

## Sambo and the Slave Narratives: A Note on Sources

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In his 1971 article, "Rebels and Sambos: The Search for the Negro's Personality in Slavery," Kenneth M. Stampp reaffirmed the contention of his 1956 major work on slavery, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South*, that American slaves were "a troublesome property."<sup>1</sup> Sources by blacks themselves, asserted Stampp, reinforced his interpretation, because "Neither the slave narratives nor the Negro's oral tradition give validity to Sambo as the typical plantation slave; rather their emphasis is on the slave dissemblers and the ways in which they deceived their masters."<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, an investigation of the most commonly cited slave narratives and the methods with which historians have used them indicates that these sources provide insufficient evidence for any final conclusions about slave personality.

Stampp's assertion becomes extremely important to the historiography of slavery. Since 1959 historians have debated Stanley M. Elkins's provocative Sambo Thesis, developed in *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*.<sup>3</sup> According to Elkins a lack of institutional controls over slaveholders in the United States made American slavery a "closed system" in which the master had complete authority over his bondsmen. From this Elkins argued that "absolute power for [the master] meant absolute dependency for the slave — the dependency not of the developing child but of the perpetual child."<sup>4</sup> Thus, he concluded, the slave system in the United States produced a typical slave personality marked by infantile behavior, which personality he designated "Sambo." Because of

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the paucity of valid sources on slave personality, historians have experienced difficulty in empirically analyzing Elkins's hypothesis. Indeed, Elkins himself turned to an analogy with the Nazi concentration camps in order to demonstrate "the infantilizing tendencies of absolute power."<sup>5</sup> Yet if Stamp's claim is true, evidence from the slaves themselves lies at hand to contradict Elkins's hypothesis.

Other scholars besides Stamp have advocated the use of slave narratives, autobiographies of ex-slaves, as sources for a new view of slavery. For instance, William W. Nichols, describing slave narratives as "Dismissed Evidence in the Writing of Southern History," claimed that "when the slave narratives are given a close reading in the light of Elkins's hypothesis, they may well provide substantive evidence to refute his view of the typical plantation slave as a 'Sambo'."<sup>6</sup> Howard Zinn, in his *The Politics of History*, called for a "slave-oriented" history of slavery "drawn from the narratives of fugitive slaves."<sup>7</sup> Such a history would present "the facts as seen by the victims," and Zinn confidently predicted the emergence of a different view of slavery than that found in traditional histories.<sup>8</sup>

In fact, however, since the publication of Elkins's theory, three historians have published book-length studies of slavery based on evidence obtained from slave autobiographies. In 1963 Charles H. Nichols rejected the Sambo Thesis in his *Many Thousand Gone; The Ex-Slaves' Account of Their Bondage and Freedom*.<sup>9</sup> More recently, Stanley Feldstein in *Once A Slave; The Slave's View of Slavery* and John W. Blassingame in *The Slave Community; Plantation Life in the Ante-Bellum South* also used slave accounts to argue against Elkins's conclusions.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the slave narratives that these authors used provide only an incomplete picture of slavery and, moreover, they do not refute the Sambo Thesis.

These authors relied on the published autobiographies of former slaves rather than on the WPA slave narratives, interviews with ex-slaves which the Federal Writers Project of the Works Progress Administration conducted during the late 1930's.<sup>11</sup> These former slaves were, of course, quite old at the time of the interviews and most of them experienced slavery only during childhood. In fact, only sixteen percent of those



interviewed had reached the age of twenty-one by 1865.<sup>12</sup> As C. Vann Woodward has pointed out, childhood was "a period before the full rigors and worst aspects of the slave discipline were typically felt and a period more likely than others to be favorably colored in the memory of the aged."<sup>13</sup> In his review article on the WPA collection, Woodward pointed out "evidence of skewed sampling of several kinds" and potentially "serious sources of distortion" in the interviews.<sup>14</sup> Regardless of that, however, the most important problem for an examination of slave personality is the very short length of the WPA narratives, as few of them exceed ten pages in typescript. Also, the WPA project, directed by men such as John A. Lomax and B. A. Botkin, emphasized the folklore of the ex-slaves. Indeed, the Folklore Division of the Federal Writers Project rather than the Project's Office of Negro Affairs directed the collection of the interviews.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, the individually published slave narratives are much longer and, because of their focus on the life story of a single individual, they would appear to be the sources of first choice for the study of slave personality.

