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978-0-521-70398-7 - Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household

Thavolia Glymph

Excerpt

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Introduction

At the deepest levels of a man's being it cannot make sense that he should voluntarily labor for those whose style of thinking declares them to be his enemies and whose triumph in the management of human affairs remain a persistent threat to the dignity of his person.

George Lamming

Tranquility and violence coexist.

Eric Hobsbawm

"The word *home* has died upon my lips."¹ Writing to her son in late June 1865, Mary Jones summed up one outcome of the Civil War. Decades later, Katie Rowe remembered another. "It was de fourth day of June in 1865 I begins to live."² Without slaves to do the work of her home, Jones's world, her home, was dead. In that death, Katie Rowe saw life and a future to claim as her own. As a former mistress and a former slave, Jones and Rowe stood opposite each other in 1865. Once connected by the institution of slavery, they now faced a common task: to build new lives on the ground of freedom. Both were transformed. This book recounts that transformation. It is a story of freedom and unfreedom, race and gender, and nation and citizenship in the world of the nineteenth-century American South. That big abstract story is composed of equally big personal stories, from a woman's right to choose the dress she will wear to her right to live.

The story properly begins before the war, when enslaved and slaveholding women related to each other on the ground of slavery. For Mrs. Jones, the home

¹ Mary Jones to Charles C. Jones, Jr., June 26, 1865 in *Children of Pride: A True Story of Georgia and the Civil War*, ed. Robert Manson Myers (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 1275.

² Katie Rowe in *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography, Oklahoma and Mississippi Narratives*, vol. 7 (Greenwood, CT: Greenwood Publishing Co., 1972), p. 284. Series hereafter cited by name of interviewee.

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that died was, whatever else, a workplace. Enslaved women mopped its floors, dusted its mahogany tables, made its beds, ironed, wet-nursed, and bathed and powdered their owners. In its yard and outbuildings – from kitchens, smokehouses, loom and weaving houses to spring and ice houses, wood sheds, dairies, and chicken houses – enslaved women scoured dishes, made biscuits and pies from scratch, churned butter, turned vegetables cultivated in gardens they worked and freshly-killed chickens into breakfast, supper, and evening meals, and fruits into jams and jellies. They washed damask tablecloths and every piece of clothing their owners wore, raised and fattened the poultry, and fetched wood.³ They were expected to do these things in silence and reverence, barefooted and ill-clothed.⁴ These expectations formed part of the legitimized violence to which they were subjected. The story ends with a transformed plantation household and the emergence of free black and white homes. In the transformed plantation household, former mistresses could no longer command labor or deference. In the new black homes, black women found some privacy and the space to live fuller lives.

Ideas about what constitutes public and private, and differentiates them, are central to all of these matters. The notion of private/public assumes that the household is a family and thus private. This has made it difficult to see the household as a workplace and, beyond gender relations, as a field of power relations and political practices. Historians have long been interested in how questions of power and hegemony informed relations between slaves and slaveholders and between women and men. We have paid less attention to power relations between women.⁵ My task is to reconstruct, as best I can, the day-to-day practices of domination and its responding discontents within the antebellum, wartime, and postbellum plantation households.

Historians have noticed and taken account of violence against slaves in the cotton, rice, sugar, and tobacco fields. Here it is easier to “see” because it took place in a “public” arena where cash crops were produced and came principally from the hands of men – masters, overseers, and slave drivers. Violence and power in the great house, the female side of domination, have not received nearly the commensurate attention. This neglect stems in part from

³ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), pp. 137–38; John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Deborah Gray White, *Ar’n’t I a Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South*, rev. ed., New York: W. W. Norton, 1999).

⁴ See, for example, Jacob Manson, *North Carolina Narratives*, vol. 15, pt. 2, p. 97.

⁵ For an extended discussion of this point, see Chapters 2 and 3. The number of slaves who worked in and around plantation households has been estimated at around one-quarter of all slaves. But as Eugene D. Genovese writes, this is “guesswork honored by time and repetition” and such a large number is plausible only by adding to those whose duties were in the household, the small number of slaves owned by yeomen and slaves whose duties were strictly in the yard, such as gardeners and coach drivers (Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* [New York: Vintage Books, 1974], p. 328).

