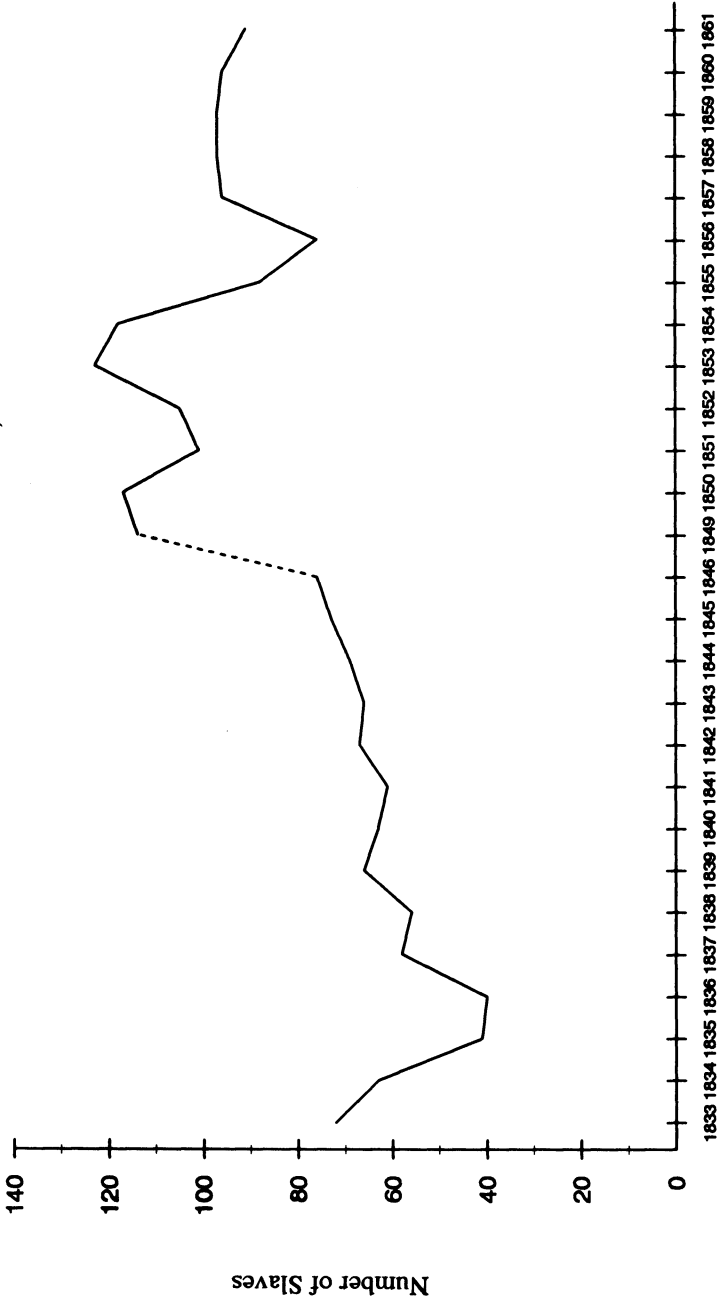
<sup>40</sup>For example, my calculated figure for the average crude fertility at Gowrie, 37.4 per 1,000, fits within the range established for England's population from the mid-sixteenth to the early nineteenth century. See E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541–1871: A Reconstruction* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), 531–35. My numbers for Gowrie are actually somewhat lower than the estimated (and strikingly high) 55 per 1,000 for the entire U. S. slave population in 1830. But because the Gowrie slave lists were normally updated once a year, they almost certainly did not reflect the births and deaths of many slave babies who died before their first birthday. Factoring in a conservative estimate for infant slave mortality on antebellum rice plantations (300 per 1,000), the crude fertility rate at Gowrie approaches 46 per 1,000, a figure closer to the southern average. For discussion of slave infant mortality, see Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (Boston, 1974), 123–24; Richard Sutch, "The Care and Feeding of Slaves," in Paul A. David *et al.*, *Reckoning With Slavery: A Critical Study in the Quantitative History of American Negro Slavery* (New York, 1976), 283–89; Michael P. Johnson, "Smothered Slave Infants: Were Slave Mothers at Fault?" *Journal of Southern History*, XLVII (November 1981), 515; Richard H. Steckel, "A Peculiar Population: The Nutrition, Health, and Mortality of American Slaves from Childhood to Maturity," *Journal of Economic History*, XLVI (September 1986), 733; Steckel, "Slave Mortality," 92; Steckel, "A Dreadful Childhood"; Steckel, "Birth Weights and Infant Mortality among American Slaves," *Explorations in Economic History*, XXIII (April 1986), 193; and John Campbell, "Work, Pregnancy, and Infant Mortality among Southern Slaves," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XIV (Spring 1984), 795–96.

<sup>41</sup>In 1833 men composed 47 percent of the Gowrie slave population; in 1849, 52 percent; and in 1855, 47 percent. See slave lists for those years in the Manigault Family Papers (SHC); and the Louis Manigault Papers (DU). For the link between gender balance and the rate of natural increase in slave populations, see Russell R. Menard, "The Maryland Slave Population, 1658 to 1730: A Demographic Profile of Blacks in Four Counties," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., XXXII (January 1975), 40; and Michael Craton, "Hobbesian or Panglossian? The Two Extremes of Slave Conditions in the British Caribbean, 1783 to 1834," *ibid.*, XXXV (April 1978), 329.

<sup>42</sup>For the purchase of these new slaves for Gowrie, consult the slave lists dated February 1839 and April 30, 1857, Manigault Family Papers (SHC); and the list dated April 1849, Louis Manigault Papers (DU).

<sup>43</sup>My projections for the Gowrie slaves as a closed population were drawn from my demographic reconstruction. See note 35 above. For the U. S. slave population data, see U. S.

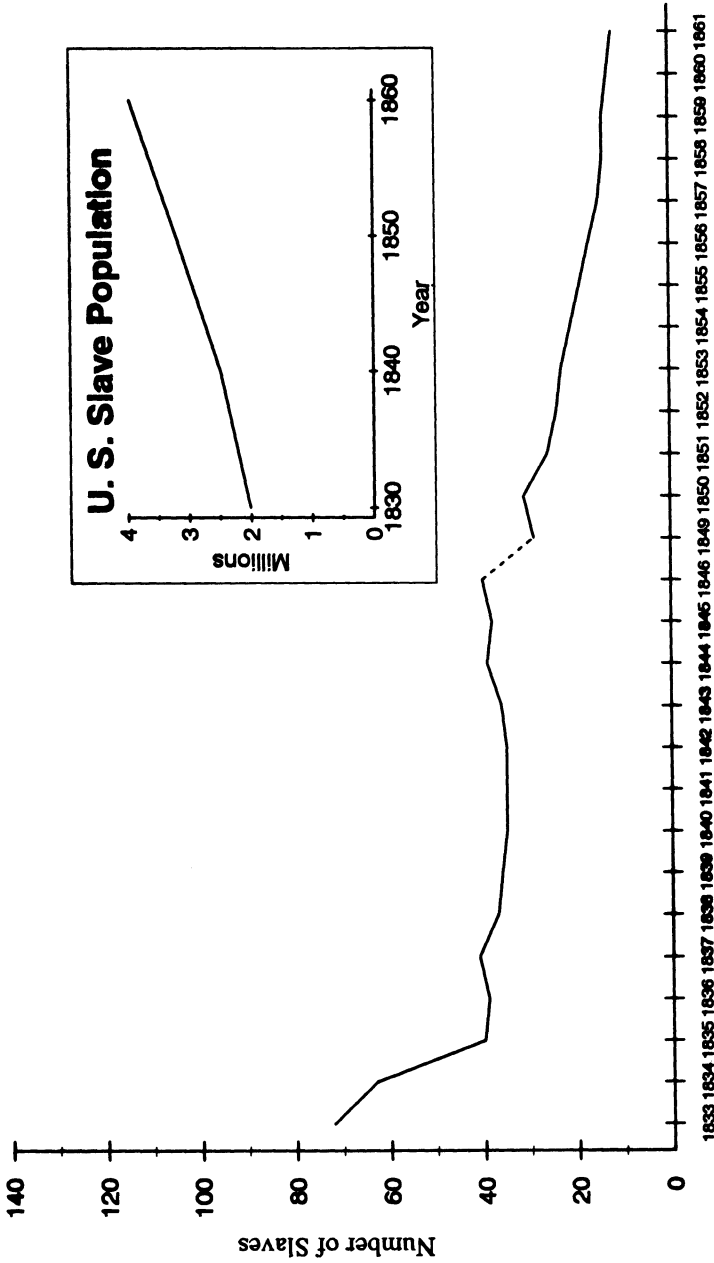
FIGURE 2  
SLAVE POPULATION ON GOWRIE PLANTATION, 1833-1861



Source: See note 35.

