

## **Sex Trafficking and the Visibilities of the Nineteenth-Century North American Slave Trade in Present-Day Context**

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Sex trafficking in the early nineteenth century has striking parallels to current practices. Making daughters and sisters into sex slaves involved similar strategies including enforced removals, violence, and psychological and physical reliance, all framed by business calculations of captors' profits and a narrative of captives' indebtedness. Dislocated, captives faced a choiceless choice of complicity while captors enforced dependence in private spaces saturated with sexual violence. Trafficking firms operated (loosely) under law, but even such legal sex trafficking operated in a shadowy and segmented market.

By viewing "the antebellum slave market" in terms of human trafficking, this essay connects a range of historical phenomena to ongoing processes rather than telling the story of the "Second Middle Passage" culminating in civil war and ending in emancipation.<sup>1</sup> It contextualizes historical evidence of sex-trafficked subjects in terms of

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 139, *passim* (first quotation); Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 161, *passim* (second quotation); Thavolia Glymph, "The Second Middle Passage: The Transition from Slavery to Freedom at Davis Bend, Mississippi" (Ph.D. diss., Purdue University 1994). Acknowledgements: I wish to thank Tom Buchanan, Airín Martínez, Damian Alan Pargas, and Joshua D. Rothman for their

current research on the sociology and psychology of that practice. It focuses on sex trafficking as opposed to sexual abuse during trafficking, glimpsing captives' responses such as traumatic bonding and counter-strategies including occupational mobility. Nineteenth-century abolitionists featured unprotected female captives and highlighted feminine vulnerability and whiteness among trafficked females. Present-day abolitionists also personalize sex-trafficked subjects as part of a response to efforts to legalize what they term slavery, highlighting the constricted choices, violence, and asymmetrical power relationships between traffickers and subjects. But then as now, sex trafficking was difficult to spot.<sup>2</sup>

Subjects of the nineteenth-century domestic U.S. sex slave trade were largely invisible. Abolitionists did publicize young females as victims, usually with light skin

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help researching this essay, to Richard Bell for persuading me to participate and to Daniel K. Richter for making participation possible.

<sup>2</sup> *Prostitution, Trafficking, and Traumatic Stress*, Melissa Farley, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004); Kevin Bales and Ron Soodalter, *The Slave Next Door: Human Trafficking and Slavery in America Today* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Michelle Madden Dempsey, "Sex Trafficking and Criminalization: In Defense of Feminist Abolitionism," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 158.6 (May, 2010): 1729-78; Jo Doezema, *Sex Slaves and Discourse Masters: The Construction of Trafficking* (London: Zed, 2010); Siddharth Kara, *Sex Trafficking: Inside the Business of Modern Slavery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); Kevin Bales and Zoe Trodd, "The Long Juneteenth," in *To Plead Our Own Cause: Personal Stories by Today's Slaves*, ed. Bales and Trodd (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 1-17, 38-41; Kevin Bales, *Ending Slavery: How We Free Today's Slaves* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Seth Rockman, "The Unfree Origins of American Capitalism," in *The Economy of Early America: Historical Perspectives and New Directions*, ed. Cathy Matson (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 335-61; Edward E. Baptist, "'Cuffy,' 'Fancy Maids,' and 'One-Eyed Men': Rape, Commodification, and the Domestic Slave Trade in the United States," *American Historical Review* 106.5 (December, 2001): 1619-1650; Walter Johnson, "The Slave Trader, the White Slave, and the Politics of Racial Determination in the 1850s" *The Journal of American History* 87.1 (June, 2000): 13-38.

and sympathetic biographies. But what reformers referred to as slave prostitution was a troublesome subcategory. Abolitionist appeals tended to feature masculine resistance or at least feminine virtue over against slaveholder vice and cupidity. Depictions of sex-trafficked females verged on the pornographic, and reformers tended to categorize sex work as a matter of individual moral choice.

Martha Sweart's case illustrates sex trafficking by a firm particularly suited to it and a response that was both desperate and savvy. The process of commoditizing her body was incremental and involved her transfer among several individual traffickers operating in concert. Sweart came from Albemarle County in central Virginia. She was about sixteen years old, had light skin, and stood five feet two inches tall when trafficked. In late January or early February, 1832, Sweart attracted the attention of Andrew Grimm, an itinerant slave trader. Grimm was a traveling purchasing agent for a multistate slaving firm. Perhaps Sweart saw the writing on the wall when the trader produced a roll of banknotes and peeled off several, handing her Charlottesville owner \$350 for title to her body. To relatives her departure amounted to disappearance, kidnapping, and theft. She soon left the Virginia Piedmont town of 950 residents, walking seventy miles east to Richmond. Grimm had been given \$3,000 a week after New Year's by his boss Rice C. Ballard, who disbursed funds "to be laid out in negroes or returned on demand."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Vol. 38, Ledger, Ballard and Co., 1831–1834, subseries 5, folder 463, Rice C. Ballard Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (UNC); Inward Slave Manifest, New Orleans, March 19, 1832, (*Tribune*) National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) M1895 Roll 7, image 77; Joseph Martin, *A Comprehensive Description of Virginia and the*

Sweart was swept up in a trafficking network the contours of which she could scarcely glimpse. Grimm and agents like him ranged widely over the landscape hunting up young, vulnerable captives he bought as slaves. Like snakeheads of a future generation he emphasized the futility of resistance and necessity of cooperation. There was no going back, and loved ones had no information as to where she disappeared. Violence or at least the threat of it sealed her delivery to Richmond. Entering a strange city was bewildering and reinforced her helplessness. Richmond had nearly seventeen times the population of Charlottesville and was the thirteenth largest urban place in the republic (like going from Charlottesville to Jacksonville, Florida, today). And Sweart landed in a jail with few captives with whom to forge ties and exchange information. On February 15, Grimm delivered her alone to Ballard's private jail between 17th and 18th streets adjoining the Seabrook tobacco warehouse (today the site of a gas station-convenience store). Ballard entered her in his ledger as "Marthy Sweart yellow . . . 350." Grimm earned wages from his employer amounting to \$300 in 1832 plus expenses like a new saddle. On at least one occasion he subcontracted with Fluvanna County resident Silas Omohundro. It was likely the last Sweart saw of him, and when he vanished so did a conduit to home.<sup>4</sup>

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*District of Columbia* (Richmond: J. W. Randolph, 1830[?]), 113-14; Edward E. Baptist, "'Stole' and Fetched Here': Enslaved Migration, Ex-Slave Narratives, and Vernacular History," in *New Studies in the History of American Slavery*, ed. Edward E. Baptist and Stephanie M. H. Camp (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 243-74.

<sup>4</sup> Vol. 38, Ledger, Ballard and Co., 1831-1834, subseries 5, folder 463, Rice C. Ballard Papers, Southern Historical Collection, UNC (quotations); Patrick Radden Keefe, "Snakeheads and Smuggling: The Dynamics of Illegal Chinese Immigration" *World Policy Journal* 26.1 (Spring 2009): 33-44.

Sweart's site of isolation was part of a supply chain, which contrasts with circumstances of some other enslaved females subject to sexual abuse. Enslaved people in the era had few if any legal rights, but they did build local networks that could protect them from rape or trafficking. Sweart's ordeal stands in relief when contrasted with that of Harriet Jacobs. About the same time as Sweart was removed from Charlottesville, Jacobs was struggling against sexual abuse in Edenton, a town several times larger. But Jacobs stayed in her native Chowan County and received protection from a network centered on her grandmother, Molly Horniblow, a free woman and small business proprietor. Horniblow used all available resources including hiding her in an attic from 1835-42.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, Sweart found herself isolated and initially alone.

Sweart was confined in a warehouse for human commodities. Grimm's employer Ballard was a partner in Franklin & Armfield, a firm that shipped up to a thousand captives a year from the Chesapeake to the lower Mississippi Valley. Two days before Sweart arrived, Ballard had emptied his jail of at least forty-five company-owned captives and embarked them on the merchant vessel *Ajax* sailing from Norfolk.<sup>6</sup> Sweart had his sizable jail largely to herself.

The jail was segregated by gender, and its proprietor was a young man on the make. Ballard was thirty-two, unmarried, and in the business of sex trafficking enslaved females. Besides a jail, Ballard's compound included a dwelling place, a hospital, and

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<sup>5</sup> Jean Fagan Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life* (New York: Basic Civitas, 2005), chaps. 3-4; Edinburgh Gazetteer, *The Edinburgh Gazetteer, or Compendious Geographical Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., (Edinburgh: Longmans, Rees, Orme, Brown & Green, 1829), 167.

<sup>6</sup> Inward Slave Manifest, New Orleans, February 8, 1832, (*Ajax*) NARA M1895, Roll 7, image 34; Vol. 2, R. C. Ballard and Co. Invoice Book, series 5, folder 417; vol. 38, Ledger, Ballard and Co., 1831-1834, subseries 5, folder 463, Ballard Papers, UNC.

fresh water pumps in its yard. Other captives arrived individually or in small groups, bought by Ballard or his agents. He categorized Sweart as “yellow” in his purchase book, underlining it. Sweart was not the sole “yellow” female in her cohort. Twenty-two year-old Hannah was categorized as “yellow” on the manifest of the slave ship that took her and Sweart to New Orleans. So was her four-year old daughter, but Ballard did not record them as such in his records.<sup>7</sup> Light skin was one prerequisite for captives being sex-trafficked. (It should be noted that Ballard was not a pariah or marginal operator, as Joshua D. Rothman adroitly argues in “Masters of the Market: Toward a Biographical Account of America’s Slave Traders”; the funds Ballard disbursed originated at some of Britain’s premier merchant banks and their New York correspondents.)