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the fact that violence in the household took place within a supposed private domain and came from the hands of women. We must remember that the plantation household was also a workplace, not a haven from the economic world, that it was not private or made so by the nature of the labor performed within it or the sex of the managers. I take a lesson from nineteenth century southerners' own view of the home as a political space.⁶ It is not home as an idea but flesh-and-blood practices that make it free or not, and public or private, or not.

Home as a political figure and space comes into focus only when a key misconception is set aside: that the household is a private space. Once the public character of the plantation household comes into full view, so, too, does its life as a "controlling context of power" and a second misconception, that plantation mistresses wielded little or no power.⁷ Nothing could be further from the truth, which comes into focus when we notice that male dominance was not the controlling force within the plantation household. A third misconception interprets the aspirations and actions of black women on the basis of assumptions and questions that have framed the writing of the history of white women. Distinctions between modes of power are diminished. The fact that black and white women experienced different, and particular, modes of power within the plantation household becomes less visible. Just as plantation mistresses can be misconceived as more different than masters than the evidence shows, slave women can be misconceived as more like mistresses than the evidence shows.

If the authority of planter women is defined by the restrictions, legal and customary, imposed by white male authority, their power and violence disappear. On this view, the plantation household held freedom only for its male "white head."⁸ Nothing bars the absurd conclusion that Mary Jones and Katie Rowe were equals by virtue of their femaleness. Indeed some scholars have challenged the idea of the southern lady that animated post-Civil War reminiscences, Lost Cause propaganda, and most historical studies prior to the mid-twentieth century. But their portrait generally depicts planter women as a silent abolitionist constituency and still, thus, as potent allies of slaves, and slave women in particular. Here were hardworking women so handicapped by patriarchy and paternalism that their lives more closely resembled those of enslaved women than the white men who were their fathers, husbands, and

⁶ On sovereignty and everyday sites of power, see Patricia Yaeger, "Introduction: Narrating Space," in *The Geography of Identity*, ed. Patricia Yaeger (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), p. 8; Nell Irvin Painter, "Soul Murder: Toward a Fully Loaded Cost Accounting," in Nell Irvin Painter, *Southern History Across the Color Line* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

⁷ Quote is from E. P. Thompson, *Making History: Writings on History and Culture* (New York: The New York Press, 1994), p. 362.

⁸ Lee Ann Whites, *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender: Augusta, Georgia, 1860–1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), p. 18.

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brothers; here were women who found in their own subjection the basis for an alliance with enslaved women.⁹ Slaves rarely thought this.

Historians of southern women continue to work within a framework that gives such priority to patriarchy, paternalism, and a particular brand of domesticity, that these become paradigmatic for the study of black women in slavery and freedom. This reigning paradigm carries in its fold several unexamined foundational presumptions that work on several levels. Freedom for enslaved women has come to be understood as the right to patriarchy and its kindred domestic norms. As one scholar writes, freedom offered “black women the possibility of returning to the home,” creating conditions in which black “women could be wives and mothers first and laundresses and cotton pickers second.”¹⁰ The contradictions, anachronisms, and foundational assumptions immediately begin to pile up on top of each other. The very phrase, “returning to the home,” owes more to post-World War II discourse than to the realities of the post-Civil War era. It is also a diversion. Moreover, such analyses suggest that whatever claim black women had to domesticity was decidedly different from and trumped by white women’s. The reigning ideology of domesticity did not call on white women to be wives and mothers *and* laundresses and cotton pickers. Indeed, for mistresses, it made work outside the home a disqualifying act.