Note: Dotted line indicates a break in the data.

FIGURE 3  
 SLAVE POPULATION ON GOWRIE PLANTATION, 1833-1861  
 (EXCLUDING SLAVES BROUGHT ON TO THE PLANTATION AFTER 1833  
 AND THEIR OFFSPRING)



SOURCE: See note 43.  
 NOTE: Dotted line indicates a break in the data.

Neighboring rice plantations fared no better. In 1834 Savannah River planter John Berkley Grimball stated that “on one plantation *half the workers have died*—on another 40—on another 14—on another 12.”<sup>44</sup> Ten years later, Charles Manigault noted that the slave population on a nearby estate had “died off,” decreasing from “95 Negroes . . . [to] only 65” in six years. In 1849 the Manigaults’ overseer reported that “out of the large number of persons of the [neighboring] Beech Hill & Moorland plantations attacked with Cholera, but one person I am told (& from a reliable source) was saved.”<sup>45</sup> According to Langdon Cheves, the lowcountry was “dotted by like misfortunes.” Having “placed on [his] Rice Plantation upwards of 330 negroes & . . . having never sold one,” Cheves asserted that “only 230” slaves remained alive.<sup>46</sup>

Such rampant mortality contrasted greatly with the wider North American demographic trend toward a rapidly increasing African-American population. The United States, as Philip D. Curtin has suggested, received only about 5 percent of the approximately 10 million slaves shipped directly from Africa. Yet by 1825, 36 percent of all slaves in the western hemisphere resided on North American soil.<sup>47</sup> Thus, relative to Latin America and the Caribbean, the southern slave population expanded at an astronomical rate. Small wonder, then, that some southern planters believed their slaves “increase[d] like rabbits.”<sup>48</sup> Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman have found that the average southern slave could expect to live thirty-six years from date of birth—a figure that compared favorably with the life expectancy of whites living in contemporary France and Holland.<sup>49</sup> Considered within this context of a relatively healthy North

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Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Negro Population in the United States, 1790–1915* (New York, 1968), 53.

<sup>44</sup> John Berkley Grimball Diary, September 18, 1834, series 2, folder 18, Grimball Papers (typewritten transcripts, SHC).

<sup>45</sup> First quotation from Plantation Journal of Charles Manigault, [December 5], 1844, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 11; and second quotation from Jesse T. Cooper to Charles Manigault, July 24, 1849, *ibid.*, 68.

<sup>46</sup> Langdon Cheves to T. P. Huger, December 30, 1846, Langdon Cheves Papers (typewritten transcripts in the Georgia Historical Society [GHS], Savannah). For other contemporary references to rampant lowcountry mortality, see the Rev. C. C. Jones to Charles C. Jones, Jr., June 7, 1854, in Robert Manson Myers, ed., *The Children of Pride: A True Story of Georgia and the Civil War* (New Haven and London, 1972), 39; Jesse T. Cooper to Charles Manigault, July 30, 1849, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 69; Jesse T. Cooper to Charles Manigault, August 24, 1849, *ibid.*, 72–73; and Charles Manigault to Louis Manigault, January 29, 1857, *ibid.*, 244.

<sup>47</sup> Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison, Milwaukee, and London, 1969), 88–89. Also see Curtin, “Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade,” in Stanley L. Engerman and Eugene D. Genovese, eds., *Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere: Quantitative Studies* (Princeton, 1975), 107–28; and James A. Rawley, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A History* (New York and London, 1981).

<sup>48</sup> John B. Lamar to Howell Cobb, May 16, 1847, in Ulrich B. Phillips *et al.*, eds., *A Documentary History of American Industrial Society*, Vol. I (Cleveland, 1910), 179.

<sup>49</sup> Fogel and Engerman, *Time on the Cross*, 125. Demographers and historians continue to



American slave population, the mortality experienced by lowcountry slaves becomes even more dramatic and disturbing. The Manigault slaves could expect to live only nineteen years from their date of birth—seventeen years less than their counterparts across the entire South.<sup>50</sup>

The Manigaults certainly should have realized the risks to which they were subjecting their slaves. Since the colonial era, planters had acknowledged the dangers of the lowcountry. Devastated by disease, early settlers in Georgia quickly discerned the perils of their new environment.<sup>51</sup> By the mid-1700s wealthy tidewater landowners in South Carolina had learned to avoid their plantations in the summer, when sickness was especially prevalent.<sup>52</sup> Planters along the South Carolina and Georgia tidewater continued their pattern of absentee ownership in the nineteenth century. Perceiving that his own coastal property put its occupants at tremendous risk for disease, a Charleston rice planter remarked, "I would as soon stand fifty feet from the best Kentucky rifleman and be shot at by the hour, as to spend a night on my plantation in summer . . ." <sup>53</sup> Before purchasing property in the Savannah lowcountry, Langdon Cheves was warned that "the mortality on the river is . . . a sad drawback to the otherwise certain profit of our fine

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debate the accuracy of this statistic. Fogel and Engerman based their number on the findings of Robert Evans, Jr., "The Economics of American Negro Slavery, 1830-1860," in *Aspects of Labor Economics: A Conference of the Universities-National Bureau Committee for Economic Research* (Princeton, 1962), 185-243. Similar estimates for slave life expectancy at birth were made by Charles S. Sydnor, "Life Span of Mississippi Slaves," *American Historical Review*, XXXV (April 1930), 566-74; Alfred H. Conrad and John R. Meyer, "The Economics of Slavery in the Ante Bellum South," *Journal of Political Economy*, LXVI (April 1958), 95-130; and Edward Meeker, "Mortality Trends of Southern Blacks, 1850-1910: Some Preliminary Findings," *Explorations in Economic History*, XIII (January 1976), 19-23. Maris A. Vinovskis asserted, however, that Evans's findings relied on the work of Paul H. Jacobsen, who overestimated slave lifespans by relying on census data that failed to reflect the full extent of mortality. See Jacobsen, "An Estimate of the Expectation of Life in the United States in 1850," *Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly*, XXXV (April 1957), 197-201. For Vinovskis's criticism and his general review of these studies, see "The Demography of the Slave Population in Antebellum America," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, III (Winter 1975), 459-67. Also see Sutch, "Care and Feeding of Slaves," 283-84. Their work along with the work done on slave infant mortality (see note 40 above) indicates that the slaves' health was decidedly worse, in many respects, than the health of whites all across the world. Yet we should not forget that in comparison to slave populations throughout the hemisphere and throughout history, most southern slaves were remarkably healthy.

<sup>50</sup> Before calculating the life expectancy from birth for the Gowrie slaves, I increased the cohort of lifespans lasting less than one year until crude infant mortality of approximately 300 per 1,000 was reflected. I did this to compensate for the infant deaths that surely were not reflected in the annually updated Gowrie slave lists (see note 40 above). According to Cheryl Ann Cody, life expectancy from birth for slaves on the Ball rice plantations in St. John's Berkeley parish, South Carolina, was similar—19.8 years for men and 20.5 years for women. Consult "Slave Demography and Family Formation," 239.

<sup>51</sup> Stewart, "Land Use and Landscapes," 133-36; and Merrens and Terry, "Dying in Paradise," 533-50.

<sup>52</sup> Wood, *Black Majority*, 73.

<sup>53</sup> "Mr. X" quoted in Olmsted, *Journey in the Seaboard Slave States*, 419.

and fertile lands."<sup>54</sup> Charleston itself endured its share of disease, earning the epithet "city of disasters." But for the tidewater plantation owners, Charleston proved to be a veritable haven.<sup>55</sup>

Time and time again, both the region's inhabitants and its visitors commented on the poor health of slaves in the lowcountry. One Georgia planter observed that it was common knowledge that "Negroes [i]ncrease on a cotton estate, seldom on a rice estate."<sup>56</sup> Traveling through the lowcountry in 1845, Sir Charles Lyell wrote that "the negroes . . . in the interior, are healthier than those in rice plantations, and multiply faster . . ."<sup>57</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted noted, as he visited the Carolina coast in 1853, that "the negroes do not enjoy as good health on rice plantations as elsewhere; and the greater difficulty with which their lives are preserved, through infancy especially, shows that the subtle poison of the miasma is not innocuous to them . . ."<sup>58</sup>

Charles Manigault also received regular reports about the suffering on his plantation. K. Washington Skinner, the overseer at Gowrie, notified his employers in 1852 that he had "a good supply of disease and pain among the negroes as usual."<sup>59</sup> A year and a half earlier, Skinner had written that "the woman Jane is yet sick. I fear she will never get well. Hector turned in the Sick House . . . I have never had such a desperate case of Diarrhea [*sic*]. . . Cudjue died very suddenly [*sic*] on Tuesday . . . He lay up one day & died the same night."<sup>60</sup> A few months later, in July 1851, the overseer reported that "the health of the people is not good. I have had a good many cases of fever . . . as well as some of [the] other complaints. On Monday last Cotta and Sarey received a stroke of the sun . . . many of the other negroes staggered about considerably . . . The children keep unusually healthy—but I fear they will be sick in the Autumn, and many of them sick unto death."<sup>61</sup> In 1855 the overseer, Stephen F. Clark, told Louis Manigault that "the woman Ph[i]llis who cooked for me is dead . . . Mingo's Phillis is dead too. I have lost Charle's Child Ralph and one of Die's Twins and now have

<sup>54</sup> James Hamilton, Jr., to Cheves, April 14, 1830, quoted in Huff, *Langdon Cheves of South Carolina*, 171-72.

