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A Nation Without Borders

The United States and Its World in an Age of Civil Wars, 1830–1910
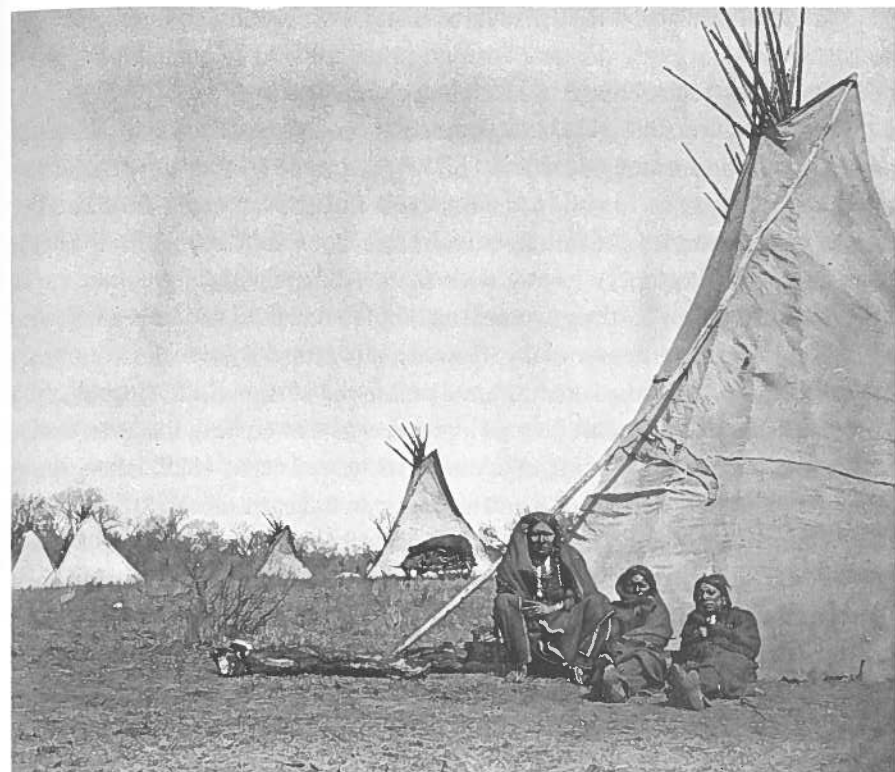
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Borderlands

Comanche "Horse-backs Camp" (Ta-her-ye-qua-hip).
Photograph by W. S. Soule.

Centers and Peripheries

As he rode northward out of San Luis Potosí at the head of an army of six thousand in early 1836, General Antonio López de Santa Anna intended to crush a rebellion in the state of Coahuila y Tejas and reassert the hold of Mexico's center over the vast stretches of its peripheries, north, east, and south. Born in Veracruz in 1794 to a prosperous creole family, Santa Anna had joined what was then the Spanish army at the age of sixteen and was thereafter embroiled in the convulsive military and political struggles that ushered in Mexican independence and charted the course of a fledgling country.

Santa Anna was haughty, temperamental, and guided chiefly by personal ambitions for power and adulation—he bragged in 1836 that if he found the hand of the U.S. government in the northern unrest, "he could continue the march of his army to Washington and place upon its Capitol the Mexican flag"—and his allegiances swung with the predictability of a weather vane. First a royalist officer battling against the Hidalgo rebellion and its peasant and republican successors, he eventually followed many of his fellow creoles in embracing independence and the constitutional monarchy of Agustín de Iturbide. In a veritable flash, he sided with liberals and federalists in ousting Iturbide, establishing a republic, and fending off a conservative revolt. In 1829, when Spain attempted a reconquest, Santa Anna led Mexican forces in successfully turning the Spanish back, paving the way for his overwhelming election as the country's president in 1833, still aligned, it seemed, with the liberals. He then quickly, and surprisingly, stepped down, leaving the presidency to his liberal vice president, who pursued a reformist agenda designed to trim the sails of the army and the Catholic Church. This time, Santa Anna heeded the appeals of angry conservatives. He helped them topple the regime he had once headed, repealed the liberal reforms, and tried to set the country on a centralist course. In 1836, he commanded not only the Mexican army but also what there was of the Mexican state.

The challenges newly independent Mexico faced from its borderlands were hardly unique. Forged in the cauldron of imperial crises and revolutionary movements that rocked the Atlantic world from the last third of the eighteenth century, Mexico, like other countries that had just emerged in the hemisphere, had to establish its legitimacy and authority over the diverse populations and territory it claimed to control. Although sparked in 1810 by what became a massive and bloody peasant insurrection (the "Hidalgo revolt"), independence, when ultimately achieved in 1821, saw the peasants largely subdued and, as elsewhere in Latin America, a creole elite of landowners, mine owners, merchants, and army officers steering the transition to nationhood. Stretching from the Yucatán, Tabasco, and Chiapas in the far southeast to Alta California in the far northwest, Mexico had more than twice the landmass of the early United States. And the immense northern regions—perhaps half the size of the entire country—were thinly populated by Spaniards, creoles, and mestizos and defended by a very loose chain of military outposts (presidios) and Catholic missions. There, from the Pacific coast, east across the Great Basin and the Rocky Mountains, and into the southern plains, Native peoples reigned supreme.

From the beginning, Mexican elites, much like their counterparts in the United States, were divided between those who wanted power concentrated in a central state (they were known as centralists in Mexico and federalists in the United States) and those who sought a weaker central state and more regional autonomy (they were known as federalists in Mexico and republicans or antifederalists in the United States). But unlike the United States, Mexico initially gave rise to a centralist tendency with bases in the army and the Catholic Church, as embodied in the imperious figure of Agustín de Iturbide, who unveiled a Mexican "empire" with himself as emperor. Within months, Iturbide managed to alienate allies and skeptics alike and was quickly routed by federalists. A republican constitution was then crafted in 1824. Modeled to some extent on the Constitution of the United States—there were three branches of government, including a bicameral legislature and a president selected by state legislatures for a four-year term—it went much further in addressing the civil standing of the country's denizens, proclaiming the equality of all Mexicans regardless of race, ethnicity, or social status (though remaining mute about the enslaved of African descent, who could be found working in mining areas and on coastal sugar plantations).

Of perhaps greatest consequence, the constitution divided the country into nineteen states with their own elected governments and four territories (three in the north, including Alta California and Nuevo México), which came under the jurisdiction of the national legislature. Although the Catholic Church retained its monopoly on Mexico's spiritual life and the country's president could claim extraordinary powers in times of emergency, the forces of centralism in Mexico City were clearly weakened and the impulses toward federalism and local autonomy in the states and territories strengthened. In the Yucatán, Sonora y Sinaloa, and especially silver-mining Zacatecas—not to mention very distant Alta California—the federalist disposition thrived, at times manifest in tax resistance and the creation of civilian militias. And, in an effort to secure the northeastern borderlands, the Mexican government offered a variety of incentives to colonists from the United States, who began settling in Coahuila y Tejas during the early 1820s and whose loyalty to the Mexican state was soon suspect.

The task of establishing stable regimes presented enormous challenges for all the new republics of the Western Hemisphere. Haiti, the second to break colonial ties, was rent by deep conflicts between former slaves and former free people of color. They had cooperated long enough to defeat the French, the Spanish, and the British militarily and to end slavery but almost immediately sank into a political maelstrom of assassinations, coups d'état, rival governments, and domestic rebellions—all exacerbated by the diplomatic isolation that had been imposed by the United States and the European powers. Peru, Bolivia, and Chile, emerging independent from anticolonial struggles with Spain, would nonetheless battle each other for years, sometimes by force of arms, over territorial disputes that often unhinged each of their governments. Venezuela's diverse terrain made national integration difficult and turned the office of the presidency into something of a revolving door.

Long boastful of its comparative stability, the United States also suffered more than its share of political turmoil. For the first half decade of independence, the Articles of Confederation provided a shaky foundation of governance (as Shays's Rebellion in western Massachusetts brought home), and even after the Constitution was ratified, questions of federal authority, territorial integrity, and public policy proved bitterly divisive. The British sought their own reconquest, the French and the Spanish schemed with separatists in the Mississippi Valley borderlands, secessionist movements erupted in several areas including New England, Native Americans organized to resist the encroachments of white settlers, and the election of 1800, pitting Thomas Jefferson's Republicans against John Adams's Federalists, threatened to break the Republic apart—though hardly for the last time.

By the late 1820s, Mexican centralists, especially those in the army, had grown increasingly concerned about the centrifugal forces spinning peripheral regions (particularly in the north) out of the orbit of Mexico City. Small revolts against government officials had already erupted in Alta California and Coahuila y Tejas—one, joining Anglos and Cherokees in the ill-fated Republic of Fredonia near Nacodoches in 1826–27, was crushed. Patterns of trade that had long moved from north to south, to markets in Chihuahua, Durango, and Mexico City, were now turning west to east, as merchants in Louisiana and Missouri began to tap the commerce of Tejas and Nuevo México. Traveling across Tejas in 1829, General Manuel de Mier y Terán, commander of the military jurisdiction of northeastern Mexico, thus worried about the dispositions of the American colonists there as well as about the designs of the U.S. government—"The North Americans have conquered whatever territory adjoins them," he observed—and urged concerted state action. Warning that "either the government occupies Tejas now, or it is lost forever," he recommended fortifying the military presence in the north, expanding the coastal trade between Tejas and the rest of Mexico, and attracting Mexican and European settlers to offset the American influence. Partly to stem the flow of American immigration, the Mexican president, Vicente Guerrero, abolished slavery in 1829, and the next year the Congress banned American immigration to the border areas entirely. Although slaveholders in Tejas won exemption from the emancipation decree and the Congress subsequently lifted the immigration ban, Mexico City seemed intent on bringing the northern regions to heel.

But it was not until Santa Anna returned to the presidency in 1834 at the behest of the centralists that a new framework of governance was imposed. Inspired by the conservative "Plan de Cuernavaca" which demanded the repeal of recent liberal reforms and the punishment of those who had enacted them, Santa Anna, together with a newly elected Congress, began to dismantle the federalist constitution of 1824 and undermine the power of the states. It would not be easy to carry through. Predictably, federalist strongholds in Zacatecas and Coahuila resisted tenaciously and forced Santa Anna to intervene militarily. Yet by 1835 the most serious challenge issued from Tejas, where rebellion had long been brewing and where an ascendant rebel faction had embraced the goal of independence. There Santa Anna headed with his army of six thousand in early 1836, far outnumbering the rebel forces and intending to make easy work of it.

Los Indios Bárbaros

When General Santa Anna gazed toward the northern borderlands, he thought about more than the rebellious Texians (Americans in Tejas) and Tejanos (Mexicans in Tejas). He thought, too, about "the savage tribes" (*los indios bárbaros*) who had been waging war in the "frontier departments" and making a mockery of the presumed authority of the Mexican state. The Hidalgo revolt and the decade of brutal conflict into which it plunged Mexico seemed to invite Indian raiding in areas shorn of troops and militias. And although newly independent Mexico looked to make peace, the state's depleted treasury made it very difficult to maintain the gifting rituals that underwrote alliances from the 1780s. Indeed, the effort to limit Indian attacks and advances in the north encouraged the Mexican government to attract the very American colonists who were now causing it so much trouble.

What appeared to Santa Anna and other Mexicans as "savage tribes" were, in fact, constellations of Native bands and confederations that raided, traded, exchanged captives, and fashioned alliances all across the Great Plains and the arid Mexican northwest. Farthest east were relatively sedentary horticultural peoples such as the Wichita, Osage, Pawnee, and Omaha; farthest west were

Navajos, Pueblos, and Utes who formed part of a sprawling Nuevo Méxican trade network built around horses, slaves, woven goods, maize, metals, and guns. But across the southern plains were to be found the hunting and pastoral Kiowas, Lipan Apaches, and, fiercest and most formidable of all, Comanches.

Nomadic, Uto-Aztecan speaking, and originally Shoshone, those who would emerge as Comanches (they called themselves Numunuu, or "the people") began moving out of the northern reaches of the Great Basin in the sixteenth century toward the central plains. By the early eighteenth century, a faction had broken off, headed farther south, and formed a military and political alliance with the Utes that spread havoc among Navajos and Apaches along the northern perimeter of Nuevo México. Most important, they had taken advantage of the horses that became available from the Spanish sometime in the seventeenth century (aided perhaps by the great Pueblo Revolt of 1680) and transformed themselves into extraordinarily able equestrians. With their mounts, their radius for trading and hunting expanded enormously, and the bison now became central to their way of life. What came to be called La Comanchería stretched from southeastern Nuevo México and northeastern Chihuahua across Tejas to the Arkansas River valley. It was a territory larger than western Europe.

At the heart of La Comanchería and of the Great Plains more generally was a distinctive political economy built around bison hunting. Across the many centuries of its unfolding, this political economy saw ever-shifting participants and showed the marks of encounters not only with many different Native peoples but also with European imperial powers. By the early nineteenth century, it included a variety of trading centers, a vast raiding zone chiefly to the south, growing economic contacts with American merchants to the east, and a complex of alliances. The bison served as the main source of food, clothing, and shelter and as an increasingly important article of trade. The raiding zones enabled the accumulation of horses and human captives, both of which were necessary to the hunting of bison, exchanges with trading partners, and the achievement of social status. The alliances helped organize hunting and trade, recognized territorial claims, and directed raiding with greater force and efficiency; they also consecrated relations of power and dependency.

For all of its geographical reach, La Comanchería was very much a decentered society. Its basic unit, the *ranchería,* included up to 250 people, mostly tied by kinship (or fictive kin) relations, and it encompassed the most important activities and hierarchies of the Comanche people as a whole. As in most other Native societies of the plains, gender and age served as the markers for the organization of social, economic, and political life. Adult men had the responsibility for hunting and raiding. Teenage boys took on the laborious tasks of herding and breaking

the horses. Women—older and younger—raised the children, processed the bison meat, and cooked the food, but as the hunting economy grew, they became more involved with the horse herds and the bison hides. Indeed, the widening scale of economic activity intensified the demand for labor and thereby made polygyny and enslavement (mainly of captive women and children) increasingly important in Comanche communities. Which is to say that the burdens of a vibrant economy fell heavily on the shoulders of women—captive or not—and accordingly led to a deterioration in their circumstances.

The enslavement of captives—like polygyny—had long been practiced by Comanches and other Native peoples of the plains and Great Basin regions. It was the product of raiding and warfare, and although some adult men were taken into captivity, most of the captives were women and children (Mexican and Indian); the men were regarded as unsuitable to enslavement and instead were killed. Many of the captives were then brought to slave markets and traded, but at least among the Comanche most were kept to work with the horse and mule herds, gather food and wood, cook, and carry out the arduous labor of preparing bison meat and hides: all the more so as the bison economy boomed and the labor available on *rancherías* proved insufficient. Like enslaved captives the world over, these were immediately stripped of their familial and tribal associations and given new names—a ritual of social death and rebirth—though they were regarded as occupying a status distinct from those "born of Comanche." Even so, and unlike enslaved African captives in the Americas (though more like captives and slaves within western Africa itself), they could be assimilated into Comanche families, becoming wives (sometimes in polygynous arrangements), sons and daughters, and eventually spouses, and could play key roles as cultural intermediaries in economic and diplomatic spheres. Some of the males also became mounted warriors and raiders.

The dynamic of the Comanche political economy of the nineteenth century—and of the Native Great Plains more generally—grew out of the demands of equestrian-based bison hunting, ideas about land and wealth, and the pursuit of social prestige and manhood by members of kinship groups and *rancherías.* Comanches sought territorial expansion not to define clear borders or land titles, not to assert cultural superiority, but rather to gain access to the land's resources and to sources of wealth in the form of horses, captives, and trade. Horses were necessary for hunting, and they required extensive pasture lands for nourishment, but horses were also, together with captives, a recognized form of private property (individual property in land had no basis in Comanche society) and personal wealth. Raiding was an important means of acquiring new horses and captives, but it was also the chief avenue for males to achieve social acceptance

and enhance their social standing. *Rancherías* were often on the move owing to the depletion of pasture, and trading networks enabled Comanches to exchange surplus livestock and the booty from raids for food supplies, craft goods, and weapons (including guns and powder). These exchanges and networks linked Comanches, directly and indirectly, with Native peoples far to the north, west, and east and opened them to economic relations with Europeans and their descendants either settled in places like Santa Fe or pressing in from the north and the east.

Raiding and trading allowed for the accumulation of personal wealth among Comanches and therefore the development of social distinctions. Building a herd was a lengthy process, perhaps years in the making, and all of the young men, irrespective of their families' wealth, were expected to participate in what proved to be intense competition on battlefields and in collecting the spoils of success. But by the early nineteenth century, something of an elite had emerged, set apart by their age and gender, their massive herds, their relative leisure, and the networks of dependents they could support. Neither rigid nor heritable, social and economic status nonetheless conferred political power and authority, especially if generosity in the distribution of personal wealth was embraced; among the Comanche, wealth acquired social meaning chiefly when it was given away. Through such methods, elite men became leaders of individual *rancherías* (the leaders were known as *paraibos*) and helped determine when members would move camp or engage in small-scale raiding.

Although *rancherías* served as the basic units of Comanche society and had a great deal of independence in decision making, they were part of a larger confederation. Each *ranchería* was aligned with one of four Comanche divisions—Hois, Tenewa, Kotsoteka, and Yamparika—which together shared language as well as ideals and sensibilities as to spirituality, personal and communal responsibilities, proper conduct, and the acceptable forms of retribution. They gathered at certain times of the year to reinforce the bonds between them and engage in communal hunts, assembling in the largest numbers—often in winter camps in the thousands—along wooded river valleys. There they staged ceremonies of cultural cohesion, and their political councils met to settle conflicts and set goals as to warfare and diplomacy. At this point, decentered Comanche bands composed a powerful army capable of inflicting massive damage on those regarded as enemies.

By the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the Comanche had emerged as the dominant power on the southern plains. Their numbers reached, and might have exceeded, forty thousand, more than the Spanish and mestizo populations of Tejas and Nuevo México combined. They had pushed Apaches south far beyond the Canadian River, opened trading relations with Pawnees, Kiowas,

and Cheyennes to the north, turned Native bands to the east into tributary clients, and transformed the northern borderlands of what was then New Spain into raiding domains. Looking southward, the Comanche did not recognize official borders or realms of imperial sovereignty; they rather saw scattered outposts, haciendas, and ranches populated by horses, mules, and potential captives. Theft and trade were not alternative or contradictory activities but rather two sides of the coin of Comanche hegemony.

When the Comanche entered into what would prove to be a long-lasting peace with the Spanish in 1786 (which included a military alliance against the Apache), the very large area of Tejas, Nuevo México, and La Comanchería seemed less a territory divided into discrete political entities than an increasingly integrated economic zone. Navajos and Utes joined the peace as well, making for an extended period of stability and allowing the unhindered movement of goods and people over a great many miles. The alliances were cemented by face-to-face contacts and the exchange of gifts that could be redistributed within each of the Native groups, thereby securing the popular followings of the Native leaders. Although the Spanish imagined that they could gain the upper hand and reduce the Comanche to a position of dependence, it was the Comanche who got the better of the Spanish and defined the boundaries of the relationship. The Comanche advantage became especially apparent in the early years of the nineteenth century as their trading interests partly turned eastward in the direction of American merchants operating through Missouri, Mississippi, and Louisiana and the Mexican independence struggles of the second decade of the nineteenth century made the depleted northern borderlands easy targets for raiding. While Agustín de Iturbide invited a Comanche delegation led by Chief Guonique to attend his coronation in Mexico City and sought to appease the Comanche with a variety of incentives, Mexican governments could not sustain gifting diplomacy at the level Comanches had come to expect. The alliance of more than four decades quickly unraveled, and the Comanche unleashed raids for horses and captives ever deeper into what Mexico considered its terrain: through Coahuila y Tejas, into Chihuahua and Nuevo León, and as far south and east as Durango, Zacatecas, San Luis Potosí, and Tamaulipas.

A Slaveholders' Frontier

Well before Mexican independence, Spanish colonizers had encouraged settlement in Tejas to repel the designs of the Indians, the British, the French, and the Americans. By the early nineteenth century, Tejano enclaves could be found in the northeast around Nacogdoches, along the San Antonio River in the Béxar-Goliad region, and between the Nueces and the Rio Grande rivers, mostly north

and west of Matamoros. But while the Spanish and then the Mexicans imagined an international border created by the Red and Sabine rivers, eastern Tejas (Texas to the English speakers and writers) remained very much a borderland marked by murky and competing territorial claims. Known for its rich soils and access to the Gulf of Mexico, the area caught the attention of the sorts of people already creating a "cotton kingdom" in what was then the American Southwest of Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and the territories of Arkansas and Missouri: slaveholders, land speculators, and commercial interests operating in St. Louis and Independence, Missouri, Natchitoches, Louisiana, and especially New Orleans.

The cultural and geopolitical liminality of eastern Texas—like that of other North American borderlands—seemed well embodied in the figure of Moses Austin, who looked to establish colonies there. Born in Connecticut in 1761, Austin initially became involved in the dry goods business and moved to Philadelphia to join hands with his brother. Once there, he married into a family with mining interests and before long was operating a lead mine in western Virginia. Although he established the village of Austinville, replete with a furnace and blacksmith shop, he went bust. Undeterred, Austin gazed west: not to territory claimed by the United States, but rather to what was then upper Spanish Louisiana. By swearing allegiance to the Spanish crown, he managed to get a grant of one league of land (nearly forty-five hundred acres) and continued his lead-mining pursuits, branching out into shipping, banking, and merchandising. A man of aristocratic tastes, Austin had slaves working for him and built a plantation-style mansion called Durham Hall. But, as in western Virginia, he also ran up debts that threw his mining operations into jeopardy. Trading on his adopted Spanish colonial identity even after upper Louisiana became part of the United States, he then hatched a plan to settle Anglo-Americans in east-central Tejas and hoped to persuade Spanish officials in San Antonio de Béxar to make the land available.

Despite the political turbulence created by the Mexican independence struggles, Moses Austin succeeded in being designated an empresario (land contractor) and was granted a huge tract in the Brazos River valley in 1821, but he contracted pneumonia and died very soon thereafter. The project then fell to his son Stephen F. Austin, who managed to negotiate the swirling political currents in Tejas and Mexico City and confirm his title to the land. Looking to recruit colonists, Austin headed to Louisiana and, owing to the stipulations of the land grant, could advertise very generous terms: 640 acres for each family head, an additional 320 acres for the wife and 100 acres for each of the children, together with a square league for the purposes of grazing. Colonists were given six years to improve the land without being assessed for taxes, and while

they were expected to become Catholics, little effort was made to enforce conversion. Significantly, although antislavery sentiment brewed in Mexico City and legislators both outlawed slave trading and prescribed the emancipation of slave children at age fourteen, Austin was able to offer colonists an extra 80 acres for every slave they brought in.

That Austin moved to evade the direction of change on the slavery question in Mexico suggested that from the first—the hopes of Mexican officials notwithstanding—the axis of Texas colonization turned west to east, rather than north to south. Neither Austin nor other empresarios attracted many settlers from other parts of Mexico; almost all came from the United States, and almost all of them came to Texas from a state where slavery served as the foundation of social, economic, and political life. Some arrived from Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri; many more came from the rapidly developing plantation states of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. They either brought their slaves along or intended to acquire them after they settled, and they were drawn by the lure of land that was cheap and highly suitable for raising cotton. Although the Mexican government wished that they would gradually move into the interior of Tejas and, together with Tejanos, form a line of defense against Comanche raids, the Anglo-Texans clustered chiefly along the Gulf Coast, where the best cotton lands were to be had and relative safety could be assured. They purchased supplies from New Orleans or from merchants in the old Spanish/French trading town of Natchitoches, in north-central Louisiana—not from market centers in Mexico—and sent their livestock and cotton back in the same direction. For all intents and purposes, their activities and orientation blurred whatever there was of a border between Tejas and Louisiana.

Anglo settlers and colonists were, of course, ready to make the political concessions necessary to their economic and familial aspirations. Stephen F. Austin had, himself, become a Mexican citizen and was little interested in seeing Texas joined to the United States. For allies within Mexico, he looked to the liberals and federalists and, with their assistance, sought to block government initiatives deemed hostile to the interests of Anglo-Texans—especially because they might undermine the stability of slavery. A small slaveholder, though never a champion of "the principle of slavery," he quickly came to accept the reality of Texas development. "Texas must be a slave country," he wrote. "Circumstances and unavoidable necessity compels it. It is the wish of the people there and it is my duty to do all I can prudently to favor it."