Sweart underwent another sudden removal in mid-March followed by a sea passage to New Orleans in tight conditions. Saltwater transport functioned analogously to long-distance air, overland, or sea travel on trafficked subjects today. It enforced a radical separation and the consequent utter reliance on captors. On a Sunday in mid-March -- about thirty days after arrival -- Sweart joined thirty-four other captives, mostly in their teens and twenties, processing down to the Richmond city dock and a James River steamboat that delivered them to Norfolk. In Norfolk Ballard embarked his consignment of captives on a company vessel, the *Tribune*. The merchant brigantine was already filled to capacity, and by the time it was cleared to sail on March 20, it had 222 involuntary passengers, about three and a half dozen more than it was built to confine. Most had been embarked in Alexandria, many arriving from company jails in

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<sup>7</sup> Purchase Book, vol. 4, 1832–1834, series 5, folder 420, Ballard Papers, UNC (first quotation); Inward Slave Manifest, New Orleans, March 19, 1832, (*Tribune*) NARA M1895 Roll 7, image 77 (subsequent quotations).

surrounding towns. Sweart joined scores of captives who had also suffered sudden, jarring breaks with natal neighborhoods and networks of loved ones. The seasoned skipper Isaac Staples sailed the *Tribune* to New Orleans in a speedy two weeks. But the passage was miserable. Measles broke out among the captives, who were each allotted twenty-nine cubic feet of space belowdecks. That is roughly equivalent to a small casket measuring 6' x 3' x 1.625'.<sup>8</sup>

As in company jails, captives were segregated by gender aboard company ships, which prevented male captives' surveillance of crewmembers and officers. In part to economize and in part to create dependency, Franklin & Armfield imposed gender separations from the point of incarceration to the point of sale. Security cost more for adult males more likely to overpower captors, but there was also a strategic reason to isolate females and children, one that actually undermined security.

Segregated shipboard compartments substituted white male subjection for what few vestiges of black male authority remained after sale. Although subject to enforced

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<sup>8</sup> Alexandria *Phenix Gazette* March 26, 1832, 3; *Richmond Enquirer* March 1, 1832, 1; Inward Slave Manifest, New Orleans, March 19, 1832 (*Tribune*), NARA M1895, roll 7, images 77, 78, 81–84, 87; William Jay, *Slavery in America; or, An Inquiry into the Character and Tendency of the American Colonization and American Anti-Slavery Societies* (New York: R. G. Williams, 1837), 158–9; Vol. 38, Ledger, Ballard and Co., 1831–1834, subseries 5, folder 463, Ballard Papers, UNC. (One of Ballard's consignees was twenty-seven year-old Cuffy Sweart, who may have been related. But it is unlikely since Martha Sweart arrived in Richmond alone, and Grimm did not deposit another captive until shortly before the cohort's removal from Richmond.) Julia Martínez, "La Traite des Jaunes: Trafficking in Women and Children across the China Sea," in *Many Middle Passages: Forced Migration and the Making of the Modern World*, ed. Emma Christopher, Cassandra Pybus, and Marcus Rediker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 166–83; Alexis A. Aronowitz, "Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings: The Phenomenon, The Markets That Drive It and the Organisations That Promote It," *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research* 9.2 (Summer, 2001): 163–95.

removal themselves, adult male subjects retained social roles as protectors of females and children, who retained corresponding expectations. White sexual predations (or their likelihood) sparked the uprising on the *Creole* in 1841. Leaders Ben Blacksmith and Madison Washington were punished for flouting shipboard rules forbidding adult males from female compartments on a passage in which officers and slave traders subjected female captives to their exclusive sexual access.<sup>9</sup>

Like kidnapping and abduction rings in modern sex trafficking, Franklin & Armfield was a social disarticulation network maintaining a modern commodity chain.<sup>10</sup> They were cutting-edge capitalists operating over long distances. Their position in a “domestic slave trade” obscures the fact that despite doing business within the American republic, Swear and other captives arrived with no rights and no status.<sup>11</sup>

The *Tribune* was a key component in an architecture of oppression. There were no outside agents to whom to appeal, and even federal customs agents endorsed the legal legitimacy of captives’ ordeals. After a federal agent certified the *Tribune*’s slave manifest in New Orleans, managing partner Isaac Franklin and company agents disembarked Swear and the other captives and transferred them to holding cells and, shortly thereafter, the deck of a Mississippi River steamer bound for Natchez.

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<sup>9</sup> Walter Johnson, “White Lies: Human Property and Domestic Slavery aboard the Slave Ship *Creole*,” *Atlantic Studies* 5.2 (August, 2008): 237-63.

<sup>10</sup> Shyamal K. Das, Lisa A. Eargle and Ashraf M. Esmail, “Cross-national Sex Trafficking Network in Developing Countries: A Theoretical Overture Using Global Commodity Chain Approach,” *Race, Gender & Class* 18.1/2 (2011): 230-53; Andrea Parrot and Nina Cummings, *Sexual Enslavement of Girls and Women Worldwide* (Westport, Ct.: Praeger, 2008), chap. 3.

<sup>11</sup> E. A. Andrews, *Slavery and the Domestic Slave-Trade in the United States* (Boston: Light and Stearns, 1836), 80 (quotation).

Like present day trafficking, repeated removals from sites of incarceration to new ones was effective at stripping away layers of social personhood. Crossing borders reinforces servitude. Many Anglophone captives were sold to francophone buyers, emphasizing their radical isolation. A flawed but telling modern analogy is the way undocumented immigrants are processed through federal detention facilities often with scant or no legal representation or forewarning of removal, their movements amounting to disappearance. (In states like Arizona, undocumented immigrants are leased out to farmers to harvest crops or supply cheap labor for prisons while private prison companies treat them as revenue generators.)<sup>12</sup> The process is tantamount to punishment before adjudication and conforms to definitions of structural violence. Even among legal immigrants engaged in domestic or custodial work, gendered borders also reinforce powerlessness.<sup>13</sup> For Sweart and her fellow captives, each step of the journey from sites of capture in the Chesapeake to the sales venues of New Orleans and Natchez involved enforced dependence on an agent of the firm. The Louisiana slave market had recently closed to slave traders, and Franklin & Armfield were scurrying to consolidate their sales agency outside Natchez.

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<sup>12</sup> Lee Fang, "How Private Prisons Game the Immigration System," *The Nation*, February 27, 2013, <http://www.thenation.com/article/173120/how-private-prisons-game-immigration-system#>; Ian Urbina, "Using Jailed Migrants as a Pool of Cheap Labor," *New York Times* May 24, 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/25/us/using-jailed-migrants-as-a-pool-of-cheap-labor.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/25/us/using-jailed-migrants-as-a-pool-of-cheap-labor.html?_r=0).

<sup>13</sup> Wendy A. Vogt, "Crossing Mexico: Structural Violence and the Commodification of Undocumented Central American Immigrants," *American Ethnologist* 40.4 (November, 2013): 764-80; Mark Dow, "Designed to Punish: Immigrant Detention and Deportation," *Social Research* 74.2 (Summer 2007): 533-46; Natalia Deeb-Sossa and Jennifer Bickham Mendez, "Enforcing Borders in the Nuevo South: Gender and Migration in Williamsburg, Virginia, and the Research Triangle, North Carolina," *Gender and Society* 22.5 (October, 2008): 613-38.

The firm's sales compound outside Natchez completed the work of making Martha Sweart into a "fancy maid," stamping her with sales propaganda and an enforced script.<sup>14</sup> Three weeks after Sweart sailed and two months gone from home, she arrived at Franklin & Armfield's Forks of the Road compound a mile east of the Mississippi River. That retail venue was built away from city residents' eyes, and outside Natchez limits Franklin & Armfield avoided city taxes on slave offered for sale. There Sweart was locked up and costumed for buyers in what amounted to a prison hospital. Sales director James Rawlings Franklin reported to Rice Ballard in late April that ninety captives were "on hand of which 30" were consigned by Ballard. Franklin added that "owing to the measles & having our negroes crowded in the Brig [*Tribune*] we have lost a great many sick, but have only lost one an old diseas'd man from Alexa[ndria]."<sup>15</sup> The Forks of the Road compound was also segregated by gender and choked with sexual abuse.

At their Mississippi Valley sales agencies Franklin & Armfield eroded what later scholars view as distinctive types of slavery. Isaac Franklin was apparently able to compartmentalize his roles as supply chain manager, financier, and pimp, while bleeding together chattel and debt slavery. Franklin & Armfield sexualized a widespread practice in domestic human trafficking. In 1834 he suggested to Ballard that "the old lady and Susan could soon pay for themselves by keeping a whore house," either in Alexandria, Baltimore, or Richmond, "for the exclusive comfort of the concern & those

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<sup>14</sup> Isaac Franklin to Rice C. Ballard, January 11, 1834, series 1, folder 13, Ballard Papers, UNC (quotation).