<sup>55</sup> For Charleston's problems with recurrent epidemics and fires, see Walter J. Fraser, Jr., *Charleston! Charleston!: The History of a Southern City* (Columbia, 1989), 189-217 (quotation on p. 217); also see David R. Goldfield, "The Business of Health Planning: Disease Prevention in the Old South," *Journal of Southern History*, XLII (November 1976), 557-59.

<sup>56</sup> Pierce Butler quoted in Stewart, "Land Use and Landscapes," 326.

<sup>57</sup> Sir Charles Lyell, *A Second Visit to the United States*, Vol. I (New York, 1849), 249.

<sup>58</sup> Olmsted, *Journey to the Seaboard Slave States*, 418. Also see 411-12.

<sup>59</sup> K. Washington Skinner to Charles Manigault, October 13, 1852, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 123.

<sup>60</sup> K. Washington Skinner to Charles Manigault, May 30, 1851, *ibid.*, 80.

<sup>61</sup> K. Washington Skinner to Charles Manigault, July 12, 1851, *ibid.*, 83.

2 very sick at the pine Land . . . .”<sup>62</sup>

In addition, the slaves themselves sent the Manigaults a clear message about Gowrie’s dangers. In March 1854 Charles Manigault informed his son that five newly purchased slaves “r[a]n away from Silk Hope” because “they were afraid of going to Savannah River.”<sup>63</sup> And Louis Manigault could not help but notice “Able, who has lost nearly all his family, and who himself has been very sick . . . . rolling on the ground almost like a Crazy person & Calling his Father & Mother . . . .”<sup>64</sup>

Despite such powerful and abundant evidence, the Manigaults never acknowledged that they were killing their slaves by forcing them to labor in the swamp. Like many other nineteenth-century Americans, both northern and southern, the owners of Gowrie believed that victims of disease were somehow responsible for their own illness—that the morally and physically irresponsible brought sickness upon themselves.<sup>65</sup> Certain that such dangerous behavior was alien to their own communities, the tidewater planters learned to blame outsiders for disease. In 1856, for example, Charles Manigault asserted that the yellow fever in Charleston was “still confined to strangers, or nearly so, & to those amongst them of bad habits, &c. We in our family do not think any thing of it, & hope with Confidence for the best.”<sup>66</sup> Prominent lowcountry physicians arrived at similar conclusions. In 1826 Savannah physician William Coffee Daniell attributed a yellow fever epidemic to an influx of Irish families, whose “crowded” households “greatly increased” the city’s “filth.”<sup>67</sup> Also writing from Savannah, Dr. Richard D. Arnold argued in 1837 that “the deaths that do occur are mostly among the Non-Residents, foreigners, who are victims of intemperance more than climate . . . .”<sup>68</sup>

Having reduced the pathological threat to a question of “habits,” the tidewater property owners convinced themselves that proper hygiene would prevent disease. In contrast to the dirty and unhealthy outsiders, lowcountry

<sup>62</sup> Stephen F. Clark to Louis Manigault, August 10, 1855, *ibid.*, 196.

<sup>63</sup> First quotation from Charles Manigault to Louis Manigault, March 3, 1854, *ibid.*, 175; and second quotation from Charles Manigault to Louis Manigault, March 6, 1854, *ibid.*, 177. The Manigault slaves were not the only slaves to resist being transferred to a rice plantation. In 1814 Langdon Cheves bought eleven slaves who “threatened to resist” when they learned that their destination was a rice plantation. See Huff, *Langdon Cheves of South Carolina*, 166.

<sup>64</sup> Louis Manigault to Charles Manigault, December 26, 1854, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 190–91.

<sup>65</sup> Charles E. Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (Chicago and London, 1962), 1–64.

<sup>66</sup> Charles Manigault to Louis Manigault, October 11, 1856, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 228.

<sup>67</sup> W. C. Daniell, *Observations upon the Autumnal Fevers of Savannah* (Savannah and New York, 1826), 23.

<sup>68</sup> Richard H. Shryock, ed., *Letters of Richard D. Arnold, M. D., 1808–1876 . . .* (Papers of the Trinity College Historical Society, Double Series XVIII–XIX, [Durham, N. C.], 1929), 14.

slaves were expected to adhere to their masters' standards of cleanliness.<sup>69</sup> A. R. Bagshaw, the Manigaults' overseer in 1844, sought to "add to the health" of the plantation by having "the negroe houses all white washed outside and in . . ."<sup>70</sup> Five years later, another Gowrie overseer assured his employers that he was "using every means in [his] power to ensure cleanliness & health."<sup>71</sup> Of course, mortality at Gowrie could always be blamed on the slaves' inability to internalize the principles of hygiene. Writing to his father in 1854, Louis Manigault explained that "we have had so much sickness" because "the Negroes . . . put all sorts of nasty things in the ditches & then dip up (I am Confident) the same water to drink."<sup>72</sup> By attributing poor health to the slaves' behavior, the Manigaults maintained their faith that disease could be eliminated from the lowcountry environment—a faith shared by doctors in nearby Savannah. "It will be obvious at once," wrote Daniell, "that there is not in the character of our soil, nor in our situation, any thing to preclude us from the enjoyment of health; and, that whatever causes of disease may exist, are within our own control."<sup>73</sup>

Although preventative measures involving hygiene afforded scant defense against sickness, slaveowners like the Manigaults remained undaunted. Armed with a variety of medical cures, they confronted plantation health problems with unbridled and unjustified optimism.<sup>74</sup> In 1854, for example, Louis Manigault told his father "not [to] feel uneasy" about pneumonia at Gowrie. Having already obtained a "recipe" for curing the disease, the

<sup>69</sup>For explicit contemporary reference to the importance of cleanliness in preventing disease, consult "Hygiene in Savannah," *Savannah Journal of Medicine*, I (January 1859), 354–59.

<sup>70</sup>A. R. Bagshaw to Charles Manigault, July 20, 1844, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 14. Perhaps it was no accident that the planters believed that "white" washing the slave quarters would make them clean. For further references to this process, see K. Washington Skinner to Charles Manigault, December 11, 1852, *ibid.*, 130; Louis Manigault to Charles Manigault, December 24, 1854, *ibid.*, 187; and D. J. McCord to Langdon Cheves, May 15, 1846, Langdon Cheves Papers.

<sup>71</sup>Jesse T. Cooper to Charles Manigault, August 24, 1849, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 72.

<sup>72</sup>Louis Manigault to Charles Manigault, December 26, 1854, *ibid.*, 191.

<sup>73</sup>Daniell, *Observations upon the Autumnal Fevers*, 20. However, unlike the Manigaults, Daniell did see a connection between the flooded rice fields and disease. *Ibid.*, 20–22.