As early as 1825, the Austin colony could boast a population of nearly two thousand, about one-quarter of whom were slaves, and colonists had drawn a slave code. Other settlements had similar social profiles, and although Mexican authorities would officially prohibit the importation of any more slaves, Anglo

immigrants arranged long-term indentures for their bondpeople before they crossed into Tejas, effectively passing government scrutiny and receiving welcomes from the empresarios. Further labor demands drew boatloads of African slaves by way of Cuba to the port of Galveston, escaping the American naval patrols attempting to bring slave smugglers to law. By the 1830s, Anglo-Texans far outnumbered Tejanos and were laying the foundations of a slave plantation society. Perhaps as many as one in four of them owned slaves.

But however successful Stephen Austin might have been in protecting Tejas slaveholders from Mexican officials either in Mexico City or in Saltillo (the capital of Coahuila y Tejas) bent on ridding the country of slaves, the slaveholders did not rest comfortably. By the late 1820s and early 1830s, the central government seemed hostile to their long-term interests and ready to weaken their power base. The emancipation decree of 1829 (from which Texans won exemption) and congressional legislation in 1832 that limited the length of labor contracts to ten years (and thus challenged the use of indentures) were problematic enough; perhaps more threatening was the 1830 ban on further American immigration together with the central state's renewed efforts to collect customs duties and garrison more troops there. The resistance was not long in coming. In 1832, at the very time the Nullification Crisis flared in South Carolina, Anglo-Americans briefly occupied a customs house near Galveston Bay, and more of them (with Austin's help) demanded repeal of the immigration ban and the separation of Tejas from Coahuila. Santa Anna yielded on the immigration issue, and the legislature of Coahuila y Tejas, while refusing to grant separation, nonetheless enacted a series of political reforms that gave the Texans more seats in the state legislature and more control over their local affairs. It might not have been enough to deflate the growing discontent. The Anglo colonists, a government official darkly predicted, "seek nothing more than pretexts for a revolution, whose first object will be separation from Coahuila and afterwards from the Republic."

Imperial Eyes

Texas was not only of interest to slaveholders and aspiring cotton growers who had taken their first turns in the emerging plantation belt of the American Deep South. It had long been of interest to American political leaders who imagined a continental empire before the ink on the Declaration of Independence was dry. After all, the model of governance they had inherited and defended to the last— they rebelled against what they saw as Britain's violations rather than its essence—was imperial, with a metropolitan center loosely coordinating the activities of far-flung and, for the most part, self-regulating outposts. When North

America's version of the Seven Years' War (known on the western side of the Atlantic as the French and Indian War) relieved the French of their claims east of the Mississippi River, it demanded a major effort on the part of British imperial authorities to keep colonial settlers east of the Appalachians and out of Indian country to the west. The Proclamation of 1763 thereby provoked some of the most serious discontent with British rule. Indeed, although they have chiefly been regarded as republicans, many of the architects of American independence— from Franklin and Jefferson to Paine and Madison—looked well beyond the Appalachians and the Mississippi and spoke a language of empire.

It of course required immense conceit to speak of empire when the political integrity of the United States had yet to be established, when the country was only a collection of thinly populated and, largely, semi-independent republics that evinced deep suspicions of centralized authority. But empire simultaneously expressed the aggressive aspirations of white settler populations and the Enlightenment-inspired sense, among sections of the elite and the intelligentsia, that a new political order had been born and was destined to spread across the globe. Empire, too, seemed to offer a solution to the problem of the republic as the eighteenth century saw it: that republics could only thrive in small, culturally cohesive territories; otherwise they tended to become tyrannies. James Madison, in *Federalist* 10, most famously challenged this logic, insisting that only in a large territory could a republic thrive because the many interests that necessarily emerged would make it impossible for any one of them to dominate. Although Madison did not invoke the language of empire there, others, including Thomas Jefferson, understood Madison's ideas in imperial terms and touted them in explaining both the success a geographically expansive American republic would have and the continental horizons it would pursue. That Jefferson the slaveholder could imagine an "empire of liberty" suggested the many contradictions that beset the American project from the first.

Those contradictions were nowhere as plainly in evidence as in the process eventuating in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, arguably the most far-reaching political and diplomatic event in nineteenth-century America. Imperial-minded political officials, together with western commercial interests, had, since the establishment of American independence, looked greedily and warily on the Mississippi Valley and the port city of New Orleans, understanding both as constituting a main artery of economic prosperity. "There is on the globe one single spot," Jefferson observed shortly after assuming the presidency, "the possessor of which is our natural enemy. It is New Orleans." News that Spain had retroceded control over the Louisiana Territory to France thus stirred great consternation—"The day that France takes possession of New Orleans . . . we must marry ourselves to

the British fleet and nation," Jefferson warned—and Jefferson instructed his minister to France, Robert R. Livingston, to offer $2 million for the city. Livingston ended up with all of Louisiana for $15 million.

It was no accident. When the French persuaded the Spanish crown to return Louisiana to them in the Treaty of San Ildefonso in the fall of 1800 (France had been forced to cede the territory to Spain after the Seven Years' War), Napoleon Bonaparte, who had come to power in 1799, imagined the creation of a great empire in the Americas. The empire's center would be in the Caribbean, organized around the rich, sugar-producing colonies of Martinique, Guadeloupe, and St. Domingue, but Louisiana would serve as the vital periphery, a sprawling storehouse of foodstuffs and livestock for the Caribbean plantations and an extended barrier against the incursions of the British and the Americans. True, the sugar islands had been convulsed for the previous decade by massive slave rebellions—the largest in St. Domingue—that had ended slavery, destroyed the plantation economies, and defeated the armies of Britain and Spain. But Napoleon, in his audacity, planned to reverse the wheels of history: to send his grand army to quell the rebellions, arrest the leaders, restore slavery, and make it possible to get the sugar mills up and running again.

He nearly succeeded. Ten thousand troops under the command of Napoleon's brother-in-law Charles Victor Emmanuel LeClerc left France for the Caribbean in early 1802, soon after a peace had been concluded with the British. In short order, LeClerc seemed to pacify St. Domingue and took into custody the island's great rebel leader, Toussaint Louverture, who would die a year later in a frigid cell in the French mountains. But when word of the French intention to restore slavery began to circulate, the officers who had served Toussaint—Henri Christophe and Jean Jacques Dessalines chief among them—reignited the popular rebellion and, with the aid of tropical diseases, decimated the French army. LeClerc perished in November, and the mission collapsed in shambles. "Damn sugar, damn coffee, damn colonies," Napoleon soon thundered. Without St. Domingue, the jewel of the French colonial system, the American empire appeared worthless, and to the enormous surprise of Jefferson's negotiators he offered up the whole of Louisiana.

The moment was replete with ironies of the deepest sort. Jefferson, the slaveholder who saw in the slave rebellion in St. Domingue the incarnation of his greatest fears ("I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just and that his justice cannot sleep forever") and had effectively given Napoleon the green light to intervene, now scored his biggest political and diplomatic coup thanks to the defeat of Napoleon and the victory of the rebellious slaves. "Santo Domingo," as the political discourse had it, would serve as the terrorizing image

for slaveholders throughout the hemisphere who faced the prospect of emancipation, but it also enabled the United States to double its size while introducing a host of new issues and challenges that would shape the remainder of the century. Had the rebellion in St. Domingue gone the way of all others before it—with the crushing defeat of the slaves—Atlantic slavery might well have been reinvigorated, and Napoleon would likely have strengthened his hold on Louisiana, forcing Jefferson, who regarded the "possessor" of New Orleans as "our natural enemy," to contemplate his next move.

As it was, the sale of Louisiana came with an assortment of irregularities and uncertainties. It was not at all clear if Napoleon had the authority to sell the territory or Jefferson to buy it; nor was it clear what property was ultimately conveyed. When the Spanish had retroceded Louisiana to the French in 1800, Napoleon and his foreign minister, Charles de Talleyrand, assured the Spanish king that they would never alienate or transfer the territory to a third country; when the Spanish learned of what had transpired between the French and the Americans, they were justly outraged, all the more so because the French had yet to take full possession of the territory from the Spanish. Napoleon, moreover, moved ahead without consulting the Corps Législatif as French law required him to do. "The sale of Louisiana to the United States was trebly invalid," Henry Adams later wrote with a sardonic eye, "if it were French property, Bonaparte could not constitutionally alienate it without the consent of the Chambers; if it were Spanish property, he could not alienate it at all; if Spain had a right of reclamation, his sale was worthless." For his part, Jefferson's constitutional authority to add new territory to the United States was dubious at best, and he was sufficiently concerned to craft an amendment to the Constitution that advisers prevailed on him to leave in the drawer.

Perhaps most problematic for the future, however, were the ambiguities as to the boundaries of the territory itself. There appeared to be consensus about the Mississippi River as the eastern boundary, although no one knew precisely where the river's source lay, and the Spanish insisted on their claim to the strip of gulf coastal land between Pensacola and the river's edge, known as West Florida. Reeling from the course of events and wary of new intruders on the edges of New Spain (Mexico), the Spanish took a very delimited view, arguing that the United States obtained only a narrow corridor out of New Orleans on the Mississippi River's western side. More generally accepted were boundaries that included the watersheds of the Mississippi, Missouri, Platte, Arkansas, Red, and Canadian rivers, together with other rivers flowing into them, thereby spreading northward into British Canada and westward across the Great Plains and cutting into northern Tejas. Indeed, Andrew Jackson would later insist, in

eyeing Mexican Tejas (as Jefferson had earlier thought), that the Louisiana Purchase boundary went as far west and south as the Nueces River—this despite the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819, which marked the boundary of Louisiana and Tejas at the Sabine River, much farther to the north and east.

Small wonder that Jackson, soon after stepping into the presidency in 1829 and well before the Anglo settlers there had raised much of a tumult, sent Anthony Butler (a Texas land speculator) to Mexico City with instructions to purchase Tejas. Butler told Mexican officials, at Jackson's behest, that Indian violence had exposed Mexico's weakness in the north and that the United States might be forced to seize Tejas for purposes of self-defense; at all events, if Mexico refused to sell, Tejas would soon be lost to settler rebellion. The Mexicans would have none of it and sent Butler packing. But it was just the sort of omen of which General Mier y Terán, touring Tejas around the same time, had warned.

It was also the sort of dilemma that imperial eyes invited, though often refused to see. The principal threat to the destiny of the American republic and empire still seemed to come from the European powers that had long been collecting colonies in the hemisphere and, despite losses, likely wished to continue extending their reach. Although the British failure to subdue the United States in the War of 1812 could be regarded as a turning point, the prospect of hostile forces encircling the country remained a very real one. "Russia might take California, Peru, Chili [sic]," John Quincy Adams, secretary of state in President James Monroe's cabinet, fretted in his diary in 1823, "France, Mexico—where we know she has been intriguing to get a monarch under a prince of the House of Bourbon, as at Buenos Ayres. And Great Britain, as her last resort . . . would take at least the island of Cuba for her share of the scramble. Then what would be our situation—England holding Cuba, France Mexico."

With that in view, Monroe soon announced what would later be called his "doctrine," warning Europeans against further political interventions in the hemisphere. It appeared to be a forceful rejection of colonialism and an implicit endorsement of the moves toward independence that had been unfolding from Venezuela and Colombia up through Mexico in what had been Spanish America. Yet in truth, Monroe only rebuffed the colonial ambitions of "European powers," and he concluded his address by insisting that "the expansion of our population and accession of new States to our Union have had the happiest effects on all its highest interests . . . add[ing] to our strength and respectability as a power . . . admitted by all." Mexico's general Mier y Terán was not alone in recognizing the scope of the imperial vision of the United States. In the words of a British newspaper, "The plain Yankee of the matter, is that the United States wish to monopolize to themselves the privilege of colonising . . . every . . . part of the American continent."

Where Is Indian Territory?

Perhaps no figure embodied the activist projects of the American imperial vision better than Andrew Jackson. Orphaned at an early age in the Carolinas, he read law, moved to middle Tennessee, took up planting, and found his way into state politics and then to Congress. But it was the military that seemed the best vehicle for channeling his ambitions and rage. He detested the British and their Indian allies (owing in good measure to his wounds and his brother's death at the hands of the British during the Revolution), and he sympathized with the aspirations and concerns of the slaveholding class, into which he had risen as a very solid member. The War of 1812 offered him a golden opportunity to make his mark, and although he is best remembered for defeating the British at the Battle of New Orleans, more consequential was his murderous thrashing of the Upper Creeks (also known as Red Sticks for their body and weapon paint) in a series of engagements ending with a bloodbath in 1814 at Horseshoe Bend on the Tallapoosa River in the Alabama Territory. In so doing, Jackson helped destroy the southern wing of Tecumseh's Pan-Indian confederation and forced the Creeks to surrender twenty-three million acres (about two-thirds of their land) to the U.S. government.

But Jackson's biggest military gambit was still to come. Ever since the formation of the American republic, slaveholders in South Carolina and Georgia had been pressuring the federal government to acquire, by diplomacy or force of arms, the Spanish colony of Florida. Although some of their interests were strategic and political (there was worry about British designs), they were mostly concerned about the security of their slave plantations. Spanish Florida, that is, was not merely the bailiwick of an imperial rival. It had also become—with the encouragement of the Spanish crown—a beacon for runaway slaves, who began appearing in the vicinity of St. Augustine in the late seventeenth century, built the town of Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mosé in the late 1730s, and formed a complex alliance with the Seminoles (a branch of the Upper Creeks) in the late eighteenth century. Word of the Spanish safe haven circulated widely among slaves in Georgia and Carolina, helping to spark the Stono Rebellion of 1739 and then flight from plantations and farms during the Revolutionary War.

Aggrieved planters formed various raiding parties to retrieve the runaways and in 1812 launched an invasion (known as the Patriot War but in truth an example of what would come to be known as filibustering) aimed at defeating the Spanish and annexing the territory to the United States. With the unofficial aid of U.S. Army troops and gunboats, they laid siege to St. Augustine and were joined in other areas of East Florida by militia companies from Georgia and

Tennessee who vowed to "put to death without mercy" any "negro taken in arms." It was not enough. Runaways and their descendants around St. Augustine, together with Seminoles, some of whom were black, saw the writing on the wall and fought back ferociously. In the Alachua region, they attacked American settlements that cooperated with the invasion and, using guerrilla tactics, struck the invaders serious blows. By the time an American offensive could resume, the political winds had shifted in Washington, D.C., and by early 1814 the "Patriots" learned that they would now be regarded as no more than "trespassers" and annexation would be refused by the U.S. government.

But not for long. The defeat of the Red Sticks and the British in the South during the War of 1812 reconfigured the borderlands of West and East Florida and southern Alabama and Georgia, as both Red Sticks and fugitive slaves looked to regroup. They collected, together with Seminoles, around a makeshift British post at the mouth of the Apalachicola River in Florida's northwestern corner. And once the British evacuated, the blacks remained behind in what became known as Negro Fort, drawing more fugitive slaves from near and far who settled along the river's banks, grew crops, raised livestock, turned back the assaults of slave catchers, and occasionally fired on boats moving on the Apalachicola. Slaveholders on both sides of the Florida line complained bitterly, and when the Spanish governor effectively threw up his hands, the U.S. military stepped in.

In charge was General Andrew Jackson, now commander of the regular army's southern division. He was not confused about what needed to be done. Negro Fort had to be destroyed and the surviving runaways returned to their owners. Jackson sent General Edmund P. Gaines (who would later turn up on the Louisiana-Texas border) to southwestern Georgia; Gaines, in turn, dispatched Lieutenant Colonel Duncan Clinch to attack the fort. The runaways residing nearby fled into the woods, and after Clinch surrounded the fort, rounds from supporting gunboats set off a massive explosion inside that killed almost all of the black defenders. But neither side was done. The black survivors retreated toward the Suwannee River, where they reorganized, began to drill, allied with Seminoles led by Chief Bowlegs, and together plotted revenge for the massacre at Negro Fort. Farther to the west, other Seminole bands in Florida and Georgia rose against American troops after a dispute over the harboring of fugitive slaves ended with the soldiers burning one of their villages (Foul Town) and killing some of the villagers. The borderlands were now ablaze.

In early 1818, Jackson received orders to take charge of operations and—with a force of army regulars, Tennessee militiamen, and Lower Creek warriors (bitter enemies of the Upper Creeks and Seminoles) totaling thirty-five hundred—moved "to chastise a savage foe, who, combined with a lawless band of Negro

brigands, have . . . been carrying on a cruel and unprovoked war against the citizens of the United States." It was not much of a contest. The Seminoles were already short of arms and ammunition, and the blacks were heavily outnumbered and only had muskets to fight off long rifles; all were soon in retreat across the Suwannee and then to the south. Jackson occupied the Indian towns, and his troops laid waste to what had been a "fertile country." Then, on his own initiative, Jackson looked to the larger prize of Florida. He captured St. Marks and Pensacola in the west, ransacked Seminole and black villages in the east, captured Spanish fortifications, executed two British subjects who stood accused of aiding and abetting the Indians, and ordered Gaines to take St. Augustine, the last stronghold of Spain. "I assure you," he boasted to the secretary of war, his imperial hunger not yet satisfied, "Cuba will be ours in a few days."

The administration of President James Monroe was not quite ready for Jackson's exploits, and some in the cabinet believed Jackson should be called to account. Monroe initially decided to return the captured territory to Spain, but within a year the weakness of the Spanish position and the likelihood of further American pressure on West Florida and Tejas led Spain to cut its losses. With the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819, Spain ceded the Floridas (East and West) to the United States and secured the Sabine River (not the Rio Grande as some in Congress were threatening) as the boundary between Louisiana and Tejas. It was not good news for what was left of the Seminoles and their black allies.

Although Andrew Jackson's efforts to extend the boundaries of the United States as far as he could push them and to oust those—Native peoples and fugitive slaves—who might bedevil the project had yet to become settled national policy, they seemed harbingers of the future. Federal officials recognized Indian territorial claims and accepted treaties as the mechanisms to adjust them, but since the founding of the Republic there was little agreement as to how the interests of American settlers and Native peoples might mesh. Owing to their communal ideas of landed property, their mix of hunting and horticulture, which required extensive territory, and their gendered division of labor in which women often did much of the agricultural field work, many Indian societies were regarded as backward and barbaric, relics of earlier ages that stood in the way of civilization's advance. Some policy makers, like Henry Knox, who served as secretary of war in George Washington's cabinet, hoped that Indians could be "civilized": encouraged to abandon hunting and warring, take up farming, learn to read and write, live in nuclear families, embrace Christianity, and adopt Euro-American styles of dress. They would then more readily sell off their "surplus" lands and perhaps find a comfortable place in American society. But, especially after the purchase of the Louisiana Territory, some version of "removal"—the exchange of land east of the Mississippi River for something

comparable in size to the west—came to be regarded by most American political leaders as the best option. The question was whether removal would be voluntary or coerced.

Even if they had allies in the U.S. government who accorded Indian tribes sovereign rights and hoped for a mutualist and peaceable resolution of the land questions, the pressure on Native peoples who remained east of the Mississippi mounted steadily. As one European power after another abandoned or was itself forced off the North American continent, the political prospects for Indians (who excelled at playing the Europeans against each other) dimmed. After American independence and particularly after the War of 1812, white settlers and land speculators flooded into what had been Indian country—notably in the Deep South, where the densest Native populations were still to be found—and looked to extinguish Indian claims as quickly as possible and by whatever means necessary. They would receive powerful support from state governments, like that of Georgia, which rejected tribal sovereignty and moved to extend their authority over all people within their designated borders.

Although Protestant missionaries and federal government agents formed part of the mix, it seemed to matter little whether Native peoples tried to reach some accommodation with American cultural proclivities. So the Cherokees learned. Longtime occupants of an area in the southern Appalachians more than 100,000 miles square, the Cherokees were increasingly pressed upon by white settlement over the course of the eighteenth century. Although they established complex trading relations (mostly for deerskins) with the French, the Spanish, and especially the British, they began to cede portions of their land as early as 1721. Their alliance with the British served them well during and after the French and Indian War but left them exposed when Britain accepted the independence of its North American colonies. By the 1790s, the Cherokees appeared under siege, and some of them moved west across the Mississippi River to settle in what was then Spanish Louisiana.

But others, led principally by tribal members who had intermarried with Europeans and Americans, looked to transform their ways. They embraced horse-and-plow agriculture, the ownership of African American slaves, the market economy, a patrilineal family structure, and Christianity. They reformed their political organization in a more centralized direction that included a bicameral legislature, a court system, elective representation, and a bureaucracy. They adopted a written language and a written constitution and published a newspaper. They laid out a capital at New Echota in northwestern Georgia. And their ranks were increasingly marked by social differentiation, with a small elite of planters and slave owners at the top end and a much larger peasant and hunter-gatherer class at the bottom.

Which is to say that by the mid-1820s Cherokee society in the Southeast had come—quite consciously—to look very much like the white American society that surrounded it. Although land was still held in common, reform-minded Cherokees with means built brick or frame-and-clapboard houses, planted orchards, and fenced their fields; they drew up a special legal code to regulate black slaves; and they imagined, in the words of one of their leaders, that "the day would arrive when a distinction between their race and the American family would be imperceptible." There was a substantial price to pay for this orientation. Many of the "full-blooded" Cherokees (about three-quarters of all Cherokees) rejected it, some vociferously. They rebuffed efforts to accumulate wealth and chose instead to keep to themselves.

The Cherokees were not alone in seeking ways to sustain their cultural imperatives while adapting to the circumstances and demands of intensifying American pressure. Nor were they alone in battling among themselves as they attempted to fashion a strategy for the future. In the Ohio River valley during the early nineteenth century, the Algonquian-speaking Shawnees, already residing in multiethnic villages, fractured over the choices they faced: some moved beyond the Mississippi River and the immediate reach of white settlers, and some joined the Pan-Indian movement that Tecumseh and his brother Tenskwatawa (also known as the Prophet) organized to resist American advances and revitalize ties among themselves; but others, led by Black Hoof, began to change their economic practices and avail themselves of opportunities afforded by schools and missionaries. So long as they had sympathetic ears in the halls of the U.S. government, and especially the White House—sympathetic, that is, in accepting some measure of their sovereignty and insisting that removal be voluntary—they could hold their enemies at bay and keep the most divisive of their internal conflicts in check.

But in 1828, in an election that empowered white settlers west of the Appalachians and especially in the South, Andrew Jackson won the presidency, and the bell of doom began to toll. Reflecting the views of many white southerners as well as the governments of Georgia and Alabama, Jackson rejected the idea of Indian tribal sovereignty, supported the right of states to extend their authority over Indian lands, and almost immediately put the federal government on the side of a removal policy the Indians would be unable to stop. Despite opposition from political opponents, especially in New England and the Middle Atlantic, Jackson saw a bill through Congress in 1830 that set aside territory west of the Mississippi for tribal settlement while undermining the legal basis of tribal claims to the east. Although the removal process itself was not elaborated, the federal government agreed to pay for the improvements Indians had made to the lands they surrendered, for the costs of relocation, for protection
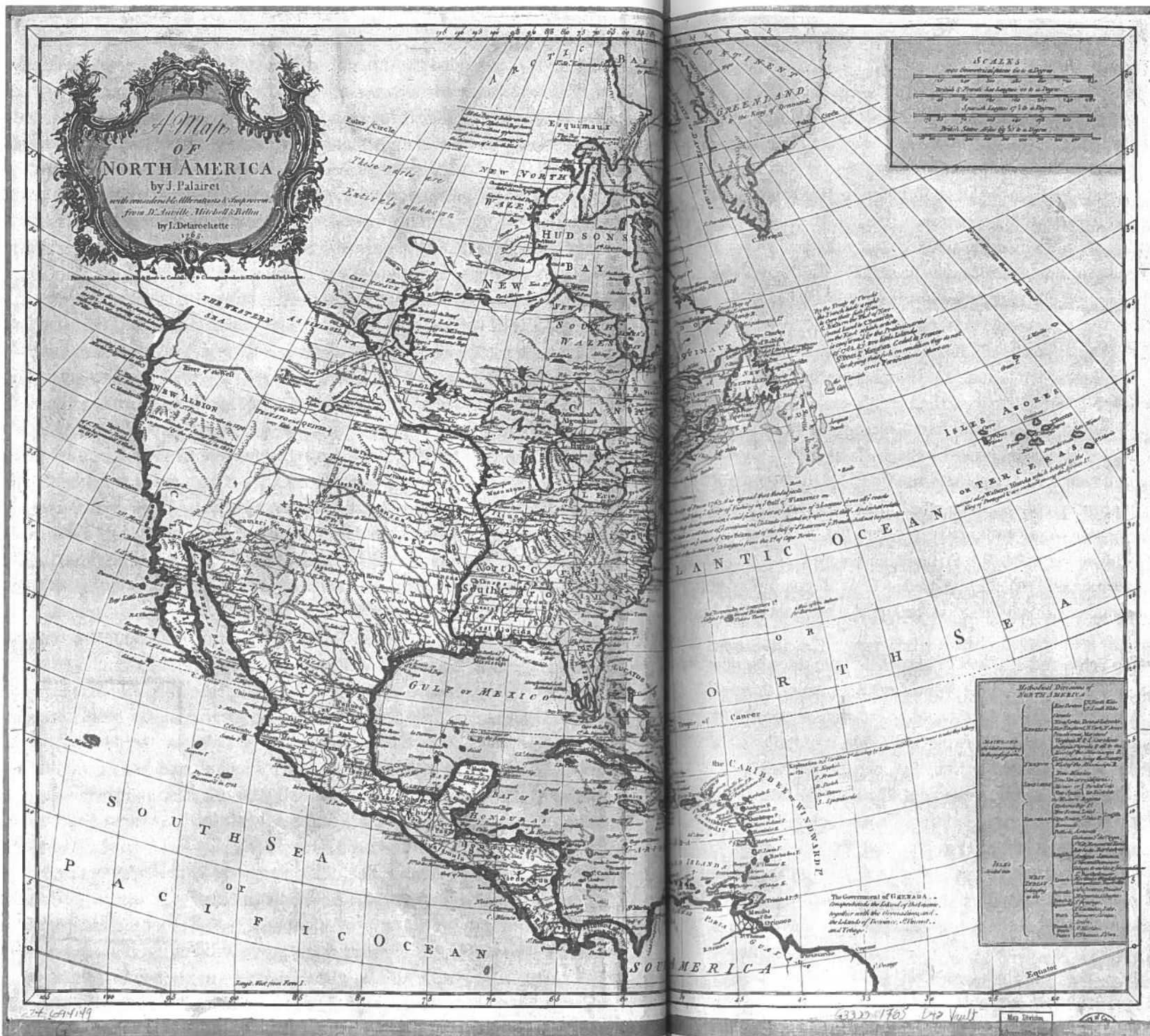
Map of North America by J. Palairet.

and care en route, for annuities to tribal leaders and cash for a tribal fund, and for support of various kinds for one year after the tribes arrived in the western districts carved out for them.