In order to investigate the nature of the published slave narratives, this study examines the lives of thirty-six ex-slaves who wrote autobiographies. These thirty-six narratives were chosen primarily for their availability. Although the number of narratives studied here may seem quite small, the authors who relied on narratives in their studies of slavery obtained the majority of their evidence from these thirty-six accounts. Of the three authors who wrote books based on narratives, only Stanley Feldstein listed more than one hundred works by ex-slaves in his bibliography and Feldstein did not use fifty-six of his one hundred twenty-eight bibliography entries.<sup>16</sup> In fact all these historians relied for the greater part of their evidence on a much smaller number of accounts than the total number in their bibliographical listings. Included in the thirty-six narratives are all eight individual accounts cited by Kenneth M. Stamp in *The Peculiar Institution*. Although only forty-seven percent of the narratives listed in Charles H. Nichols's bibliography came from this group, it represented eighty-six percent of his documentation from slave sources. The thirty-six narratives made up but fifty-one percent of John W. Blassingame's bibliography yet provided seventy-two



percent of his evidence from such sources. Despite Stanley Feldstein's stated intention "to present a picture using the less-known, if not completely unknown, slave narratives," fifty-seven percent of his evidence came from the thirty-six accounts, but only twenty-eight percent of his bibliographical listings.<sup>17</sup> Obviously if the thirty-six narratives are not valid sources their unreliability severely weakens the conclusions of these historians.

All thirty-six former slaves wrote between 1836 and 1911, most shortly after escaping to freedom. Narratives published between 1830 and 1865 often served as propaganda for the anti-slavery movement. Thus the concerns of the authors and their editors for the Northern white audience may have distorted the picture of slavery found in the narratives, and the autobiographies written after the Civil War possibly suffer from the vagaries characteristic of reminiscences. Nevertheless, historians advocating the use of narratives argue that a critical approach eliminates such influences.<sup>18</sup>

Stanley M. Elkins's hypothesis that slaves accepted their condition challenged Kenneth M. Stamp's earlier conclusions found in *The Peculiar Institution*. Arguing that slaves were not content in bondage, Stamp had declared, "That they [slaves] had no understanding of freedom, and therefore accepted bondage as their natural condition is hard to believe."<sup>19</sup> In light of Stamp's recent claim that the slave narratives challenge the Sambo Thesis, it is revealing to begin by examining his uses of them.

Although Stamp reported testimony of eight ex-slaves, he relied heavily on only one account, Frederick Douglass's *My Bondage and My Freedom*.<sup>20</sup> He cited that narrative twenty-nine times compared with thirty-five references to the other seven combined. Of course, Douglass's autobiography is hardly an undiscovered source, for historians beginning with James Ford Rhodes have used his account with confidence.<sup>21</sup> Stamp also relied heavily on Benjamin Drew's *A Northside View of Slavery; The Refugee*, a collection of interviews with former slaves living in Canada.<sup>22</sup> Because of the short length of these accounts and since they often tell only of escape from bondage, the book fails to give the fuller view of slave life found in the individual narratives.



If slave autobiographies do indeed afford a different view of slavery, Stamppp exploited them in a rather conservative way. Even to establish that slaves yearned for freedom, Stamppp buttressed his documentation from four slave narratives with observations from the oft-employed travel accounts of Frederick Law Olmstead and James Stirling.<sup>23</sup> Stamppp did use the slave testimony effectively to provide a view of human reactions to slavery. For example, he quoted Solomon Northup's report that picking cotton required more skill than Northup, a kidnapped free black, had expected.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, when discussing fugitive slaves, Stamppp referred to Frederick Douglass's "graphic description of the fears he and several other slaves shared when they planned to escape."<sup>25</sup>

Stamppp used reports of ex-slaves most often in combination with traditional sources such as plantation records and accounts of travelers. In support of his conclusion that each slave quarters "contained one or two members whom the others looked to for leadership," he cited as evidence Solomon Northup's account, a contemporary magazine article, two reports of travelers, and a planter's diary.<sup>26</sup> The ex-slave's opinion may give strength to the passage, but it complemented rather than altered the traditional sources Stamppp employed.