<sup>74</sup>By the late antebellum period, planters could obtain "recipes" for cures from a variety of sources. For professional medical reference books, see Daniell, *Observations upon the Autumnal Fevers*; "A Medical Practitioner" (pseud.), *A Companion to the Medicine Chest; or, Plain Directions for the Employment of Various Medicines and Utensils Contained in It; and for the Treatment of Diseases* (London and Exton, 1802); and Thomas S. Powell, *A Pocket Formulary and Physician's Manual* . . . (Savannah, 1855). The Manigaults also made use of their own home remedies, which employed similar ingredients (and were equally ineffective) as most of those prescribed by doctors. See the recipe for "diarea &c. used on Sav[anna]h River," 1848, the Manigault Papers (microfiche, the South Caroliniana Library [SCL], University of South Carolina, Columbia); Stephen F. Clark to Louis Manigault, October 15, 1853, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 161. For an examination of slave health care in the lowcountry, see David O. Whitten, "Medical Care of Slaves: Louisiana Sugar Region and South Carolina Rice District," *Southern Studies*, XVI (Summer 1977), 153–80. Whitten, however, cited the Manigaults' experience at Gowrie as evidence that "rice planters did in fact provide sufficient medical care to compensate for insalubrious conditions" (p. 164). For more scholarship concerned with the question of health care for slaves, consult Todd L. Savitt and James Harvey Young, eds., *Disease and Distinctiveness*

younger Manigault confidently asserted that he was "bound to get [the slaves] well."<sup>75</sup> Ironically, those slaves suffering from the most dangerous afflictions reinforced rather than undermined their masters' paternalism. For when they confronted "serious" cases of disease, the Manigaults willingly incurred the expense of professional medical care—a financial sacrifice that enhanced their sense of moral superiority.<sup>76</sup> In this respect, the lowcountry epidemics enabled the planters to distance themselves from northern manufacturers, who, as Richard Arnold observed, could "easily fi[ll] the place of [a] dead operative" and therefore made no effort to protect their employees. Strangely enough, plantation disease allowed the tidewater masters to argue that only in slavery did "Interest & Humanity go hand in hand together."<sup>77</sup>

Filtering their perceptions about sickness through their own self-image of benevolence, the Manigaults never grappled with the harsh and obvious truth about Gowrie. Because of his paternalist outlook, Charles Manigault could credit his "own peculiar care & management" for the increase in his slave population during a period of abnormally low mortality.<sup>78</sup> But the slaveowner hardly commented and certainly never blamed himself when deaths outnumbered births (as they did in almost every year for which slave lists were kept). Louis, for his part, could discuss the slaves' fear of their lowcountry environment without consciously considering the fact that their anxiety was well founded. "I begin to think that it has a bad effect moving them [the slaves out of Gowrie to recuperate]," wrote the younger master. "It makes them think this is a very unhealthy place."<sup>79</sup> Even when composing a list of dead slaves in 1854, Louis Manigault looked to the future with hope. He could "begin now a new [plantation record] book trusting its pages w[ould] not be stained [with the names of the deceased] . . . for years at least to come."<sup>80</sup> Thus, as their own bondservants perished, the Manigaults continued to believe that African-American slaves were thriving under the benevolent guardianship of concerned lowcountry masters.

Clearly, there existed a tremendous disparity between the tidewater slaveholders' perceptions of their environment and the actual conditions on

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in *the American South* (Knoxville, 1988); and William Dosite Postell, *The Health of Slaves on Southern Plantations* (Baton Rouge, 1951).

<sup>75</sup> Two letters from Louis Manigault to Charles Manigault, both dated February 25, 1854, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 171–72.

<sup>76</sup> James Haynes to Charles Manigault, June 1, 1846, *ibid.*, 35.

<sup>77</sup> Arnold to Mr. McCall, August 29, 1849, in Shryock, ed., *Letters of Richard D. Arnold*, 33–34.

<sup>78</sup> Charles Manigault to Alfred Huger, April 1, 1847, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 52–53. In this letter Manigault claims that "the increase of my Negroes of late years by births exceeding Deaths . . . was last year 4 per cent." Because of a gap in the slave lists between 1845 and 1849, I was unable to verify the accuracy of Manigault's claim.

<sup>79</sup> Louis Manigault to Charles Manigault, April 19, 1853, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 155.

<sup>80</sup> Gowrie Slave List, April 23, 1854, *ibid.*, 184.

their estates. Troubled by this apparent contradiction, some historians have questioned whether these slaveowners considered themselves paternalists.<sup>81</sup> The Manigaults' experience, however, demonstrates that the paternalist ethos dictated the manner in which lowcountry masters made sense of both their surroundings and themselves. Like other rice planters, the Manigaults first internalized the ideology in Charleston, where the notion of noblesse oblige reigned supreme.<sup>82</sup>

In this urban environment, tidewater slaveowners were born and bred to play the role of gentleman-planter. For even as they extolled the virtues of pastoral life, lowcountry masters made their real home in Charleston.<sup>83</sup> In the summer, they came to avoid exposure to the risks of disease on their lowcountry estates. In the winter, they came for the concerts, the plays, and the horse races.<sup>84</sup> But as the planters watched the musicians, the actors, and the thoroughbreds, they took part in their own social drama. Though they fiercely resented any perceived intrusion of their cherished independence,

<sup>81</sup> See George M. Fredrickson, "Masters and Mudsills: The Role of Race in the Planter Ideology of South Carolina" in Fredrickson, *The Arrogance of Race: Historical Perspectives on Slavery, Racism, and Social Inequality* (Middletown, Conn., 1988), 15-27; Creel, *Peculiar People*, 120, 188, 243, and 393n64; Michael Mullin, ed., *American Negro Slavery: A Documentary History* (New York and other cities, 1976), 8-29; Freehling, *The Road to Disunion*, I, 229-30; Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York, 1956), 325; and Randall M. Miller, "The Golden Isles: Rice and Slaves Along the Georgia Coast," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, LXX (Spring 1986), 90-91.

<sup>82</sup> Historians continue to disagree about the circumstances in which planter paternalism originated. Eugene Genovese and Willie Lee Rose have depicted the paternalist ethos as essentially a nineteenth-century phenomenon. James Oakes, on the other hand, has suggested that the ideology flowered in the eighteenth century and declined thereafter. Consult *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York, 1982), 196. Without accepting Oakes's contention that paternalism was waning in the half century before the Civil War, several scholars have recently argued that the ethos had roots in the mid-eighteenth century. For efforts to ground paternalism in the shifting religious sensibility of the Great Awakening, see Alan Gallay, *The Formation of a Planter Elite: Jonathan Bryan and the Southern Colonial Frontier* (Athens and London, 1989), xix-xx and 17-54; Gallay, "The Origins of Slaveholders' Paternalism: George Whitefield, the Bryan Family, and the Great Awakening in the South," *Journal of Southern History*, LIII (August 1987), 369-94; and Sylvia R. Frey, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton, 1991), Chap. 8. For a study framing the genesis of "humane" slave treatment within a similar temporal context, but on secular terms, consult Joyce E. Chaplin, "Slavery and the Principle of Humanity: A Modern Idea in the Early Lower South," *Journal of Social History*, XXIV (Winter 1990), 299-315. Whatever the merits of these various arguments, we can at least be certain that by the time Charles Manigault purchased Gowrie in 1833, paternalism had become entrenched in the lowcountry.

<sup>83</sup> Indeed, Charles Manigault would eventually chastise Louis for spending too much time away from Charleston: "You are changed to a Georgian by Marriage, by residence, & by Planting Interest and no Son of Mine can own any one of my family residences who does not inhabit it permanently with but trifling occasional absence. . . . therefore you must not send for any more of the Furniture I bought to put in that House . . ." Charles Manigault to Louis Manigault, March 19, 1864, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 346-47. Also consult Freehling, *The Road to Disunion*, I, 216; and Theodore Rosengarten, "The Southern Agriculturist in an Age of Reform," in Michael O'Brien and David Moltke-Hansen, eds., *Intellectual Life in Antebellum Charleston* (Knoxville, 1986), 289-90.

<sup>84</sup> William H. Pease and Jane H. Pease, *The Web of Progress: Private Values and Public Styles in Boston and Charleston, 1828-1843* (New York and Oxford, 1985), 138-42; and Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!*, 195.

the planters constantly needed to have their standing in the community affirmed by their peers.<sup>85</sup> Having the right name—Allston, Heyward, Middleton, Manigault—was a matter of tremendous importance, but it was never enough.<sup>86</sup> No matter how respected their fathers and grandfathers may have been, planters still concerned themselves with maintaining the appearance of gentility.<sup>87</sup> The lapse of any individual member put his entire family's reputation at risk. Charles Manigault, for his part, understood that the family's good name depended on the proper image. "If you go wrong *Now* they will say its my fault should either of you on any occasion not shew yourselves well informed well bred Gentlemen," wrote Manigault to Louis and his brother Charles. "So look out sharp," he continued, "lest you Cast any slur on any of us."<sup>88</sup>

By the 1830s the reputation of southern "well-bred Gentlemen" had become inextricably linked to the concept of duty. In planting, in family, and in politics, Charleston's gentry sought to maintain an appearance of noblesse oblige. Resting on the notion of reciprocal obligations, paternalism had become the standard by which statesmen, fathers, and masters were to be judged.<sup>89</sup> Ideally, politicians placed the needs of their constituents before partisan or personal desires, and blood relations gave and

<sup>85</sup> Michael P. Johnson, "Planters and Patriarchy: Charleston, 1800–1860," *Journal of Southern History*, XLVI (February 1980), 45–72; and Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York and Oxford, 1982), 114.