Jackson saw removal as the only alternative to the decay and destruction of Native tribes at the hands of whites armed "with their arts of civilization," and thus as a gesture of "humanity and national honor." But he would have battles on his hands, and they would be very costly. In the Great Lakes region, representatives of the Sauk, Fox, and Kickapoo peoples had, between 1800 and 1830, ceded most of their homelands to the U.S. government, much to the consternation of many tribal members. While a moderate faction under the leadership of Keokuk crossed the Mississippi and settled there, in the early 1830s the warrior chief Black Hawk, who had fought with the British during the War of 1812 and whose village was part of the cession, led a band of several hundred back to reclaim land along the Rock River in the northwestern corner of Illinois. Regarding Black Hawk's move as an "invasion," the Illinois governor called out the militia and asked for federal troops, who were then sent from St. Louis under the command of General Edmund P. Gaines, his hands already bloodied in the First Seminole War. The fighting—known as the Black Hawk War—spread across northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin (then part of the Michigan Territory) in the spring and summer of 1832 until the Indians suffered a crushing defeat at the Battle of Bad Axe, ending their resistance. Black Hawk managed to escape and find refuge with the Winnebago before being taken into custody by U.S. authorities and briefly imprisoned in St. Louis; he lived out his few remaining years, very much defeated, on tribal lands west of the Mississippi.

American troops paid a price, though: less in battlefield casualties, which were relatively light, than in the effects of cholera and desertion, which thinned their ranks. Even so, Jackson's removal policy would be far more expensive in Florida. The Seminoles numbered somewhere between five hundred and a thousand in the early 1830s and, unlike other Native peoples east of the Mississippi River, did not stand in the way of white settlement. The First Seminole War had pushed them into south-central Florida, and they did not look to reoccupy land they had been forced to relinquish. They could easily have been left to themselves had it not been for the fugitive slaves and their descendants who lived among them and roiled the slaveholding class of Florida and the Southeast. Slaveholders quite simply wanted the Seminoles sent west and the runaways returned to their owners, and in 1833 a Seminole delegation journeyed to Indian Territory to survey the land they would take up in the larger tract assigned to the Creeks. It appeared that the delegation was satisfied, and the federal government expected the tribe to move there within three years.

But as in other cases of such tribal negotiations, the Seminole negotiators did not have most of the tribe behind them. Many of the Seminoles insisted that the delegates lacked the power to reach a removal agreement and were particularly vexed at the prospect of becoming a minority out in the new Creek country west of the Mississippi. Yet none dug in their heels more fiercely than did the black runaways. Living in their own villages near Seminole encampments, the blacks acknowledged their dependency by paying annual tributes to the Seminole chiefs while also providing valuable services to the Seminoles as interpreters, guides, and fighters. With good reason they looked upon removal with suspicious eyes and feared that rather than trekking west, they would be returned to enslavement. Ordered by the U.S. Army to gather at Tampa Bay in early January 1836, the Seminoles and their black allies chose instead to strike first, attacking sugar plantations along the St. Johns River and annihilating an army command of a hundred men, initiating what has come to be called the Second Seminole War.

The Seminoles were not easy to subdue. More than a year into the fighting, the army had utterly failed to break the Indian-black resistance, because the Seminole leaders Micanopy, Osceola, Wild Cat, Little Alligator, Jumper, and King Philip, together with their black advisers Abraham, John Cavallo, and John Caesar, rallied plantation slaves and put up a formidable defense. One of the American commanders could observe that "this . . . is a negro war, not an Indian war; and if it be not speedily put down, the south will feel the effects of it on their slave population." Before it was all over, the warfare claimed the lives of fifteen hundred American troops and perhaps as much as $40 million (almost three times the price of the Louisiana Territory) in government funds, and the army had to permit many of the black Seminoles to go west rather than be returned to their owners. By 1842, the fighting had ceased (this would be the American state's longest war until Vietnam), and most of the Seminoles had been removed, save for a small group of holdouts who withdrew deep into the recesses of the Everglades.

Cherokee efforts to resist the removal process were less militaristic but no less formidable. Led initially by Chief John Ross, they used their newspaper, the *Cherokee Phoenix*, to keep tribal members informed and to demonstrate their cultural advancement to a wider public; they lobbied in Washington, D.C., by means of petitions and oral arguments; and they brought suit in federal court against the actions of the State of Georgia, insisting on their tribal sovereignty and the political remedies associated with it. The results were not encouraging. The Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice John Marshall, offered mixed rulings in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831) and *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832): on the one hand, the Court determined that while the Cherokee did occupy a sovereign

status of sorts (they and the other Indian tribes were deemed "domestic, dependent nations"), they had no standing as a foreign state and thus no right to sue Georgia; on the other hand, the Court called "the Cherokee Nation" a "distinct community, occupying its own territory," over which Georgia law had no jurisdiction. A sympathetic chief executive could then have defended Cherokee claims and gone nose to nose with the Georgians. For his part, Jackson regarded the Court's decision as simply one interpretation of the Constitution and refused to enforce it. A possible Native American victory turned into an utter defeat.

Even more troublesome, the removal issue drove a sharp wedge into the Cherokee nation, dividing those who wished to remain in their traditional homelands (Ross was one of them) from those who believed that resistance was pointless and looked to secure the best removal terms possible (they were led by John Ridge and known as the Treaty Party). Ridge managed to gain the upper hand at a crucial moment, and the Treaty of New Echota was signed in very late December 1835, looking toward a removal date in 1838. Although Ross did not give up the fight, the combined pressure of the Jackson administration and the State of Georgia proved impossible to defeat, and what is known as the Trail of Tears eventually brought nearly twelve thousand Cherokees out to Indian Territory (perhaps one-quarter had perished along the way). But the political divisions moved with them, and in a bloody denouement John Ridge and two other Treaty Party leaders (Major Ridge and Elias Boudinot) were brutally murdered by tribal adversaries, who were then pardoned by the larger Ross faction. It was an awful end and an awful beginning.

But where was Indian Territory, and, more precisely, what was it? By the time of the Jackson-era removals, the new states of Arkansas and Missouri— both west of the Mississippi River—had been admitted to the American union, and what was regarded as "Indian" or "Western" territory was an area roughly between the Platte and the Red rivers, to the west of the Arkansas-Missouri state lines. Indian peoples who had found their homelands north of the Ohio River would in turn be located in the northern sections of this territory, while those who had lived below the Ohio, including slaveholding tribes like the Cherokee, Seminole, and Choctaw, would be located to the south (reflecting, in part, the demands of northern congressmen mindful of the line drawn by the Missouri Compromise of 1820—36°30´—which closed the Louisiana Territory north of it to slavery). The United States promised "forever" to "secure and guaranty" the western lands to the resettled Indian tribes and to protect them in their occupancy but did not convey the lands in fee simple. The removal legislation provided instead that if "the Indians become extinct" or abandoned the land, it would revert to the United States.

Yet what would be the political destiny of these newly created territories?

For the previous half century, ever since Congress had enacted the Northwest Ordinance (1787), territories came under the jurisdiction of the federal government while at the same time being viewed as states in the making. They would be administered by congressionally appointed territorial governors and by elected territorial legislatures, and once they achieved the requisite population of sixty thousand, they could write constitutions and apply for statehood. But Indian territories would have no such political arc. They would be supervised by the commissioner of Indian affairs, based in St. Louis, and by the commandants of military bases. Although there had been intermittent talk of a formal Indian state being admitted to the Union, the idea was dropped as soon as the removal policy officially unfolded. For all intents and purposes, Indian Territory was an internal protectorate of the United States marked by impermanent boundaries and obscure lines of governance. It would exist until it was made untenable by the press of white settlement on the outside and the paucity of resources on the inside. Its status was wholly distinct in the United States—set apart and within simultaneously—but an eerie harbinger of America's imperial future.

What Is Texas?

Whatever ambiguities surrounded the status and future of Indian Territory in the United States, Andrew Jackson was quite clearheaded about Texas. He had long believed that Texas formed part of the original Louisiana Purchase and was mistakenly relinquished by John Quincy Adams, secretary of state for James Monroe, in the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819. Like an assortment of adventurers and political renegades—such as James Wilkinson of Burr conspiracy notoriety—who engaged in filibustering missions there since at least the second decade of the nineteenth century, Jackson eyed Texas with a view to annexation and eventual statehood, and once he assumed the presidency, he wasted little time in pushing forward. Even after his emissary Anthony Butler utterly failed to interest the Mexican government in selling the province, Jackson thought to use the threat of Indian raids into Louisiana and Arkansas as a pretext for invading eastern Texas.

Jackson was not alone. The thriving port city of New Orleans, already the fifth-largest city in the United States and the economic hub of the Caribbean basin, had become a busy crossroads for slave traffickers, financiers, political opportunists, and exiles from failed power struggles looking for new fields of activity. Their horizons stretched from Cuba across to Central America and Mexico, but owing to the Anglo-American colonization of the 1820s Texas seemed especially alluring. New Orleans merchants and factors began to capture

the growing Texas cotton trade, as they previously had much of the livestock trade, not to mention the trade in stolen horses and weapons with Indians, Comanches chief among them, in the borderlands of the Red and Sabine rivers. Speculators, some coming in from the Texas town of Nacogdoches, looked to cash in on the sprawling lands made available by the Mexican government. And the New Orleans Association, a business conglomerate, channeled funds in a variety of economic and political directions, including to expeditions hatched by filibusters. Not by accident did Stephen Austin head to New Orleans almost immediately after confirming his empresario grant. From there, from Arkansas, and from other parts of the Deep South, the development and potential acquisition of Texas by the United States seemed increasingly vital both as an outlet for accumulating economic energies and as a zone of protection for the slave system to the east. "A population of fanatical abolitionists in Texas," Austin warned, "would have a very dangerous and pernicious influence on the overgrown slave population of [Louisiana]."

Imperial-minded Americans in New Orleans and the slave South had potential allies among the Anglo-Texians. By the early 1830s, a politically combustible mix was building in the Tejas province, and threats to slavery surely formed part of the explosive package of discontent. Although Texian leaders were divided over whether to seek greater autonomy within the Mexican Republic (they were known as the Peace Party) or to strike for outright independence (they were known as the War Party), all of them feared the rising tide of centralism in Mexico City and the challenges it posed to the social order they had begun to construct. Most were slaveholders, large landholders, land speculators, and cotton growers, and they had watched as the federal and state (Coahuila y Tejas) governments tried to tamper with their labor force, limit the in-migration of Anglo-Americans who shared their aspirations, and recover the customs duties that were not being collected. Through the summer of 1835, they played the principal role in organizing popular unrest and in attempting to create a structure of protest and governance. In November, after military skirmishing had flared between rebellious Texians and Mexican troops, they met in a body—the Consultation—organized an army under the command of Sam Houston (a Jackson ally who arrived in 1832 after stints in Tennessee politics and Cherokee country), and established a provisional government on the basis of the federalist Mexican constitution of 1824. Still, they did not proclaim independence.

But an important shift in the dynamics of the developing rebellion occurred at the same time. As news of the escalating conflict began to circulate in the lower Mississippi Valley and then farther to the east, efforts were made to raise money and troops to support the embattled Texians and advance the prospects

of independence from Mexico. Public meetings were held in small towns and large, contributions solicited, paramilitaries mobilized, and visions of an expansive world of plantations and slavery nourished. "The great rage here is the cause of Independence in Texas," a white Mississippian wrote from the village of Louisville. "A great many men are going from this country in expectation of acquiring homes and wealth in the cause [as] the government of Texas offers a large bounty in land for soldiers and their lands I am assured . . . are not surpassed by any in our Southern country for the cultivation of cotton, sugar, etc." Paramilitary units began to arrive from New Orleans and from Georgia, Alabama, and Kentucky. By early 1836 in the vital district stretching from San Patricio to Goliad to San Antonio de Béxar—under the command of James W. Fannin, a wealthy Texas slaveholder—over three-quarters of the soldiers in Texas had arrived only since the previous October. What would come to be known as the Texas Revolution, that is, received decisive aid from a large American filibustering operation.

Andrew Jackson was not long in putting his iron into the Texas fire. Stories have been told for many years that Jackson sent Sam Houston into Texas to promote the cause of annexation. Although no supportive evidence has ever been uncovered—and the stories are probably apocryphal—Jackson did look for an opportunity to enter the fray. The opportunity came in the fall of 1835 when members of the Nacogdoches Committee of Vigilance and Safety appealed to Jackson for protection against Indian attacks, and he sent General Edmund P. Gaines (veteran of the Seminole and Black Hawk wars) and a company of army troops to the Sabine River early the next year. Gaines soon crossed over, occupied Nacogdoches, and remained in place for the next six months.

Whether Gaines would have engaged Mexican troops if they pushed that far into the Tejas northeast or quickly crushed the Texian rebellion is unclear. But when news arrived that General Santa Anna was on his way with a large force, the divisions between War and Peace parties evaporated, and rebellious Texians (Austin among them) embraced independence and the military defense of their territory. Some of them, including hotheads like William Travis and James Bowie, dug in at the Alamo, a large presidio in San Antonio de Béxar (the provincial capital), despite Sam Houston's orders to destroy it and evacuate. Others were with James Fannin around the town of Goliad or with Houston in the vicinity of San Felipe. In the meantime, they prepared for a convention to meet in early March and formally break their ties with Mexico.

Confident as he was that his troops would suppress the rebellion in Tejas, Santa Anna also eyed other vulnerabilities of Texian society. One of them was the looming presence of Indian peoples, especially Cherokee bands and their allies, who had migrated into the Arkansas-Texas borderlands before the

coerced removals later in the decade. Mexican officials and Texian leaders alike, including Houston, who had lived for a time among the Cherokee and once had a Cherokee wife, competed for their loyalties with the promise of lands and other accommodations. The Cherokee ultimately split into pro-Mexican and pro-Texian factions. But it was slavery that seemed to represent the soft underbelly of the Texas unrest. "Their intent," one of the Texas rebels said of the Mexican centralists, "is to gain the friendship of different Indian tribes; and if possible to get the slaves to revolt."

The concern was hardly misplaced. In October 1835, as Texians and Mexicans first battled, slaves residing in the Austin settlement along the Brazos River sparked a rebellion that allegedly looked to the redistribution of lands among them. It was brutally repressed by their owners but also served as a reminder of the stakes at play and the dangers involved. More than a few Texians began to warn that Mexican forces intended "to compel you to liberate your slaves," that they would set the "slaves free and loose them upon their families." And, indeed, Mexican officials were not reluctant to suggest, as General Martín Perfecto de Cos did, that the consequences of the Texians' insurrection would "bear heavily upon them and their property." Small wonder that many Texas slaveholders stayed home, keeping close watch over their slaves, rather than join the armed rebels.

Santa Anna recognized the Texians' predicament and pondered how he might best take advantage of it. "There is a considerable number of slaves in Texas also who have been introduced by their masters under cover of certain questionable contracts, but who according to our laws should be free," he observed only days before crossing into the province and meeting the rebels. "Shall we permit those wretches to moan in chains any longer in a country whose kind laws protect the liberty of man without distinction of color?" Imperious in aura and demeanor, Santa Anna might appear among the least likely to launch an assault on slavery and racial exploitation, but the emancipationist sympathies of the Mexican government had clearly circulated among Texas slaves and stoked their anticipation of change in the offing. The "negroes," slaveholders in Brazoria thus noticed, "were on the tip-toe of expectation, and rejoicing that the Mexicans were coming to make them free!" Some of the slaves looked for the first chance to escape from the grips of their owners and head toward Mexican army encampments.

It therefore might have made sense for Santa Anna to steer his forces immediately toward the Texas Gulf Coast, where most of the Texians had settled and the slave population was concentrated. Instead, he and his troops continued northward toward San Antonio de Béxar and the Alamo, where a small band of Anglos and a few of their own slaves were holed up, and laid it siege. Perhaps

Santa Anna wished to begin his operations on terrain that was most familiar (the arid plains rather than the eastern woodlands); perhaps he wanted to make his initial show of strength in what was then the Texas capital. Whatever his logic—and in retrospect the military and strategic value of the Alamo appears minimal—the first results of Santa Anna's invasion seemed auspicious: his troops destroyed the Alamo and killed all of the male defenders (the only two male survivors were slaves), and to the southeast Mexican troops under the command of General José de Urrea overran Texas rebels at San Patricio and then subdued them near Goliad, whereupon all the rebels who surrendered were summarily executed on orders from Santa Anna. Not only was Sam Houston and what remained of the Texas rebel army in hasty retreat, but Anglo-Texians now fearing "extermination" at the hands of the Mexican invaders and a "possible rising of the negroes" fled in a panic that came to be known as the Runaway Scrape.

Yet for all of his ostensible success, Santa Anna paid a heavy price for the track he chose to take. Nearly one-quarter of his troops fell at the Alamo—more than three times the number of Anglo defenders who died inside—and the slaughters he authorized there and at Goliad touched a raw nerve of vengeance among those left to keep the Texas rebellion alive. Believing that he verged on total victory, Santa Anna planned a multipronged attack on Houston and divided his army to carry it out. But the winds of fortune (in this case a captured courier) enabled Houston to learn of Santa Anna's moves, and at Buffalo Bayou on the San Jacinto River, Houston and his nine hundred men struck back. The Mexican army was quickly routed and then subjected to a massacre so fierce that Texas officers could not stop it. Nearly seven hundred Mexican soldiers would die, and several hundred more would be taken prisoner, including General Santa Anna, seized by the rebels while in desperate flight, dressed as a common soldier.

Eager for revenge, many of the rebel troops demanded Santa Anna's execution. Houston had a different idea. In exchange for his life and passage back to Mexico City, Santa Anna would have to agree to Texas independence, order his remaining troops south of the Rio Grande, and seek recognition of Texas by the Mexican Congress. It was a deal he could hardly refuse. Santa Anna signed the Treaty of Velasco ending hostilities and privately promised to press the Mexican government to accept Texas independence. With this, the Republic of Texas—created in convention at Washington-on-the-Brazos in March, by delegates who were younger and had spent less time in Texas than previous leaders, with a constitution resembling the American, though explicitly supporting slavery—had apparently come into being.

But what exactly was the Republic of Texas, and, equally to the point, where

was it? Despite Santa Anna's assurances, the Mexican Congress refused to recognize the Texas Republic and regarded itself as still at war with the Texas insurgency. And despite the expectations of the Anglo-Texians that the U.S. government would lend them credibility or move toward annexation, the Jackson administration remained aloof. For all of Jackson's interest in Texas and attempts to find advantage in the unrest there, the outcome of the Texas rebellion posed its own share of challenges. Annexation would be divisive politically and raise the ire of those Americans already building a movement to limit the power of slaveholders and eventually abolish slavery itself. Either annexation or recognition, moreover, would surely court the venom of the Mexican government and threaten warfare that would not unify the United States. Jackson was already counting down the last days of his administration and was reluctant to saddle the new president, and his favored successor, Martin Van Buren, with the burdens that direct involvement with the Texas question would most certainly bring. Although a chargé d'affaires to Texas was appointed moments before Jackson left office, the larger issue of Texas-U.S. relations remained very much unresolved; in Mexican eyes, the Texas Republic simply did not exist.

Then there was the matter of boundaries. The Adams-Onís Treaty had established the Sabine River as the eastern border of the Mexican state of Coahuila y Tejas, and the leaders of the Texas Republic accepted this. But they also defined the southern and southwestern border as the Rio Grande, and a western and northern boundary extending all the way to the 42nd parallel, an immense stretch of territory that no government or confederation save for the Texans—not the United States, not Britain, not France, and certainly not Mexico or the Indian peoples of the southern plains—seemed ready to acknowledge. For the next decade, Texas would be more of an imagined space than a sovereign state, with boundaries that were endlessly porous, ever shifting, and almost impossible to discern. Comanches, Kiowas, Cheyennes, and Arapahos pressed in from the north and the west. Aggressive Texans looked to move against the Indians and even to carry their designs farther into Mexico. And the area between the Nueces and the Rio Grande was neither populated nor politically secured, designated on contemporary maps as the "Mustang or Wild Horse Desert." Texas remained a borderland in the fullest sense, and the struggle over its formal political identity would continue to detonate across the nineteenth century.

Slavery and Political Culture

Anti-abolitionist mob destroying the printing press of James G. Birney, Cincinnati, Ohio. *The Anti-Slavery Record*, a monthly published by the American Anti-Slavery Society, September 1836.

Contesting the Slaveholders' Design

Among the prospective empresarios who sought land grants from Mexican authorities in Tejas during the 1820s and 1830s, Benjamin Lundy was surely the most unusual. Born in New Jersey in 1789 to a family of Quakers, he hoped to establish not a colony of aspiring planters but rather one of freed slaves. Seemingly peripatetic by nature, he had already traveled to Haiti (1825) for the same purpose and then visited the small Wilberforce Colony of fugitive slaves in Ontario, Canada (1831–32), perhaps to take the measure of what such a settlement entailed. Active in the developing antislavery movement since the second decade of the nineteenth century, Lundy moved along a geographical belt encompassing the country's midsection, from Mount Pleasant, Ohio, to St. Louis, Missouri, to Greeneville, Tennessee, and on to Baltimore, Maryland. In the process, he began publishing the *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, one of the earliest and most influential papers devoted to the cause. But Lundy was interested in turning his words into deeds and in demonstrating the superiority of free over slave labor, so he headed to Mexican Tejas on two occasions during the 1830s, imagining that a government with antislavery credentials might be sympathetic to his project. As it happened, he was on the ground as the Anglo-American rebellion came to the boiling point.

Whatever chances Lundy might have had to establish a colony of black freedpeople in Tejas evaporated when rebellious Texans defeated Santa Anna, proclaimed their independence, and wrote a constitution that protected slavery. Indeed, the Texas Republic turned Lundy's emancipationist dream into a potential nightmare, as pro-slavery interests in the United States, with the support of President Andrew Jackson, commenced a vigorous campaign for annexation. Lundy was determined to alert his political allies, as well as the American public more generally, to the perils Texas now posed, and he penned *The War in Texas* (1836) to expose what he regarded as a slaveholders' plot. "It is susceptible to the clearest demonstration," he wrote, "that the immediate cause and leading object of the [Texas revolt] originated in a settled design among the slaveholders of this country to wrest the large and valuable territory of Texas from the Mexican Republic, in order to re-establish the SYSTEM OF SLAVERY; to open a vast and profitable SLAVE-MARKET therein; and, ultimately to annex it to the United States." The ensuing struggle over the future of Texas would lead to war with Mexico and an intensifying crisis over the slavery question.