Stamppp's cautious use of slave narratives may have stemmed from reservations about their validity. In a discussion of sources, he noted that reports of all witnesses "were rarely uncompromised by internal emotions or external pressures," and he asked a question which applies to many of the slave autobiographies: "How much was Northup's book influenced by his amanuensis and by the preconceptions of his potential Northern readers?"<sup>27</sup> Writing in 1918, Ulrich Bonnell Phillips found the probability of such influence sufficient reason for not using slave narratives in his study of American slavery, claiming that "books of this class are generally of dubious value."<sup>28</sup> Unlike Phillips, Stamppp utilized narratives as sources, but overall the resemblances between Stamppp's and Phillips's documentation outweigh the differences. As both C. Vann Woodward and David M. Potter noted in reviews of *The Peculiar Institution*, the difference between Stamppp and earlier historians of slavery lay in Stamppp's assumptions rather than his source-work.<sup>29</sup>



Since 1956 two historians have written histories of slavery based almost entirely on the narratives, and in both cases the authors claimed to have presented the slave's view of slavery. Charles H. Nichols's *Many Thousand Gone* and Stanley Feldstein's *Once A Slave* are sufficiently similar in method and conclusions that they should be considered together. Their emphasis on slave resistance places them in opposition to the Sambo Thesis.

Nevertheless, their common method of quoting short statements from the narratives, often out of context, led to distortions of what the former slaves actually wrote. For example, when arguing for the widespread existence of slave resistance, Nichols pointed to Solomon Northup's description of a planned shipboard slave revolt.<sup>30</sup> He failed to report, however, Northup's statement that the conspiracy involved only three slaves, all kidnapped freemen, because, as Northup recalled, "There was not another slave we dared to trust." "Brought up in fear and ignorance as they are," Northup contended, "it can scarcely be conceived how servilely they will cringe before a white man's look."<sup>31</sup> Thus Northup's description of the conspiracy could more validly illustrate slave docility than resistance.

Although the narrators customarily made clear when they spoke for slaves as a group and when they spoke for themselves, Nichols and Feldstein often treated descriptions of individual experiences as general accounts of slavery conditions. When discussing loyal slaves, Feldstein cited Josiah Henson's narrative as though Henson had described the phenomenon of slave loyalty when in fact Henson referred only to his own experiences as a proud trusted slave.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, in a discussion of black slave drivers, Feldstein reported Solomon Northup's opinion that "some drivers treated their slave gangs well."<sup>33</sup> Northup, however, did not express such a sweeping opinion; he only described his own method while serving as a driver, and he also noted that the black driver he had replaced had been "severe in the extreme."<sup>34</sup>

Recently a number of historians challenging the Sambo Thesis have based their arguments on the idea of slave community, reasoning that even slaves who suffered the worst of conditions endured without succumbing to infantilization through the psychological support provided by this community. In order to



prove the existence of a psyche-sustaining community in the plantation slave quarters, these historians have relied on evidence from the slave narratives and the collected songs and stories of the slaves. Articles on slave community by Sterling Stuckey and Lawrence W. Levine served as prototypes for the more comprehensive presentation and conclusions of John W. Blassingame's *The Slave Community*.<sup>35</sup> All three authors cited the testimony of ex-slaves but, as in the case of Nichols and Feldstein, careless use of the narratives distorted the evidence available from these sources.

For example, Levine and Blassingame cited the testimony of Frederick Douglass that the song ending with the line "I don't expect to stay much longer here" had a double meaning for Douglass "and many of his fellow slaves."<sup>36</sup> Douglass, however, wrote that the song

was a favorite air, and had a double meaning. In the lips of some, it meant the expectation of a speedy summons to a world of spirits; but in the lips of *our* company [Douglass and five companions], it simply meant, a speedy pilgrimage toward a free state, a deliverance from all the evils and dangers of slavery.<sup>37</sup>

Blassingame, quoting Douglass, combined the two sentences and, with an ellipsis, removed Douglass's caution that "some" did not perceive a double meaning.<sup>38</sup> Thus, he gave the statement a general character that Douglass did not intend for it.