<sup>86</sup> A rhyme captured the significance of family names in antebellum Charleston: "I thank thee Lord on bended knee I'm half Porcher and half Huger . . . For other blessings thank thee too—My grandpa was a Petigru." Quoted in Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!*, 196. For the connection between names and social status, see Johnson, "Planters and Patriarchy," 49; and Pease and Pease, *Web of Progress*, 121–22.

<sup>87</sup> Bertram Wyatt-Brown has discussed the ways in which honor was indistinguishable from reputation in the antebellum South. See *Southern Honor*, 14–15. Also see Steven M. Stowe, *Intimacy and Power in the Old South: Ritual in the Lives of the Planters* (Baltimore and London, 1987), 167. For the lowcountry planters' efforts to cultivate the appearance of gentility, see William W. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1816–1836* (New York and London, 1966), 11–15.

<sup>88</sup> Charles Manigault to Louis Manigault, November 15, 1846, quoted in Johnson, "Planters and Patriarchy," 49; and also see Charles Manigault to Charles Manigault, Jr., November 25, 1843, Louis Manigault Papers (DU).

<sup>89</sup> For a discussion of the evolution of planters' defenses of slavery—defenses that hinged on the assumptions of paternalism—into a coherent ideology, see Drew Gilpin Faust, ed., *The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830–1860* (Baton Rouge and London, 1981), 1–20; Larry Tise, who saw in the southern defense of slavery a commitment to republicanism that hinged on the doctrine of duty, likewise recognized that the 1830s brought new cohesion to the proslavery rhetoric. Larry E. Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701–1840* (Athens and London, 1987), Chap. 14. For an exploration into the similarities between the so-called duties of the slaveowner and those of the politician, see Greenberg, *Masters and Statesmen*, Chap. 1. For an examination of the links between paternalist assumptions and the family dynamic, see Stowe, *Intimacy and Power in the Old South*, 161–91; Johnson, "Planters and Patriarchy"; and Freehling, *The Road to Disunion*, I, 50–54 and 59–76. For discussion of the homogeneity of these values, see David Moltke-Hansen, "The Expansion of Intellectual Life: A Prospectus," in O'Brien and Moltke-Hansen, eds., *Intellectual Life in Antebellum Charleston*, 20–21.

received the love that they were obligated to exchange.<sup>90</sup> The standard for planters was, perhaps, the most clearly defined. Defending slavery against increasingly harsh criticism from the outside world, lowcountry masters insisted that the peculiar institution was a noble enterprise—one that required great sacrifice on the part of the planters and caused great improvement on the part of the slaves.<sup>91</sup> Small wonder that Charles Lyell came away with the impression that planters often “retain[ed] possession of inherited estates, which it would be most desirable to sell, and which the owners can not part with, because they feel it would be wrong to abandon the slaves to an unknown purchaser.”<sup>92</sup>

Since rice could not be grown for profit without transforming the land itself, tidewater planters struggled to improve their fields as well as their slaves. In order to reclaim the swamps—a process that one lowcountry master remembered as “a great undertaking”—the planters had to control the water level on their land.<sup>93</sup> They therefore constructed an elaborate and expensive network of floodgates, which served to divide the land into neat grids of irrigated soil.<sup>94</sup> Order replaced the chaos of the swamps—a reassuring thought to the lowcountry planters who sensed that their world was being threatened. As these elite southerners were attacked by proponents of free labor and threatened by democratization in the Age of Jackson, their rice plantations reassured them that their social order remained intact.<sup>95</sup> To a lowcountry planter, the rice estate symbolized the master’s ability to control the environment, to mold the physical world until it conformed to

<sup>90</sup> Greenberg, *Masters and Statesmen*, 18; and Stowe, *Intimacy and Power in the Old South*, 191.

<sup>91</sup> On the eve of the Civil War a number of aristocratic Charleston planters articulated their paternalist conception of the proper relationship between whites and blacks. Decrying proposed legislation that would have prevented the city’s free black craftsmen from practicing their trades, these planters characterized blacks as “a class of our inhabitants who ought to be objects of our care and protection.” “Let us not begin now for the first time in our history,” they insisted, “to subject ourselves to the charge of oppressing the weak and unresisting.” See undated petition 0010-003-ND-2801-01, Petitions to the General Assembly (South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia). William C. Hine generously shared with me his discovery of this document. For discussion of this episode, consult Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, *Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South* (New York and London, 1984), 273–82.

<sup>92</sup> Lyell, *Second Visit to the United States*, I, 210. Of course, such paternalist pretensions were deeply contradicted by the ghastly reality of human bondage—a reality that included a large domestic slave trade that broke up many African-American families. See Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*.

<sup>93</sup> Heyward, *Seed from Madagascar*, 18.

<sup>94</sup> Stewart, “Land Use and Landscapes,” 251–55; and Fernand Braudel, *Capitalism and Material Life, 1400–1800*, translated by Miriam Kochan (London, 1973), 101.

<sup>95</sup> For a discussion of nineteenth-century lowcountry planters’ sense that their world was being threatened, see Moltke-Hansen, “Expansion of Intellectual Life,” 37; George C. Rogers, Jr., *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys* (Norman, Okla., 1969), 156; Rogers, *Evolution of a Federalist: William Loughton Smith of Charleston (1758–1812)* (Columbia, 1962), 387–88; Lacy Ford, “James Louis Petigru: The Last South Carolina Federalist,” in O’Brien and Moltke-Hansen, eds., *Intellectual Life in Antebellum Charleston*, 159 and 184; Michael O’Brien, “Politics, Romanticism, and Hugh Legaré: ‘The Fondness of Disappointed Love,’” *ibid.*, 148–51. Peter



the paternalist ethos. As was the case for the manager of one Georgia Sea Island plantation, the rice planter felt pride when “astonished” visitors commented favorably on the “order and regularity” of “such an Establishment in this wild country.”<sup>96</sup>

Ironically, the lowcountry masters projected images of control onto a working environment that actually afforded the slaves a great deal of autonomy. Unlike most southern slaves who labored in gangs under the master or overseer’s immediate supervision, lowcountry slaves worked individually to finish the tasks allocated to them each morning. Upon completion of their assignments, tidewater slaves were usually permitted to spend the rest of the day on their own activities. The task system allowed slaves who worked quickly (and who were allotted reasonable tasks) to enjoy a few free hours for relaxation; it also fostered an illicit economy that enabled slaves to trade for profit the goods produced on their own time.<sup>97</sup> Yet, as far as the masters were concerned, the task system increased their control over the slaves. Whereas slaves toiling in gangs could surreptitiously work at less than full speed, the task laborer was accountable if the assigned work was not completed by the end of the day. The bottom line, from the master’s perspective, was greater efficiency.<sup>98</sup> As absentee slaveowners, the lowcountry planters were unable in any event to supervise their slaves directly. The task system returned to them a measure of control, while simultaneously appealing to their paternalist sensibilities by encouraging a contented work force. “Experience has proven that whenever work . . . can be properly parceled out into tasks, it is much better to do so,” wrote

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Coclanis has asserted that the lowcountry economy was in decline during the nineteenth century; see Coclanis, *Shadow of a Dream*, 128–40; and Pease and Pease, *Web of Progress*, 10. This too may have added to the lowcountry planters’ unease. We should note, however, that many coastal planters received annual returns from their property of 8 to 12 percent. See Pease and Pease, *Web of Progress*, 43; and R. F. W. Allston in *De Bow’s Review*, XVI (June 1854), 589–615, printed in Phillips *et al.*, eds., *Documentary History of American Industrial Society*, I, 263. The Manigaults made substantial sums from their Savannah River estate. In 1856, for example, Louis reported a profit of \$16,637—an impressive gain even taking into consideration the lost capital from the death of six slaves that year. See Gowrie Record Book, 1833–1877 (p. 11), Manigault Papers (SHC). Also see Carville Earle’s review of Coclanis, *Shadow of a Dream* in the *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., XLVII (April 1990), 313–16. For the trend toward democracy in South Carolina politics, see Lacy K. Ford, Jr., *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800–1860* (New York, 1988), 142; for the planters’ distaste for Jeffersonian notions of equality, see Roark, *Masters Without Slaves*, 16–19; and Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution*, 126.

