Masters, Slaves, and Exchange

This book examines the political economy of the master-slave relation viewed through the lens of consumption and market exchange. What did it mean when human chattel bought commodities, “stole” property, or gave and received gifts? Forgotten exchanges, this study argues, measured the deepest questions of worth and value, shaping an enduring struggle for power between slaves and masters. The slaves’ internal economy focused intense patronalist negotiation on a ground where categories of exchange – provision, gift, contraband, and commodity – were in constant flux. At once binding and alienating, these ties endured constant moral stresses and material manipulation by masters and slaves alike, galvanizing conflict and engendering complex new social relations on and off the plantation.

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To my parents,

Margaret and Anthony Hilliard
Masters, Slaves, and Exchange

*Power’s Purchase in the Old South*

KATHLEEN M. HILLIARD

*Iowa State University*
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The experience of writing this book, I am chagrined to say, has often seemed to undermine the very argument it strives to make. I have received so many gifts freely bestowed; incurred countless debts graciously forgiven; trespassed without penalty upon the time of archivists, colleagues, and friends; and entered into a wealth of intellectual exchanges without the least concern of short-changing my partners. I guess that goes to show it is still sometimes possible to embrace scholarly exchange and the life of the mind beyond the purview of power and the dash for cash. Lucky me.

Fortunate I was, first off, to wander into Mark Smith’s nineteenth-century seminar during my first term of grad school at the University of South Carolina. At that early point in my academic career, I understood little of what graduate education entailed, and Smith’s course was a trial-by-fire experience that left me hooked on southern history. As teacher and mentor, his enthusiasm was immeasurable. Yet, Mark knew when to hold back, too. For both careful guidance and the gift of intellectual space to explore my own ideas, I cannot thank him enough. I offer my appreciation as well to Lawrence Glickman, Paul Johnson, Daniel Littlefield, Katherine Grier, Lacy Ford, Thomas Brown, and Walter Edgar. Well into revision, their comments, insights, and wonderfully divergent perspectives on antebellum society and economy helped shape this book.

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great food to my door when deadlines loomed. She remains a trusted colleague, friend, and critic. As her own manuscript goes forward, I hope that I may mirror her collegiality, kindness, and support.

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Last Christmas, I unwrapped a package of bright pink pencils, my name and academic title embossed upon each. They’re the key prop in a running joke within my family: Margaret and Anthony Hilliard have long threatened to show up to conferences and classrooms, passing these out to friends, colleagues, and students, a commodified sign of my labors, and of the close tie between us. Today, the splash of color in my desk drawer reminds me daily of the love, support, and good-humored perspective they have offered over the years, and all the writing I have yet to do. Let this book serve as poor payment for those pencils, and all the wonderful things they stand for. Masters, Slaves, and Exchange is dedicated to my parents, with love.

Pencils to sharpen, books to write, archives to plumb, the journey ahead is all the more exciting with Lawrence McDonnell at my side. Larry and I came together in work and love over an awful dinner at a hole-in-the-wall restaurant in Washington, DC’s, Chinatown, fates sealed, so the fortune cookie said. Every day since has been a gift. My thanks to him, for everything, knows no bounds.
### Archive Abbreviations

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>DUKE</td>
<td>David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDAH</td>
<td>Georgia Department of Archives and History, Morrow, Georgia</td>
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<tr>
<td>GHS</td>
<td>Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LVA</td>
<td>Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCOAH</td>
<td>North Carolina Office of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCDAH</td>
<td>South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina</td>
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<td>SCHS</td>
<td>South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCL</td>
<td>South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina</td>
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<tr>
<td>SHC</td>
<td>Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, North Carolina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VHS</td>
<td>Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia</td>
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