<sup>15</sup> Isaac and James Franklin to Rice C. Ballard, April 20, 1832, series 1, folder 6, Ballard Papers, UNC (quotation); Kara, *Sex Trafficking*, chaps. 1, 7-8.

agents” in their employ.<sup>16</sup> Brothels were indeed kept by enslaved women who acted as madams for their owners. Some johns were enslaved. So were prostitutes. Implicit in Franklin’s proposal, however, was the captives’ indebtedness to the firm for their purchase price and maintenance, all framed by the firm’s culture of relentless pursuits of returns and self-understanding as a pirate company of buccaneering entrepreneurs.<sup>17</sup>

At Forks of the Road, males were offered as obedient workers and females for both labor and sexual exploitation. The firm’s sales strategy disrupted bondspersons’ ability to shape sales because of its pervasive control of the sales theater. Some evidence comes from gender-specific behavior. A visitor reported that male and female captives conducted themselves differently when Isaac Franklin offered them for sale. Males stood “perfectly still,” hats in hands, clutched by their sides, arms downward “while some gentlemen were passing from one to another examining for the purpose of buying.”<sup>18</sup> “Opposite the line of males was also a line of females,” the witness reported, “extended along the left side of the court.” Twenty or so were “dressed in neat calico frocks, white aprons and capes, and fancy kerchiefs . . . upon their heads.” Their appearance seemed “extremely neat and ‘tidy,’” telegraphing domesticity. But female captives “could not be disciplined to the grave silence observed by the males,” the visitor reported, “but were constantly laughing and chattering with each other in suppressed voices, and appeared to take, generally, a livelier interest in the transactions in which all were equally

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<sup>16</sup> Isaac Franklin to Rice C. Ballard, January 11, 1834, series 1, folder 13, Ballard Papers, UNC.

<sup>17</sup> Judith Kelleher Schafer, *Brothels, Depravity, and Abandoned Women: Illegal Sex in Antebellum New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), 40-44; Baptist, “‘Cuffy,’ ‘Fancy Maids,’ and ‘One-Eyed Men.’”

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Holt Ingraham, *The South-West by a Yankee*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1835), 193.

concerned.”<sup>19</sup> The visitor’s circumlocution points to a well-honed practice of compelling captives to sell themselves on captors’ terms, males as supplicant, disciplined workers, and females as willing subjects of sexual aggression.<sup>20</sup>

It is unlikely that Sweart knew the stakes or understood the ramifications of compliance. Just as the biology of reproduction was mysterious, the geography of sexuality was dimly lit for many pre- or peripubescent African Americans. As a group enslaved children tended not to be the subject of pointed discussions of sex and sexuality. Parents tended to conceal the implications of menarche, for instance, and despite there being little privacy in bondspersons’ living quarters children were not taught to connect sexual intercourse and birthing babies. Discussions of sexuality and power were also suppressed or elaborately coded. Historians have guessed at motives including a valiant and ultimately futile effort to protect children from sexual exploitation. But in many circumstances sexual abuse came hard on the heels of sexual innocence.<sup>21</sup>

Franklin & Armfield sold the sexual inexperience of a “fancy maid,” who brought a hefty premium at sale over captives offered for agricultural or nonsexual domestic

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<sup>19</sup> Ingraham, *The South-West by a Yankee*, vol. 2, 197 (quotations).

<sup>20</sup> Melissa Farley, ed., *Prostitution, Trafficking, and Traumatic Stress* (New York: Routledge, 2004), introduction.

<sup>21</sup> Anthony S. Parent, Jr. and Susan Brown Wallace, “Childhood and Sexual Identity Under Slavery,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 3.3 (January, 1993): 363-401; James Trussel and Richard Steckel, “The Age of Slaves at Menarche and Their First Birth,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 8.3 (Winter 1978): 477-505; J. B. Pritchett and H. Freudenberger, “A Peculiar Sample: The Selection of Slaves for the New Orleans Market,” *Journal of Economic History* 52.1 (March, 1992): 109-128; Joshua D. Rothman, *Notorious in the Neighborhood: Sex and Families Across the Color Line in Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), chap. 4.

work.<sup>22</sup> Slave traders selected adolescents and young adults. Seventy percent of their female captives were thirteen to twenty, and half of that group fell between thirteen and sixteen, straddling menarche. Ballard's records reveal that the median age of his captives between 1831 and 1833 was eighteen years for both males and females.<sup>23</sup> Connecticut abolitionist Ethan Allen Andrews toured Franklin & Armfield's Alexandria headquarters and a Fredericksburg, Virginia, compound perhaps owned by Franklin & Armfield's regional affiliate Samuel Alsop. Andrews communicated obliquely traces of sex trafficking when he contended that "mulattoes" were categorized as "domestics, and the females . . . sold for prostitutes."<sup>24</sup>

Sweart was among them. At sixteen she was on the cusp of the older group favored by James and Isaac Franklin.<sup>25</sup> (In an outburst at Ballard in 1832, Isaac Franklin hissed "your little slim assed girls and boys are entirely out of the way [of] demand" and ordered sexually mature captives.)<sup>26</sup> About a month after Sweart arrived, James Franklin wrote Ballard: "The fair maid Martha is still on hand. I think the chance

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<sup>22</sup> Isaac Franklin to Rice C. Ballard, January 11, 1834, series 1, folder 13, Ballard Papers, UNC (quotation); Sharony Green, "Mr Ballard, I am compelled to write again': Beyond Bedrooms and Brothels, a Fancy Girl Speaks," *Black Women, Gender and Families* 5.1 (Spring 2011): 17-40; Lisa Ze Winters, "More Desultory and Unconnected than Any Other': Geography, Desire, and Freedom in Eliza Potter's 'A Hairdresser's Experience in High Life,'" *American Quarterly* 61.3 (September, 2009): 455-75.

<sup>23</sup> Calvin Schermerhorn, *The Business of Slavery and the Rise of American Capitalism, 1815-1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 146.

<sup>24</sup> Andrews, *Slavery and the Domestic Slave-Trade in the United States*, 166 (quotation).

<sup>25</sup> Richard Follett, *Sugar Masters: Planters and Slaves in Louisiana's Cane World, 1820-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 57-58.

<sup>26</sup> Isaac Franklin to Rice C. Ballard, December 8, 1832, series 1, folder 8, Ballard Papers, UNC [quotations]; Robert H. Gudmestad, *A Troublesome Commerce: The Transformation of the Interstate Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 93.

to sell her . . . as well and our white Caroline is very bad.”<sup>27</sup> The market was poor, and in the lull James Franklin luxuriated in his own sales propaganda. If he could not sell the fantasies he created, he indulged in them instead.

The “white Caroline” to whom Franklin referred was eighteen year-old Caroline Brown. She stood just five feet one and three-quarters inches tall and was labeled “nearly white” on the *Tribune*’s slave manifest when she was shipped from Virginia in November, 1831.<sup>28</sup> In the process of complaining about a slow slave market, James Franklin moaned that prices were falling and “we anticipate tolerably tough times this spring for one eyed men.” The phallic metaphor linked rape and market penetration. Of Brown, Franklin bragged:

I have seen a handsome girl since I left Va that would climb higher hills & go further to accomplish her designs than any girl to the north & she is not to[o] apt to leave or loose her gold[.] & the reason is because she carries her funds in her lovers purse or in Bank & to my certain knowledge she has been used & that smartly by a one eyed man about my size and age, excuse my foolishness. In short I shall do the best with & for the fancy white maid & excellent cook that I can.

Unable to attract a buyer, Franklin “used” her to reinforce the market identity he imposed.<sup>29</sup>

Violence was discipline. By raping Brown, Franklin administered a disciplinary shock on female captives, out of sight of males. If Brown’s treatment is indicative of a

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<sup>27</sup> James Franklin to Rice C. Ballard, May 13, 1832, series 1, folder 6, Ballard Papers, UNC (quotations); Kathleen Barry, *The Prostitution of Sexuality* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), chap. 6.

<sup>28</sup> Inward Slave Manifest, New Orleans, November 17, 1831, (*Tribune*) NARA M1895 Roll 6, image: 1213.

<sup>29</sup> John Armfield to Rice C. Ballard, March 26, 1832, series 1, folder 5, Ballard Papers, UNC.

pattern of behavior among sales agents, Sweart had been subject to similar violence and aggression. But Franklin's compound was one dark corner of a segmented market.

Sex trafficking in the so-called domestic slave trade was difficult to spot in part because the market was protean, segmented, and traffickers' ease of mobility complemented elastic demand. Franklin & Armfield specialized in retail sales of sex-trafficked females as one human product line among many. The firm acted as a "slave-factory" in the words of one abolitionist.<sup>30</sup> Just as there are sex-trafficked subjects who work indoors and out, with a series of johns or a single client, for a brief encounter or an enduring arrangement, urban environments lent themselves to an assortment of coerced sex work. Johns in turn sought encounters with females of various ages, and the density of sex-trafficking usually corresponded to the depth of the market and breadth of demand for particular services. Traffickers adjusted accordingly. Well-financed and integrated organizations like Franklin & Armfield skimmed the top of the retail market while less well-financed or itinerant traffickers plied other niches.<sup>31</sup> Invisibility resulted in part because much of it was concealed in the private spaces of inhabitants of property and standing. The Latin etymology of *prostitute* is literally one who stands out. The Greek equivalent is the root of *pornography* and also meant one who was publicly visible. Nineteenth-century sex traffickers specialized instead in what remained hidden.