All of the historians who used testimony of ex-slaves, except Lawrence W. Levine, quoted Douglass's contention that slaves sang only to express their sorrow.<sup>39</sup> None of them noted, though, that Douglass also said,

I did not, when a slave, understand the deep meaning of those rude, and apparently incoherent songs. I was myself within the circle, so that I neither saw nor heard as those without might see and hear. They told a tale which was then altogether beyond my feeble comprehension.<sup>40</sup>

Obviously, by its very nature, the slave community would be a



phenomenon of the larger holdings where a sufficient number of slaves resided to form such a community. Although none of the advocates of slave community emphasized differences between slave life on large holdings and on small holdings, all of the historians discussed above assumed that the former-slave writers "spoke for the silent millions," the typical plantation slaves.<sup>41</sup> The authors of the thirty-six narratives considered here, however, had little experience as field hands on the large holdings where Stanley Elkins asserted that Sambo predominated. Elkins was emphatic that Sambo was a plantation field hand, not a house servant or slave craftsman.<sup>42</sup>

Thirty-four of the authors spent their childhood in the North or in the Border States where large plantations were much less the rule than in the Deep South.<sup>43</sup> The only exceptions, Jacob Stroyer and I. E. Lowery, lived on South Carolina plantations but neither served as a field hand, and both became free in their teens.<sup>44</sup> As a result of his master's bankruptcy, adolescent Jermain Loguen moved from Tennessee to a plantation in Alabama where he said that he "felt for the first time, what it was like to be a slave."<sup>45</sup> Aged twelve when sold South, John Brown credited his friendship with a proud kidnapped freeman with sustaining his spirit through his years on a Georgia plantation.<sup>46</sup> Of the narrators, only Peter Randolph spent all his life in bondage as a field hand, in Virginia, and he reported that neighboring slaveholders considered his master too lenient in his treatment of his slaves.<sup>47</sup>

Charles Ball recorded the fullest account of life on a Southern plantation found in the thirty-six autobiographies. From his experiences he reported that "the coloured people here [Maryland and Virginia] have many advantages over those of the cotton region."<sup>48</sup> To Ball the most important difference between the regions was that "Flogging — though often severe and excruciating in Maryland, is not practised with the order, regularity and system to which it is reduced in the South."<sup>49</sup> Not taken South until a grown man, Ball's early experiences, particularly as a cook in a Washington, D. C., shipyard where he met free black sailors, prepared him psychologically to resist the pressures of plantation life. His master, recognizing his abilities, made Ball a slave driver and later gave him charge of a fishing operation located some distance from the plantation.



Although many did perform field labor at one time or another, the rest of the narrators spent most of their lives in other work. Sixteen of the ex-slaves served as house servants, two of whom, William Wells Brown and Moses Roper, later worked as stewards on riverboats.<sup>50</sup> The tobacco industry provided work for three of the authors: Henry Box Brown and Henry Clay Bruce worked in tobacco manufactories, and Lunsford Lane, allowed to hire his time, sold pipes and his own special blend of tobacco throughout North Carolina. Ten of the narrators had the unusual privilege of hiring their time, three of whom, Lunsford Lane, Moses Grandy, and James Mars, purchased their freedom with money earned in this way.<sup>51</sup> Apprenticed to a trade, eight of the narrators learned skills which gave them a more independent position in the slave system. Noah Davis and James L. Smith learned the shoemaker's trade, Jacob Stroyer and John Brown learned carpentry, William Hayden became a ropemaker, James W. C. Pennington a blacksmith, and Austin Steward's master bound him out to a teamster. Isaac Jefferson, who belonged to Thomas Jefferson, learned the "tinner's trade" in Philadelphia while his master was Secretary of State and later he managed Jefferson's "nail business."

An apprenticed slave usually lived with the tradesman and this often involved moving to a town, away from the plantation. According to the 1850 census, only thirteen percent of American slaves lived in urban areas, yet thirty-six percent (thirteen) of the authors spent an important part of their lives in towns or cities.<sup>52</sup> As Richard C. Wade has pointed out, although slaves in the cities were never allowed to forget their bondage, nevertheless they "carved out an area of independence without analogue on farm or plantation."<sup>53</sup> Urban life seemed an improvement over the plantation according to reports of the ex-slaves. Peter Randolph wrote that "the slaves in the cities do not fare so hard as on the plantation . . .," and Frederick Douglass, who lived both in Baltimore and on a plantation, declared, "A city slave is almost a freeman compared with a slave on a plantation."<sup>54</sup>