White women wielded the power of slave ownership. They owned slaves and managed households in which they held the power of life and death, and the importance of those facts for southern women’s identity – black and white – were enormous. In the antebellum period, white women were clearly subordinate in fundamental ways to white men, but far from being victims of the slave system, they dominated slaves.¹¹ The first part of this book studies the female face of slave owners’ power. Its legacy for the Civil War and Reconstruction (and after) is the central focus of the second part. I begin by reconstructing the world of women in the plantation household. Cultural nostalgia sometimes

⁹ This historiography has its modern roots in Anne Firor Scott’s pioneering *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830–1930*, 25th Anniversary Edition (1970; Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1995) and Catherine Clinton’s *The Plantation Mistress: Woman’s World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982). For more recent elaborations of the thesis, see, for example, Leslie A. Schwalm, *A Hard Fight for We: Women’s Transition from Slavery to Freedom in South Carolina* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Brenda E. Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Brenda E. Stevenson, “Gender Convention, Ideals, and Identity among Antebellum Virginia Slawomen,” in *More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 183–90; and Marli F. Weiner, *Mistresses and Slaves: Plantation Women in South Carolina, 1830–80* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), pp. 123–24; among others.

¹⁰ Quotes are from, respectively, Jim Cullen, “‘T’s a Man Now’: Gender and African American Men,” in *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*, ed. Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 90, and Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (1985; reprint, New York: Vintage, 1995), p. 46. See also Whites, *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender*, pp. 6–7.

¹¹ For an important corrective on this point, see White, *Ar’n’t I a Woman?*, rev. ed., pp. 6–7.

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gives priority to what Frederick Douglass called the “seeming” and Renato Rosaldo “the elegance of manners,” both of which in fact sit atop “relations of dominance and subordination.”¹² Once we acknowledge that white women wielded the power of slave ownership, then our culture’s fascination with slavery’s and mistresses’s seeming elegance and “veneer of manners” becomes visible as a dodge and can be cleared away. Not only did white women’s violence, and their ownership and management of slaves make it impossible for black people to see them as ideal models of a “kind and gentle womanhood,” but they resulted in specific practices of resistance. Chapters 1 and 2 investigate the female face of slaveholding power particularly as it was expressed through violence against enslaved women in the plantation household. Contrary to most interpretations, violence on the part of white women was integral to the making of slavery, crucial to shaping black and white women’s understanding of what it meant to be female, and no more defensible than masters’ violence. At the same time, white women’s violence contradicted prevailing conceptions of white womanhood – and still does.

White women beat slave women and, more rarely, killed them in ways so disturbing that historians have judged them barbaric. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese writes of the “inherent injustice and inevitable atrocities” associated with white female violence. “In the heat of the moment,” Jacqueline Jones notes, “white women devised barbaric forms of punishment that resulted in the mutilation or permanent scarring” of female slaves.¹³ “In the course of reading plantation documents,” Winthrop Jordan expressed surprise at finding so much evidence of white women’s violence.¹⁴ Still, Jordan was unable to see this violence as more than special cases or aberrations “by white women.” In the main, historians have dismissed or minimized that womanly female violence. Mistresses “had in fact slapped, hit or even brutally whipped their slaves – particularly slave women or children,” Drew Faust writes, despite the fact that the “exercise of the violence fundamental to slavery was overwhelmingly the responsibility and prerogative of white men. A white woman disciplined and punished as the master’s subordinate and surrogate. Rationalized, systematic, autonomous, and instrumental use of violence belonged to men.”¹⁵

¹² Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, (1855; reprint, New York: Dover 1969), p. 111; Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1989), p. 68. As Rosaldo also notes, “a mood of nostalgia makes racial domination appear innocent and pure” (Ibid). See also Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” trans. Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15 (Winter 2003): 21–22.

¹³ Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, p. 132; Jones, *Labor of Love*, pp. 26–27. Jones nonetheless views such violence as occurring in “the heat of the moment.” Following this line of reasoning, Stephanie M. H. Camp argues that white female violence “was typically impulsive and passionate.” (Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004], p. 132.)

¹⁴ Winthrop D. Jordan, *Tumult and Silence at Second Creek: An Inquiry into a Civil War Slave Conspiracy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), pp. 201–2.

¹⁵ Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), p. 63.