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<sup>30</sup> Jay, *Slavery in America*, 158 (quotation); Randall Akee, Arnab K. Basu, Arjun Bedi, and Nancy H. Chau, "Transnational Trafficking, Law Enforcement, and Victim Protection: A Middleman Trafficker's Perspective," *Journal of Law and Economics* 57.2 (May, 2014): 349-86.

<sup>31</sup> Alexis A. Aronowitz, *Human Trafficking, Human Misery: The Global Trade in Human Beings* (Westport, Ct.: Praeger, 2009), chaps. 4, 5, and 9; Jacques Pepin, *The Origins of AIDS* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), chap. 6.

Franklin's was one component of a lucrative trade abolitionists and antislavery writers exposed as a particularly egregious form of slavery.

Other traders specialized in urban sex trafficking of children, some under the rubric of *plaçage*.<sup>32</sup> A New York visitor to New Orleans remarked on the practice in the 1850s. "Slaver-brokers' offices, or whole barracoons of beautiful slave-women are here kept in any quantity, to let to gentlemen for sleeping companions," minister Philo Tower reported, many beginning as children. Tower interpreted his observations through a lens of middle-class sexual morality in his part of the country, contending that females, "when they arrive at puberty, from twelve to fourteen" were given a nominal choice in seeking "a man as she may fancy, and engage herself to be his bed companion."<sup>33</sup> *Plaçage* was variable, and common-law marriage was one end of a spectrum. Sex-trafficking was the other.<sup>34</sup>

The arrangement usually began as a temporary transaction between trafficker or pimp and john. "These girls are usually educated and instructed by their masters of the hyena stamp, in a certain way," Tower contended, "for the express purpose of producing all the attractions and charms that can be presented in a female whose value is much

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<sup>32</sup> Stephanie Li, *Something Akin to Freedom: The Choice of Bondage in Narratives by African American Women* (Albany: State University of New York, 2010), chap. 3; Monique Guillory, "Under One Roof: The Sins and Sanctity of the New Orleans Quadroon Balls," in *Race Consciousness: African-American Studies for the New Century*, ed. Judith Jackson Fossett and Jeffrey A. Tucker (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 67-92.

<sup>33</sup> Philo Tower, *Slavery Unmasked: Being A Truthful Narrative of A Three Years' Residence and Journeying in Eleven Southern States* (Rochester: Darrow and Brother, 1856), 316 (quotations).

<sup>34</sup> Floyd D. Cheung, "Les Cenelles and Quadroon Balls: 'Hidden Transcripts' of Resistance and Domination in New Orleans, 1803-1845," *The Southern Literary Journal* 29.2 (Spring, 1997): 5-16; Robert C. Reinders, *End of an Era: New Orleans, 1850-1860* (Gretna, La.: Pelican, 1989 [1964]), 165-69.

increased by a greater combination of all that is beautiful and lovely in woman.” Tower’s description reveals even a suspicious observer’s seduction by the fantasies sex traffickers conjured, inserted in a narrative of Creole tradition, racial ambiguity, social mobility, and sexual mystery. Tower’s description imputes to trafficked female captives a choice, factoring her “fancy” into the coercion to which she is subject.<sup>35</sup> He did not seek to know from where the trafficked women came.

New Orleans slave trader Theophilus Freeman apparently took part in that trade by buying prepubescent girls as investments. Freeman made a spectacle of his own renegade sexuality by receiving visitors while lying in bed with Sarah Connor, an African-descended woman he had once owned. Solomon Northup (kidnapped, trafficked, and sold by Freeman in 1841 as a slave) wrote that Freeman kept seven-year-old Emily -- an arrival on the same slave ship on which he had been held captive -- as a subject of sex trafficking, she being the daughter of a light-skinned mother and a white father. “There were heaps and piles of money to be made of her [Northup reported Freeman saying] when she was a few years older.” Northup interpreted Freeman’s rationale in separating a child from her mother: “There were men enough in New-Orleans who would give five thousand dollars for such an extra, handsome, fancy piece as Emily would be, rather than not get her.”<sup>36</sup> Compared to Freeman’s firm, Franklin &

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<sup>35</sup> Tower, *Slavery Unmasked*, 316-17 (quotations); Kenneth Aslakson, “The ‘Quadroon-Plaçage’ Myth of Antebellum New Orleans: Anglo-American (Mis)interpretations of a French-Caribbean Phenomenon,” *The Journal of Social History* 45.3 (Spring 2012): 709-34.

<sup>36</sup> Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup, a Citizen of New-York, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841, and Rescued in 1853* (Auburn, NY: Derby and Miller, 1853), 86-87 (quotations); Edward E. Baptist, *The Half has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic, 2014), 241.

Armfield was better organized and financed, and the pace of Franklin & Armfield's business was frenetic.

After failing to sell Martha Sweart in the spring of 1832, James and Isaac Franklin returned her to Ballard in Virginia. The ease and low cost of shipping captives made financial sense given the firm's investments in perishable human commodities. But Ballard held on to her. After turning her into a sex slave, firm directors showed no signs of reversing the process. In November, 1833, some twenty months after Sweart's initial delivery to Richmond, Isaac Franklin wrote Ballard from Natchez, "I was disappointed in not finding your Charlottesville[e] maid that you promised me." Apparently, Ballard and Franklin had discussed returning Sweart to Forks of the Road. In the same letter Franklin reported that

field woman large & likely [ranged in price] from 6 to 650 dollars [but] we have no fancy girl on hand but your girl Minerva an she is a caution[.] I sold your fancy girl Alice for \$800[.] There are great demand for fancy maid I do believe that a likely girl and a good seamstress could be sold for \$1000 . . . . you must ship all the first rate house servants by the first shipment after you receive this."<sup>37</sup>

Ballard had bought Alice Sparrow for \$375 and Minerva Robertson for \$400 earlier that year, beginning their incremental transformation into "fancy girl[s]" down the supply chain.<sup>38</sup> Isaac Franklin was apparently frustrated that Sweart had not reappeared in his Natchez-bound inventory.

The trafficking business was brisk, and 1833 had been a year of uncontrolled growth for Franklin & Armfield's firm. Their overtaxed commodity chain exacerbated

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<sup>37</sup> Isaac Franklin to Rice C. Ballard, November 1, 1833, series 1, folder 12, Ballard Papers, UNC.

<sup>38</sup> Isaac Franklin to Rice C. Ballard, November 1, 1833, series 1, folder 12, (quotation); Purchase Book, vol. 4, 1832–1834, series 5, folder 420, Ballard Papers, UNC.

risks of cholera and other infectious diseases breaking out among captives, which resulted in deaths. While the partners moaned to one another about resulting financial losses, the firm's culture of impunity emerged as a trail of hastily-buried bodies. Out of the ground came evidence of sexual violence at Forks of the Road. In April, 1833, Natchez residents were scandalized by "the discovery of the body of a child about eight months old, put into a hole, washed out by the rains as it run into the bayou, with its head downwards, and, which was only hid from view by a few shovels full of dirt." Franklin & Armfield was suspected because the baby's corpse was buried among those of captives trafficked by the firm. Isaac Franklin was summoned before an inquest jury, which reportedly found "that the same kind of goods or clothing is now to be seen on some of Mr. Franklin's negroes, as those found on the deceased—which were compared."<sup>39</sup> Overseer Samuel Johnson was apparently involve as well.

It is difficult to know whether the dead baby unearthed in the Natchez vicinity in the spring of 1833 was born in Franklin & Armfield's "slave-factory" or shipped from the Chesapeake with its mother. But only rarely did the firm ship infants. Despite claims that the firm sacrificed profits to keep families intact, evidence from their records reveal the opposite. Public relations bromides hid the kind of crimes uncovered in Mississippi bayous. Natchez citizens were outraged at clandestine burials, and even rival slave traders pointed accusing fingers at Franklin, whose flimsy excuses the inquest jury found wanting. Still, there was little authorities could do about traffickers disposing of dead captives' bodies short of kicking them out of Natchez. Overseer Johnson conveniently died shortly after the scandal broke, giving the Natchez agency a

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<sup>39</sup> *Natchez Courier and Adams, Jefferson and Franklin Advertiser*, April 26, 1833, 2.

scapegoat. James Franklin registered his “distress” at the firm’s finances owing to bondspersons having “been very sickly so much so the city council compels us all to leave the limits of the corporation,” concluding that, “in two days we shall have to take [to] the woods” and start selling there.<sup>40</sup> That was the terrain Sweart had escaped only to return to confinement in Ballard’s Richmond compound. Partly as a result of the firm’s recklessness it reorganized in the summer of 1833.