Benjamin Lundy might have traveled far and wide to find a secure destination for slaves freed from bondage, but his antislavery politics were decidedly gradualist. Although he (like most Quakers) believed that slaveholding was a sin, he thought that any plan of emancipation had to unfold slowly and include the removal of the emancipated black population from the United States. That was why he journeyed to Haiti and Mexican Tejas in search of land and political assistance: unlike many others in the antislavery movement who shared his views, Lundy was planning to enact "colonization" (as it was known) both as a solution to the problem of emancipation and as an encouragement to the advance of emancipation itself. Once freedpeople demonstrated their readiness for freedom and the economic benefits of free labor, slaveholders, he assumed, would be more willing to manumit their slaves.

Lundy's was a version of the program previously unfurled by the American Colonization Society (ACS). Founded in 1816 by elite reformers who worried about the corrosive effects of slavery and wished to envision a distant future when slavery would no longer exist in the United States, the ACS promoted the exile of free people of African descent. To that end, the society established—with financial and political backing from the U.S. government—the colony of Liberia on the west coast of Africa, and by the mid-1820s the first black migrants began to trickle in there and build settlements in uneasy relation to the indigenous populations nearby. ACS organizers included prominent slaveholders like Henry Clay of Kentucky and John Randolph of Virginia, and the membership would boast an array of important political leaders: James Madison, James Monroe, Daniel Webster, John Marshall, Stephen Douglas, and William Seward chief among them; Thomas Jefferson never joined the organization but endorsed its goals. In a significant sense, colonization must be seen in close relation—intellectually and politically, as well as chronologically—to Indian removal, as powerful elements in the developing American imperial project. Both reflected the increasing centrality of racialist thinking and categories together with a growing pessimism as to the prospects for interracial peace. And both reflected a deepening consensus among juridically free Americans that the country—whatever its dimensions—would be ruled in the interests of white people; others would be required to leave or submit.

Benjamin Lundy did not become a member of the ACS, and the *Genius of Universal Emancipation* could be sharply critical of the society's ideas and policies. Yet Lundy's gradualism helped form one of the main currents of emancipationist sensibilities that began to emerge in the last third of the eighteenth century. On the one hand, emancipationiss expressed grave doubts about the ethics and political wisdom of slaveholding; on the other hand, they acknowledged the enormous financial investments and property holdings that slavery involved and, equally consequential, wondered about the slaves' preparedness for freedom. Were slaves ready for a life of freedom, or would they need to be educated into it, socialized in the ways of free society, "civilized"? For a time, emancipationist thought focused on the African slave trade and the repellent images of

slave pens, Middle Passages, and slave sales. If the trade were abolished, not only would some of slavery's most ghastly features be eliminated, but slaveholders would be more concerned with the material conditions of their slaves, reliant as they would then be on natural reproduction to replenish their labor force—the first of many steps that might lead to the abolition of slavery itself. Once the trade was indeed officially ended (1808), emancipationists attempted to mobilize sentiment in civil and political society around reforms in slavery's conduct and a gradualist approach—involving implicit or explicit compensation to owners—to slavery's ultimate demise.

What distinguished people like Benjamin Lundy from the more complacent and elitist ACS were not only his humble origins and sympathies for the travail of black slaves but also the urgency he felt the mission demanded. Despite the campaigns against the slave trade and the mounting challenges to slaveholding—bringing with them some notable victories—slavery, like the United States more generally, had shifted into an expansionist phase during the early decades of the nineteenth century. American slave owners and their slaves were moving into the Louisiana Territory, new states (like Missouri) were being admitted to the Union with constitutions that upheld the legality of slave property, and slaveholding Texas loomed on the horizon. Thus, together with seeking land to establish freed black colonies, Lundy headed off on speaking tours of the Middle Atlantic and New England states to rouse public awareness of the threatening circumstances. On one of them, in 1828, he met a young admirer named William Lloyd Garrison.

Garrison came from a modest background in Newburyport, Massachusetts, his father a mariner who fell on hard times and abandoned the family just a few years after Garrison's birth. Raised by a devoted Baptist mother and eventually swept up in the evangelical revivals of the time, he apprenticed as a printer and worked at several newspapers. At the time he met Lundy, Garrison had been drawn to temperance and antislavery, though his emancipationism was of the gradualist sort espoused by the American Colonization Society. Perhaps it was their similar origins (Lundy apprenticed as a saddle maker) and religious zeal; perhaps it was Garrison's skills and experience with the press; at all events, the two seemed to strike up a relationship, and within a month Lundy invited Garrison to Baltimore to help him edit the *Genius of Universal Emancipation*.

Baltimore proved to be an arresting and transforming experience for Garrison. The second-largest city in the United States (next to New York) and a thriving seaport, it was also decidedly in slavery's domain. Although slaveholding in Maryland was concentrated in the countryside south and east of the city, along the eastern and western shores of Chesapeake Bay, roughly one-quarter of Baltimore's population was of African descent, and just under half of it was enslaved.

Here Garrison directly encountered, for the first time, a world organized around slavery: slaveholding, slave hiring, slave punishments, and slave markets. "There is nothing which the curse of slavery has not tainted," he would tell his New England friends of what he saw there. "It rests on every herb and every tree, and every field, and on the people, and on the morals." Yet, even more significantly, Garrison worked and boarded with free people of color in the city who had a far less cautious view of the antislavery project than he had, and he learned that they subscribed in large numbers to the *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, providing a base of support that was essential to the paper's viability. He also read and helped to print in the pages of the newspaper the powerful *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* written by a free man of color named David Walker. By the time Garrison left Baltimore for Boston in 1830, he had abandoned gradualism and colonization and was ready to take his emancipationist ideas in new, and far more radical, directions.

Garrisonian abolitionism, that is to say, grew out of a soil already nourished by black people, slave and free, and David Walker helps us grasp the complex process and circuits by which this came about. Walker wrote and published his appeal in 1829 in Boston, where he had been since the mid-1820s, active in the interests of antislavery and Boston's black population. He played a role in the organization of the Massachusetts General Colored Association (1828), designed to "unite the colored population" and "meliorate our miserable condition," and he served as a local agent for *Freedom's Journal*, the first newspaper in the United States owned and edited by African Americans, while earning a living by selling used clothing. But Walker was born in the mid- to late 1790s in Wilmington, North Carolina, the son of a free black mother and an enslaved father (and so as a free person), and he spent most of his life moving among dense populations of slaves and free people of color. He appears to have grown to young adulthood in the environs of Wilmington, which reverberated with various forms of slave unrest during the 1790s and early nineteenth century. He then traveled to Charleston, South Carolina, around the time that Denmark Vesey, another free man of color, was talking with slaves and free blacks of political developments relating to slavery at home and abroad, including the Haitian Revolution and the debate over the admission of Missouri to the Union as a slave state, and was charged with plotting a massive slave rebellion. When Walker finally arrived in Boston, some time after Vesey and his alleged conspirators were put to death, he brought with him the fruits of a remarkable education in the black political worlds of slavery and freedom.

Walker's *Appeal* pulsed with anger and erudition, argument and eloquence, threat and forgiveness. It addressed many audiences—white and black, slave and free, American and African diasporic, the living and their ghosts—and

constructed a universe of political concern and engagement that was truly internationalist. In prose dotted with classical allusions and historical references and laced with millennial language that reached the pitches of a fevered jeremiad (many of the sentences were punctuated with multiple exclamation points, as if he imagined his readers listening), Walker insisted on the unique barbarity of American slavery, exposed the hypocrisy of slaveholding republicans and Christians, chided slaves for their "wretchedness" and submission, condemned colonization for its moral bankruptcy and self-serving coerciveness, and warned of God's retributive justice. Walker reminded African Americans that their "brethren" were enslaved "the world over" and that their destinies were inextricably tied together. He told them that freedom was their "natural right" and, to claim it, they had to cast off their wretchedness. And, in the *Appeal's* most audacious move, he took special aim at Thomas Jefferson's ideas of black inferiority and embrace of colonization, predicting that blacks would "contradict or confirm him by your own actions, and not by what our friends have said or done for us."

Yet for all of Walker's outrage and indignation, for all of his adumbrations of turmoil and black triumph—"we must and shall be free, in spite of you . . . God will deliver us from under you. And woe, woe, will be to you if we have to obtain our freedom by fighting"—Walker also offered a vision of redemption and social peace that stood out in an era of racialized removals: "Throw away your fears and prejudices then, and enlighten us and treat us like men, and we will like you more than we do now hate you, and tell us no more about colonization, for America is as much our country, as it is yours.—Treat us like men, and there is no danger but we will all live in peace and happiness together. For we are not like you, hard-hearted, unmerciful, and unforgiving." The *Appeal* revealed a gifted voice and a distinctive political intelligence, but it also distilled passions, languages, and sensibilities that circulated among the people of African descent David Walker encountered in the Carolinas, Massachusetts, and possibly elsewhere in his travels. With riveting perspective, it also showed the marks of struggles against slavery already more than a century old.

Emancipationism in the World of Slaves

David Walker was a publicist and agitator as well as a writer. He intended his *Appeal* to be read not only by the small black population in Boston and New England but also by the very large black, and mostly enslaved, population farther to the south. To that end, he relied chiefly on the networks of communication that people of African descent had long been carving out and secreted copies of the text among black seamen working the coastal trade, at times stitching them in their coats, and had it distributed to a variety of contacts, some known to him personally. Walker was, of course, well aware that few of the slaves were literate, but he also recognized that newspapers, political tracts, or anything of general interest could be read aloud—as was common among all poor and working people—by the few who could claim literacy to the many who could not. Although the evidence is sketchy, the *Appeal* seems to have turned up in port cities from Boston to New Orleans (including Wilmington and Charleston) and excited great alarm among public officials in places where slavery was legal and black people numerous, most notably in Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, and Louisiana.

Walker's efforts to circulate the *Appeal* show us what studies of the antislavery movement too infrequently acknowledge: that the first and most continuous combatants in the fight against slavery were the slaves themselves. To be sure, none of the slaves had standing in the official arenas of civil and political life. They could not publicly demonstrate their grievances, petition their governments, sue their owners, vote or run for office, publish newspapers and broadsides, or hold political meetings. But there were things they could—and did—do. They could push back against the power and presumed authority of slaveholders. They could build relations and networks across considerable distances. They could flee their plantations and farms and construct settlements they would vigilantly defend (known as maroons). They could make contact and exchange information with slaves and free people of color from other slave societies, often as a result of maritime transport. They could organize small- and large-scale rebellions. And, through their many actions, they could weaken the edifices of enslavement, win the sympathies of people in the ruling populations, attract allies near and far, and eventually create crises for slave regimes. The antislavery movements as we have come to know them were therefore components in a greater battle against slavery, and they might never have arisen had the slaves not prepared the way.

The slaves' movements against slavery, like the more formal movements that would develop in close association with them, were international in their dimensions. They not only encompassed the North and South Atlantic as well as the Caribbean basin but increasingly linked the experiences of slaves and other people of African descent in many different locations and circumstances. After all, the system of slavery moved across, and often defied, national boundaries, and the slaves themselves were among the most frequent transgressors. They were taken across oceans and seas, brought to port cities and remote hinterlands, and traded around the slaveholding colonies owing to the vagaries of markets and the appearance of slave traders. They worked on transoceanic and coasting vessels, accompanied metropolitan armies and colonial militias, labored

in seaports—Baltimore, Savannah, New Orleans, Havana, Cap-Français, Kingston, Cartagena, Salvador—that saw heavy international traffic, and served public officials. They also followed owners who migrated to new locales searching for economic opportunities or fleeing political unrest.

Denmark Vesey embodied this transnationalism. Born a slave in the Danish Virgin Islands, he was sold to a ship captain and taken to French St. Domingue for several years before ending up in Charleston, South Carolina, where he won his freedom by means of a lottery. Vesey became multilingual, literate, and very much attuned to the political crosscurrents of the Atlantic. He read to slaves and free blacks from the Bible, the Declaration of Independence, the debates in the U.S. Congress and the South Carolina legislature, and the Charleston papers, and thereby enabled them to view their situations and destinies in relation to thousands of other slaves around the hemisphere. In turn, Vesey's comrades could share these discoveries and insights with others in the workshops and plantations to which they belonged. David Walker might well have been edified in this manner and then carried what he learned far to the north.

Yet owing to their civil and political debilities and the violence required to enforce their submission, the slaves' struggles against slavery more nearly resembled ongoing warfare than recognizable social movements. The warfare could assume the guise of large battles and very public encounters, such as when revolts erupted; most often, it took the form of guerrilla skirmishing as slaves fought with their owners over the rules and governance of their plantations and farms, their ability to develop relations (of kinship, friendship, faith, and strategic alliance) with other slaves, their access to provision grounds and local markets, and the room they could claim to organize communities of different sorts—with wreckage and casualties inflicted on both sides. Over the course of the eighteenth century, as European imperial powers themselves came to blows across the face of the Atlantic world, the warfare grew in scale and ambition. It shifted, generally speaking, from efforts to flee slavery by constructing maroon settlements or finding other safe havens to efforts aimed at defeating slave regimes and at least pushing back the grasp of enslavement.

Indeed, after the Seven Years' War, slaves from the Caribbean basin to northerly New England commenced what would turn into half a century of increasingly interconnected and militant struggle. Beginning with Tacky's Revolt in Jamaica (1760) and slave flight to the British armies during the American Revolution (1770s), this new phase of warfare then exploded in St. Domingue, Guadeloupe, and Martinique in the early 1790s (becoming a successful revolution in St. Domingue by 1804, when the independent Republic of Haiti was proclaimed by victorious slaves and free people of color), further detonated in French Louisiana in 1795, Richmond, Virginia, in 1800 (Gabriel's Rebellion), the plantation

parishes of lower Louisiana (this time under U.S. rule) in 1811, Barbados in 1816 (the Easter Rebellion), Florida in 1817–18 (the First Seminole War), Charleston, South Carolina, in 1822 (Vesey's conspiracy), and Demerara in 1823, reaching its climax with Jamaica's massive Baptist War and Nat Turner's far smaller but nonetheless consequential rebellion in Southampton County, Virginia, both in 1831. By the time the smoke cleared, slavery had been abolished in Haiti and Britain's colonial possessions, and an emancipation process had been initiated in the United States, fired as much by aggrieved slaves as by white Americans who could not square the political ideals of their revolution with the continued enslavement of black people.

These blows against slavery did not simply abut chronologically; they fed off each other as information and rumors spread out across the Atlantic and the Caribbean allowing slaves and free blacks to discuss and debate the new political possibilities and decide how they might best advance them. During the American Revolution, free people of color (*gens de couleur libres*) from St. Domingue accompanied French troops and fought with patriot forces in Savannah in 1778, while slaves who had run off to the British ended up in Nova Scotia, England, the British Caribbean, and ultimately Sierra Leone. Rebels in St. Domingue in the 1790s included veterans of the Savannah campaign (Henri Christophe, an eventual leader of the rebellion and then ruler of Haiti, was one of them), and as the rebellion gained ground and slavery collapsed, thousands of refugees—slave owners, slaves, and *gens de couleur libres*—arrived in Havana, Kingston, and Cartagena, but especially in port cities on the North American mainland, stretching from Philadelphia to Baltimore, Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, and New Orleans. Some of the slaves who plotted rebellion in Pointe Coupee Parish, Louisiana, in 1795 and again in 1811 had roots in St. Domingue; the slave blacksmith Gabriel invoked the developing revolution in St. Domingue as he organized a rising in the area of Richmond in 1800; and Denmark Vesey, who had labored briefly in St. Domingue, told slaves and free blacks in his Charleston circle of what had happened there.

Indeed, refugees from St. Domingue arrived in American ports at a very propitious moment. The cotton gin had just been invented, and the beginnings of the short-staple cotton boom led thousands of slaveholders and their slaves into the hinterlands of the Southeast and then into the rapidly developing areas of Alabama, Mississippi, and, with the territorial purchase from France in 1803, Louisiana and the west bank of the Mississippi River. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, an interstate trade was moving thousands of slaves from Virginia, Delaware, and Maryland down to the Gulf Coast; in the end, a million slaves would make this forced migration. Mostly young and male in the early years of the trade—they were needed to do the backbreaking work of

clearing fields and building dwellings—these slaves were wrenched out of families and communities that had been constructed over many decades and required to start again in an entirely new environment. But they also brought with them a range of experiences and expectations, and perhaps knowledge of the blows that rebel slaves were meting out to slaveholders. David Walker's *Appeal* showed explicit familiarity with events in "Hayti," and the circulation of the *Appeal* likely extended this familiarity, together with an emerging sense that the institution of slavery was under intensifying attack.

News of the Haitian Revolution was easier to come by for people of African descent in New England and the Middle Atlantic states because there slavery was unraveling and a black civic culture slowly taking shape. But it was a bumpy and contentious process. Slaveholding had a firm legal basis across British North America and was fortified everywhere during the eighteenth century as the Atlantic economy boomed. Although colonies from Pennsylvania on north had relatively few slaves (and small black populations), slave ownership was nonetheless widespread among those most involved in the international market and in public life. Slave trading vessels frequented the port cities, especially Newport, Rhode Island, where a plantation system had developed in nearby Narragansett, and a substantial share of urban households up and down the coast held slaves. The opening came during the American Revolution, in part owing to the ideological and cultural currents of the time and in part owing to slaves who seized the moment: joining patriot military units where it was possible for them to do so and, notably in Massachusetts, petitioning the legislature for freedom in the language of universalism. The Pennsylvania Assembly enacted the first emancipation law in the Americas in 1780, and over the next quarter century Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey followed suit.

Even so, the hand of hesitation and gradualism made itself felt. Not one of the emancipation statutes freed any slave, providing instead for the liberation of the children of those who were enslaved (known as post-nati emancipation), and only when they reached a certain point in their adulthood: age twenty-one, twenty-five, or twenty-eight depending on the state and their gender. Slave owners thereby received the most productive fruits of slave labor as compensation for the eventual loss of their property, were often relieved of responsibilities for their slaves turned freedpeople, and could coerce their slaves into long-term indentures, which managed to pass emancipationist scrutiny. In Massachusetts and New Hampshire, slavery's end appeared less gradual, though at the same time more confusing, accomplished chiefly through judicial interpretation of state constitutions that in fact made no mention of slavery. The pall of slavery, thickened by the federal Fugitive Slave Law of 1793 (requiring the return of runaways

to states where slavery remained legal), consequently continued to hang over all these states, threatening the status of any person of African descent and leaving many hostage to slaveholding authority.

Nevertheless, as the hold of slavery weakened in the New England and Middle Atlantic states, the public and political space available to people of African descent grew. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw the establishment of mutual aid societies, Masonic lodges, churches—including the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church—and literary clubs. Black writers and publicists began to circulate their personal stories, pen critical essays, reprint the speeches of local leaders, and report on black struggles, such as the rebellion in St. Domingue. Black communities also mobilized to protect newly arrived fugitives, retrieve children illegally retained by former masters, and speed the formal end of enslavement. Their increasing militancy, embrace of direct action, and grassroots appeals contrasted sharply with the elite, tempered, and gradualist demeanor of early—and white—antislavery societies, like the Pennsylvania Abolition Society and the New York Manumission Society, and set the foundation for powerful protests against the program of the American Colonization Society.

The protests erupted quickly, beginning in Philadelphia in 1817, when nearly three thousand blacks packed the AME Bethel Church, and they spread as far south as Baltimore and as far north as Boston, inspiring anger and activism. It was not that African Americans wholly rejected the idea of leaving the United States for more welcoming destinations. They knew firsthand how slavery and an intensifying racism hedged their prospects, and in view of the protracted and often compromised emancipation process that had been unfolding in the Northeast, they could hardly feel optimistic about a future where free labor prevailed. Some had already been attracted to black-led emigration projects (such as that of Paul Cuffe), and in the 1820s several thousand headed off to Haiti. But by the early nineteenth century, most of them had been born in the United States, their labor had enriched the country, and they saw that the American Colonization Society clearly wanted to send them packing, whether or not they wished to depart. At its very best, the ACS envisioned an America without slavery and without blacks, and most white emancipationists greeted the advent of the ACS either with enthusiasm or with silence.

Blacks' critique of colonization and their organized opposition to it pointed the way to new forms of emancipationism. Black leaders regarded colonization as politically objectionable and morally bankrupt, a compromise with both slavery and racism, and recognized that they would have to offer an alternative: that they would have to combat gradualism as to the abolition of slavery as well as the white belief—even among their allies—in black inferiority. During the

1820s, anti-colonization societies sprouted in black enclaves from New England across to the Midwest, and rebuttals to the logic of colonization could be heard in black churches and meetings and read in pamphlets and newspapers like *Freedom's Journal*. David Walker's *Appeal* was therefore the culmination of a challenge more than a decade in the making.

A New Type of Movement

When William Lloyd Garrison began publishing his newspaper, the *Liberator*, in January 1831 and soon thereafter explicitly denounced colonization and helped found the New England Anti-Slavery Society, he joined what had already become a multifaceted antislavery movement that encompassed much of the Atlantic world and, in some cases, had decisively rejected gradualism. The 1780s witnessed the emergence of organized antislavery in both Britain and France (cognizant in each case of what had begun in some parts of the United States), and while initially focused on ending the slave trade, it played an important role in destabilizing their colonial slave systems. Just as slaves shared news and political assessments with one another, white allies constructed a transnational network of communication that broadened the basis of agitation. Indeed, Garrison and others on the American side watched as British efforts to steer a ship of gradualism—ending the slave trade, attempting to enforce the slave trade ban throughout the Atlantic, enacting ameliorative legislation for the colonies—crashed on the shoals of mounting popular protest at home and slave unrest overseas. By the summer of 1833, the British Parliament was ready to stare down the once-formidable West Indian lobby and enact an emancipation bill, though one that called for a six-year transition to freedom and monetary compensation to slave owners.

Garrison's embrace of "immediatism" showed the marks of something more than history's recent lessons, however. Immediatism was less a political program or strategy than a personal commitment: demanding recognition not just of slavery's brutality and inefficiencies but of its sinfulness; insisting upon an acknowledgment not just of the need to mobilize against slavery but of moral responsibility for eradicating it. Immediatism thereby revealed the powerful influence of a major transformation in religious belief, under way for well over a century, and especially the effect of a tide of spiritual enthusiasm that swept across the United States during the early decades of the nineteenth century. Called the Second Great Awakening and advanced by Protestant revivalists like the Reverends Charles Grandison Finney and Lyman Beecher, it built on earlier theological changes that emphasized the work of benevolence and the worth of all human beings regardless of their worldly stations. Yet it also went dramatically further in depicting individuals as moral free agents, capable of corruption or perfectibility, who could establish a personal relationship with God, choose good over evil, achieve salvation, and join the evangelical legions in persuading others to do the same, hastening the day when God's kingdom would come to earth.

To be sure, the evangelical revivals did not "cause" immediate abolitionism; they could just as easily buttress the slaveholding regime. In areas of the United States dominated by slavery and slaveholders, revivalism generally encouraged Christian trusteeship within the context of slave ownership, promoted evangelical missions to the slaves, and nourished a religious and biblical defense of enslavement. But for a generation of young men and women born in New England and the Middle Atlantic—or in places to the west where people from these regions migrated—and who grew up in Presbyterian, Congregational, Quaker, or Unitarian households that valued moral and social responsibility, the revivals offered a vision of human perfectibility and a route of action to help bring it about. Many felt attracted by the idea of social reform, from temperance and education to poverty and prostitution, and some, horrified by the coercive power of slaveholders and the abject dependence forced upon the slaves, came to see slavery as a sin and abolition as a major step toward the coming of God's kingdom. Most of the leading white abolitionists—Garrison, Theodore Dwight Weld, Elijah Lovejoy, Wendell Phillips, Sarah and Angelina Grimké, Elizur Wright, Arthur and Lewis Tappan—either experienced conversion during the revivals or were Quakers. And although districts given over to evangelicalism did not necessarily favor abolitionism, abolitionists could find welcomes only in places that had been evangelized or had Quaker communities.

That Quakerism and evangelical Protestantism helped inspire the turn toward immediatism was of enormous importance to the politics and projects of abolitionism. Garrison and his followers never developed a "plan" for the abolition of slavery, and they never conjured an apocalyptic vision of slavery's end. Most would have had little trouble accepting a version of what New England and the Middle Atlantic had already pursued—emancipation immediately embraced but gradually accomplished—though their orientation was to individuals rather than the state. This is to say that much in the manner of the revivalists themselves the Garrisonians hoped to persuade ("moral suasion" is what they called it) slaveholders and their supporters of the sinfulness of their ways and of the imperative to devote themselves to the task of emancipation. To that end, they chose to mount a campaign, the likes of which had never before been seen in the United States and had only recently been launched in Great Britain: a campaign, constructed from the grass roots, to mobilize public opinion around the righteousness and wisdom of abolitionism.