These fortunate experiences attenuate the utility of the slave narratives for evidence of community in the plantation slave quarters. Despite John W. Blassingame's recent assertion that "all of the narrators go behind the curtain and delineate the



features of life in the quarters . . .," the few examples of slave community described in the autobiographies occurred on small holdings.<sup>55</sup> Solomon Northup described life on Edwin Epps's farm as a true community where the slaves protected one another from the master, whom they contemptuously referred to as "Old Hogjaw."<sup>56</sup> Epps, however, owned only nine slaves. According to Blassingame in *The Slave Community*, "Douglass wrote that the slaves on his plantation: 'were true as steel, and no band of brothers could have been more loving.'"<sup>57</sup> Douglass actually referred to life on what he described as William Freeland's "old worn-out farm" where the work force consisted of just five men: two slaves belonging to Freeland, two hired slaves (one of them Douglass), and one free black.<sup>58</sup>

In fact, these thirty-six narratives tell very little about slave life on large holdings, and, because Stanley Elkins described Sambo as a plantation slave, they therefore provide insufficient evidence for historians challenging Elkins's interpretation of slave personality. The fact that one cannot describe any of the narrators themselves as infantilized does not refute the Sambo Thesis, for, as Elkins acknowledged, "It was possible for significant numbers of slaves, in varying degrees, to escape the full impact of the system and its coercions upon personality."<sup>59</sup> Indeed, according to Elkins, "the house servant, the urban mechanic, the slave who arranged his own employment, the responsible slave foreman, and the single slave family owned by a small farmer" all escaped the harshest pressures of slavery.<sup>60</sup>

Historians who cite testimony of former slaves must consider the observations of the narrators about the mass of American slaves as well as their own self-characterizations. For example, Charles Ball claimed that slavery "stupefies the slave with fear, and reduces him below the condition of man . . .," and Jermain Loguen declared that "To be a slave, he must cease to feel he is a man."<sup>61</sup> Both William Green and Henry Box Brown prefigured Elkins when they compared the slaveholder's power to the omnipotence of God. Green said that the master "seems to the slave many times, to have more power than the Almighty Himself," and Brown recalled that, when a child, "I really believed my old master was Almighty God and his son, my young master, was Jesus Christ."<sup>62</sup> Rhetorically, Brown asked,

And why should not my childish fancy be correct, ac-



ording to the blasphemous teachings of the heathen system of slavery? Does not every slaveholder assume exclusive control over all the actions of his unfortunate victims? <sup>63</sup>

Similarly, Frederick Douglass concluded, "Trained from the cradle up, to think and feel that their masters are superior, and invested with a sort of sacredness, there are few slaves who can outgrow or rise above the control which that sentiment exercises." <sup>64</sup>

Further, the former slaves who wrote these life histories on occasion complained themselves of personality damage incurred while in slavery. James W. C. Pennington, for example, was certainly no Sambo. Escaping to the North at twenty-one, he demonstrated his intelligence and ability as a clergyman and anti-slavery leader. Yet in a passage never cited by the scholars of slave resistance, he bitterly recalled:

It cost me two years' hard labour, after I fled, to unshackle my mind; it was three years before I purged my language of slavery's idioms; it was four years before I had thrown off the crouching aspect of slavery; and now the evil that besets me is a great lack of that general information, the foundation of which is most effectively laid in that part of life which I served as a slave. <sup>65</sup>

Stanley M. Elkins's thesis of slave personality may be wrong; certainly its correctness is beyond the scope of this essay. Nevertheless, Elkins acknowledged that avenues of escape from the coercions of the slave system did exist for some fortunate slaves. Hence the evidence to refute his hypothesis should depict slave life under the conditions which Elkins predicted would produce Sambo-like personalities, and the thirty-six accounts examined here fail to do that. Therefore, besides giving a woefully incomplete picture of slavery, these narratives simply do not refute the Sambo Thesis.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth M. Stamp, "Rebels and Sambos: The Search for the Negro's Personality in Slavery," *The Journal of Southern History*, 37 (August, 1971), 367-92; *The Peculiar Institution; Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York,



1956). The phrase "a troublesome property" serves as the title of Chapter III in *The Peculiar Institution*.

<sup>2</sup> Stampp, "Rebels and Sambos," pp. 374-75.