In part to calm business turbulence, Ballard embarked Sweart to Louisiana again that autumn as a favor to his partners. It had been nearly two years since Ballard first laid eyes on her. Sweart had survived at least two sea passages between the Chesapeake and lower Mississippi Valley and was now returning at the managing director’s request. In January, 1834, Franklin boasted of his sexual exploits from New Orleans: “the way your old one eyed friend looked the pirate was a sin to Crocket but he is brought up all standing.” It was a chilly winter in the Crescent City owing much to a national credit freeze. In the business lull Franklin demanded his partner send from Richmond “the Fancy Girl from Charlotte[s]ville.” Franklin asked Ballard, “will you send her out or shall I charge you \$1100 for her[?] say quick[!]” Franklin had either forgotten or refused to use Sweart’s name. “I wanted to see her,” he insisted; “I fear the time for the 1100 dollar prices are over and that I will not get to see the fancy maid.” Franklin and Ballard reinforced a connection between prices and pimping, bantering about invoices (or mock

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<sup>40</sup> Jay, *Slavery in America*, 158 (first quotation); James Franklin to Rice C. Ballard, April 24, 1833, series 1, folder 11, Ballard Papers, UNC (subsequent quotations); Gudmestad, *A Troublesome Commerce*, 93-95; 160-61

invoices) exchanged for Martha Sweart. Franklin closed by bragging, “I thought that an old robber might be satisfied with two or three maids [but] I will do the best I can.”<sup>41</sup>

Sweart soon returned to New Orleans. She was about eighteen years old when Isaac Franklin took her into his private chambers. For nearly two months she was subject to the forty-four year-old Franklin’s his sexual predations. Perhaps for his nephew’s twenty-sixth birthday, Franklin embarked Sweart on a steamboat to Natchez and Forks of the Road compound over which James Franklin presided. “The old man sent me your Maid Martha she is inclined to be compliant,” the younger Franklin bragged to Ballard early in March.<sup>42</sup> About five weeks later James Franklin wrote his partner again boasting, “I have your Charlotteville Maid Martha on hand she answers by the name of Big Cuff.” The racist epithet hinted too that Sweart was pregnant. Whether that was the case or not, James removed her from Forks of the Road and took her across the Mississippi River. From White Hall, Louisiana, he joked to Ballard, “I am happy to say to you I have changed very much since I saw you have become very virtuous.” As he feebly hinted at sexual overexertion, James hinted at Martha’s strategy to leave the vicinity of Natchez. “I am nearly ruined,” he wrote. “Martha sends her best respects & says she wants to see you very much.”<sup>43</sup>

In the shadows of James Franklin’s sexualized swagger is the glimmer of Martha Sweart’s strategy to mitigate her abuse. She may have formed a traumatic linkage with

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<sup>41</sup> Isaac Franklin to Rice C. Ballard, January 11, 1834, series 1, folder 13, Ballard Papers, UNC.

<sup>42</sup> James Franklin to Rice C. Ballard, March 7, 1834, series 1, folder 13, Ballard Papers, UNC.

<sup>43</sup> James Franklin to Rice C. Ballard, April 16, 1834, series 1, folder 14, Ballard Papers, UNC (quotations); James Rawlings Franklin’s family genealogy is available here: <http://worldgenealogy.tripod.com/familygroup/fam01988.html>, accessed February 20, 2015.

Rice Ballard, her pimp and legal owner, and almost certainly underwent outcomes of traumatic stress. Perhaps expressing affection for or loyalty to Ballard was part of a desperate effort to return to Virginia. From Richmond she could hope to return to Charlottesville and reenter her old network of family and kin. If she did form a traumatic bond with Ballard, her dependence on him was a psychological fetter. Evidence of Swear's whereabouts grows cold following that exchange. But the firm that trafficked her was exquisitely suited to reinforcing captivity.

Within the broader organizational structure of Franklin and Armfield, Swear was kept under tight watch. Each agent was a security officer. The firm's sexualized culture of pervasive abuse was part of how it cohered. Each snakehead was a member of the hydra. And each partner seems to have bought in to his role as "pirate," a romanticized outsider script that permitted these business insiders to act with impunity toward the human beings they commoditized.<sup>44</sup>

Edward E. Baptist and Walter Johnson among others adroitly detail the practices that made the American South "a landscape of sexual violence."<sup>45</sup> Swear's response was

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<sup>44</sup> James Franklin to Rice C. Ballard, December 9, 1833, series 1, folder 12, Ballard Papers, UNC, (quotation); Megan Anitto, "Consent, Coercion, and Compassion: Emerging Legal Responses to the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Minors," *Yale Law & Policy Review* 30.1 (fall 2011): 1-70; Karen P. Harlos and Craig C. Pinder, "Emotion and Injustice in the Workplace," in *Emotion in Organizations*, ed. Stephen Fineman (London: SAGE Publications, 2000), 255-276. Donald G. Dutton and Susan Painter, "Emotional Attachments in Abusive Relationships: A Test of Traumatic Bonding Theory," *Violence and Victims* 8.2 (Summer 1993): 105-20; Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), chap. 4.

<sup>45</sup> Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2013), 170 (quotation); Baptist, "'Cuffy,' 'Fancy Maids,' and 'One-Eyed Men.'"

one shrewd if anxious, evolving response to the series of shocks Ballard and agents of his firm administered. Traumatic bonding may have played into the conceits of traffickers like Franklin and Ballard, who proved adept at disposing of captives pregnant with the children of white men.<sup>46</sup> In 1853, Ballard shipped Virginia Boyd off to Texas to give birth to a partner's son and die in a cotton paradise.<sup>47</sup> While Ballard was snakeheading Sweart back and forth to Louisiana, he was also sexually involved with other captives, including Avenia White. Sharony Green contends that Ballard's relationship with White led to the birth of a son, Preston, and a move to Cincinnati, Ohio. That was on the cusp of Ballard's marriage to Louise Cabois Berthe in 1840.<sup>48</sup> What became of Sweart is unclear, but her near-invisibility in historical records is mirrored by the glancing mentions of sex-trafficking in historical abolitionist appeals.

Early nineteenth-century abolitionists used sex trafficking to condemn chattel slavery, but such appeals were not well developed. Frederick Douglass skewered slaveholding defenders of Christian female virtue. "He who sells my sister," he charged,

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<sup>46</sup> Baptist, *The Half has Never been Told*, 357-63; Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 262-64; Robert Gudmestad, "The Troubled Legacy of Isaac Franklin: The Enterprise of Slave Trading," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 62.3 (September, 2003): 192-217; Joshua D. Rothman, "Franklin, Armfield, and Ballard: The Men Who Made the Domestic Slave Trade into Big Business," Williams Research Center, The Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, October 22, 2014; Ben Schiller, "Literacy," in *Enslaved Women: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Daina Ramey Berry (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO Press, 2012), 183-34.

<sup>47</sup> Baptist, *The Half has Never been Told*, 363.

<sup>48</sup> Green, "Mr Ballard, I am compelled to write again."

“for purposes of prostitution, stands forth as the pious advocate of purity.”<sup>49</sup> C. G. Parsons claimed in 1855 that enslaved females were offered at auction, “entirely naked surrounded by a profane and vulgar crowd while she writhes under the lash, or is offered for the purposes of prostitution to the highest bidder.”<sup>50</sup> In the time of Franklin & Armfield, gadflies like Harriet Martineau focused on sexual abuse under slavery, which raised hackles from proslavery writers.<sup>51</sup> So-called slave breeding also drew attention.<sup>52</sup> But slavery as a plantation drama obscured trafficking, and the novelized portraits of the 1850s pandered to what Marcus Wood terms “plantation pornography” rather than the business network of traffickers.<sup>53</sup>

But prostitution and sex trafficking were not culturally fused with chattel slavery. To civil authorities, brothels or disorderly houses were not categorically different from dens of gambling or drinking. And social reformers did not often connect white female

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<sup>49</sup> Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1845), 119.

<sup>50</sup> C. G. Parsons, *Inside View of Slavery: or A Tour Among the Planters* (Boston: John P. Jewett and Co., 1855), 297.

<sup>51</sup> Kimberly Snyder Manganelli, *Transatlantic Spectacles of Race: The Tragic Mulatta and the Tragic Muse* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012), chap. 2; Marcus Wood, *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), chap. 5; Max Berger, “American Slavery as Seen by British Visitors, 1836-1860,” *The Journal of Negro History* 30.2 (April, 1945): 181-202.

<sup>52</sup> Gregory D. Smithers, *Slave Breeding: Sex, Violence, and Memory in African American History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012); Frederick Law Olmstead, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States; With Remarks on their Economy* (New York; London: Dix and Edwards; Sampson Low & Co., 1856), 55-57; G. Bourne, *Picture of Slavery in the United States of America* (Middletown, Ct.: Edwin Hunt, 1834), 31-32; 87-98.