Organization was crucial. Garrison's New England Anti-Slavery Society

policy there, and they were quick to seize the initiative. Moving door-to-door, whether in small hamlets or larger towns, they began collecting thousands of signatures and soon flooded Congress and statehouses with their calls for abolition, the end to municipal racial discrimination, and the education of black children. By 1838, nearly half a million petitions had been forwarded to Congress alone.

Yet there were equally far-reaching developments within the petition campaign itself. At the outset, the petitioners were overwhelmingly male, a measure of the gendered conventions regarding political citizenship and the male domination of the movement. Women could find no official place in antislavery societies (they were left to form their own) and were rarely afforded the opportunity to speak in public. But by the mid-1830s, more and more women were affixing their names to antislavery petitions, effectively pressing at the boundaries of political practice. Although some had cut their political teeth in the temperance campaign or in the battle against Indian removal (the first mass petition campaign involving women), abolitionist women—even those who organized female antislavery societies—initially turned to more customary projects such as education, fund-raising, religion, and consumer-based actions. Then, with the support of Garrison and some other immediatists, they embraced collective petitioning. Careful as they were to observe certain proprieties—women either submitted their own petitions or signed in columns separate from the men and often adopted a tone of pious deference—they nonetheless stepped out onto new public political terrain and did much of the work that sustained local abolitionism, challenging as that work often proved to be. They also shed special light on what slave women endured, recounting the brutalities, degradations, and "insatiable avarice" they suffered. Many of the abolitionist women were from the families of an emerging middle class of small manufacturers, shopkeepers, clerks, physicians, and ministers who hoped to turn the cultural attributes of domesticity and moral authority to political purpose; some were mill workers and outworkers in search of more personal independence and sensitized to the perils of inordinate power. The repercussions would be enormous both for the advance of women's rights and for the conduct of modern American politics.

Rough Politics

For all of their innovative activities, abolitionists never captured the support of more than a tiny minority of the white American public. Although they helped to demonize slaveholders and what would come to be called the "slave power" in American political life, they also exposed deep unease about emancipationism (and especially immediatism) even in areas of the country where slavery

was in retreat. It was not just the abolitionists' moralizing and denunciation of colonization that provoked hostility. Nor was it just their organizational challenges and apparent readiness to defy gender norms. Nor was it just their disregard for the bases of established wealth and economic power. Nor was it just their willingness to imagine a future that included free black people in their midst. It was all of these things. To many white Americans, the abolitionists not only appeared to be demanding the elevation of a degraded subject race but also seemed to be heralding a new—and threatening—social and political order.

Anti-abolitionism took many forms. Abolitionists were denounced in the pages of the press, railed against from the pulpits, and viciously lampooned in broadsides and political cartoons. The case made against them suggested what anti-abolitionists believed was at stake. Abolitionists were deemed "licentious and incendiary," reckless and subversive, revolutionaries who not only invited "all men" to join their crusade but also urged women to "turn their sewing parties into abolition clubs." They had begun, one New Hampshire correspondent fitfully charged, "the agitation of legal, constitutional, or political reform . . . by measures adopted to inflame the passions of the multitude, including the women and children, and boarding school misses and factory girls . . . through organized societies, public meetings, authorized agents, foreign emissaries, regular publications, and the incessant circulation of cheap tracts, pamphlets, handbills, &c." Perhaps most frightening of all, they were "amalgamationists," intent on mixing the races and "mongrelizing" the Anglo-American population with the blood of black inferiors.

Small wonder that the heated language and inflammatory accusations could spark violent attacks. During the mid-1830s, just as abolitionist societies began to multiply across New England, the Middle Atlantic, and the lower Midwest, angry crowds of opponents moved against them. The greatest eruptions came in the larger cities of New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Cincinnati, but anti-abolitionist violence also spread through smaller urban centers like Utica, New York, Newark, New Jersey, and Concord, New Hampshire, and to country towns like Canterbury, Connecticut, and Berlin, Ohio. Abolitionist conventions were broken up, their property and newspaper presses destroyed, their meeting halls burned to the ground, their bodies tarred and inked, and local blacks (conceived as allies) harassed and beaten. Indeed, any sites of interracialism or any people regarded as "amalgamationists" became vulnerable targets. Although the lethality of these episodes was limited, William Lloyd Garrison was dragged through the streets of Boston, and in the town of Alton, Illinois, the abolitionist editor Elijah Lovejoy was murdered.

Observers and later historians often referred to these explosions of anti-abolitionist violence as "riots" and "mobs," suggesting rage, spontaneity, and

disorder. But the social composition and political choreography of anti-abolitionism points instead to more structured political associations and practices. Anti-abolitionist leaders came principally from the ranks of merchants, bankers, lawyers, and public officials whose families were of older stock and more conservative Protestant religious affiliations (many were Episcopalians) and who were closely identified with a seaboard mercantile economy important to the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as well as with the local political establishment. They were regarded as the old elite, the "aristocracy of the North," "prominent and respectable gentlemen," "gentlemen of property and standing." Many were colonizationists. They commonly organized public meetings and, through resolutions, handbills, and the press, issued warnings to abolitionists: that they would not permit their locale to become a "theater" for antislavery "operations"; that abolitionist activities had to be "put down," either by the laws of the state or by the "law of Judge Lynch"; that a gathering of "incendiary individuals" must not be allowed "within corporate bounds"; that the "vital stab" to their prosperity resulting from the "wicked and misguided operations of the abolitionists" had to be "arrested." When, by their lights, the warnings were not heeded, the "expostulations and remonstrances" ignored, they proceeded to act in concert.

Directed by the "gentlemen of property and standing," the anti-abolitionist meetings and then "mobs" drew in an array of sympathizers, frequently young and from the lower reaches of the social order, who looked to vent their own hostilities and dissatisfactions—journeymen, laborers, teamsters, and sailors. Together they might choose to disrupt abolitionist assemblies, shouting down speakers and forcing others in attendance to flee. They might set fire to buildings that housed antislavery newspapers or break in and smash the presses. They might sack the homes and businesses of local antislavery leaders. They might try to run white and black abolitionists out of the city, town, or village, meting out painful and shaming punishments as marks of their resolve. In 1838, they torched Philadelphia's Pennsylvania Hall, newly constructed with the financial support of abolitionists.

Often, the actions of anti-abolitionists were accompanied by a cacophony of shouts, tin horns, clanging pots, and whistles symbolizing the rituals of rough justice that communities had long inflicted upon those accused of transgressing local norms; abolitionists could be pelted with rotten eggs or rocks, further enunciating rejection and retribution. On occasion, the anti-abolitionist leadership lost control of events or reorchestrated the choreography, and the violence became especially ugly, more potentially lethal, and almost invariably racialized. Black churches, schools, and settlements could face utter destruction, and black men, women, and children could be subjected to grievous abuse, as the fires of hatred were fanned to a searing heat. The destruction of Pennsylvania Hall, led by a well-dressed crowd, was followed by the demolition of black enclaves in the city. Throughout the early nineteenth century, black people were far more likely than whites to suffer death at the hands of these perpetrators.

Yet anti-abolitionism represented one component in a wider surge of political violence and vigilantism in the 1830s—against Mormons, Catholics, foreigners, slaves, and free people of color—that together suggested how deeply embedded organized violence, coercion, and paramilitarism were in the conduct of American politics more generally. We are, of course, accustomed to focusing on the electoral arena to understand the dynamics of politics and political history, and there can be no doubt that elections and the franchise became more important during the early decades of the nineteenth century. Between the second decade of the nineteenth century and the 1840s, property-owning requirements for voting and office holding were either dropped or modified almost everywhere in the United States, more and more offices became elective rather than appointive at the state and local levels, and mass political parties—developing in close relation to these democratic reforms—emerged for the first time. The participation of eligible voters grew rapidly, and by 1840 it reached a height in national elections (about 80 percent) that would prevail for the remainder of the nineteenth century. Even so, the electoral must be seen as one of several interconnected, and ever shifting, arenas of political activity, and physical intimidation, in various forms, could always be found at the interfaces, if not at the centers.

When, for example, voters made their way to the polls on Election Day, they were ordinarily greeted with a scene that was not for the weak or faint-hearted. Representatives of competing candidates and parties jostled with one another, shouting insults and epithets, lubricated by the alcohol that was always available, as they tried to round up their supporters and strike fear into the opposition. "Each one," an observer of a St. Louis municipal election in 1838 declared, "talking loud and fast . . . bringing forward the voters telling them who to vote for, and challenging the votes of everyone with who they have the faintest shadow of a chance; handing out tickets, crossing out names, with many arguments pro and con, . . . some imitat[ing] the Barking of Dogs and some the Roaring of Bulls, all making as much noise as they could." Scuffling and fighting often broke out, with local toughs in attendance to enforce political discipline, while employers, merchants, and master craftsmen might watch as their employees and clerks deposited their ballots or announced (in viva voce voting) their choices. The weeks preceding an election were usually given over to raucous processions and parades, replete with torches, banners, fifes, and drumbeats, and to militia musters meant to demonstrate the martial basis of

political citizenship and the legions of supporters the contestants could command. Not infrequently, the political faithful took the opportunity to inflict physical punishment on their enemies, especially if ethnic or religious antagonisms were added to the mix. Outright "riots" or "mobs," when they occurred—and scores were recorded during this period—seemed far more a matter of electioneering degree than kind.

It was a rough, a rowdy, and very much a male theater of public power, a fierce celebration of the gender exclusions that kept women and other dependents, who did not benefit from political democratization of the time, at the margins or wholly on the outside. It showed that the victors in electoral politics needed the muscle as well as the arguments and organization. And it fed off the rituals of community legitimation and sanction that had governed popular politics long before the franchise assumed importance. For in the face-to-face world of early America—and early modern Europe—power and hierarchy were not just determined by wealth and access, grievances were not merely aired, and justice was not simply enacted. They were performed in ways that had come to be recognizable. The performances could be quiet and didactic, as when members of the local elite entered a church or meeting after everyone else was seated and took their places at the front. But they could also be raucous and harshly edged, as when transients were warned out of a village, informants tarred and feathered, or petty thieves put in the stocks. Plebeians might show their support for a member of the governing class (generally with his encouragement) by taking to the streets in boisterous displays of allegiance or might show their contempt for Catholics by desecrating the symbols of papal authority or destroying a neighborhood convent. By the time of the Revolution, public rituals such as these had become formats of political protest and mobilization and proved ever adaptable to other spheres of conflict. Artisans and journeymen embraced them both in celebrating their trades and in struggling with their employers. Aggrieved leaseholders deployed them against wealthy landlords. Fleeced depositors used them in outbursts against local bankers. And fledgling political parties drew upon them in stoking electoral enthusiasm. After all, how better to distinguish loyalists from enemies?

That electoral politics in the early nineteenth century assumed a martial demeanor—bare-knuckle, coercive, paramilitary—was not only a product of its gendered composition and hypermasculine insistences. The political universe also encompassed arenas of activity that were, in fact, tightly bound up with warlike maneuvers and skirmishing and that gave significant shape to the conduct of elections themselves. Thus, in areas of the United States where substantial populations of slaves were to be found, state and local politics often revolved around efforts to police enslaved laborers and the large stretches of the countryside they might seek to traverse. Here, militia companies and slave patrols were important instruments both for manifesting the power of slaveholders and for herding the energies of white inhabitants (whether or not they owned slaves) who were required to serve. Plantations and farms, where slaves overwhelmingly resided, were important sites of political combat as matters of authority and submission were contested and networks of communication and alliance built. Slaveholders and slaves alike relied on webs of kinship and personal loyalty, extending over property lines and civil divisions, to circulate vital information, establish hierarchies among themselves, and defend their own against attack. Politics thereby meshed electoral practices among the free (and, most prominently, adult male) population with the mechanisms for disciplining the enslaved working class. No wonder that aspiring politicians often sought election or appointment as militia officers and that the smallest units of electoral politics were commonly known as militia districts.

The militia companies and their urban counterparts, like volunteer fire companies, played substantial roles in defining the terrain of local politics and in elaborating the patron-client relations that remained central to political practice and culture even after democratization took hold. If wealth and cultural attainment no longer commanded automatic deference, political ambition nonetheless required an assortment of resources and reciprocities. The abrogation of most property-owning requirements for political participation surely enabled humbler white men to voice their preferences and seek placement, and some positions in counties and municipalities could be economically alluring because of the salaries they paid or the fees they brought. Yet lone voices counted for little, and political office almost always necessitated more powerful sponsors not only because of the demands of electioneering but also because most offices called for the posting of substantial monetary bonds. The county sheriff might have to post a $10,000 bond; the treasurer a bond the size of the county's annual tax revenue. An apparent hedge against corruption and theft, the officer bonds also placed significant hurdles across the path of political preferment. Who but the wealthiest could stand for these sums? Those of more modest means had to rely on better-off sureties; in short, they needed political patrons.

Although patrons expected favors and services from their office-holding clients, they had their own needs as well. Their power and prestige were enhanced by—often required—collections of followers who could offer loyalty, votes, skills, and readiness to intimidate foes, but all of this came at the price of the rewards patrons had to make available: protection, work, credit, loans, assistance in times of trouble. It was a system of vertical allegiances and reciprocal obligations, sometimes mediated by kinship, at once potent and complex, open to differing and conflicting interpretations, not to mention discontent. And

rather than disrupting it, the new electoral politics incorporated and effectively institutionalized it. Over the course of the nineteenth century, nothing would so bedevil those social groups and movements that looked for alternatives to the established order as the hardfisted vestiges of patron-client politics, which abolitionists discovered in the face of terrifying crowds called out by "gentlemen of property and standing."

The Slaveholders' Answers

Among America's political patrons of the early nineteenth century, none would have seemed as securely situated as the slaveholding planters who reigned powerfully in a geographical crescent stretching south and west from the Chesapeake to the Mississippi Valley. They owned large tracts of land and at least twenty slaves apiece, and their clients were chiefly small landholders with few or no slaves who were often related to them. They were amply represented in county seats and state legislatures and, owing to the federal ratio that counted slaves as three-fifths of a free person for the purposes of apportionment, had great influence in all the branches of the federal government. People like them—Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Jackson—had occupied the presidency almost continuously since the ratification of the Constitution. Some had already moved out to the fertile lands of the Texas Republic; others looked hungrily at Mexico and Cuba.

Yet there was also cause for deep concern. An emancipation process had begun in New England and the Middle Atlantic, and by the 1830s it appeared part of a rising international assault. Slaves had successfully rebelled in St. Domingue and helped establish the second independent—and first black—nation in the Western Hemisphere, and their counterparts in the British Caribbean helped force the metropolitan government in London to accept emancipation there. The specters of "Santo Domingo" and Jamaica (site of the Baptist War) henceforth struck fear into the hearts of slaveholders everywhere, serving as grave reminders of their political vulnerabilities.

In the United States, the Northwest Ordinance had been enacted, the African slave trade had been outlawed, the American Colonization Society, with fantasies of very gradual emancipation, had attracted some prominent slaveholders to its cause, and in Virginia, Maryland, and Tennessee the questions of gradual abolition coupled with colonization now became subjects of public debate, suggesting that emancipationism was spreading ever southward. Since the 1790s, slave unrest had been brewing in Virginia, the Carolinas, and Louisiana and erupted into either large-scale conspiracies or bloody revolts on several occasions. Some members of Congress had begun to oppose the admission of new slave states to the Union and in the Missouri Compromise (1819–21) had managed to close off much of the Louisiana Territory to slaveholding. Most recently, a movement of whites and blacks in the Northeast and the Midwest had come to embrace immediatism, called slavery a sin, and started flooding the mails with their literature and Congress with their petitions.

The response of slaveholders was not uniform, and it depended, in good measure, on the social geography and political culture of their locales. If anything, the challenge of emancipationism revealed both how implicated most of the country was in the system of slave labor and how complex slavery was as a system. As late as the 1830s, slavery and its residues remained alive throughout the United States (due to gradual emancipations and the Fugitive Slave Law) and could be found in a great range of circumstances: in rural and urban settings; in small- and large-scale units; in overwhelmingly white and overwhelmingly black population enclaves; attached to agricultural and industrial activities; involved in different crop cultures; and subject to an array of religious and political influences. In most places outside the southernmost states, slaveholders were still prepared—following Jefferson and the moderate voices of the Virginia dynasty—to regard slavery as an evil and a burden and to speak of a very distant day when it might no longer exist. For while they invariably held the upper hand in their state governments, they had to contend with constituencies of non-slaveholding whites, who resided in districts where slavery did not have much of a foothold (eastern Tennessee and Kentucky, western Virginia and North Carolina, northern Maryland and Delaware) and might have been influenced by small settlements of Quakers and evangelicals. Some of these slaveholders were open to discussing a plan of gradual abolition that would extend over many years and bring compensation to owners of slave property; many more wished to avoid such a discussion entirely and, if they bothered, imagine a protracted process that would move slaves to thriving plantation economies farther to the south and west, thereby "whitening" their counties and states (Jefferson called it "diffusion"); virtually all believed that any acceptable plan would have to be linked with the removal of freed slaves.

In the Southeast and the emerging Southwest—what would come to be called the Deep South—matters had long been different. Slave plantations ruled (or were coming to rule) the social landscape, black majorities (or near black majorities) were the norm, export crops liked cotton, rice, and sugar drove economic growth, and the planter elite was especially powerful. Few slaveholders there had been moved by the Enlightenment currents of the Revolutionary period and, unlike their counterparts in the Chesapeake and farther to the north, rarely manumitted individual slaves. Their representatives at the federal Constitutional Convention insisted that slavery had to be explicitly recognized

as well as protected from unwanted government interference. And they remained sensitive about their petty sovereignties and local prerogatives. South Carolina was emblematic in all these regards and took the lead politically and intellectually in challenging federal authority. In 1828, the brilliant and irascible John C. Calhoun, in his "South Carolina Exposition and Protest," argued that the states not simply were sovereign but also had the sovereign right to veto (nullify) federal laws if they determined them to be unconstitutional. Four years later, following Calhoun's lead, South Carolina officials refused to enforce federal tariffs that favored manufacturing at the expense of agricultural interests (and as a consequence threatened to weaken the slave system) and thereby provoked a showdown—known as the Nullification Crisis—with the administration of Andrew Jackson (himself a Tennessee slaveholder).

Although radical slaveholders in South Carolina—at the time called Nullifiers—held sway in their state, they attracted very few supporters elsewhere in the slaveholding United States and were forced, in this instance, to back down. It would be an important lesson for them and for the politics of slavery. What slaveholders almost everywhere in the country during the 1830s could agree upon, however, was that the abolitionist mail and petition campaigns had to be stopped. The future of slavery in the United States, all could see, was becoming a bitterly divisive issue, and when it was raised for public discussion, the divisions seemed to spread and deepen. Abolitionists might have been a despised minority, but their petitions demanded debate in the halls of government, and the literature they sent through the mails could easily get into the hands of non-slaveholders and slaves, encouraging political disaffection on the one hand and, perhaps, "servile insurrection" on the other. By the mid-1830s, with the petition campaign intensifying and a cache of abolitionist material seized by the postmaster in the port of Charleston, the time for a reckoning had been reached.

Despite the broad support that anti-abolitionism attained, these were thorny issues. However objectionable the circulation of abolitionist tracts or petitions might have been, freedom of expression and the right of petition were explicitly protected by the Constitution, and some of the proposals advanced by slaveholding interests and sympathizers seemed heavy-handed violations. The freshman South Carolina representative James Henry Hammond, hoping to put "a decided seal of disapprobation" on the abolitionist petitions, called on his congressional colleagues to outright refuse to receive them. Even President Jackson, who had already had it out with radical South Carolinians, wished to stem the abolitionist tide by prohibiting "under severe penalties, the circulation, in the Southern states, through the mail of incendiary publications." In the end, more temperate

voices and less inflammatory solutions prevailed, and a political alliance among slaveholders and anti-abolitionists more generally advanced: Congress, in the so-called gag rule of 1836, agreed to receive abolitionist petitions and then immediately table them so that they would not be considered, and federal authorities (the postmaster general in particular) agreed to tolerate the refusals of local postmasters to deliver abolitionist publications.

Still, for many slaveholders, and especially for those in the Deep South, efforts to hedge in abolitionism did not take the sting out of its moral and political assault. Regarding themselves as modern, cosmopolitan, and devotedly Christian, they reeled at the abolitionists' charges that slavery was a hideous despotism, unfit for a republic, and that they were sadistic tyrants and sinners. To be sure, slavery always had strong and vocal defenders, and slaveholders had long been vigilant not only about protecting their interests and ways of life but also about expanding their power. How else to explain the remarkable success they had in fashioning a constitution that gave slavery a legal basis in every corner of the United States (through the fugitive slave clause), rewarded slaveholders with more political representation than any other group of Americans (through the federal ratio), prohibited the taxation of exports (their greatest source of wealth), empowered the federal government to repress slave rebellions, and refused to halt the African slave trade for two decades. Yet it was only in the 1830s, amid an assortment of disruptions and challenges, that some of them—and their intellectual and clerical allies—began to build an explicit defense of slavery that was simultaneously sacred and secular, tuned to the logic of the Bible and the modern world.

Modern but very much veering toward illiberal. The explicit defense of slavery, what we have come to call the "pro-slavery argument," eagerly embraced the racialist thought that had penetrated more and more of the Atlantic world since the last third of the eighteenth century. In the 1780s, Jefferson, among others, had speculated that black people were innately inferior to white, and during the early nineteenth century, aided by phrenology and other forms of pseudoscience, that speculation took firm hold in academic as well as popular culture. Slavery could thereby be presented as the best means to order a society containing large numbers of people who were destined for little better than a life of menial labor. The "negro," one writer insisted in 1835, "is from his intellectual and moral organization incapable of being civilized or enjoying freedom" and, if freed, would "corrupt the principles of one half of our population and drag them down—down to their own depraved, degraded and disgusting condition." Enslavement, others believed, provided whatever "humanity" slaves might have and enabled them to find their "level." It was a version of racialized

arguments that slave and serf owners, from Russia and Prussia to Brazil and Suriname to Cuba and Martinique, deployed in explaining what they regarded as the incapacities of their dependent laborers.

No more, in truth, needed to be said. Certainly not in the early nineteenth-century United States. But much more was said. Drawing upon traditions of an Atlantic conservatism that found outlets in Federalism (associated with the Federalist Party of the early republic) and wider opposition to the radical phases of the French Revolution (anti-Jacobinism), slavery's defenders commenced to reject the egalitarianism that the Declaration of Independence had enshrined. They claimed, as William Harper, reared in Antigua before moving to South Carolina, did, that men were rather born into a state of inequality and "helpless dependence" and that "slavery anticipates the benefits of civilization, and retards the evils of civilization," channeling labor into wealth-producing pursuits. Unlike Jefferson, who worried that slaveholding corrupted both master and slave and ate at the vitals of a republic, they argued that slavery was the necessary basis of a republic, the best means of excluding those not fit to participate, the only way of preventing tyranny. Slavery alone, they suggested, placed a degraded and dependent working class under adequate control and enabled humble white folk to find land and other forms of productive property, thereby escaping exploitation at the hands of white masters and employers. Some would go so far as to call slavery a "positive good" for master and slave alike, an acknowledgment of inherent inferiorities and superiorities, the foundation of economic prosperity, public order, and political progress.

Vital aid came from white ministers, many of whom were from relatively modest backgrounds but nonetheless saw the defense of slavery as integral to the building of Christian community. After all, while they accepted the spiritual equality of all people—and rejected polygenesis, or the separate creation of the races, which won interest in some pro-slavery circles—they understood Christianity in familial terms, with the hierarchy, patriarchal authority, and submission that went along with it. Perhaps their easiest task was demonstrating the compatibility between slavery and the Bible and showing their critics' "palpable ignorance of the divine will," as Virginia's Thornton Stringfellow bellowed. But even more politically effective was the ministers' likening of slavery to other household relations, especially marriage, which both naturalized the subordination that slavery entailed and demonized emancipation as a dire threat to the very foundation of social order. "The true Scriptural idea of slavery," a Mississippi pastor could announce, "is that of patriarchal relations," and masters served as "essentially the head of the household in all relations—the head over the wife—the head over his children—the head over his servants." Therefore, another insisted, the "evils of slavery, like the evils of matrimony,

may be traced to the neglect of the duties incumbent upon the individuals sustaining the relation" rather than the relation itself. Abolitionism, like agrarianism, deism, socialism, feminism, and "perhaps other isms," heralded nothing but anarchy.