<sup>96</sup> Roswell King, Jr., quoted in Stewart, “Land Use and Landscapes,” 331–32. For one upcountry Savannah River planter’s obsession with reshaping his property until it conformed to his paternalist conception of a plantation, see Faust, *James Henry Hammond and the Old South*, Chaps. 5 and 6.

<sup>97</sup> Morgan, “Work and Culture”; Morgan, “The Ownership of Property by Slaves”; and Ira Berlin and Morgan’s introduction to “The Slaves’ Economy: Independent Production by Slaves in the Americas,” *Slavery & Abolition*, XII (May 1991), 1–27.

<sup>98</sup> See Olmsted, *Journey in the Seaboard Slave States*, 434–36 and 478–79; and Frances Anne Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838–1839* (New York, 1863), 79.

a Georgia planter. "If the overseer has judgement, he will get more work, and the negro will be better satisfied . . ." <sup>99</sup> Echoing this conclusion, the *Southern Agriculturist* noted that since "the task of each [slave] is separate, imperfect work can readily be traced to the neglectful worker." <sup>100</sup>

Seeking total power over their slaves, planters like the Manigaults mistakenly imagined that their mastery was complete. In fact, the realities of the environment and the slaves' burning desire for freedom made the slaveowners' vision of the lowcountry a fantasy. To protect their own feelings of self-worth—feelings that hinged on their role as paternalist planters—the Manigaults clung to the notion that their slaves were obedient extensions of a well-maintained household. The perseverance of this belief, even while unfortunate African Americans suffered and died in large numbers, demonstrates the intensity of the lowcountry masters' paternalist convictions—not their insincerity.

Despite the dangers of their environment and the oppressive ideology of their masters, the Manigault slaves continually struggled against the plantation order. Forced to toil in the swamp, they found ways to make their displeasure known. Jack Savage, for example, worked slowly and complained frequently. "I found it absolutely necessary to take hold of Carpenter Jack and learn him how to progress more rapidly with his work, as he did but little, and would always be ready to say that 'him one had all the work to do,'" recounted the Gowrie overseer in 1852. <sup>101</sup> Other slaves displayed their displeasure in more dramatic and direct fashion. Tired of their work, some simply departed until they were in the mood to return. "Judy has walked off," wrote the overseer in 1855, "but I hope that she will feel rested and walk back in a few days as G. Jack did." <sup>102</sup> London, on the other hand, committed suicide rather than endure the continued trauma of life at Gowrie. Hoping to avoid a flogging, he fled to the river, where the driver pleaded with him to return. "His ans[wer]," as Charles Manigault was informed by William Capers, "was he would drown himself before he would and he sank soon after . . ." <sup>103</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Robert Collins, "Essay on the Treatment and Management of Slaves," *Southern Cultivator*, XII (July 1854), 205–6, in Breeden, ed., *Advice Among Masters*, 21.

<sup>100</sup> Quoted in Stamp, *Peculiar Institution*, 55.

<sup>101</sup> K. Washington Skinner to Charles Manigault, October 9, 1852, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 121–22.

<sup>102</sup> Stephen F. Clark to Charles Manigault, September 25, 1855, *ibid.*, 198.

<sup>103</sup> William Capers to Charles Manigault, June 13, 1860, in Rose, ed., *Documentary History of Slavery*, 284–85 (quotation on p. 285). Eighteenth-century rice planters avoided buying slaves from certain African regions because they supposedly were more likely to commit suicide. See Littlefield, *Rice and Slaves*, 10. Willie Lee Rose asserts that suicide was less common among slaves born and raised in the United States. See Rose, ed., *Documentary History of Slavery*, 284; also see Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 639.

Lowcountry slaves also demonstrated the capacity to resist en masse. Rather than resorting to direct force, which would have been quickly self-defeating, the slaves took advantage of the inherent tensions in the absentee master-overseer relationship. Masters, as a rule, were dissatisfied with the performance of their supervisors, fearing that they were either neglecting the slaves or slighting the crops. Realizing that their owners would often take their word against that of a temporary employee, the slaves understood that an organized protest could change the plantation status quo.<sup>104</sup> James Haynes, the Manigaults' overseer in 1847, certainly discovered that such widespread insubordination could occur. He was dismissed from his position on a neighboring plantation after thirteen slaves "ran off . . . with tales" of his wrongdoing. Haynes blamed the incident on "a fabrication of falsehoods hatched by the negroes and told to [his employer]."<sup>105</sup> Ten years earlier, according to Charles Manigault, "almost every grown Negro [at Gowrie had] . . . pushed off in a body & [gone] to Savannah with serious Charges against" the overseer.<sup>106</sup>

Even as they undermined the plantation household, the slaves at Gowrie were establishing their own network of relatively stable family relationships. Although Charles Manigault sometimes sold slaves as punishment "for their misconduct," very few of them actually departed under these circumstances.<sup>107</sup> When the Manigaults did threaten to separate parent and child, the Gowrie slaves fought to protect their families. "Jenny is confined," wrote the Manigaults' overseer on one such occasion. "I think you will have trouble with her if the Child is taken from her[.] I have been informed she says she [will] run away before she will leave her Child . . ."<sup>108</sup> Most of the slaves' domestic arrangements, however, endured until death or until the maturation of children changed the household composition. The slaves' naming patterns demonstrated the strength of these relationships. Offspring were named after grandparents, uncles, and aunts. And when parents died, members of the community demonstrated their willingness to welcome the orphaned children into their own households. For example, when Susey died in 1848, her daughter Mary was

<sup>104</sup> See Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 382 and 656; Mark S. Schantz, "'A Very Serious Business': Managerial Relationships on the Ball Plantations, 1800-1835," *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, LXXXVIII (January 1987), 1-22; John Spencer Bassett, [ed.], *The Southern Plantation Overseer as Revealed in His Letters* (Northampton, Mass., 1925), 1-22.

<sup>105</sup> James Haynes to Charles Manigault, January 6, 1847, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 46; and James Haynes to Charles Manigault, April 22, 1847, *ibid.*, 54.

<sup>106</sup> Charles Manigault to James Haynes, March 1, 1847, *ibid.*, 49.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 50. Over a thirty-year period, Manigault recorded selling only ten slaves. When the master of Gowrie later claimed to have "always made it a rule to sell every runaway," he was clearly exaggerating. Charles Manigault to Anthony Barclay, April 15, 1847, *ibid.*, 54. For example, Judy ran away in 1855 but remained on the Gowrie slave lists until 1858 when she contracted dysentery. See note 35 above; "Slave List," April 18, 1858, *ibid.*, 265.

<sup>108</sup> William Capers to Louis Manigault, August 20, 1863, Louis Manigault Papers (DU).

adopted by Matilda. Likewise, Betsy welcomed the two-year-old Cato into her household when the boy's mother, Crecia, died in 1855.<sup>109</sup>

Much to Charles Manigault's displeasure, this community had its own semiautonomous economy.<sup>110</sup> Slaves traded among themselves and even sold their clothing, which Manigault viewed as a symbol of his benevolent control over Gowrie. "For they are (some of them) so apt to swap & sell," wrote Manigault, "that I have been several times provoked at hearing that some of the large thick Jackets which cost me so much trouble & money to get made up in Charleston for them have been seen on the backs of my neighbour's Negroes."<sup>111</sup> The Manigault slaves extended their trade to Savannah as well as to nearby plantations. Bob, for example, was apprehended in town with "8 or 9 bushels of Rough Rice" and one of the Manigaults' boats.<sup>112</sup>

The slaves' resistance against the plantation order, however, did not force Charles or Louis Manigault to reconsider their paternalism. At times, they placed their ideals ahead of skepticism and simply believed their slaves when they promised to behave. Bob, for his part, avoided severe punishment for absconding with the Manigaults' boat and rice merely by telling the overseer that he would not repeat the incident.<sup>113</sup> In other cases the Manigaults tried to correct their slaves' behavior with discipline—but only in ways that reinforced the Manigaults' self-image as paternalists. In 1846 Charles Manigault sold the "small Rice"—the inferior portion of his crop—instead of giving it to his workforce, because he was frustrated with their "groundless complaints." The following year, he instructed his overseer to "tell them that tho I can sell it & with half the money buy Corn instead, & put thereby half the money in my pocket, that you wrote to me stating their good Conduct, & that I have decided to let them now have all

<sup>109</sup> Household and naming data were drawn from the reconstructed biographical information on the Manigault slaves. See note 35 above. According to Herbert Gutman, slaves on many plantations demonstrated a similar desire for household stability and an awareness of extended kinship ties. See Gutman, *Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, 3-431. It should be noted, however, that the Gowrie experience countered the trend of long-lasting slave marriages cited by Gutman. As much as the slaves wanted these relationships to last, mortality almost always interfered. For similar findings on another rice plantation, see Cody, "Slave Demography and Family Formation," 320-21. Also see Jo Ann Manfra and Robert R. Dykstra, "Serial Marriage and the Origins of the Black Stepfamily: The Rowanty Evidence," *Journal of American History*, LXXII (June 1985), 19. For an in-depth discussion of the implications of slave-naming practices on a lowcountry rice plantation, see Cheryll Ann Cody, "There Was No 'Absalom' on the Ball Plantations: Slave-Naming Practices in the South Carolina Low Country, 1720-1865," *American Historical Review*, XCII (June 1987), 563-96; and Cody, "Naming, Kinship, and Estate Dispersal: Notes on Slave Family Life on a South Carolina Plantation, 1786 to 1833," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., XXXIX (January 1982), 192-211.