<sup>53</sup> Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 184 (quotation).

prostitution with chattel slavery. So-called white slavery was an artifact of a later age, and the sexual abuse of captive males was muted.<sup>54</sup> As in sentimental novels of slavery, sex trafficking was obscured by racial theatrics. In the early 1860s Henry Ward Beecher displayed light-skinned females like Sally Maria Diggs, rescued from slavery and submitted to auction again at his Plymouth Church to raise funds to prevent subjects being trafficked as sex slaves. Being ritualistically auctioned may have revisited traumas on Diggs. But it also gave a theatrical and exaggerated picture of sex trafficking. Images by artists like Eastman Johnson and photographic cartes-de-visite featuring children like Fannie Virginia Casseopia Lawrence liberated from traffickers formed an enduring set of images. (Authentic cartes-de-visite from the 1860s can be bought on Internet auction sites today.) But the emphasis was on sexual abuse and the perverse spectacle of incest or exoticism of the “harem” rather than trafficking, and “while audiences were scandalized by the children’s whiteness,” Mary Niall Mitchell contends, “they were also troubled by the inability to see their blackness.”<sup>55</sup> Sojourner Truth and Harriet Jacobs

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<sup>54</sup> William W. Sanger, *The History of Prostitution: Its Extent, Causes, and Effects throughout the World* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1852), 671; Rothman, *Notorious in the Neighborhood*, chap. 3; Amy Dru Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract: Wage Labor, Marriage, and the Market in the Age of Slave Emancipation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 254; Barbara Meil Hobson, *Uneasy Virtue: The Politics of Prostitution and the American Reform Tradition* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), chap. 3.

<sup>55</sup> Mary Niall Mitchell, *Raising Freedom’s Child: Black Children and Visions of the Future after Slavery* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 88 (quotation); Mark Auslander, “Touching the Past: Materializing Time in Traumatic “Living History” Reenactments,” *Signs and Society* 1.1 (Spring 2013): 164-69; Jason Stupp, “Slavery and the Theatre of History: Ritual Performance on the Auction Block,” *Theatre Journal* 63.1 (March, 2011): 61-84.

faced considerable obstacles communicating sexuality and sexual abuse to middle-class white readers. After all, any sort of black women's public activism was suspect.<sup>56</sup>



An 1863 carte-de-visite featuring Fannie Virginia Casseopia Lawrence, Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/ppmsca.11264/>

<sup>56</sup> Margaret Washington, "From Motives of Delicacy': Sexuality and Morality in the Narratives of Sojourner Truth and Harriet Jacobs," *The Journal of African American History* 92.1 (winter, 2007): 57-73; Stacey M. Robertson, *Hearts Beating for Liberty: Women Abolitionists in the Old Northwest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), chap. 5.

In a sea of awful alternatives, occupational mobility was a raft. Light skinned females used the potential invisibility of their blackness to move into and sometimes out of trafficking. And the ability to build networks and accumulate social and money capital ameliorated the asymmetries and violence sex trafficking involved. In the 1840s and 1850s enslaved women like Sarah Connor in New Orleans and Corinna Omohundro in Richmond became domestic partners of sex traffickers. Their strategies offer a telling counterpoint to Swart and Brown's experiences.<sup>57</sup>

Traffickers' webs were difficult to leave by means other than altering an enforced script of willing submission by switching roles with traffickers. Using sexuality defensively, Sarah Connor accomplished that transformation. She allied with Theophilus Freeman, a successor to Franklin & Armfield in the long-distance human trafficking business. Connor was born in Virginia and arrived in New Orleans enslaved. Seizing the momentum of events out of her control, Connor became Freeman's domestic partner. She parlayed that bond into a deed of manumission. Freeman called their relationship a marriage, but their sexual theatrics led to the trafficker's downfall.

While Freeman built his credibility in the sex-trafficking business on Chartres Street in New Orleans, he lost his financial backers' confidence. In the mid-1840s, the Bank of Kentucky claimed that Freeman owed it money and that he had hidden assets by transferring them to Sarah Connor. Her manumission amounted to fraud, the bank argued, and demanded that a court revoke Connor's freedom. Freeman could then forfeit her as an asset along with her property and make good his debt. The case flouted

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<sup>57</sup> Paul J. Goldstein, "Occupational Mobility in the World of Prostitution: Becoming a Madam," *Deviant Behavior* 4.3-4 (1983): 267-79.

a domestic dalliance that irritated creditors. But Freeman refused to reverse the bond, and Connor remained free. By 1850, thirty-year-old Connor was still with fifty-year-old Freeman in New Orleans. Freeman had failed in the trafficking business.<sup>58</sup>

And he and Connor were still in trouble. Racial and sexual transgressions were not easily forgiven. The “celebrated negro-trader,” a Mississippi newspaper sneered in 1852, “who once fixed his head quarters or African harem at the forks of the road, Natchez,” was charged in a perjury case. Connor had accused a white man in a slave kidnapping case, which suggests she owned her status as a trafficker. Word of kidnapping was bad for business -- even a business that thrived on it. But Connor pitched her accusation imperfectly. Acquitted, the accused “gratified his revenge by prosecuting the woman for perjury,” for which Connor was convicted. The accused then had Freeman charged with suborning perjury, “inducing the woman to swear falsely,” claimed a report. Like the Bank of Kentucky, the accuser dishonored Freeman by exposing a scandalous sexual partnership. Connor was jailed in New Orleans during the proceedings, which cost Freeman considerable resources.<sup>59</sup> When newly-freed Solomon Northup passed through New Orleans in 1853, he found Freeman “miserable rowdy—a broken-down, disreputable man.” (Freeman was never charged with kidnapping or illegally selling Northup.) Creditors hounded the ex-trafficker until at least 1860, a few

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<sup>58</sup> 1850 U.S. Census, Orleans Parish, Louisiana, roll: M432\_234; p.217A, image: 285, [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com), accessed: January 20, 2015; Judith Kelleher Schafer, *Becoming Free, Remaining Free: Manumission and Enslavement in New Orleans, 1846-1862* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 137.

<sup>59</sup> *Mississippi Free Trader* June 16, 1852, 3 [quotations]; *New Orleans Times-Picayune* August 2, 1851, 2; *State v. Sarah Connor, f.w.c.* Supreme Court of Louisiana, New Orleans 7 La. Ann. 379; 1852 La. Lexis 186, Lexis-Nexis Academic, accessed November 28, 2012.

years before his death.<sup>60</sup> Connor paid a price for upward mobility, but she shifted strategy again. She exited the trafficking business and Freeman's household.

Connor built on the status achieved as Freeman's domestic partner. Even a deadbeat trafficker was still a white businessman. And Connor became the wife of another white man and lived as a free woman of color in New Orleans and later, Washington, D.C. In 1860, she was listed as an interior decorator with \$500 in personal property. Connor's domestic partner was Pennsylvania-born Smith Izard, a forty-two-year old "Private Police Officer." Also in their household was twenty-three year-old Jim Izard. He was in the same business and from the same state.<sup>61</sup> Categories of race on the U.S. Census were variable and depended on the persuasion of the census taker. But money whitens. By 1870, Connor was listed as a white woman and Izard's wife. By then he owned \$16,000 in real estate and was a "Special Bank Officer." Connor was a housekeeper.<sup>62</sup> Forty years after Freeman's sexual theatrics, Connor had migrated to Northwest Washington D.C., where the widow died in 1892, at age seventy-two. But in those last years she reverted to the identity of a black woman. Connor was buried in New Orleans.<sup>63</sup> Her departure from the trafficking business was a process of many years

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<sup>60</sup> Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave*, 310 (quotation); *Theophilus Freeman v. His Creditors*, Supreme Court of Louisiana, New Orleans, 15 La. Ann. 397; 1860 La. Lexis 724 (1860), Lexis-Nexis Academic, accessed November 28, 2012.

<sup>61</sup> 1860 U.S. Census, Ward 4, Orleans Parish, Louisiana, roll: M653\_421, p.131, image: 131, Family History Library Film: 803421, www.ancestry.com, accessed February 12, 2015.

<sup>62</sup> 1870 U.S. Census, Ward 3, Orleans Parish, Louisiana, roll: M593\_520, p. 650B, image: 502; Family History Library Film: 552019, www.ancestry.com, accessed February 12, 2015 (quotation); W. Andrew Boyd, *Boyd's Directory of the District of Columbia, 1892* (Washington, D.C.: William H. Boyd, 1892), 322.

<sup>63</sup> *District of Columbia, Select Deaths and Burials, 1840-1964* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc, 2014, www.ancestry.com, accessed February 12, 2015.

following some tough initial choices. And that kind of mobility involved a Faustian bargain.

Corinna Hinton made such a bargain, which was her ticket to whiteness and enough capital to propel her into the middling class. Hinton was about twenty years old when she entered the Richmond slave market. That was the late 1840s, and the market was recovering from hard times. Hinton (some sources have her surname as Clark) was enslaved but had fair skin. In Richmond she encountered Silas Omohundro, twenty years her senior and an established slave trader who had come up under Ballard and his agents. Omohundro wore a goatee and dressed like a gentleman. He had become a widower in 1847, perhaps for the second time. As an understrapper at Franklin & Armfield, Omohundro had learned the sex trafficking trade. As his own boss he bought and sold enslaved people including those he labeled “fancy.”<sup>64</sup>

Perhaps Hinton first looked at him with fear and loathing. But as words passed between them, and he laid hands on her, she spied a strategy. In Hinton, Omohundro saw a striking woman, and his appraisal of her resale value shifted into his appraisal as a lover, a wife, and a mother. In Omohundro Hinton saw a way out of no-way. He was a middling trafficker cashing in on demand for bondspersons in the lower South, and his business caught the prevailing commercial winds. Out of state buyers lodged at his

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<sup>64</sup> Accounts of Silas and R. H. Omohundro's slave trade, 1857-64, mss 4122, Small Library Special Collections, University of Virginia (UVA); On surname Clark, see: Phillip D. Troutman, “Black’ Concubines, ‘Yellow’ Wives, ‘White’ Children: Race and Domestic Space in the Slave Trading Households of Robert & Mary Lumpkin and Silas & Corinna Omohundro,” paper presented at the Southern Association of Women Historians Sixth Conference on Women’s History, Athens, GA, June 5, 2003.