Ironically, it was Thomas Jefferson, the deist and freethinker, who, in his struggle to come to terms with the problems of slavery and freedom, laid a foundation of later pro-slavery thought. Responding to the appeals of his nephew Edward Coles in the second decade of the nineteenth century, and to others who tried to persuade him to take a public stand against slavery, Jefferson instead lectured them on the realities of the world and the responsibilities of slaveholders in it. The challenge of abolition was too great, at least for his generation, Jefferson concluded, and a solution to it must be left to the future. In the meantime, slaveholders should recognize the duties and obligations that slavery imposed on them and do their best to take care of charges who could not take care of themselves. At once accepting and then rejecting gradualism, Jefferson instead offered Christian trusteeship, which pro-slavery theorists of the 1830s would hold up as the humane alternative to the insecurities and degradations of the free labor market.

Problems of Slavery, Problems of Freedom

White abolitionists had their own version of the effect of slavery on "domestic relations." It corrupted and destroyed them and, for the slave, rendered a family life—a pillar of freedom in the abolitionist view—virtually impossible. A great deal of abolitionist ink was spilled in depicting the many barbarities and brutalities that slaves suffered at the hands of slave owners, and although the lash became a centerpiece of their representations, abolitionists seemed especially focused on the damages done to proper marriage, gender roles, and forms of sexuality. Slave families had no legal basis and could be broken up in an instant; slave men could not be providers and protectors of their wives and children; and slave women were daily exposed to the many sexual predators among their owners. As William Ellery Channing observed in 1835, "Slavery virtually ruptures the domestic relations. It ruptures the most sacred ties on earth. . . . He [the slave man] lives not for his family but for a stranger. He cannot improve their lot. His wife and daughter he cannot shield from insult . . . marriage has not sanctity. It may be dissolved in a moment at another's will."

The result, as many abolitionists saw it, was the slave's descent into a morass of evils. Slavery, according to Lydia Maria Child, seemed to destroy everything it touched, promoting "treachery, fraud, and violence" while "rend[ing] asunder the dearest relations, pollut[ing] the very fountains of justice," and leaving

the slave to "his wretched wanderings. . . . They are treated like brutes and all the influences around them conspire to make them brutes." For many abolitionists, "a worse evil to the slave than the cruelty he sometimes endures, is the moral degradation that results from his condition. Falsehood, theft, licentiousness, are the natural consequence of his situation. . . . Cowardice, cruelty, cunning and stupidity, abject submission or deadly vindictiveness" were the bitter "fruits of slavery." Even William Lloyd Garrison, who ordinarily defended blacks against attacks on their character, thought it "absurd . . . to deny that intemperance, indolence, and crime prevail among them to a mournful extent."

It was a biting critique of slaveholding and a devastating portrait of the circumstances in which people of African descent consequently found themselves. Yet at the same time, it raised serious questions about the road to freedom. Were slaves such as these prepared to make the transition? And was the country prepared to accept them? Colonizationists, whose views of black character were strikingly similar, bluntly answered no and called for gradual emancipation and the expulsion of the freedpeople. But what would immediatism have to offer? At no point did abolitionists present a program of emancipation, a way of making immediatism operational. The most radical among them, who rejected formal politics because its arena was contaminated by slavery and slaveholders, hoped to convince individual slaveholders of their sinfulness and Christian obligation to manumit their slaves. Those more open to engagement with the political process might look to mobilize sympathetic voters, force a public reckoning with the slavery question, and compel the federal government to abolish slavery where it had jurisdiction: in the District of Columbia and the federal territories west of the Mississippi River (most agreed that slavery in the states was beyond federal interference). None intended to stir up slave unrest; if anything, they discountenanced slave rebellion and, like Garrison, were "horror struck" by Nat Turner's rising in Southampton County, Virginia.

"Immediatism" did not, therefore, elaborate a clear or rapid route of emancipation, and abolitionists imagined significant cultural work along the way. They spoke of "raising more than two millions of human beings to the enjoyment of human rights, to the blessings of Christian civilization, to the means of infinite self-improvement," of "elevating the slave," of teaching slaves and free blacks "the importance of domestic order and the performance of relative duties in families," of instilling "industry and economy, promptness and fidelity in the fulfillment of contracts or obligations." Some believed that slaves would require guardians, strict controls on their physical mobility, and direct obligations "to labor on the same principles on which the vagrant in other communities is confined and compelled to earn his bread." Many more wondered whether slaves were quite ready "to understand or enjoy" freedom however urgent emancipation was, and they

saw the need for a variety of educational initiatives. Indeed, although abolitionists were virtually alone among free Americans in envisioning a biracial future and although some of them fought courageously for schooling and civil equality, few confronted the many challenges of gradual emancipation where it had occurred or was still occurring. Instead, they often chose pedantry, instructing blacks to "be industrious, let no hour pass unemployed . . . be virtuous . . . use no bad language . . . in a word be good Christians and good citizens, that all reproach may be taken from you." It was a worrisome omen—were abolitionists themselves prepared for emancipation?—and an indication of why many were reluctant to admit black abolitionists to their organizations.

But there were other paths to emancipationism than colonization or immediatism, and they grew out of a wider critique of the American social order that began to take hold in the 1820s (in the wake of the economic panic of 1819) and made themselves felt more forcefully in the 1830s. They moved through communitarian experiments, and especially Owenism, that attempted to construct sets of social relations that would serve as alternatives to the competitiveness, greed, and exploitation of the market economy. They moved through growing public hostility to private banks, paper money, and the economic vulnerabilities these new devices introduced. And they moved through a developing opposition, notably among artisans and journeymen in the larger urban centers, to new concentrations of wealth and power, what might be called "antimonopoly" sensibilities. While millennial pulses could be felt along some of these paths—especially the communitarian—evangelical revivalism was by no means a major influence, and while antislavery would be increasingly important, it began as one of several issues of concern.

The Scots-born freethinker Frances Wright plotted a number of the intersections. First traveling to the United States in 1818, she greatly admired most of what she saw but was shocked by her brief encounter with slavery in Washington, D.C.: "The sight of slavery is revolting everywhere, but to inhale the impure breath of its pestilence in the free winds of America is odious beyond all that imagination can conceive." Thus, when she returned to the States in 1824 and visited Robert Owen's community, New Harmony, in Indiana as well as George Rapp's not far away, Wright determined to organize her own social experiment that would strike a blow at American slavery. Not surprisingly, her plan showed more of the marks of colonizationism than early immediatism and indeed was mindful of the need both to compensate slave owners for their losses and to facilitate the removal of freed slaves. She would purchase a model farm (she expected to raise money from men of wealth and prominence with the help of the Marquis de Lafayette, who was in the country at the same time and close to Wright) and, together with a large group of slaves, have the agricultural work

done in the efficient manner suggested by Rapp's notion of "unified labor," and use the proceeds to emancipate the slaves, pay for their transport to a foreign location, and buy additional slaves to replace them. By her calculations, such an undertaking would "redeem the whole slave population of the United States" in about eighty-five years. To that end, and using her own resources (she failed to attract any investors), she bought 1,240 acres of land near Memphis, Tennessee, but only eight slaves (five men and three women) to labor on them. She called her small colony Nashoba. It was a plan, something in the manner of Benjamin Lundy's, and it failed miserably, due in part to Wright's illness-related absence and the behavior of the managers she left behind. Wright then sold Nashoba to a philanthropic trust and eventually sent the slaves on a chartered ship to Haiti, where they were emancipated (at her expense) and entrusted to the Haitian president, Jean-Pierre Boyer. Yet the experience further radicalized her, not simply on the slavery question, but on the character of the American republic. She spent more time at the community of New Harmony, imbibing the early socialist ideas there, helped to edit Robert Dale Owen's paper, the *New-Harmony Gazette*, and set off on a controversial speaking tour where she heaped scorn on organized religion, the marriage relation, and restrictive divorce laws and advocated for educational reform and an end to capital punishment. In 1829, with Robert Dale Owen and the newspaper in tow, she arrived in New York City.

The moment was propitious. The city was swirling with radical ferment, labor unrest, and an emerging workingmen's movement led by militant journeymen, wage earners, and small master craftsmen that would find its way into electoral politics. The political air had been electrified during the 1820s by the agrarian, antimonopoly, and nascent socialist writings of Thomas Spence, William Thompson, John Gay, Langton Byllesby, and Cornelius Blatchly and by the radical labor theory of value espoused by Philadelphia's William Heighton. It was a lively and welcoming environment for Frances Wright and Robert Dale Owen, who quickly won a following of freethinkers and commenced publishing their paper (renamed the *Free Enquirer*), with the aid of the English-born printer George Henry Evans.

At the intellectual center of the workingmen's movement was Thomas Skidmore, a machinist and inventor originally from the hardscrabble Connecticut countryside who arrived in New York City in 1819 and read deeply in the works of Locke, Rousseau, Jefferson, and Paine, not to mention Gay, Thompson, Blatchly, and Byllesby. Although initially a supporter of John Quincy Adams, Skidmore gravitated to the laboring men and in 1829 (the same year as David Walker's *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*) published *The Rights of Man to Property!* Best known for its agrarian plan for redistributing landed property

and abolishing inheritance, the tract also set its critical sights on the inequities promoted by banking institutions, the public debt, chartered corporations, privately owned and run schools and factories, and an elective franchise that excluded women, blacks, and Indians. It also looked to the prospect of "extinguishing slavery, and its ten thousand attendant evils." Imagining that many slaves were reluctant to "take their freedom if it were given them" because they lacked the property to "support themselves," Skidmore offered a sweeping solution that made a mockery of the colonizationist disposition: include slaves in the "General Distribution," and provide them with "lands and other property."

Skidmore stood out for his agrarian redistributionism, his willingness to maintain private property while equalizing its ownership, but he was not alone in New York radical and labor circles in fashioning an antislavery that owed to political and economic egalitarianism rather than evangelicalism. William Leggett, a native New Yorker who had traveled the West Indies and the Mediterranean in the U.S. Navy and joined William Cullen Bryant at the *New-York Evening Post*, also in 1829, was associated with the "Locofoco"—labor egalitarian—wing of the fledgling Democratic Party and was known to characterize emancipationists as "amalgamators." His main concern was the "money power," the financial predators and their political minions who preyed on farmers, workers, and other producers, and his attacks were withering. But the viciousness of anti-abolitionism jostled his sensibilities, and by the mid-1830s he had come to see "monster slavery" as the most serious aristocratic enemy facing the United States. In moves that shocked most fellow Democrats, Leggett endorsed the American Anti-Slavery Society and called for extending equal rights doctrine (including suffrage) to African Americans. Slavery, Leggett insisted, quite simply ran against the "fundamental article of the creed of democracy, which acknowledges the political equality, and inalienable right of freedom, of all mankind."

Like Leggett, George Henry Evans turned antimonopoly radicalism and support for white labor ("workyism," as it was known in the early 1830s) in the direction of antislavery. English-born and apprenticed as a printer, Evans immigrated to upstate New York and read Tom Paine before coming to New York City and meeting up with Frances Wright and Robert Dale Owen, who, in turn, helped him launch the *Working Man's Advocate*. There he would develop the ideas—less radical than Skidmore's—that would make him perhaps the leading apostle of land reform. But there too he would attack slavery and anti-abolitionists, deride the American Colonization Society ("the most absurd of all absurd projects"), argue for equal treatment of free blacks, and, most remarkable, express sympathy for Nat Turner. "What can be more natural," he wrote, "than human beings destined to perpetual slavery, should commit excesses in attempts to better their condition? And how can the whites be better secured against such excesses than by

affording the degraded slaves the prospect of gradual but effectual emancipation, and by capacitating them for the enjoyment of freedom?" In an important sense, Evans's plans to make public lands—homesteads—available to landless settlers fed off the same antimonopoly sentiments that fired his emancipationism. He called his land reform program "Free Soil."

American Maroons

African Americans in the northeastern United States pioneered many of the roads to immediatism. They were the earliest and loudest critics of gradualism and colonization. They built an infrastructure of institutions to coordinate their communities, disseminate important news and ideas, and orchestrate public protest. Black women as well as men became involved in abolitionism, and the fiery Boston activist Maria W. Stewart might have been the first woman to address a "promiscuous assembly"—that is, an audience composed of men and women—when she spoke at the city's African Masonic Hall in February 1833. A small free, economically prosperous, and educated class had emerged among them, especially in Philadelphia, who were concerned both with fighting against slavery and with "uplifting" the poor, uneducated, and dissolute. They became the chief subscribers to abolitionist newspapers and not only helped convince Garrison of the errors of colonizationism but also made their presence felt when he established the New England Anti-Slavery Society and the American Anti-Slavery Society. They also instructed white sympathizers in the international dimensions of abolitionism, annually commemorating the independence of Haiti and the ending of slavery in the British West Indies, as well as the death knells of enslavement in the American states in which they resided.

It appeared, in short, that these African Americans were carving a place for themselves in the developing public political culture and advancing it in a variety of ways. Yet appearances can be deceiving, and in this instance they obscure the very distinctive—and very precarious—political niche in which most of those in the Northeast and the Midwest found themselves. The overwhelming majority of them were at the bottom of the economic ladder, surviving hand to mouth as unskilled laborers and domestics in cities and towns and perhaps as poor tenant farmers and farm laborers in the countryside. They lived in residential clusters usually in the roughest sections of rural and urban areas, if not wholly off to themselves. Many of them had been enslaved or were the children of enslaved parents, and a significant number, especially in Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, were fugitives from states where slavery remained legal; that number would steadily grow. Most important, they were

literally besieged by slavery and the many debilities that slavery carried with it. In the United States of the 1830s, any black man, woman, or child anywhere was presumed to be a slave, and owing to gradual emancipations and the federal Fugitive Slave Law the arms of the state were in place to enforce that presumption. Slave catchers, who acted with the sanction or support of white authorities, were regularly on the prowl for runaways, and they often observed no distinction between African Americans who were and were not legally free. As a result, blacks in the Northeast and the Midwest remained in constant fear, and their settlements had to be perpetually alert, perpetually on guard, perpetually self-protective. "After a few years of life in a Free State," William Parker, who fled from Maryland to the rural hinterlands of Pennsylvania, recalled, "I found by bitter experience that to preserve my stolen liberty I must pay, unremittingly, an almost sleepless vigilance."

Fugitive slaves in fact learned quickly that there was no clear dividing line between slavery and freedom in the United States. Lewis Garrard Clarke, a Kentucky slave, successfully fled across the Ohio River and initially "trembled all over" being "on what was called free soil." But when he arrived in nearby Cincinnati and saw "slave dealers . . . who knew me," he concluded that "the spirit of slaveholding was not all south of the Ohio River" and determined, on the advice of an acquaintance, to head to Cleveland and then "cross over to Canada," where he could be sure that "I AM FREE." He was not alone in wondering about the true borders of enslavement. Fleeing into states that had apparently abolished slavery, many runaways discovered that they "were still in an enemy's land," that slaveholders roamed the streets in search of their property, that the "northern people are pledged . . . to keep them in subjection to their masters," and that even "in sight of the Bunker Hill Monument . . . no law" offered them protection. The fugitive Thomas Smallwood spoke bitterly of white abolitionists who "would strenuously persuade" runaways "to settle in the so-called Free States," not recognizing "the influence that slavery had over the entire union." For him and for so many others who attempted escape from captivity, real freedom beckoned only in Canada, Britain, or some other "entirely foreign jurisdiction." "When I arrived in the city of New York," Moses Roper remembered, "I thought I was free; but learned I was not." Roper quickly moved into the surrounding countryside, up the Hudson River valley to Poughkeepsie, on to Vermont, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts. It was all the same, and before long, hearing of a slave catcher on his trail, he "secreted" himself for several weeks until he could get passage on a ship to Liverpool, where he finally felt that he had left "the cruel bondage of slavery."

For African Americans unable or unwilling to leave the United States for a safer destination, organized self-defense became increasingly necessary—all

the more so after explosions of anti-abolitionist and racial violence in the early to mid-1830s destroyed some of their communities and frightened off many of their white allies. Very quickly, vigilance committees were established by blacks in the major cities of the northeastern and Middle Atlantic coasts, taking as their responsibility the harboring of fugitive slaves as well as the thwarting of "slave agents and kidnappers." To those ends, they monitored waterfronts for the arrival of runaways or of vessels suspected to be "slavers." They reported on the arrests and abductions of blacks purported to be fugitives and on the whereabouts of slave catchers. And they made efforts to recover fellow blacks who had been carried back into the South.

People like David Ruggles, freeborn in Connecticut in 1810 to a family of artisans and eventually a leader of the New York Vigilance Committee, played key roles both in protecting the many vulnerable African Americans in their midst and in building a grassroots antislavery movement. Availing himself of developing communication networks that linked black settlements over wide areas, Ruggles helped ferry runaways to relatively secure havens—Frederick Douglass was one of them—encouraged subscriptions to abolitionist newspapers, contributed articles and pamphlets in the antislavery cause, and tirelessly pursued kidnappers. In New York and elsewhere, vigilance committees could in fact move toward direct action and armed resistance, mobilizing black members and supporters to rescue fugitives spirited away by bounty hunters and physically drive off those who threatened. In these efforts, the committees, generally headed up by African Americans with skills and means (like Ruggles), were aided by less formal groups of poor, working-class blacks who utilized their own networks based in clustered households and work sites.

Composed heavily of African American men and women who had directly experienced slavery or had escaped from it by flight or manumission of some sort, surrounded by territory in which black enslavement continued to have a significant legal basis, hedged in by civil and political disabilities organized around slavery and race, and subject to regular invasions by armed whites (including constituted police authorities) who tried to kidnap their members, destroy their dwellings and institutions, or utterly drive them out, many black settlements in the Northeast and the Midwest came to resemble what are known as maroons: enclaves of fugitives from slavery. Their public presence might, of course, have been more pronounced, their activities more visible, and their political maneuvering room a bit greater than their counterparts farther to the south in the United States, the Caribbean, and Latin America. But like maroons everywhere, they served as beacons for those attempting to flee their enslavement and as important political meeting grounds for those who found refuge. Here, in an almost unprecedented way, people of African descent who had endured slavery

as well as putative freedom, who had lived to the south and to the north, to the east and to the west, in the West Indies and other parts of the Americas, in rural and urban environments, could encounter one another, share perspectives, exchange ideas, and begin to fashion new political languages and political cultures. Together, in the face of precarious circumstances and inveterate public hostility, they waged a militant struggle—of a tenor that few others in the United States were willing or able to embrace—against slavery and the world that slavery had made.

CHAPTER THREE

Markets, Money, and Class

Paper currency issued by Massachusetts state banks.

A Tale of Four Continents

Few cities in the world during the 1830s could rival the economic dynamism of New Orleans. Its population had increased nearly tenfold since the French sold it to the United States in 1803. Its port was jammed with the traffic of hundreds of steamers and flatboats sailing in from the Atlantic and the Caribbean and down the Mississippi River. Its merchant and factorage houses prospered on an import and, especially, export trade that by the mid-1830s well surpassed that of New York City in value, and they drew on the capital of local banks, most of which were newly chartered by the Louisiana state legislature. Boosters like the publisher J. D. B. DeBow exulted in the "rapid and gigantic strides" New Orleans had made, and some predicted that the city was destined to become the economic hub of all the Americas.

The source of the boom that New Orleans rode in the 1830s was not hard to find. Although the sugar plantations that lined the Mississippi to the north and south, and hugged the banks of nearby Bayou Lafourche and Bayou Teche, were the closest, the wharves told the main story, stacked as they were, from late summer to early winter, with bale upon bale of cotton. More than anything else, cotton made New Orleans in the first half of the nineteenth century because cotton was remaking large sections of the world. Its cultivation, organized chiefly around large landed estates and slave labor, had spread across the fertile belts of the Deep South and then into the Mississippi Valley in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century and, once harvested, festooned the riverine traffic to the Crescent City before being shipped out to England and France—Liverpool and Le Havre—and secondarily to the American Northeast, where it would be turned into yarns, cloth, and other cotton goods for rapidly growing consumer markets. The profits to be made from cotton culture as the price of the fiber soared in the 1830s fueled human migrations on a large scale (especially from the Chesapeake and the Carolinas, Kentucky and Tennessee) and land speculation that reached dizzying heights. In 1835–36, the New Orleans cotton market drew in 443,307 bales of cotton from Mississippi and Louisiana alone, almost one-half of all the cotton shipped from the United States.

Then, in what seemed to be an instant, the boom collapsed. Discount rates shot up, and credit, which had been easily available, suddenly tightened. Lenders called in their loans. Debtors ran to convert their paper obligations into specie (gold or silver coin). And banks, which in many cases had overextended themselves during the boom, were caught short. The price of cotton began to tumble, and the large debts secured by the value of the cotton crop became impossible to collect, driving a stake through the operations of merchants and factors in the

cotton trade and eventually through those institutions that propped them up financially. In March 1837, the New Orleans factorage house of Herman, Briggs & Company failed, and soon thereafter the New York lending house of J. L. & S. Joseph & Company, which provided credit to Herman, Briggs, closed its doors. A raft of other firms, especially in the coastal port cities, followed suit. It was a massive financial crisis, now known as the panic of 1837.

Observers at the time and since looked principally to domestic politics to explain what had unfolded, and an easy logic stared them in the face. President Andrew Jackson, a man of considerable means but also deeply suspicious of any authority other than his own, had gone nose to nose with the Philadelphia aristocrat and president of the Second Bank of the United States, Nicholas Biddle, and the fallout appeared to rock the foundations of the expanding American economy. Chartered by the federal government in 1816 for a period of twenty years, the bank, though privately controlled, had become a powerful force under Biddle's stewardship. It served as the depository for Treasury funds and federal tax revenues, circulated notes accepted as legal tender, sold government securities and made loans, established branches in twenty-nine cities, and could keep the growing number of state-chartered banks in check by gathering up their notes and redeeming them for specie. But to Jackson, the bank was a "hydra-headed monster" that corrupted "the morals of our people" and threatened "our liberty," and he determined to slay it. When Congress considered the matter of recharter several years earlier than necessary, he vetoed the bill that Congress passed (but lacked the votes to override) and then proceeded to finish the deed by removing federal deposits from the Bank of the United States and redistributing them to state-chartered banks of his choosing ("pet banks," as they were derisively known).

Jackson's redistribution of federal deposits to state banks appeared—though not by intention—to stoke the fires of inflation and speculation, enabling the banks to print more of their own currency and underwrite the purchase of public lands coming on the market. So too did a burgeoning federal budget surplus, occasioned by a rise in tariff revenues and the boom in land sales, which Jackson thought to spread among the states. When the Jackson administration ultimately moved to rein in the excesses, restricting the circulation of small banknotes and issuing the "Specie Circular," which prohibited the use of paper money for federal land purchases (the government would now only accept gold or silver coin), the bottom, it seemed, quickly and dramatically fell out. It was, according to one critic, like "a tremendous bomb thrown without warning."

Although Jackson's "war" with the Bank of the United States, Specie Circular, and general leadership of hard-money constituencies proved of great importance to the politics and political economy of early nineteenth-century America,

they may not explain the panic of 1837 and the severe economic slowdown that carried into the following decade. For that, circuits of investment and exchange encompassing four continents may be better indicators, and at their center was the City of London, the Bank of England, and several large investment houses operating there, Baring Brothers and Brown Brothers chief among them. Despite its late eighteenth-century defeat at the hands of rebellious American settlers, Britain had emerged from the era of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars as the world's premier economic and political power. Its empire remained formidable and vast, stretching across southern Asia, Australia, Canada, and the Caribbean, and London's City—the financial district—became an engine of both domestic and international economic growth. In the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, British investors bought up large blocks of shares in the Second Bank of the United States, ultimately holding about one-quarter of all those in private hands, and they were especially significant in financing many of the costly turnpike, canal, and early railroad projects (perhaps to the amount of $90 million to $100 million) that undergirded the developing infrastructure of the United States. It was an example of the trading relations that continued to bind the British and the Americans together: Britain being the chief market for American goods (especially cotton) and the United States representing a significant market for Britain. In the first half of the 1830s, the volume of Anglo-American trade doubled.

British purchases of American securities promoted the flow of specie, notably gold, from east to west across the Atlantic and, together with other investments, stimulated economic activity in the United States as well as some of the inflationary pressures of the period. But it was the flow of silver from Mexican mines well to the southwest that would be even more consequential. Built on the backs of Afro-Mexicans (many of whom had been enslaved) and indigenous people who labored in the mines of Zacatecas and San Luis Potosí, the silver trade moved through the nearby ports of Tampico and Alvarado (later Veracruz) and out to New Orleans (involved since the Spanish period) and New York. American packet ships brought flour, textiles, carriages, and chairs into Mexico, returning with casks of Mexican coins, silver pesos or "dollars Mex," as some called them. During the 1820s, $3 million to $4 million in silver might be imported annually into the United States from Mexico; during the 1830s, in sharp upticks, the silver imports nearly doubled.