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In part to preserve gentle feeling, mistresses generally defended their violence as heat of passion responses (even this demands investigation) and historians have tended to follow suit. However, as Eric Hobsbawm reminds us, uncontrolled violence, “blind lashings,” even when it does not kill, is “more frightening, because both more random and cruel, inasmuch as this kind of violence is its own reward.”¹⁶ Whatever its degree or prevalence, white women’s violence was connected to and supported the larger culture of violence. The notion of a gentle and noble white womanhood rode uncomfortably in tandem with the ideology of domesticity that, with roots in Western Europe, came to play an increasingly central part in how nineteenth-century white northerners and southerners thought about themselves. In the South, white gender ideals clashed with white women’s domestic dominance.

Chapter 3 explores the interplay of notions of domesticity and ideologies of race and slavery within the plantation household. Slaveholding women were called on to make their homes and themselves models of domestic virtue but depended on the work of slave women to accomplish these objectives. Southern prescriptive ideals asked them to “play the lady” *and* to be “domestic manager,” and judged them according to both yardsticks. Accomplishing this required that they be both submissive and dominant. Their manners had to be perfect and their households had to demonstrate attention to order, punctuality, and economy. Failure threatened their status as ladies and the institution of slavery.

Success, in turn, depended on the cooperation of black women who notoriously refused to play their part. The ideology of domesticity required enslaved women to work for the plantation household as if their own interests were involved. Their failure to do so made it hard for mistresses to meet the emerging standards of domesticity. Mistresses couched black women’s noncooperation as a refusal to be “better girls,” in terms that suggested innate backwardness. This, not discontent under slavery, made them unalterably inefficient, slothful, and dirty. This was the source of their “misbehavior” and could be used to explain mistresses’s violent responses and their inability to create the ideal domestic home, to be “better girls” themselves. Violence against enslaved women was thus justified. The disjuncture between these views and the fact that beds got made, meals cooked, clothes washed and ironing done, floors scrubbed, babies nursed, beds turned back, jams made, flies swatted, and much more is glaring but not unexplainable. In the end, black women’s noncooperation defined and marked the failure of southern domesticity and simultaneously the defeat of its accomplice, the ideology of a gentle and noble white womanhood.

The Civil War made possible a sustained assault on the southern white planter “home.” From 1861 to 1865, slave women targeted the planter household, the scene of “so much devilment,” for destruction, desecration,

¹⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, *Revolutionaries* (1973; reprint, New York: New Press, 2002), p. 253.

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occupation, and transformation.¹⁷ It is by now a commonplace of historical scholarship that domestic workers were often the first to flee slavery. Chapter 4 links their flight to the physical and psychological violence that had come from the hands of white women before the war rather than, in the way of much revisionist scholarship, to a desire on the part of enslaved women to mimic the gender ideals of the planter class. In their actions and words, slave women rejected the white household's symbolic and political meanings and its work. The transformation of the plantation household (and sometimes its literal destruction), with its claims to domesticity and civilization and violence, was a major goal of freedom as slaves understood it.

During and after the Civil War, mistresses fought to reestablish their claims to class and race privileges and to deny and turn back the efforts of black women to redefine the meaning of womanhood, freedom, family, home, and domestic economy. Black women won important victories and suffered defeats, but in the end they gained the larger victory. Slaveholding households great and small were irreversibly transformed and free black homes emerged.¹⁸ What came to replace the antebellum plantation household was a hybrid formation, a cobbled-together patchwork of labor practices that bore the imprint of past experience and that carried the promises of freedom; the process which shaped this result was, in important respects, similar to that taking place simultaneously in the South's cotton and sugar cane fields. Subjected to a free labor market, former mistresses had to learn how to be employers and former slave women, employees. The meaning of southern womanhood also changed. None of these changes were guaranteed by the Union military victory or the constitutionally legislated emancipation that came in its wake. Remembering slavery, black women did not make the going easy. White women found the process demeaning and the loss of status appalling.