Richmond boardinghouse while shopping for human wares. The boardinghouse was part of a compound that included a private jail private jail off 15th Street and a nearby dwelling place. Hinton pivoted quickly from sex-trafficked subject to trafficker, settling in as his domestic partner, helping to run the business. That relationship was one they both recognized as a marriage.<sup>65</sup>

Omohundro did not stop buying and selling women packaged for exploitation. In the 1850s his fortunes rose. In partnership with his brother Robert, Omohundro bought Maria Johnson in the winter of 1859 for a price approaching what an adult male field worker would fetch. She had already been labeled “fancy,” and Omohundro sold her to a fellow trader. In the pages of Richmond newspapers Omohundro advertised women using suggestive descriptions: “mulatto,” “light mulatto,” and “second class and yellow” women. He did not quote prices.<sup>66</sup> Hinton cooperated.

She sex-trafficked other captives and was responsible for packaging them for sale. Hinton publicly acted as Omohundro's agent doing business with local merchants. In 1855, for instance, Omohundro wrote in his accounts: “Bill of Negro Clothing to Corinner [sic] for this year,” in the amount of “\$587.25.”<sup>67</sup> The same market and account book lists thousands of dollars in cash Corinna received, along with dresses, kid gloves, and jewelry, including a \$200 diamond ring.<sup>68</sup> But there was an irony laced with

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<sup>65</sup> Troutman, “‘Black’ Concubines, ‘Yellow’ Wives, ‘White’ Children.”

<sup>66</sup> Accounts of Silas and R. H. Omohundro's slave trade, 1857-64, UVA; Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, And Slaves In The Old South* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 125; Maurie D. McInnis, *Slaves Waiting for Sale: Abolitionist Art and the American Slave Trade* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

<sup>67</sup> Market and General Account Book, 1858 [i.e., 1855]-1864, Omohundro Papers, Library of Virginia (LVA).

<sup>68</sup> Market and General Account Book, Omohundro Papers, LVA.

tragedy. Her new role reinforced her vulnerability since Omohundro kept her enslaved, and she witnessed in a personal way the practices she honed as manager of her husband's enterprise.

Hinton's occupational mobility combined with a new domestic role as mother of Silas's children. Hinton gave birth to six babies who survived infancy, all legally enslaved, including Silas Jr., Alice, Colon, Riley, William, and George. Silas Omohundro apparently doted on his children, even as he deprived so many other young captives of their fathers and siblings. He invested resources in them, lavished gifts on them, and sent them to school. But the sources of family wealth likely wore on Corinna. By the late 1850s she and the children had departed Richmond. They stayed in Philadelphia for months at a time, and she was apparently planning another move, to Ohio. Omohundro bought a house in Philadelphia's 20th Ward. There Silas Jr. went to boarding school. There the Omohundros passed as white. There they also passed as free. A slave in law, Corinna Omohundro was anything but an enslaved woman according to her local status.

Her children enjoyed the wages of whiteness. Born in Richmond on December 25, 1853, Colon Omohundro was the fourth of six children Hinton and Omohundro had together. But he seems to have been unencumbered by his legal status even while growing up in a compound flooded with sex-trafficked subjects. At age six, Omohundro bought son Colon a gun at six and a leghorn hat that matched his own. Colon must have understood that he was unlike the house servant Willis, whom his father sold in 1859.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Silas Omohundro Business and Estate Records, 1842-82, accession 29642, LVA; Troutman, "Black' Concubines, 'Yellow' Wives, 'White' Children."

Youngsters in the neighborhood of 15th and Wall Street shared many of his experiences and perhaps his confusion if socialized as middle class children. Silas Omohundro's compound was in Exchange Alley or Lumpkin's Alley, so named for fellow trader Robert Lumpkin, who also lived in a domestic partnership with an enslaved woman one witness described as "yellow."<sup>70</sup> Lumpkin's establishment -- recently excavated -- was known as "the devil's half acre." It included a whipping room where captives were drawn out on the floor and flogged. Robert and Mary Lumpkin had five children. Some were Colon's age. Other children of traffickers and sex-trafficked women lived nearby. Hector Davis, one of Richmond's biggest slave auctioneers partnered with Ann, and the couple had four children. Like her neighbor Corinna, Ann Davis passed for white. It is difficult to think that what went on in the neighborhood jails and auction rooms eluded the youngsters.<sup>71</sup>

When a Scottish journalist arrived in Richmond in the early 1850s to tour the slave market he stumbled on a mock auction held by unsupervised black children. "Fifty dolla for de gal—fifty dolla—fifty dolla—I sell this fine gal for fifty dolla,' was uttered with extraordinary volubility," by a small auctioneer, the subject being a girl about a year older than himself, "who stood demurely by his side," the visitor reported. The cries were "accompanied with appropriate gestures, in imitation, doubtless, of the scenes he had seen enacted daily on the spot." The visitor "left them," he reported, "happy in

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<sup>70</sup> Charles Emory Stevens, *Anthony Burns: A History* (Boston: John P. Jewett and Co., 1856), 192.

<sup>71</sup> Abigail Tucker, "Digging Up the Past at a Richmond Jail," *Smithsonian* (March 2009), <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/digging-up-the-past-at-a-richmond-jail-50642859/>, accessed July 31, 2014.

rehearsing what was likely soon to be their own fate.”<sup>72</sup> Unlike so many enslaved children, however, the Omohundro siblings had a childhood. Besides piano lessons, Colon received candy, toys, pineapples, along with trips to the circus and a hot air balloon, and the occasional gifts of pocket money including gold coins. He went to the countryside, took trips to Petersburg and Philadelphia. Colon was likely away from Richmond during the devastation of the Civil War.<sup>73</sup>

The network Corinna built as a trafficker led to her children’s exit not only from slavery but from blackness as well. During the Civil War Omohundro continued to buy and sell captives. The business was too lucrative to leave. Richmond was home. And Silas suffered chronic health problems. He did not live to see Richmond burn and the end of legal trafficking. Omohundro died in June, 1864. In his will he ordered, “I do absolutely emancipate and forever set free, from all manner of servitude my woman Corinna Omohundro, and her five children . . . who are also my children.” (Silas Jr. had already passed away, at age thirteen, in December, 1861.) Omohundro also gave her his compound in Richmond and if she chose not to live there a choice of his properties in Philadelphia. Hinton had honed her public persona as an honorable married white woman.

Her legal transformation was invisible as the burden of slavery lifted. Besides freedom, Omohundro willed most of his property to her. The month after his death Hinton took possession of four enslaved people she claimed as part of her inheritance

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<sup>72</sup> William Chambers, *Things as they Are in America* (London and Edinburgh: William and Robert Chambers), 274.

<sup>73</sup> Market and General Account Book, Omohundro Papers, LVA; Phillip D. Troutman, *Slave Trade and Sentiment* (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 2000).

from one of her husband's business partners. Claiming Silas's legacy was not easy. The Civil War was raging across Virginia that summer, as it had for three years. Petersburg was under siege, Richmond was garrisoned, and two vast armies were colliding in places like Cold Harbor. But Hinton made her way through a war zone to claim her property, perhaps meeting a blue-eyed soldier from New Hampshire along the way. Mrs. Omohundro could play a southern belle and a widow adrift in war. And that audacity enraged her ex-husband's other family. Littleton Omohundro, a nephew or Silas's son by a previous marriage, contended that Silas "had been building a house in Ohio for his wife (or reputed wife) and children, who resided there and where he was in the habit of visiting them till the rebellion broke out."<sup>74</sup>

But Hinton's transformation had many tangles. When she sued to collect her inheritance, which included property in Philadelphia and Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, she found out that her marriage was not legally recognized. Silas Omohundro chose to relinquish control over Hinton solely at his death. A Pennsylvania court decided that Omohundro had not freed her before marrying her, and consequently the marriage had no legal standing, even after 1865. The laws that gave Omohundro license to traffic in humans also threatened to wreck his legacy.<sup>75</sup> Having held the traffickers' reins over others, Hinton was fogged by them when denied what Omohundro claimed for her as a wife and mother to his children. She was unable to collect her legacy in real estate.

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<sup>74</sup> *Cooper, Executor v. Omohundro*, 86 U.S. 65, 22 L. Ed. 47, 19 Wall. 65 (1873), Lexis-Nexis Academic, accessed June 5, 2010.

<sup>75</sup> Will book 2, Richmond City Circuit Court, 228, LVA.

Hinton Omohundro did not return to her identity as an African-descended woman. She soon married again, this time Nathaniel Davidson, a New Hampshire clergyman. The Yankee with blue eyes and a fair complexion wore a Union uniform during the war. In 1870 the couple was in Richmond where he worked as a coal merchant. She faced diminishing returns pressing her rights as Silas Omohundro's widow. As in 1860, Corinna Davidson and her children were recorded in the 1870 census as "white."<sup>76</sup> By 1881 Davidson had rejoined the U.S. Army in Washington, D.C., where he had worked as a journalist. She passed on her talent for passing.