Mexican coins became sufficiently abundant in the United States that Spanish pesos, or dollars, were recognized as a circulating medium and appear to have formed an important part of the country's specie reserves on which banknotes were printed. Mexican silver was also crucial to the developing trade with China. Initiated in the 1780s, the trade brought American ships to the

port of Guangzhou (the only one open to foreign merchants), in China's south-east, in search of valuable silks, porcelains, and teas. But because the Chinese had little interest in American goods, they took only silver in payment: all the more so as the trade in opium, which had commenced in the eighteenth century, became extremely brisk in the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth. Linking Bengali poppy producers and Chinese purchasers, and organized by the British East India Company chiefly out of Calcutta, the opium trade could be financed by the silver the Chinese had been accumulating from Americans and various European commercial partners. So large did the opium trafficking become—despite its being officially outlawed in China—that by the 1820s Chinese authorities worried both about the drug's widespread use and about the outflow of silver.

What, in truth, was a massive smuggling operation in southern Asia took a new turn in 1834 when the British government ended the East India Company's mercantile monopoly, effectively opening the India-China trade—in opium (which was legal in Britain) and other goods—to all comers. Among the beneficiaries were American merchants equipped with schooners fast enough to move the opium successfully. Now the debit side of their trading ledgers could be balanced in part with opium rather than silver, which could then be retained in the United States. Together with the increased importation of Mexican silver, this alteration in the specie flow added significantly to American specie reserves in the mid-1830s and to the decade's inflationary spiral.

Before the decade was out, China's Qing emperor determined to crack down on the opium smuggling in Guangzhou and, in the process, provoked an armed conflict—the First Opium War—with the British that would cost the Chinese dearly and extend Britain's empire in the East (to Hong Kong, in this case). But even earlier, in the summer of 1836, British bankers demonstrated that their power moved west as well. Observing a steady decline in its gold reserves (only some of the gold went to the United States), the Bank of England raised its discount rate (interest charged for loans) from 4 percent to 5 percent, forcing merchants and other creditors, including those engaged in the American trade, to contract their business. The international economic dominoes fell first and hardest in New York and New Orleans, where the Anglo-American trade was especially vital, and they generally followed the lines of the Atlantic cotton market, which was heavily dependent on the London-based credit nexus. Although the initial financial rebound was relatively quick, a broad-scale recovery would require more than half a decade.

It is likely that the actions of British bankers and investors reflected not only fears of a deteriorating supply of specie but also diminishing confidence in the American economy and in the apparent economic agenda of Andrew Jackson.

Neither the "bank war" nor the Specie Circular played well in London banking circles, and raised serious questions as to where policy was headed. Indeed, for a time in 1836 British banks refused to receive the paper of any American commercial houses. Yet it was also clear that in the United States trade—particularly foreign trade—was of immense importance, that the cotton economy drove American growth and created intricate webs of finance that covered the Atlantic, and that events in Zacatecas, Guangzhou, Calcutta, and especially London could reverberate powerfully in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and the rising entrepôt of New Orleans. Less clear was whether the economic panic and the subsequent depression of the late 1830s and early 1840s heralded the end of one economic era and the beginning of another.

Market Intensification

In the 1830s, merchants and large landowners were the dominant actors in American economic life as they had been among people of European descent since their earliest North American settlement. Together, they organized the production and distribution of the goods that circulated in regional and especially international markets and reaped the lion's share of the rewards. In the coastal cities, they controlled the wharves, the shipping, and the warehouses, extended loans and other forms of credit, sold provisions and fineries, employed lawyers, and generally ran the municipal governments. In the countryside, especially where market crops were cultivated in abundance, they owned the most fertile and well-situated lands, exploited the labor of men, women, and children in various states of dependency (slaves, tenants, farm laborers), offered services of several sorts to more humble neighbors, and served as magistrates, militia captains, and political patrons generally. Many of the large landowners found their way into mercantile activities on some scale, while many of the merchants used their earnings to buy land, in either town or country. The opulent town houses in the cities and the great houses in the rural districts symbolized their wealth, power, and presumed authority. Even the early textile mills, in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania, depended on the capital that merchants had accumulated in trade.

The dominance of merchants and large landowners spoke of an economic order that had created networks of commerce and colonialism stretching around the globe, provided room for elite-led anticolonial rebellions across the Americas, helped usher in new political unions based on republican principles, and looked to the expansion of market exchange. The dynamism was to be found in the circulation of goods and people, at times over great distances, rather than in major transformations in the ways the goods were produced or the people

deployed. Indeed, the very late eighteenth century and the early decades of the nineteenth were marked by the extension and intensification of market economies owing to the growth of population, the elaboration of transportation networks, the advent of new commodities, and the use of state-sponsored and private means of capital formation. Emblematic of the market intensification of the period was the developing cotton economy of the states in the Deep South. The demand for cotton and the potential financial rewards of cotton cultivation drew aspiring growers well into the interior of the Southeast and the Southwest: into upland South Carolina, middle and southwestern Georgia, northern Florida, central Alabama, eastern Mississippi, and the fertile lands of the lower Mississippi Valley. They brought tremendous pressure on the state and federal governments to extirpate Native American land claims, they set off a speculative frenzy in land purchasing, and they provided an enormous market for "surplus" slaves from the general farming areas of Virginia, the Chesapeake, and Kentucky. As was true for other staple crops (tobacco, rice, sugar), cotton was raised chiefly by slave labor and processed for sale on plantations and farms before being sent to cotton factors and merchants in port cities like New Orleans (Charleston, Savannah, and Mobile, too) who organized its shipment to the sites of textile production in Europe and the American Northeast. The availability of easy credit, the printing of paper currency by state banks, and federal policy that (before the Specie Circular) permitted credit purchases together enlarged and intensified market-based involvement and exchanges. But the structures and relations of the market system remained very much what they had been for at least a century.

Much the same could be said for different agricultural regimes around the United States, which were based on the exploitation not of slave but of family and other dependent labor. Closest in character to the slave plantations were the large estates in the Hudson River valley of New York, dating back to the Dutch rule of the seventeenth century, where, by the 1830s, more than a quarter of a million tenant families farmed parcels on long-term leases, producing a mix of market and subsistence crops: wheat (the principal money crop), corn, rye, flax, buckwheat, potatoes, and timber (also marketed). Although wealthy landlords (patroons) like the Livingstons and the Van Rensselaers had cultivated paternalist relations, offering perpetual leases (which could be transmitted generationally) and showing leniency in rent collection in return for political support, by the second and third decades of the nineteenth century the leases had become shorter, the leniency less common, and the tenants more involved in the vagaries of the market to avoid the landlords' squeeze. Before long, more than market participation would be intensified; thousands would rise in a rebellion known as the Anti-Rent movement.

Rebellion did not erupt in the "family farming" areas of the Northeast, Middle Atlantic, Midwest, and backcountry South—Shays's Rebellion (1786) and the Whiskey Rebellion (1791) were the last of these until much later in the nineteenth century—but a similar process of market intensification unfolded nonetheless. Here, free households had long organized economic activity around fee-simple landownership, patriarchal authority, a gender division of labor, and a balance between production for subsistence and—usually local—market exchange. Adult and teenage males cleared land, did most of the heavy field work, tended the hogs, cattle, and draft animals, cut wood, built and repaired fences and structures, hunted and fished; adult and teenage females raised vegetables, egg-laying hens, and small livestock, made cloth, brooms, and hats, churned butter, and prepared food. Planting and harvesting meant long hours of self-exploitation for all family members who raced against the elements to get seeds in or crops out of the ground. Almost invariably, however successful they might be, farm households "swapped work" with neighbors and traded with village merchants and artisans—some of whom were itinerants—for the goods they could not make themselves or wanted from afar. Growing small surpluses enabled them to bring in both cash and store credits. By the latter years of the eighteenth century and surely by the early years of the nineteenth, the pulse of commercial opportunities quickened as the populations of coastal cities increased rapidly, new urban centers rose in the hinterlands of the Middle Atlantic and the Midwest, and mercantile networks extended over greater territory. Agricultural producers in proximity to cities like Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore might move to specialize in high-value but perishable goods like dairy products, vegetables, and fruits that could be transported in relatively short order to urban markets. But most who had access to these markets, such as the farming households in the Connecticut River valley of Massachusetts and Connecticut, chose instead to intensify their market involvement. They grew more food crops, such as wheat, for sale, increased their manufacture of homespun and palm-leaf hats, and wove the yarn of local mills into cloth. They did not, by and large, look to expand their operations, hire farm laborers, or take on tenants; only the largest and wealthiest landowners could—and did—do that. Instead, male household heads continued to draw upon the labor of their wives, children, and perhaps an occasional relative or boarder while orienting it further to the production of commodities. Eventually, as farm households came to depend more on store-bought supplies, some of this labor—especially the home manufacturing activities of teenage daughters—became redundant, and the girls might choose to seek work in neighboring households, newly constructed textile mills, or larger urban centers, joining brothers who would not inherit farmland in a swelling rural-to-urban (or, for those bent on the farming life, east-to-west) migration.

The quickening pulse of commerce could be detected far earlier in American cities—particularly those of the Eastern Seaboard and the Gulf Coast—than in much of the countryside (certainly by the last quarter of the eighteenth century), but there, too, market intensification and a ramifying division of labor remained the economic markers well into the 1830s. The artisan shops, which were at the center of urban manufacture, have long been regarded as keystones of this process, and they do provide important indications of what was happening. Thus, as the density and scope of market exchanges increased, master craftsmen, who customarily worked alongside relatively small numbers of journeymen and apprentices (workers who had learned or were learning trade skills), often became more engaged with the purchasing of raw materials and the selling of the finished goods, leaving production in the hands of trusted employees and perhaps a few other journeymen and apprentices at the shop. If demand continued to grow, the shop might be enlarged, more craft workers hired, and outworkers (often women and children laboring in their homes or tenements) brought into the finishing stages by means of runners. New machinery was rarely introduced; handicraft work prevailed, however subdivided it came to be.

To be sure, the course of market intensification varied by trade—printing moved more quickly to mechanization—and in some, such as luxury goods like glass, silver, and fine furniture, the mode of the old artisan shop would endure for a long time to come. But, especially where the mass consumer market was growing rapidly—shoes, the building trades, clothing—the artisan shop was effectively "bastardized" by its expansion (more skilled workers set to different tasks within its walls) and extension (more of the work put out to semiskilled laborers). A pattern of "sweating" became common in larger metropolitan areas as master craftsmen and merchants subcontracted to a range of workers (skilled, semiskilled, male, female, young, old) who would complete their jobs in homes, rooms, or garrets, often being paid by the piece. The needle trades and garment "slop" shops became notorious for sweating, though the system would encompass docks, construction, and other sites of growing economic activity.

The most dramatic signs of early industry, and of the social relations generally associated with industrial capitalism, were to be found not in the urban centers but in the hinterlands where waterpower was abundantly available: the cotton and woolens manufactories or textile mills of the Northeast. By the 1830s, thanks to large investments of merchant capital and technological innovations (some smuggled out of England) that mechanized spinning and weaving, factories that contained within their walls all steps of the production process dotted the fall lines from New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island to Connecticut and Pennsylvania. The laborers came chiefly from the hardscrabble

districts of the surrounding countryside, and although they worked for wages under a rhythm set by owners, managers, and especially the unceasing motion of throstles, drawing frames, mules, and looms, there were important ways in which the mills reconfigured—and intensified—long-standing patterns of household manufacture. Most famously, the mills in Lowell, Massachusetts, recruited young, unmarried women, who had customarily done spinning and weaving under the authority of their fathers, to come and live in boardinghouses and turn out yarn and cloth on a scale well beyond anything with which they were familiar.

Elsewhere, the mills relied on whole families who left declining farmsteads or other poor prospects on the land to take up berths in their villages and factories. Even so, the owners mostly looked for operatives among the women and children who had been accustomed to working under patriarchal management and who, they believed, could be paid less and controlled more easily. Mindful of the "dark, satanic mills" of Britain's Manchester and Birmingham, which symbolized the wretched and conflict-ridden road of industrialization, the mill owners hoped to construct something of a pastoral alternative: paternalist in character, rural in setting, tidy in appearance, and relatively peaceful in social relations. Almost commemorating the connection made by cotton, the mill villages seemed most akin to plantations farther to the south, with their residential laborers, their supervisors known as overseers, their machine shops, stores, and churches, and the imposing houses their owners occupied. But the mill owners quickly learned that the workers would push back on the floor or leave at their choosing, and the workers discovered, whether they quickly moved or stayed for a time, that they were now in a new world of wage earning.

Perhaps most indicative of the scope and consequences of market intensification were the swelling pools of casual and manual labor to be found across the American landscape of the early nineteenth century, but especially in cities, in towns, and on multiplying public works projects. Reflecting an Atlantic perimeter of social disruption—encompassing the rural and urban economies of England, Ireland, and northern Europe as well as North America—the pools filled with poor men and women from town and country, enslaved and quasi-free people of African descent, and immigrants from French Canada, Germany, and the British Isles, some of whom still arrived under conditions of indentured servitude. Gender figured quite centrally in the occupational breakdown. The greatest number of women, especially if they were immigrants or African Americans, ended up in domestic service, where they met a burgeoning demand among middling and upper-class families. But the garment trades were becoming close rivals because of a growing market for ready-made clothing and the ability of seamstresses and other female "slop workers" to labor in their households. Still other

women operated boardinghouses, worked as street vendors, laundresses, and cooks, and, when necessary, entered the sex trade.

For their part, male laborers found their way to the waterfronts, the construction sites, the transportation networks, the streets, the mines, and the fields, where they lifted, hauled, drove, chopped, carried, hawked, cut, dug, and dredged. Many had the knowledge and skills that came with life on the land, near the sea, or in the towns and cities—they could be regarded as unskilled or semiskilled only in a formal sense—and that they might put to use in a variety of workplace settings. And most faced the problems of seasonality: stretches of un- or underemployment owing to the cycles of weather and trade. Scraping by—for that was what it was—thus required strategies to navigate the slack times by cobbling together a series of work stints and mobilizing the labor of all family members. Poor households that lacked either a male or a female working adult, due to illness, death, or desertion, courted disaster or, at minimum, an extended stay at almshouses that were proliferating in number and size.

But in an important sense, casual labor proved to be the physical engine for the infrastructure that made market intensification possible and wide-ranging in its effect: for the developing transportation networks that extended into the interior, linked rivers and lakes with the coasts, and facilitated the flow of people and goods across distances that had previously been difficult or impossible to traverse. The challenges of transport and communication were widely recognized, including by the federal government, which feared the country's vulnerabilities to foreign invasion. President Thomas Jefferson's visionary Treasury secretary, Albert Gallatin, warning that only "by opening speedy and easy communication through all its parts" could "the inconveniences, complaints, and perhaps dangers" of so "vast [an] extent of territory be radically removed or prevented," thus presented Congress with a remarkable plan in 1808 for building "good roads and canals" into "the most remote quarters of the United States."

Gallatin was well aware of the initiatives that had been undertaken on the local and state levels, most notably the Lancaster Turnpike, completed in 1794, which linked Philadelphia and Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and proved to be a great success. But he was similarly aware of the enormous costs of constructing roads and canals on a large scale and saw federal resources as essential to the task. It was a tough sell. Although the War of 1812 dramatized the need for more and better routes to move troops, if for nothing else, and although some version of Gallatin's plan came before Congress at various times over the following decade, most initiatives were defeated by a combination of regional self-interests and constitutional objections (did the federal government have the authority to carry out such projects?). Only the National Road, connecting Cumberland,

Maryland, and Wheeling, Virginia (and eventually continuing out into Ohio and Indiana), would be built.

The energy and achievements came rather from partnerships of varying types between local (mostly merchant) capital, state and municipal governments, and foreign investors. To advance early road and turnpike development, state legislatures normally chartered private corporations, which in turn financed and organized construction. But when it came to canals, which were far costlier and demanding to build, state and local governments took the lead, raising money by marketing securities in the United States and abroad (especially in Britain). The Erie Canal, an immensely ambitious project that effectively kicked off a three-decade canal boom, won the support of the New York state legislature in 1817. Under the aegis of a state commission, bonds were then sold to cover the multimillion-dollar construction outlays, and subcontractors were hired to carry out the work. By 1825, more than 360 miles had been completed and revenue from canal tolls quickly began to pour into state coffers, enabling the repayment of investors. Other large projects—in New England, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Ohio—were soon under way, so that by 1840, when railroads increasingly overshadowed them, canals cut through nearly 3,500 miles of the American interior.

Together with proliferating roads and turnpikes, the canals helped to bring the market intensification of the early nineteenth century to its fevered pitch. Tapping deep into the North American hinterlands, these transport networks not only gave farms and mines (especially coal mines) more and easier access to distant markets but also drew metropolitan centers into bitter competition for control of the greatly expanded trade: Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and New York to the east; Rochester, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Louisville, St. Louis, and New Orleans to the west and south. All battled for the interior and came to feel the commercial jolts given off by multiplying market exchanges.

The competition for labor to do the building was just as fierce. The transport projects, especially the canals, mobilized workers on a scale unprecedented outside the plantation districts. Builders and contractors seemed ever in search of labor: scouring the countryside, putting advertisements in urban newspapers, offering various inducements. Backbreaking as it was, the work brought decent wages and, above all, steadier employment than was available almost anywhere else for those without trades or special skills. Early on, most of the canal workers were native-born and usually from the surrounding countryside, farm laborers looking for better pay or supplements to what they might make in the fields. But by the 1820s, more and more were recent immigrants from Europe, and particularly from Ireland, who themselves had been pried from the land and cast into a world that new markets were making.

Labor's Coercions

By the mid-1830s, it might have appeared that the political economy of the United States was marked by a fundamental geographical divide. The divide could be traced from the border between Pennsylvania and Maryland (known as the Mason-Dixon Line) in the east, westward along the Ohio River to the Mississippi, then northward to the northern and western borders of Missouri, and then farther westward along the coordinates of 36°30′ to where the Louisiana Territory abutted lands claimed by Mexico and the Texas Republic. South of this line, slavery was supported by the states and secured by the federal government, it organized the production of marketable surpluses for export, and it shaped the social and political power deployed in the free population. North of the line, slavery had been abolished in gradual fashion, and although some African Americans were still officially enslaved, they were rapidly declining in number and, at all events, had never figured very centrally in the production and distribution of either subsistence goods or market commodities. By many measures, "North" and "South" embodied very distinctive labor regimes and therefore seemed to constitute the principal axis of American society and politics.

Yet for those slaves who attempted to escape their captivity by crossing the line between "South" and "North," the reality was far murkier and more unnerving. They discovered in searing ways that the status of slavery attached to their persons wherever they went and that the freedom they sought to grasp could easily slip through their fingers or be violently taken from them. They discovered that they could be pursued, sometimes with great determination, captured or kidnapped, and returned to their owners; that the only safe havens were provided by other fugitives or abolitionist friends, and even these were subject to the invasions of slave catchers and police authorities. They discovered, in short, that slavery remained an American rather than a regional or local institution and that the power of the state—at all levels, almost everywhere—was committed to slavery's preservation.

Slavery's net was cast from the top, and it reinforced or complicated arrangements closer to the ground. The Constitution's fugitive slave clause and, subsequently, the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793, which required that runaways be returned to their rightful owners, put the federal government squarely on the side of sustaining slave ownership and gave slavery a legal basis in all of the American states and territories regardless of what they did about slavery within their particular boundaries. While "northern" states had moved down the path of emancipation, it was not until the 1840s and 1850s that many of them—New Jersey (1846), Pennsylvania (1847), Connecticut (1848), Illinois (1848), and New

Hampshire (1857)—amid judicial confusions and individual exceptions, finally got around to pronouncing slavery dead. Even then, a handful of slaves could be identified in New Jersey as late as 1860. Slaveholders, moreover, expected to take their slaves with them if they needed to travel through states in which slavery had been abolished (say, to New York or Philadelphia to catch a packet ship), and officials in these states generally accommodated their interests—offered "hospitality," in the words of one judge—so long as the slaveholders did not seek to establish residency.

Few succeeded in defying slavery's true geography, though William Parker, who fled enslavement in Maryland, made an impressive and extended effort. He crossed the Pennsylvania line, went into the hinterlands of southeastern Pennsylvania, and settled in Lancaster County, where he headed up a small community of fugitives and other African Americans. Mindful of their vulnerabilities, Parker and his neighbors quickly formed an "organization for mutual protection against slaveholders and kidnappers" and had success in fending off the terrorist raids of local white toughs known as the Gap Gang as well as the incursions of occasional slave catchers. They armed themselves with pistols, rifles, scythes, corn cutters, and other farm tools and learned to summon each other with the sound of a horn. But after one especially fierce fight with a federalized posse looking to take several of them into custody, Parker decided to leave slavery behind in the best way he knew how: he fled to Toronto, Canada.

What made the worlds of slavery and freedom so difficult to distinguish was not only the wide basis that federal authority lent to slavery but also the broad spectrum of coercions that marked labor relations in all corners of the United States. Wherever one looked—at plantations and farms, docks and wharves, shops and garrets, mines and mills, or at farm laborers and tenants, journeymen and apprentices, domestics and outworkers, operatives and common laborers—various forms of legal and customary subordination and dependency prevailed and burdened working people with the direct and coercive power of their employers and with an assortment of vulnerabilities that threw their very survival into question. To be sure, the most burdensome of these relations were to be found in the southern and western parts of the country, and they shaped society and politics there in distinctive ways. But in other regards, the terrain of servitude, compulsion, and dependence was geographically boundless.

Consider how the emancipation process unfolded in the Northeast and the Middle Atlantic. The laws enacted by state legislatures, reflecting fears of instability and threats to property, ignored African Americans who were already enslaved and instead "freed" children born after a certain date and only then when they reached a certain age in adulthood. Masters and slaves could, of course, make their own arrangements for early emancipation, and some of them

clearly did. But either way, "freedom" was commonly encumbered with the residues of slavery and servitude. In some cases, emancipated blacks remained within white households as servants; in other cases, they shouldered continuing obligations in return for material or educational support; in still others, they entered indentures, which had passed emancipationist scrutiny owing to the appearance of voluntarism and bound them to labor, sometimes for many years on end. Children, especially poorer ones, were often "bound out" as apprentices or indentured servants, not infrequently for terms extending well into their majority. And in all instances, the indentures were subject to sale. Between 1780, when the Pennsylvania abolition law was passed, and 1820, nearly three thousand people of African descent were indentured in the city of Philadelphia, and in rural Delaware and Chester counties, on the city's outskirts, farm owners widely seized on indentures to increase the supply of cheap and exploitable labor, occasionally purchasing the indentures of slaves emancipated inside or outside the state.

The boundaries between slavery and freedom proved murky and porous in other ways. Rather than revealing a clear line of demarcation, the border areas of the "upper South" and "lower North" were overlaid with ambiguities. Western Pennsylvanians crossed over into neighboring Virginia, purchased slaves at low prices there, brought the slaves back into Pennsylvania, and then emancipated them on condition that they remain in service and, effectively, in conditions scarcely removed from enslavement. There, and elsewhere farther to the west—Ohio, Indiana, Illinois—employers hired slaves from owners in Virginia and Kentucky and worked them for up to a year before sending them back to their masters on the other side of the Ohio River. In Indiana, slaveholders could come with their slaves for up to sixty days and, within the first thirty, arrange for indentures, sometimes lasting for many decades. In the United States of the 1830s, the notion that "free soil" dissolved the chains of slavery—suggested by the famed *Somerset* decision in England in 1772—while making some progress in the lower courts (such as in St. Louis), was generally greeted with skepticism and hostility. It offered little solace or protection to slaves in search of escape.

Gradualism, ambiguity, and halfway houses out of slavery were even more common in states where slave ownership remained very much sanctioned by law. Although the two decades following the American Revolution saw private manumissions on a considerable scale in the states of the Chesapeake, the transition out of slavery there and farther to the south, when it occurred, was much more extended and hedged in by persisting ties and dependencies. In Baltimore, and perhaps in other localities, some slaveholders, hoping to secure labor and discourage flight, postdated deeds of manumission, often years in the future, in return for "faithful" service beforehand. Slaves in perpetuity thereby became

"term slaves," such as "a strong healthy mulatto Girl, about sixteen years of age" sold with the proviso that "she has 13 years to serve." Other slaveholders embraced a different but similarly drawn-out strategy: permitting ambitious slaves, willing to follow a long and winding road of self-exploitation and petty accumulations, to purchase themselves (and maybe other family members). Even when slaves were manumitted without explicit encumbrances, they often entered a netherworld of dependency and clientage, looking to their former masters for support and protection in a world in which black people were assumed to be slaves. Those who lacked or rejected such patronage, if they did not leave the state, for all intents and purposes became "slaves of the community" or "slaves without masters."