Chapters 5 and 6 unravel the particular initiatives on the part of freedwomen that fueled these changes and the adjustments in domestic work that transformed black and white homes and set them on a path to becoming free homes. These initiatives introduced mistresses to free labor practices – from bargaining, hiring, firing, and contracting for labor to accepting the right of employees to quit – however reluctant pupils they were – and to working for a living themselves. Former slave women took the lead in initiating these processes, but they too had much to learn. I mean to detail some of the precise forms this struggle took and how they guided the making of freedom and the remaking of southern womanhood. Though Reconstruction historiography has given the more prominent role to the more public battles over black freedom and citizenship, this struggle between women informed the other struggles as well – over land, family formation, wage labor in the fields, and black male

¹⁷ Quote is from Charles Royster, *The Destructive War: William Tecumseh Sherman, Stonewall Jackson, and the Americans* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), p. 344.

¹⁸ Black homes, of course, remained under attack and faced new forms of, and more intense, violence. But this was precisely because they were free.

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suffrage. It was part and parcel of struggles over the right to move about and to talk freely. The return of black women to domestic work was related to all of these battles. Where domestic work provided “ready cash,” it could mean the difference between starvation and survival for fragile black household economies. The institution of a free wage economy in domestic work was inseparable from the larger struggles of emancipation.

Domestic workers, like field hands, fought to preserve privileges long established as virtual “rights.” They tasked their labor – which some scholars mistakenly see as a postwar development – and determined a value for it that corresponded to their sense of a just rate. The very nature of slavery in the household and its management meant that mistresses often had little precise knowledge about such matters as how much time it took to wash or iron a certain amount of laundry. In slavery, there were wash days and ironing days, and the amount of work expected had been determined in large part by how much actually got done. Slave women had, themselves, over the course of time, set these standards. After slavery, they adapted the terminology of the task system used in field labor, made the calculations, and moved to put them in place: So many pieces of clothing or linen equaled so many tasks of washing and ironing.

As historians have shown, former mistresses were forced to do some or all of their own domestic work for a time, to take on for the first time in their lives the work slaves had previously done. Some became waged workers for the first time. Others founded mutual aid societies to help support themselves and their families.¹⁹ They peddled old dresses to freedwomen; made and sold jams, preserves, and clothing; sewed for a living; taught in black schools; and took in boarders, not as a gesture of southern hospitality but to pay the bills. These and other endeavors signaled a radical shift in power and gender relations. When former mistresses went before the public to sell their wares in order to feed and clothe themselves and their families, *and to pay for their domestic help*, they acknowledged just how massive the break was. A change in the tone of admonitions from fathers and husbands on the dire necessity for change also marked the break. Former masters stressed with greater force than ever before the need to take domestic economy seriously. Yet, no matter how financially distressed they were, white women were determined to hold on to black domestic labor even when doing so required that they work to pay for it. The labor they got was not what they wanted or believed they were entitled to.

The end of slavery also brought another important development: The plantation household’s façade of privacy was stripped away, fully exposing its public realm. Freedom gave black women the right to quit as it gave white women the right to fire them. It gave them the right to move about to seek other employment and to openly discuss the characters of their employers, to gossip about them. One achievement of gossip is to make the home more

¹⁹ Ladies Mutual Aid Association (Charleston, SC), Handbill, ca. 1866 (43/0996), SCHS.

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public, along with the abuses that take place there. Freedwomen who gossiped about white employers transmitted information about the personal and intimate lives of their employers as well as their character as employers and the work conditions in their homes. Slaves had always gossiped about the goings-on in plantation households. One of the important accomplishments of freedom was to multiply the number of witnesses and broadcast their testimonies at the moment and into the twentieth century. In forcing slave women to stay put in the plantation household, slavery by the same stroke veiled home truths. The mobility that accompanied emancipation tore away the veil. Speaking of the “scenes of cruelty” in the fields, Frederick Douglass made the sharp point that they were “enacted and witnessed.”²⁰ The witnesses were slaves, he among them. In the ex-slave narratives we have many witnesses.