<sup>110</sup> For full consideration of this topic, see the works cited in note 97.

<sup>111</sup> Charles Manigault to James Haynes, August 15, 1846, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 38.

<sup>112</sup> K. Washington Skinner to Charles Manigault, June 6, 1852, *ibid.*, 99.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

the small Rice again—on trial; & it depends entirely on them whether they shall have it in future or not.”<sup>114</sup> Manigault clearly wanted his slaves to reaffirm his self-image of benevolence; he wanted them to appreciate the sacrifices he made for them, and, paradoxically, he was willing to punish them until they did so.

Only as heightening sectional tension undermined their control did the Manigaults understand that their slaves preferred freedom to enslavement by a paternalistic master. Even then, even as large numbers of the slaves openly defied their authority, the realization came slowly. In August 1860 a slave named Hector liberated himself from the Manigaults. Forsaking the runaway’s customary refuge in the swamp, Hector defied his legal owners on their own property. The Manigaults’ distraught overseer, William Capers, informed them that the rebel, armed with “a pr. of Pistols & Sword,” had “been on the Plantation since he left and . . . [would] not be taken.”<sup>115</sup> At the same time Hector left, the Manigaults also learned that “Daniel ran off” after “breaking up” a buggy and turning loose the mule. Several months later, Capers informed the slaveowners that “Big Hector & Carp[enter] George left the Plantation . . . without one word being said to them.”<sup>116</sup> In January 1861 Louis Manigault’s brother Gabriel suggested that “the only [thing] . . . to do now is to hunt [the runaway slaves] with dogs . . . . It is absolutely necessary to go armed with a double barrellled gun . . . with the intention of shooting . . . any negro who attempts to resist . . . .”<sup>117</sup> The advice did not stop the runaways, and the new year brought continued unrest at Gowrie. The masters were told, for example, that “Big George” had “attempted to run off in presents of the entire force” and in plain sight of the overseer.<sup>118</sup> Capers wrote to Charles Manigault that Jack Savage had “resisted the Driver” who “caught [him] in [the] Back River” attempting to escape. In a letter to his father a few weeks later, Louis Manigault described Savage as “the worst Negro I have ever Known. I have for two years past

<sup>114</sup> Charles Manigault to James Haynes, January 1, 1847, *ibid.*, 45. Of course, Manigault may have been exaggerating the extent of his financial sacrifice in not selling the inferior rice. As his factor observed several years earlier, “it is almost impossible to find purchasers for this d[e]scription of rice . . . .” See Robert Habersham to Charles Manigault, March 16, 1842, Louis Manigault Papers (DU).

<sup>115</sup> William Capers, Sr., to Louis Manigault, November 3, 1860, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 310 (quotations); and Capers to Louis Manigault, August 19, 1860, *ibid.*, 305. For extended discussion of lowcountry slaves’ efforts to emancipate themselves during the Civil War, consult Clarence L. Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom: Masters and Slaves in Civil War Georgia* (Athens and London, 1986); and Willie Lee Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment* (Indianapolis, New York, and Kansas City, 1964), 104–11.

<sup>116</sup> Capers to Louis Manigault, August 19, 1860, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 305; and Capers to Louis Manigault, October 31, 1860, *ibid.*, 309.

<sup>117</sup> Gabriel E. Manigault to Louis Manigault, January 21, 1861, *ibid.*, 314.

<sup>118</sup> Capers to Charles Manigault, November 14, 1861, *ibid.*, 325. Capers “gave him [George] 60 straps in presents of those he ran off in . . . .” The overseer then advised he be sold: “Let him go or you will l[lo]se him.”

looked upon him as one Capable of Committing murder or burning down this dwelling, or doing any act."<sup>119</sup>

Their world was crumbling, but the Manigaults proved reluctant to alter their attitudes toward the men and women they held in bondage—attitudes that reflected their firm belief that they understood their slaves and acted always in the slaves' best interest.<sup>120</sup> Thus, Louis Manigault earnestly maintained that his slave Ishmael had "completely changed" for the better, despite having been caught in 1861 stockpiling ammunition to take to the Yankees.<sup>121</sup> The Manigaults even believed that Jack Savage and Big George could be redeemed once they had been properly disciplined. Charles informed his son in 1862 that the two "have been well punished, & profess great Penitence & now see clearly how easy it is to fix a bad Negro."<sup>122</sup>

Indeed, the Manigaults' conviction that they could salvage their relationships with their slaves contrasted greatly with their reaction to white employees who were also beginning to question their authority. Louis Manigault erupted in anger when he learned that Saly, a white dressmaker, had written an "insulting note" to his wife. Manigault characterized the woman as an "ungrateful upstart, whose true character is now at last developing itself . . . Indeed, God has punished the little Animal, the bright page in her history is ended, & her 1st chapter of Misery, toil, & ruin is at hand." By contrast, the young planter maintained his faith in Captain, even when the slave resisted his wife's authority. "Now I think if you lock him up in one of those upper rooms for 24 hours he will come to his senses," wrote Manigault. If not, he continued, the unruly slave should be sent "to wait on me . . . [after which] Captain will return to you a Changed Negro."<sup>123</sup>

But as the war progressed, the Manigaults finally perceived that the master-slave relationship could not be salvaged. Realizing that their chances for freedom were improving, the slaves no longer gave the impression that they could be easily corrected through physical punishment. William Capers informed his employers that he "had an occasion to whip [Rose, an eighteen-year-old slave] & she refused to be tied & fought me until she had

<sup>119</sup>*Ibid.*; and Louis Manigault to Charles Manigault, December 5, 1861, *ibid.*, 331.

<sup>120</sup>For extended discussion of slaveowners clinging tenaciously to their values during the Civil War, even as events proved those values to be untenable, see Roark, *Masters Without Slaves*; Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York, 1979); and Wayne, *Reshaping of Plantation Society*.

<sup>121</sup>Louis Manigault, Plantation Journal, May 1861 to May 1862, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 320.

<sup>122</sup>Charles Manigault to Louis Manigault, January 20, 1862, *ibid.*, 337.

<sup>123</sup>Louis Manigault to Fannie Habersham Manigault, December 14, 1861; and Louis Manigault to Fannie Habersham Manigault, December 15, 1861, both in the Louis Manigault Papers (DU). For discussion of class conflict among white southerners during the Civil War, see Stephen V. Ash, "Poor Whites in the Occupied South, 1861-1865," *Journal of Southern History*, LVII (February 1991), 39-62; and Roark, *Masters Without Slaves*, 55-56.

not a rag of clothes on."<sup>124</sup> The masters of Gowrie soon discovered that the most trusted slaves would escape as soon as they were confident of success. When the house slave Dolly ran off in 1863, Louis Manigault did not believe that she had deliberately rejected her favored position in his household. He surmised that she had "been enticed off by some White Man . . ."<sup>125</sup> Yet, after investigating the matter, Louis Manigault discovered that Dolly had actually run away on her own volition with a slave that had been "courting" her.<sup>126</sup> Likewise, the young master of Gowrie realized that Hector—a slave who had been "kindly treated . . . upon numerous occasions" and who had been "esteemed highly" by the Manigaults—"was the very first to murmur, and would have hastened to the embrace of his Northern Brethren, could he have foreseen the least prospect of a successful escape."<sup>127</sup> The Manigaults' assumptions that they knew their slaves and that their slaves were in a sense their children steadily evaporated. The young master who had once lovingly called his slaves "the people" now referred to "that stupid dirty Negro Joe" with "his big Cat-fish mouth . . ."<sup>128</sup> Such hostility intensified as the last of the Manigault slaves emancipated themselves. Having finally been deserted by every one of his house slaves, Charles Manigault "resolved never to have a Negro in our house again."<sup>129</sup>

Encouraged by the success of the Union forces, the slaves at Gowrie and Silk Hope did more than flee. "They broke into our well furnished residences on each plantation," recounted a bitter Charles Manigault, "and stole or destroyed everything therein." And in a scene of tremendous poetic justice, the slaves attacked the visible manifestations of the Manigaults' self-image—their portraits, which had been commissioned from leading Charleston painters. Taken by the newly free African Americans, these images were "hung up in their Negro houses, while some of the family portraits (as if to turn them into ridicule) they left out, night and day, exposed to the open air."<sup>130</sup>

<sup>124</sup> Capers to Louis Manigault, August 14, 1863, Louis Manigault Papers (DU).