<sup>3</sup> Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago, 1959).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225. In a footnote on "eyewitness accounts" as sources for study of slavery, Elkins included "whatever is dependable from the reminiscences and narratives of slaves themselves." (p. 4n) Nowhere in his text, however, did he cite slave accounts.

<sup>6</sup> William W. Nichols, "Slave Narratives: Dismissed Evidence in the Writing of Southern History," *Phylon*, 32 (Winter, 1971), 405.

<sup>7</sup> Howard Zinn, *The Politics of History* (Boston, 1970), p. 41.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Charles H. Nichols, *Many Thousand Gone; The Ex-Slaves' Account of Their Bondage and Freedom* (Leiden, Netherlands, 1963).

<sup>10</sup> Stanley Feldstein, *Once A Slave; The Slave's View of Slavery* (New York, 1971); John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community; Plantation Life in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York, 1972).

<sup>11</sup> Only Feldstein used the WPA slave narratives, and his references to them made up but seven percent of his total footnote citations, compared to eighty-two percent from other slave sources.

<sup>12</sup> Norman R. Yetman, "The Background of the Slave Narrative Collection," *American Quarterly*, 19 (Fall, 1967), 534-35.

<sup>13</sup> C. Vann Woodward, "History from Slave Sources," *The American Historical Review*, 79 (April, 1974), 473.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 472-73.

<sup>15</sup> Yetman, p. 550.

<sup>16</sup> Feldstein listed accounts by one hundred twenty-eight individuals, Charles H. Nichols listed seventy-seven and John W. Blassingame listed seventy.

<sup>17</sup> Feldstein, p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution*, p. 75; C. Nichols, p. xiii; Feldstein, p. 14; Blassingame, pp. 229-30.

<sup>19</sup> Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution*, p. 88.

<sup>20</sup> The narrators Stampp cited were: Charles Ball, William Wells Brown, Frederick Douglass, Josiah Henson, J. W. Loguen, Solomon Northup, Austin Steward, and John Thompson. (For publication data on the narratives used in this essay, see the bibliographical appendix, below).

<sup>21</sup> James Ford Rhodes, *History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850* (New York, 1904). For Frederick Douglass, see Volume I: pp. 305, 310, 317, 330, 343, 351, 364, 379, and Volume II: pp. 186, 392, 401. Rhodes also compared favorably one ex-slave author, Noah Davis, with Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom." In a footnote, he justified using Davis's account: "I am informed by a colored man who knew him well that Davis was truly a religious man, and had the confidence of all classes of citizens." (I, 365n).



- <sup>22</sup> Benjamin Drew, *A North-Side View of Slavery: The Refugee* (Boston, 1856). Only seventeen of the one hundred twelve accounts exceed four pages in length.
- <sup>23</sup> Stamp, *The Peculiar Institution*, pp. 90-91.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 335-36.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75.
- <sup>28</sup> Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, *American Negro Slavery* (New York, 1918), p. 445n.
- <sup>29</sup> C. Vann Woodward, "A Plain-Speaking Study of Slavery in the Old South," *New York Herald Tribune Book Review*, 33 (October 21, 1956), 6; David M. Potter, "A Minority Within a Minority," *Yale Review*, 46 (Winter, 1957), 260.
- <sup>30</sup> C. Nichols, p. 109.
- <sup>31</sup> Solomon Northup, p. 44. William W. Nichols, in his "Slave Narratives: Dismissed Evidence in the Writing of Southern History," p. 406, also cited Northup's conspiracy as evidence of slave resistance and similarly did not include Northup's statement about the unreliability of the other slaves.
- <sup>32</sup> Feldstein, p. 136; see Josiah Henson, pp. 31-32.
- <sup>33</sup> Feldstein, p. 120.
- <sup>34</sup> Northup, p. 172.
- <sup>35</sup> Sterling Stuckey, "Through the Prism of Folklore: The Black Ethos in Slavery," *Massachusetts Review*, 9 (Summer, 1968), 417-37; Lawrence W. Levine, "Slave Songs and Slave Consciousness: An Exploration in Neglected Sources," in *Anonymous Americans*, ed. Tamara Hareven (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1971), pp. 99-130.
- <sup>36</sup> Levine, p. 121; Blassingame, p. 71.
- <sup>37</sup> Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, p. 279.
- <sup>38</sup> Blassingame, p. 71.
- <sup>39</sup> Stamp, *The Peculiar Institution*, p. 369; C. Nichols, p. 98; Stuckey, pp. 419-20; Feldstein, p. 172; Blassingame, p. 68.
- <sup>40</sup> Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, p. 99.
- <sup>41</sup> The quoted phrase is from Feldstein, p. 14. Also see C. Nichols, p. xiv, and Blassingame, p. 230.
- <sup>42</sup> Elkins, pp. 82, 137.
- <sup>43</sup> Fifteen of the narrators were born in Virginia, eight in Maryland, four in Kentucky, four in North Carolina, two in South Carolina, and one each in Tennessee, Connecticut, and New York. According to figures from the census of 1850 cited in Lewis Cecil Gray's *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860* (Washington, 1933), II, 530, the average holding in the Deep South consisted of 30.9 slaves while the average holding in the Border States numbered only 15.3 slaves. This study accepts Gray's division of the South into Border States (Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia) and Deep South (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Texas) [II, 482]. Although he did not give the source of his figures, Kenneth M. Stamp claimed "12.7 slaves per holding in the Deep South and 7.7 slaves per slaveholder in the Upper South," (*The Peculiar Institution*, p. 31n).
- <sup>44</sup> Stroyer worked as a stable boy and then as a carpenter's apprentice. Lowery