Growing up amid coffles of chained human beings entering and leaving their father's compound, Corinna and Silas Omohundro's children may not have internalized the legal similarities between themselves and the trafficked subjects their father bought and sold. Colon became a middle-class white businessman in Washington, D.C. Geographic mobility served to insulate him from the past rather than isolate him from kin and loved ones. He settled in Northwest Washington (where he could have passed Sarah Connor on the street) and at twenty-two married Kate Young, a white woman from Prince Edward County, Virginia. Colon ran an apothecary, lived in a white

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<sup>76</sup> 1870 U.S. Census, Jefferson Ward, Richmond, Virginia, roll M593<HY>1653, p. 488, image 340, www.ancestry.com, accessed December 12, 2006 (quotation); *Consolidated Lists of Civil War Draft Registrations, 1863-1865*. NM-65, entry 172, 620 volumes. ARC ID: [4213514](#). Records of the Provost Marshal General's Bureau (Civil War), Record Group 110. National Archives at Washington D.C.; Original data: Register of Enlistments in the U.S. Army, 1798-1914; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M233, 81 rolls); Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780's-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives, Washington, D.C., www.ancestry.com, accessed: February 27, 2015; Will book 2, Richmond City Circuit Court, 228;, 1851-64, Silas Omohundro Business and Estate Records, 1842-82, accession 29642, LVA.

neighborhood a short walk away from his Vermont Avenue drugstore. He was in the middle of his society, a public face, and an entrepreneur.<sup>77</sup>

But there must have been some unease. Perhaps Colon took the same kind of kung fu strategy his mother had used in the market and applied it to race, embracing “the heart of whiteness” and erasing a family history of trafficking. Perhaps he drew a color line in his drugstore. Kate and Colon had five children, including a little Kate who arrived after her father’s sudden death at age thirty-two in 1886. He seems to have seized a democratic entitlement that endorsed white supremacy and black servitude and participated in the mythology of the Lost Cause. His obituary mentioned that he was well known, had “a large circle of friends,” and was an admirer of first cousin John B. “Texas Jack” Omohundro, a Confederate scout and spy, whose career blossomed as a showman in W. F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody’s and James B. “Wild Bill” Hickok western circus.<sup>78</sup>

Memories of trafficking dimmed in the quotidian comings and goings of middle class white life. It seems that this process inverted what W. E. B. Du Bois articulated as African Americans’ double consciousness. Perhaps identifying with the white Omohundros and their rich Virginia heritage seemed natural. But like every ideology, it involved obfuscation. When Colon visited his sister Alice in Philadelphia, did they ever

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<sup>77</sup> 1880 U.S. Census, Washington, District of Columbia, roll: 121; Family History Film: 1254121; p. 196C; Enumeration District: 020; image: 0878, [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com), accessed: February 12, 2015; Brian P. Luskey, *On the Make: Clerks and the Quest for Capital in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: NYU Press, 2010), chaps. 2-3.

<sup>78</sup> Robert Jensen *The Heart of Whiteness: Confronting Race, Racism and White Privilege* (San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 2005), (first quotation); *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), April 20, 1876, 4; *Critic-Record* (Washington, D.C.) July 23, 1886, 3 (subsequent quotations).

speak of their Richmond childhood? They almost certainly knew what their father's jail looked and smelled like. They undoubtedly witnessed chained and handcuffed men and women, and even children tied and cussed at, bought and sold, threatened and whipped. The moans or cries emanating from places of confinement, the heady banter of boarders and byers, the disappearance of captives their mother dressed *fancy* and appraised by would-be owners must have registered something. Did they understand that their mother entered the city in a coffle? What about the white boarders who arrived with rolls of banknotes and left with black people bound with shackles? Like her brother Colon, Alice too grew up white, married a Philadelphia merchant, and was keeping house when the 1880 census taker arrived to count heads. Was Alice able to see outside the veil as well as through it? In 1880 she was keeping house with younger daughter Corinna, named after her mother, while the two older children were at school.<sup>79</sup>

Down the generations, how did descendants remember Silas and Corinna? The dramatic tension of Charles W. Chesnut's *The House Behind the Cedars* (1900) or James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912) seems to have resolved in Hinton Omohundro Davidson's legacy into a banal middling whiteness. One of Colon's sons was Howard Sides Omohundro. He worked as a merchant tailor, moving from Washington to Arlington, Virginia, in the 1920s, in the same town as his only surviving sibling, Colon C. Omohundro. Both were white.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> 1880 U.S. Census, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, roll: 1188; Family History Film: 1255188, p.92B, enumeration district: 617, image: 0192, www.ancestry.com, accessed: February 12, 2015.

<sup>80</sup> 1940 U.S. Census, Arlington, Virginia, roll: T627\_4246, p. 18A, enumeration district: 7-25, www.ancestry.com, accessed: July 31, 2014.

Hinton and her children slipped across a color line and enjoyed the proceeds of human trafficking. The widow Corinna Hinton Omohundro Davidson died in Washington, D.C., in 1887, her will executed by youngest son, George. When faced with a series of non-options, she turned the tables on her traffickers. That short term strategy became an identity, blossomed as a network, and grew to a legacy in which she fled African heritage in the interests of preserving family and building social capital. Her neighbor Ann Davis underwent similar trials, appealing the denial of her husband's legacy all the way to the Supreme Court of the United States. Others in the vicinity of the Devil's Half Acre did not make her choices. Hinton's Richmond neighbor Mary F. Lumpkin sought some atonement after becoming the domestic partner of Robert Lumpkin. Like Silas Omohundro, Lumpkin did not survive the Civil War. But after emancipation Mary Lumpkin took the bars off her husband's slave jail and leased it to a minister who founded a school that became the nucleus of Virginia Union University.<sup>81</sup>

Putting the cases of Martha Sweart, Corinna Hinton Omohundro Davidson, and others into a narrative of trafficking provides an approach that gets at the organizational structure of trafficking firms and the responses of trafficked subjects. Situating Sweart within Franklin & Armfield provides suggestive parallels to transnational human trafficking organizations today, including traffickers' scope and sophistication. Franklin

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<sup>81</sup> W. Andrew Boyd, *Boyd's Directory of the District of Columbia, 1887* (Washington, D.C.: William H. Boyd, 1887), 324; 92; John S. Blair, ed., *The Washington Law Reporter* 15 (January 1887-January 1888): 92; *The Critic-Record* (Washington D.C.), January 21, 1887, 3; Calvin Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery, Family over Freedom: Slavery in the Antebellum Upper South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), chap. 3; Tucker, "Digging Up the Past at a Richmond Jail."

& Armfield used a far-flung financial network to finance its human commodity chain. The firm's culture emphasized sexualized piracy, but its effectiveness relied on the banalities of shipping schedules and strategic management, even if managers administered sexualized violence as discipline and tools of economization. Hinton Omohundro Davidson's case shows how a response to sex trafficking using emotion and sexuality defensively did not transcend the practice. On the contrary, Hinton's strategy reinforced dependence on it, substituting mastery and management for subjection. Her case shows was the grit and guile -- and plasticity -- it took to rise in the trafficking business. Her legacy tended to whitewash the past as she reinvented herself and her children as middling, white, and respectable.

Sex trafficking was and is capitalism's slavery, which I distinguish here from slavery's capitalism. Viewing *the antebellum slave market* as a component of "slave-racial capitalism" tends to frame it as an abortive part of modern capitalist development and nineteenth-century statecraft. It hints at a redemptive Civil War for whose sins 750,000 Americans died between 1861 and 1865 as part of a global transition from "war capitalism" to a less violent successor. Instead of a sequel to *The Middle Passage*, sex trafficking was a process linking (mostly) female subjects from a range of backgrounds, ethnicities, linguistic groups, and geographic regions, a tragic predecessor to current practices. Viewing sex trafficking as a continuing practice links African American history and American slavery to the commoditization of Native Americans' bodies, among many others across time and space.<sup>82</sup> It looks past discussions of who was or was not *a slave*

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<sup>82</sup> Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 14, *passim* (first quotation); Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Knopf, 2014), xvi, *passim* (second quotation); this approach is influenced by Seth Rockman (*Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore*

and focuses instead on markets, mobility, strategy, and subjects' responses. But the approach does have its perils.

Analyzing nineteenth-century sex trafficking using social science and criminology methods distances it from African American history. There is a danger of losing a perspective on the particular violence and historical injustices to which African Americans and especially females like Sweart were subject. As extralegal, summary violence against African Americans in the United States, particularly by civil authorities, again gains widespread attention, the particular racial legacy of American slavery should not be ignored.

But this approach has the potential to connect present day abolitionism to a broader historical context. It sheds light on the excruciatingly persistent practices of enslavement not predicated so much laws of slavery or the political economy of nineteenth-century America as on a global political economy of slavery in which trafficked subjects are invisible even where slavery is illegal. Radical isolation, incremental commoditization, geographic mobility, and invisibility are all characteristics of present-day sex trafficking.

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[Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009]), James F. Brooks (*Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002]), and Joseph C. Miller (Joseph C. Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730-1830* [Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988]) among many others, suggesting connections to scholarship at this conference by Paul Conrad, John Donoghue, John Harris, D. Andrew Johnson, and Joanne Jahnke-Wegner, among those by other participants.