<sup>125</sup> Slave Runaway Notice, Louis Manigault, April 10, 1863, Manigault Papers (microfiche, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia).

<sup>126</sup> William Capers, Sr., to Louis Manigault, April 9 and 13, June 17, and July 2, 1863, all in Louis Manigault Papers (DU).

<sup>127</sup> Louis Manigault, Plantation Journal, May 1861 to May 1862, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 320–21; also in Mullin, ed., *American Negro Slavery*, 261–62.

<sup>128</sup> Louis Manigault to Fannie Habersham Manigault, November 11, 1861, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 324.

<sup>129</sup> Charles Manigault to Louis Manigault, April 30, 1865, *ibid.*, 353. The transition from the masters' paternalist desire for intimate relations with their bondservants to the post-Emancipation wish for physical distance between the races is discussed in C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (3d rev. ed.; Oxford and other cities, 1974), 11–29; Williamson, *Crucible of Race*, 82; and Roark, *Masters Without Slaves*, 163.

<sup>130</sup> Quoted in Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877* (Cambridge and other cities, 1988), 72. For Manigault's attachment to these portraits and his

Humbled by the war, the Manigaults struggled to survive. "We are certainly experiencing the most trying times . . . . The future looks gloomy enough . . . ," wrote Louis Manigault in 1865.<sup>131</sup> To support his wife and children, he began to work as a clerk in a counting house. Desperate for cash, he suffered the indignity of pawning a writing desk—which his father had purchased in 1833, the same year that he had acquired Gowrie—for an extra twelve dollars in spending money.<sup>132</sup> Although his family retained ownership of Gowrie, Louis Manigault rented out the property because he could no longer afford to cultivate a crop.<sup>133</sup>

In this context the previously proud master returned to his plantation in 1867. Walking the banks of the Savannah River for the first time in two years, he was struck by "the cruel hand of War" and by "the change on every side . . . ." Seeking out the men and women that he used to own, a surprised Louis Manigault "beh[e]ld young Women to whom I had most frequently presented Ear-Rings, Shoes, Calicos, Kerchiefs &c. &c.—formerly pleased to meet me, but now not even lifting the head as I passed." Meanwhile, Jack Savage—the slave that Manigault had feared and despised the most—unexpectedly greeted his former master. Here was final evidence that the planters had known "nothing of the Negro Character." Amid the ruins of Gowrie, Manigault finally appreciated that "that former mutual & pleasing feeling of Master towards Slave and vice versa is now as a dream of the past."<sup>134</sup>

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efforts to recover and repair them, see Charles Manigault, "Some Things Relating to our Family Affairs," ca. 1868 (pp. 11-14), Manigault Family Papers (SHC). In addition to taking the Manigaults' personal belongings, the emancipated slaves claimed the land itself. Upon visiting his upcountry plantation, Charles Manigault discovered that "2 or 3 of the Negro men on the farm, had provided themselves with Guns, which they loaded . . . . 'Moses' (one of the principal hands) stated loudly on all occasions, that 'if ever I threatened to move Him off the Place, he would shoot me on the spot.'" Charles Manigault, "The Close of the War—The Negro, &c," ca. 1868 (p. 6).

<sup>131</sup> Louis Manigault Letterbook, March 26, 1865, Manigault Papers (microfilm, SHC).

<sup>132</sup> Louis Manigault, Plantation Journal describing December 1864, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 350.

<sup>133</sup> Numerous other southern plantation owners were also forced to lease out their property. See Wayne, *Reshaping Plantation Society*, 62.

<sup>134</sup> Louis Manigault, "Visit to 'Gowrie' and 'East Hermitage' Plantations, Savannah River, 22d March 1867," in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 354-64 (first quotation on p. 356; others on p. 361). The story behind Jack Savage's presence at Gowrie serves as a poignant reminder that slaves were driven by conflicting impulses—the need for freedom and the desire to maintain strong family and community ties. A month after he had supposedly demonstrated "great penitence" for attempting to escape in 1862, Jack Savage ran away, remaining in the swamp for over a year before surrendering. He was then sold in September of 1863. Yet, even during this moment of powerlessness, Savage sought to strike back at his master by driving down his own price at the auction. Manigault would later speculate that the slave had anticipated his own sale and had therefore struck a deal with the white neighbor who eventually purchased him. To secure his own freedom, Savage had left behind his wife of over twenty years. With the destruction of slavery, Savage now demonstrated his commitment to his spouse by returning to Gowrie, where she still lived. See Louis Manigault, Plantation Journal, ca. 1863, *ibid.*, 342; Capers to Charles Manigault, September 28, 1863, *ibid.*, 345; Charles Manigault to Louis Manigault, December 28, 1863, Louis Manigault Letterbook, Manigault Papers (microfilm, SHC). For discussion of slaves spiting their masters at auctions by making themselves appear to be less-than-competent workers, see Tadman,



Like the Union shell that shattered Louis Manigault's bedroom in Charleston, the African-Americans' campaign for freedom wreaked havoc on the Manigaults' conception of a well-maintained household. The slaveowners now acknowledged the impossibility of harmonious race relations characterized by reciprocal responsibilities. But just as the Union shell had left "the Body of the[ir] House untouched," the Manigaults' new vision of their former slaves did not force them to abandon paternalism's central premise.<sup>135</sup>

Despite the slaves' emphatic rejection of their owners' authority and despite the vast disparity between the Manigaults' ideology and the reality at Gowrie, the Manigaults continued to insist that their mastery had been benevolent. Reflecting on the former institution of African-American bondage, Charles Manigault distinguished between slavery in the South and slavery in the West Indies. Foreshadowing the analysis of modern scholars, the planter asserted that "in the West India Colonies, their loss of slaves, [wa]s continuous . . . all those Estates . . . [belonged to] slave owners, [who] were generally absentees . . ." But southern slaveowners, observed Manigault, were "surrounded by our Negroes [and] attend[ed] personally to their comforts . . . We saw, that they ever received good, wholesome food & the sick & aged attended to . . . All this, naturally resulted, in mutual family interests & kind personal feelings so generally prevailing (until recently) between Masters & their slaves amongst us." Proof that southern "slaves were not in [a] state of discomfort, & oppression," insisted Manigault, could be found in their population's "wonderful Increase."<sup>136</sup> Clinging to his own paternalist assumptions about slavery, the master of Gowrie perceived no boundary between the Savannah River rice estates and more healthful upcountry properties. After three decades of devastating plantation mortality, Manigault still believed that the Gowrie slaves had flourished under his rule. Had it been otherwise, had the Manigaults and other tidewater masters acknowledged the grimly unique circumstances on

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*Speculators and Slaves*, 101. For evidence of the slaves' desire to remain in contact with families from whom they had been separated see Smith, *Slavery and Rice Culture*, 74-75; and Foner, *Reconstruction*, 81-82.

<sup>135</sup> For Charles Manigault's description of the Union shell and the damage to their Charleston residence, see Charles Manigault to Louis Manigault, April 10, 1865, in Clifton, ed., *Life and Labor*, 352.

<sup>136</sup> Charles Manigault, "The Close of the War—The Negro, &c," ca. 1868 (p. 8), Manigault Family Papers (SHC). Manigault asserted that the South imported only 300,000 African slaves who increased naturally to a population of about 4 million—figures surprisingly close to modern demographic estimates. See the works cited in note 47 above. Other lowcountry residents were equally capable of ignoring the region's demographic reality. In 1866 Richard Arnold wrote that "mortality is certainly great among the Blacks, but I am satisfied that belongs to their new status of being 'nobodys niggers but their own.' A comparison of the mortuary records of the five years preceding the war & the five to follow will . . . astonish the negrophilists [who had criticized slavery] . . ." See Richard D. Arnold to Miss M. W. Houston, October 8, 1866, in Shryock, ed., *Letters of Richard D. Arnold*, 131.

their own coastal estates, they might have agonized over the human suffering they had caused. Instead, they remained confident in the righteousness of their mastery. In this sense, despite all that separated them from their upcountry counterparts, the lowcountry slaveowners truly were members of a distinctly southern master class.