was a house servant and coach driver, and his biographer said that he "had better advantages than most of the boys on the plantation." (p. 15; J. Wofford White's "Brief Sketches of the Author" appeared as the introduction to Lowery's book).

<sup>45</sup> J[ermain] W[esley] Loguen, p. 93.

<sup>46</sup> John Brown, p. 93.

<sup>47</sup> Peter Randolph, p. 19.

<sup>48</sup> Charles Ball, p. 40.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41. For a similar opinion see John Brown, p. 196.

<sup>50</sup> The house servants included: John Quincy Adams, Henry Bibb, Leonard Black, William Wells Brown, Milton Clarke, Frederick Douglass, William Green, William Grimes, Louis Hughes, Harriet Jacobs, Elizabeth Keckley, I. E. Lowery, Isaac Mason, Moses Roper, Austin Steward, and John Thompson.

<sup>51</sup> Receiving the privilege of hiring their time were: Lewis Clarke, Milton Clarke, Moses Grandy, William Hayden, Thomas H. Jones, Elizabeth Keckley, Lunsford Lane, James Mars, and Bethany Veney.

<sup>52</sup> According to figures reconstructed from the census of 1850 found in W. O. Blake's *The History of the Slave Trade* (Columbus, Ohio, 1857), p. 810, four hundred thousand of the 3.2 million American slaves lived in towns and cities. The urban dwellers included: Henry Box Brown (Richmond), William Wells Brown (St. Louis), Noah Davis (Fredericksburg, Va.), Frederick Douglass (Baltimore), Moses Grandy (Wilmington, Del.), William Grimes (Savannah), William Hayden (Frankfort and Lexington, Ky.), Louis Hughes (Natchez), Thomas H. Jones (Wilmington, N. C.), Elizabeth Keckley (St. Louis), Lunsford Lane (Raleigh), and Bethany Veney (Luray, Va.).

<sup>53</sup> Richard C. Wade, *Slavery in the Cities* (New York, 1964), p. 179.

<sup>54</sup> Randolph, p. 58; Douglass, *Narrative*, p. 60.

<sup>55</sup> John W. Blassingame, "Black Autobiographies as History and Literature," *The Black Scholar*, 5 (December, 1973-January, 1974), 2.

<sup>56</sup> Northup, pp. 139-44.

<sup>57</sup> Blassingame, *The Slave Community*, p. 210.

<sup>58</sup> Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, pp. 256, 264.

<sup>59</sup> Elkins, p. 137.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 137-38.

<sup>61</sup> Ball, p. 6; Loguen, p. 33.

<sup>62</sup> Green, p. 16; Henry Box Brown, p. 18.

<sup>63</sup> Henry Box Brown, p. 18.

<sup>64</sup> Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, p. 251. For similar expressions, see: Bibb, p. 19; Black, pp. 50-51; John Brown, p. 193; Lewis Clarke, p. 30; Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, pp. 160, 281, 307; Henson, p. 36; Jones, p. 5; Lane, p. 8; and Steward, p. 98.

<sup>65</sup> Pennington, p. 56.

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