No longer legally bound to the white household after the Civil War, former slaves set out to demolish the residue of that attachment, which legislation was powerless to efface, as one of their first political acts. Former mistresses struggled to get along with free laborers whose “loyalty” they could no longer even pretend to command. Even when black women had no choice but to take employment in white homes, the terms upon which they did so changed radically. Sometimes, external appearances suggest otherwise, a sort of costumed continuity. The discontinuities become most apparent in actions such as former mistresses bargaining over how many pieces of laundry constituted a task. Such women would have been less inclined than scholars to find more continuity than discontinuity in the postwar plantation household. The costumes and the sets may have been old, but the dialogue and the actions were new.

Historians have chronicled the rich history of black people’s claims to autonomy, from the reconstitution and formation of families and the establishment of their own educational, religious, and self-help organizations to the thirst for land and political rights. They have paid less attention to how such matters informed black women’s quest for dignity as much as land, family rights, and religious freedom. The term “autonomy,” today’s watchword of freedom from the bottom up, often conceals more than reveals how people acted, what they sought to achieve in action, or the actual standards on which their actions were based. In demanding better pay and working conditions, respect, and an end to the power of white women to control their lives, freedwomen demonstrated their belief that freedom alone, without dignity, pride, and their own self-fashioned identity, was a dead end.

In historical scholarship, freedom is often reified as a “thing” or a “place” that one can “obtain” or “go to.” But freedom is not separate from the understandings and intuitions of those who seek it, or live it. It is related to, but not congruent with, its official features deliverable by the actions of the state and certainly not subsumable under what E. P. Thompson called “the need for respect and status among working people themselves.”²¹ Whatever one

²⁰ Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, p. 92.

²¹ Thompson, *Making History*, p. 362.

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(validly) says about wages and political participation as “freedom,” an authentically historical vision cannot be deemed adequate unless it can accommodate Virginia Newman’s idea of freedom: “a blue guinea with yaler spots.”²² This was Newman’s first “bought dress,” and it represented, for her, control over her “whole life” and, concomitantly, the diminished control white people had over it. In the same way, black people’s claim to leisure time eroded the customary practices that slaveholders had relied on to exact the fullest measure of their labor.²³

A wide world of actions can be formulated as the needs of identity, or the requirements of a particular “identity.”²⁴ Actions also testify to the fact that freedom had to be built. Freedom for mistresses was not a thing or place, either, but once again, a wide world of actions. Virginia Newman’s purchase of a store-bought dress emancipated her from her former mistress’s purview and control, a key component of planter women’s antebellum identity. Freedom meant that white women lost the power of giving “gifts” like clothing (made, of course, by their purported beneficiaries, of cloth purchased by their labor), and hand-me-downs (purchased, again, with profits from the labor of slaves) or to “help” their slaves (with problems resulting from slavery itself).

The small aspects of the large status of slavery and freedom come into view with the actions of Virginia Newman. Chapter 7 explores the operation of small oppressions in the exercise of power and the struggles of black women to unweave the inequalities that were a part of everyday life. Understanding the theoretical and narrative divide that has often separated discussions of the transformation of the plantation household and the agricultural economy in the postwar South is as central to this task as understanding how white women’s domination fit into larger repressions. The priorities of black women that led them to seek part-time work in white homes, to remove tasks previously done in white homes to their own, and to turn labor in their own homes to the production of products for the market and their families had repercussions for women who did not turn to domestic work as a source of income. Those priorities helped to make for labor shortages in domestic work that, in turn, led former masters and mistresses to attempt to force women whose contractual obligations were to field labor to work overtime in white homes without pay. In the end, black women’s struggles were joined, whether they labored as field hands, domestic workers, or in their own homes. Former slaveholders,

²² George P. Rawick, ed., *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979); Virginia Newman, *Texas Narratives*, vol. 5, pt. 3, Supplement Series 2, p. 151. Slave narratives in this series are hereafter cited by the name of the interviewee.

²³ See E. P. Thompson, “Patrician Society, Plebian Culture,” *Journal of Social History* 7 (Summer 1974): 383 and 391.

²⁴ For a salient and sobering analysis of the use and misuse of “identity” as a category of analysis and of practice, see Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond ‘identity,’” *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 1–47, and Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).