"Free labor" that would be recognizable to contemporary eyes—and not simply a rhetorical rubric meant to encompass those, like small farmers, who might have worked with their hands and tools but were property owners and employers in their own right—could be found in some significant measure, chiefly in urban areas. It was, above all, a relation characterized by an exchange in which the employee would agree to work for a specified numbers of hours and days in return for a wage, in which the employee could choose to quit without serious penalty, and in which the employer would not deploy physical coercion for purposes of either discipline or labor control. In this sense, free labor was both a political and a social relation, because workers had to be personally unencumbered to enter the exchange of their own volition and employers had to be held accountable for the order they imposed at the workplace.

The relation, therefore, was most likely in evidence among adult males of European descent who could claim ownership of their persons and, perhaps, of some productive property, who had some skills, who had established local residency of some duration, who had achieved civil and political standing, and who, consequently, could appeal to community standards for justice, bring grievances to court, and register their sentiments at the ballot box. Their prospects were most limited in places like Richmond, Charleston, and Savannah, where they competed with slave labor and could be seen as threatening the system of slavery. A strike of puddlers at the Tredegar Iron Works in Richmond over wages and the employment of slaves thus provoked the press to thunder that such demands attacked "the roots of all rights and privileges of the masters and, if acknowledged, or permitted to gain a foothold, will soon wholly destroy the value of slave property." Elsewhere, free laborers were more securely situated, might identify with a transatlantic political culture of working people, and could invoke the language of republicanism ("virtue," "independence," "tyranny," "wage slavery") to express their aspirations and discontents.

Like all categories and ideal types, "free labor" embodied many complexities

and contradictions. Its focus on voluntary exchange in the marketplace obscured the historical process that required people to seek work from someone else rather than to work for themselves: a process that might have driven them off the land, reduced their prospects in the shop, rendered their skills less valuable or redundant, limited their inheritances, and in all cases either denied or substantially postponed their access to productive resources that would enable them to labor independently. It also obscured the legal and political advantages that most employers retained and the power they could wield at the workplace once the marketplace exchange was completed. But during the early decades of the nineteenth century, and for a long time thereafter, large numbers of men, women, and children who were putatively "free" were nonetheless also subject to a raft of coercions, to circumstances of servitude, and to the penal reach of the state for contract violations.

At many work sites, apprentices, maritime laborers, sailors, servants, and miners faced physical coercion if they failed to keep up the pace, punishment if they broke equipment, and even imprisonment if they left before the contract expired. Especially in the port cities of Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Charleston, the jails were loaded with "runaways" of various sorts and ethnicities, none in greater numbers than seamen who would either be forced to complete their terms or remain incarcerated. At other sites, canal diggers, harbor dredgers, workers in the building trades, farm laborers, and domestics could be subject to corporal abuse, coaxed into debt, and fired without pay. Across the country, stints in the workhouse or harsh forms of compulsory labor were regularly meted out to vagrants, paupers, and the unemployed, effectively pressing many working people into the marketplace and anticipating the infamous Black Codes of the post–Civil War era. In some cases, convicts were leased out to transportation projects, undercutting the prospects of those in search of work and strengthening the hands of employers, yet another harbinger of the future.

The vulnerabilities of workers such as these to the compulsions and exploitation that had long been part of the laboring life—and gave the lie to the reach of free labor—reflected their limited civil and political status in the United States of the 1830s. Many were women, children, recent immigrants, and people of African descent who were legally dependent, owned little or no property, had few skills, were subject to the coercive authority of husbands, parents, and masters, were often on the move, had limited access to the courts, and had few, if any, political patrons seeking their support. Their efforts to resist and protect themselves depended on hastily formed alliances and cooperation but more likely on individualized attempts to escape conditions that seemed intolerable and to find better and steadier ones.

Yet during the first half of the nineteenth century—and well beyond it—the entire world of labor was encased by the presumptive power of masters and employers and the presumptive subordination of workers, whether or not they were formally free. Enslavement, which lent masters nearly absolute power, defined the experience of more than three million black workers who grew the crops (tobacco, rice, sugar, and, more than anything else, cotton) that propelled the economic growth of the country. Dependencies owing to gender, which depressed their wages and jeopardized their ability to keep them, left them disfranchised and legally incapacitated, bedeviled many thousands of women (black and white, native-born and immigrant) who tended textile machines, did outwork, sewed ready-made clothing, and served in the households of middle- and upper-class families. Foreign birth or African descent kept a growing proportion of semi- and unskilled workers in liminal civic standing, on the margins of civil and political life, and subject to the whims of employers whose authority dominated the workplace.

But even those whose working lives came closest to the ideal of free labor encountered a structure of power that proved very unfavorable and equally difficult to unsettle. For American labor relations inherited the tradition of the British common law and especially the law of master and servant, which required loyalty and obedience on the part of the worker during the term of a contract and provided for serious legal action in the event of violation. Adjudication of disputes resided wholly with the courts, which, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, were increasingly oriented to commercial growth, influenced by the perspectives of employers, and instrumental in their approach to economic development. When legislatures or municipalities moved in directions more advantageous to workers, and thus showed the political potential of labor, the courts simply chose to ignore them. Equally problematic, the courts embraced the legal doctrine of "entirety," upholding the employer's right to deny any wages if the contract was not entirely fulfilled or if the worker quit early. It made no difference, in the eyes of the court, "whether wages are estimated at a gross sum, or are to be calculated according to a certain rate per week or month, or are payable at stipulated times, provided a servant agree for a definite and whole term."

Still, change was in the air. By the 1820s, some courts were beginning to raise doubts about cases in which workers were effectively compelled to stay on the job in order to retrieve any of the wages due them, and in the process they threw into question the long-standing common-law distinction between voluntary and involuntary servitude—a distinction that had turned voluntary (or contractual) servitude into a species of free labor and only involuntary servitude into a species of slavery. Thereafter, the courts recognized the employer's

authority in the workplace so long as it did not involve corporal punishment and so long as employees were allowed to refuse it. The pressure for change had come from workers themselves who brought suit or protested on the job. In so doing, they contributed to a new understanding of the labor relation and eventually to the emergence of new forms of bargaining and adjudication. But that was still a long way off, and despite the rulings as to coercion it would be years before laborers could expect to recover the wages they had earned before they exercised their freedom to quit.

Mediums of Exchange

In December 1790, Alexander Hamilton, secretary of the Treasury in the cabinet of President George Washington, presented a report to Congress that called for the creation of a national bank. Hamilton believed such a bank of "primary importance" to the United States for the administration of finances, the raising of capital, the securing of emergency aid, the support of public credit, and the development of industry. But he was especially interested in the role a national bank could play in establishing the "basis of a paper circulation."

The problem, according to Hamilton, was "that there has been for some time a deficiency of circulating medium," and as a consequence large numbers of producers could do little but engage in barter on the fringes of the market economy. Gold and silver coins (specie) did, of course, change hands, particularly for official purposes. Yet, in Hamilton's view, specie was, in and of itself, "dead stock." Only when deposited in banks could it "acquire an active and productive quality" by enabling investment and the printing of paper money. The "vast tracts of waste land" and the disappointing "state of manufactures" to be seen in various parts of the country seemed to Hamilton evidence of money's limited supply. Expanding mediums of exchange would, that is, advance the march of regional and national markets and draw more and more producers into their wake.

By the 1830s, paper currency was in abundance, though it did not circulate in the manner that Hamilton had envisioned. Rather than being produced and managed by a central, or national, bank, most of the circulating paper was printed and distributed by privately owned banks chartered by individual state legislatures. With differing requirements as to the specie that had to be kept in their vaults and the ratio of specie to the paper issued, the state notes simultaneously permitted an acceleration of market exchanges and created a sea of monetary chaos. Notes printed in one state usually traded at a discount in the others (although the discounts varied from state to state), and their value ultimately depended on the banks' ability to redeem the notes in specie if the note holders

presented them. In the early 1830s, well over three hundred state-chartered banks, circulating more than $60 million in notes, operated in the United States, and the federal government provided no oversight of their activities. At best, the Bank of the United States (a partial manifestation of Hamilton's designs) could collect state banks' notes and present them for specie redemption as a way of holding the state banks accountable.

Yet Hamilton's concerns in the 1790s reflected more than limits of supply; they grew out of the circumstances and dynamics of local economies that remained very much in place in the American hinterlands four decades later and suggested that market intensification proceeded fitfully and could meet resistance. Specie and banknotes, together with other paper instruments, were most likely in evidence when trade and other exchange relations transcended localities or occurred in large urban centers. Merchants relied on them in transactions with distant suppliers, master craftsmen and small manufacturers in dealings for raw materials or with distributors of their products, artisans and farmers in selling to strangers. In most cases, some form of credit was involved, and the interest charged would depend on when the notes came due. Without question, these exchanges were becoming more common and encompassed a growing share of the marketplace.

But in smaller towns and villages across the United States, the very types of barter that Hamilton found worrisome—and that he wished to see eliminated—often remained robust. Farmers, craftsmen, shopkeepers, blacksmiths, and tenants, short on cash because there was little of it and they had scant need for it, traded crops for store goods, labor for tools and seed, skilled services for foodstuffs, livestock for shoes, and "swapped work" when the demands of harvesting, building, or fencing were particularly pressing. Although they were increasingly aware of the "prices" being asked and paid for various commodities and frequently kept track of their economic activities in account books (usually with cash equivalents recorded, and sometimes with notes exchanged), they nonetheless were flexible and informal as to the settlement of debts.

Local artisans might accept wheat, fruits, distilled spirits, and raw materials as forms of payment; farmers might take barrels, harvest labor, firewood, and fence rails. In Sugar Creek, Illinois, during the late 1830s, a blacksmith shod horses, sharpened tools, and made nails for a neighboring farmer. In return, he received 15 pounds of veal, 110 pounds of beef, and over 250 pounds of flour. Debts such as these commonly ran for weeks and months—at times for years—on end (nine months in this case), generally with little if any interest charged, occasionally with no expectation that the debts would ever be fully repaid. Store owners, even those engaged with distant wholesalers and creditors, often advertised that they would accept "all kinds of country produce" in

exchange for their wares. "When the harvests are in," a Connecticut River valley merchant explained in 1837, "I will accept the tender of grain and goods as may be convenient."

This was plainly not a "subsistence" economy nor one wholly oriented to local communities. Merchandisers brought in supplies from the outside and accumulated debts in the process; tradesmen and farmers looked to send at least some of their products to larger markets and might welcome the arrival of a turnpike or a canal to better facilitate the undertaking. Unpaid debts could cause considerable strain, especially for merchants who, under pressure from their own creditors, were most likely to go to law to recover what was owed them. But it was also a world of face-to-face economic relations in which various producers and shopkeepers met one another in a marketplace governed by shared understandings of how goods were valued and transactions took place. For most of them, "money" was not a specific thing or a universal equivalent or an object of accumulation; it was one of several mediums of exchange and a means of defraying specific obligations (like state taxes), used chiefly to obtain items necessary for production, nourishment, and clothing. Thus, in Ulster County, New York, tradesmen accepted payment in "wheat, rye, Indian corn, as well as cash, or," as they put it, "anything that is good to eat."

Money, as most Americans of the early nineteenth century understood it, came in the form of gold and silver coins. Some of these, since the 1790s, had been imprinted in U.S. mints. Many others were of French, Portuguese, and especially Spanish derivation and still accepted as legal tender (and would be until the late 1850s). By the 1830s, silver and gold were coined or valued at a ratio of roughly sixteen to one and circulated most widely in port cities, where they were utilized in both small- and large-scale transactions. Paper currency was also well known. Since the colonial era, it was circulated, in limited quantities, either by British authorities or by private concerns and, more notoriously, was printed by the Continental Congress and then some of the states to finance the immense costs of the Revolutionary War. But so widespread was their provenance (soldiers were paid with them) and dramatic their depreciation that the "continentals" encouraged disgust with and suspicion of the paper medium more generally. Alexander Hamilton hoped that a national bank would allay those suspicions and lend paper currency a clear basis in specie, though the pushback—which trimmed the plan's sails and then briefly defeated its renewal twenty years later—evinced opposition to the project as well as concerns about its constitutionality.

Whereas specie and "all kinds of country produce" seemed to embody tangible value and conjure a marketplace in which relatively independent producers met to exchange the things they needed for sustenance and comfort, paper

currency appeared a creation of dubious value and the medium of a marketplace in which producers were vulnerable and "moneyed men" powerful. For many farmers, craftsmen, laborers, and shopkeepers, paper currency represented—as Hamilton intended—the vortex of a new type of market, one that engulfed territories well outside their own communities and swirled well beyond their control. Although the prospects of gain might be tantalizing—and the overall economic growth of the United States stimulated—the fears of failure and dependence were sobering. As institutions meant to advance this course, banks were thereby eyed, in many quarters, with deep concern, all the more so after a serious financial panic in 1819 was triggered, in part, by the contractionist policies of the Second Bank of the United States. If paper currency were to be regarded as "money," who should be entitled to print it and who to control its value and supply?

These questions and anxieties provided the context for Andrew Jackson's "war" on the Bank of the United States and for the panic of 1837 and its consequences. Jackson's hostility to the bank and its president, Nicholas Biddle, smacked of the personal rivalries and coalition building that routinely energize electoral politics, and its heated rhetoric—"The bank is trying to kill me, but I will kill it!" Jackson told his vice president, Martin Van Buren—could easily be dismissed as masculinist posturing by a wildly masculinist president intent on settling a score. But Jackson's opposition to the bank ran deeper. For a long time, he had looked warily at the operations of private state banks and the influence they could exert over the economy by expanding and contracting the currency, though his greatest animus was directed to the Bank of the United States. Despite the Supreme Court's decision in *McCulloch v. Maryland* (1819), which appeared to uphold its constitutionality, Jackson regarded the bank as an affront to the intentions of the framers and a massive concentration of power "in the hands of a few men . . . a few Monied Capitalists" who could "oppress" the people and "embarrass" the government. And Biddle, with his aristocratic lineage and contempt for public supervision, seemed to embody all that the bank threatened.

Yet Jackson also tapped into wells of popular anti-bank sentiment that had as much to do with social and economic as with political and constitutional issues. In many parts of the United States, paper money and private banking came to symbolize the market intensification that was speeding forward, disrupting customary practices of production and exchange, pressing artisans into circumstances of economic dependence, undercutting the wages of laboring people, and increasing the vulnerabilities of those struggling to maintain the familiar balances between subsistence and the marketplace. Workingmen's associations identified the cause of the banks with the "same men . . . who have

always been opposed to our interests," to our "rights of suffrage," and to "almost every other democratic measure that has ever been brought forward in our state or general government," with the "aristocratic and unjust." Yeoman farmers and even slaveholding planters worried about suspensions of specie payments, "the intolerable evils of a fluctuating and depreciated paper currency," and a "system so fraudulent, so anti-Republican," in the sense that banks threatened what they regarded as their independence. Together they began to form a "hard money" tendency in American politics, committed to specie as the basis of exchange and, by extension, to limits on the forces of the market.

As he had previously done in personal duels, Jackson did succeed in "killing" the Second Bank of the United States, not by persuading Congress to reject the bank's recharter but rather by vetoing the bill that provided for it in the summer of 1832. Yet it was in his accompanying veto message that Jackson, assisted by several of his hard-money advisers (including Attorney General Roger B. Taney), articulated the issues that made for such powerful feelings of social unease. He began by identifying the special privileges and "monopolies" that the bank had enjoyed and took care to note the influence that foreigners had obtained through the purchase of bank stock. He went on to raise doubts about the Supreme Court's judgment in *McCulloch v. Maryland* and insisted that "it is as much the duty of the House of Representatives, of the Senate, and of the President to decide upon the constitutionality of any bill or resolution which may be presented to them." But he saved his most stinging and trenchant arguments for last: "It is to be regretted that the rich and powerful too often bend the acts of government to their selfish purposes. Distinctions in society will always exist under every just government. Equality of talents, of education, or of wealth can not be produced by human institutions . . . but when the laws undertake to add to these natural and just advantages artificial distinctions, to grant titles, gratuities, and exclusive privileges, to make the rich richer and the potent more powerful, the humble members of society—the farmers, mechanics, and laborers—who have neither the time nor the means of securing like favors to themselves, have a right to complain of the injustice of their Government."

Jackson's "war" with the Second Bank of the United States, together with his veto of the Maysville Road bill and very tough stance against the nullification campaign in South Carolina, began to shape partisan alignments in the system of formal politics that the democratization of the franchise was producing. Those supportive of Jackson and his policies called themselves Democrats and commenced to organize not only at the upper levels of governance, as was true of the Democratic-Republicans and the Federalists in the early years of the Republic, but also at the grass roots. Those hostile to him and his policies,

conjuring the struggle of English parliamentarians of the seventeenth century against their tyrannical king, called themselves Whigs (in battle against "King" Andrew).

But it was less Andrew Jackson than the hardships and discontent caused by the panic of 1837 and its extended aftermath that turned political dispositions based heavily on personal identifications and loyalties into more stable and ideological constituencies. The Whig Party came to appeal to those who were benefiting from the market intensifications of the era; who welcomed the expanded market exchanges and the development of transportation and communication networks even if the government (at all levels) played an important hand in paying for them; who saw banks as promoting capital accumulation and paper money as expanding access to wealth; who looked chiefly to the domestic market as the engine of their advancement and favored protective tariffs to limit foreign competition; and who were drawn to evangelical Christianity and its social reformist impulses. Whigs were to be found in greatest numbers in states that had moved most fully against the institution of slavery, in cities and towns most deeply involved in regional markets, and in rural areas availing themselves of market opportunities as well as swept up in the fires of evangelism. Whig strongholds extended from Massachusetts across the "burned-over" districts of upstate New York, into the Western Reserve of Ohio, and through areas of the upper Midwest where New England migrants settled. They were also in the towns of the interior South and especially in lower Louisiana, where sugar planters sought protection from Caribbean cane growers.

For their part, Democrats appealed to constituencies either harmed or bypassed by market intensifications and left reeling by the effects of the panic. They were dubious about the benefits of expanded market exchanges and suspicious of government involvement in economic infrastructure projects. They regarded banks as privileged institutions that enriched themselves at popular expense and viewed paper money as the means by which banks drew hardworking producers into their grasp. They were oriented either to local or to international markets and opposed protectionism as a threat to their trading relations. And they were generally hostile to the culture of evangelical Protestantism and especially to its reformist initiatives. Democrats were most numerous in the states that supported slavery and/or felt the strong influence of slavery, in port cities that thrived on international trade and had large, multiethnic (and non-Protestant) working populations, and in rural districts either dominated by cotton plantations or on the edges of the market economy and less receptive to evangelical revivalism. Democratic strongholds extended across the countryside of the slave states, into areas of the lower Midwest settled

by migrants from the Chesapeake, Virginia, and Kentucky, into the poorer rural sections of New England and the Middle Atlantic, and particularly into the Atlantic cities of New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Charleston.

By the late 1830s and early 1840s, Democrats increasingly fell under the influence of their hard-money (sometimes called Locofoco) wing, setting their sights on the excesses of banking institutions and especially on what they considered the dangers of paper currency. In sections of the country where market economies had long been established (Northeast, Southeast, Middle Atlantic), they pushed to regulate—through the statutory mechanisms of state legislatures—the chartering and operations of banks. But where the boom of the 1830s first drove fledgling economies, only to see them collapse when the boom went bust—much of the cotton Southwest and, most notably, the Mississippi Valley corridor tied to New Orleans—the response was far fiercer and more sweeping: state regulation, the repudiation of debts, and, in some cases, the outright abolition of banks. These were moves that could bring small farmers wary of the marketplace, hard-pressed urban wage laborers, and debt-ridden cotton planters into a political embrace and mark the fissures of American politics along complex economic and cultural lines and the emerging political economy of capitalism.

Making and Remaking Classes

Perhaps the most consequential, though not yet obvious, accompaniment to the market intensification of the early decades of the nineteenth century was the rise and transformation of new social classes. As late as the 1840s, merchants (especially the old, coastal mercantile elite) and large landowners remained the wealthiest Americans and the major economic actors in the Republic, and they had fortified themselves by serving in political offices at all levels of government and constructing a variety of institutions and networks: chambers of commerce, social clubs, schools and colleges, and agricultural societies. But amid the booms and busts of the 1820s and 1830s, their grip loosened, and they began to be challenged from a number of directions. Over the next two decades, those challenges would help to create a massive political crisis.

Some of the challenges emanated from below. In many respects, the organization of labor in the 1830s showed the tenacity of long-established forms and practices. Handicrafts still predominated, machines were not widely in use, and most workplaces were small in scale. But as a measure of the great economic expansions of the period, there were new venues that brought workers together in numbers that had previously been reached only on slave plantations: on canal, turnpike, and railroad projects; in textile mills; at construction sites; on urban labor gangs. The workers did not generally bring special skills to the jobs—

other than brute strength—and overall they were polyglot in social composition. They were white and black, native-born and immigrant, male and female, from town and countryside. Their sense of solidarity was extremely limited; mostly, they lived and worked with those of similar ethnic and religious background and, at times, fought with rival groups of laborers for place, preferment, status, and whatever advantages the jobs might bring.

What they had in common was the experience of working for wages, of transiency and other forms of geographical mobility, of being subject to direct managerial authority (sometimes corporal), and, increasingly, of residing in distinctive settings as to density, gender balance, and cultural sensibility. Indeed, whether in labor camps, mill compounds, or urban enclaves, they seemed, to many observers, to stand apart, to be governed by indiscipline, to follow their own rules as to family responsibility and sexuality, to be alien in character and perhaps threatening in demeanor. A notion of class distinction thereby emerged, less in the self-consciousness of the laborers than in the perception and representations of surrounding communities and denizens. "I never saw anything approaching to the scene before us, in dirtiness and disorder," wrote one offended onlooker of a work encampment along the Illinois and Michigan Canal, "whisky and tobacco seemed the chief delights of the men; and of the women and children, no language could give an adequate idea of their filthy condition, in garments and persons." Herman Melville, too, captured the antinomies—resonant as they were with the images of Britain's "dark, satanic mills"—when writing of a New England paper manufactory: pressed into the "bleak hills . . . against the sullen background of mountain firs," filled with "blank-looking girls . . . blankly folding blank paper" and tending "iron animals . . . mutely and cringingly as the slave serves the Sultan."

Even so, social conflict erupted across these representational oppositions in the 1820s and especially 1830s, triggered by the entrepreneurial competition unleashed by market intensification. Wages—protests against cuts and nonpayment or demands for increases—most often provided the spark, leading to turnouts in textile mills, even among the female operatives in Lowell who would form the Factory Girls' Association, and strikes on canals, docks, railroads, and building sites. But workers also reeled at new circumstances of dependency, unsettling rhythms of labor, wearying hours on the job, and wrenching material vulnerabilities. "We are obliged by our employers to labor at this season of the year, from 5 o'clock in the morning until sunset, being fourteen hours and a half," the operatives in Manayunk, Pennsylvania, complained during the summer of 1833, "at an unhealthy employment where we never feel a refreshing breeze to cool us, overheated and suffocated as we are . . . [by] an atmosphere thick with the dust and particles of cotton. . . . Often

we feel ourselves so weak as to be able to scarcely perform our work, on account of the over-strained time we are obliged to labor . . . and the little rest we receive during the night. . . . [I]t requires the wages of all the family who are able to work . . . to furnish absolute wants."

The question of hours, specifically a ten-hour day, stirred labor unrest and more self-conscious forms of class making among workers in the trades, most notably hard-strapped artisans and journeymen, in cities of the coasts and the interior. The organizational impulse was first in evidence in Philadelphia, a birthplace of trade unionism and home to the radical William Heighton, when journeymen established the Mechanics' Union of Trade Associations in the fall of 1827. The ripple effects would be powerful and wide-ranging. By the mid-1830s, citywide trade unions and federations had been established in urban centers large and small, east and west—in St. Louis, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Louisville, and Cleveland; in Buffalo, Albany, Troy, Newark, and New Brunswick; as well as in New York, Boston, and Baltimore—and union membership spiked to near 300,000, composing somewhere between one-fifth and one-third of all urban journeymen. In the midst of this activity, the National Trades' Union, hoping to advance the prospects of a ten-hour day, was founded.

Equally important, in urban cauldrons of freethinkers, Owenites, and nascent socialists, labor agitation easily crossed into the electoral arenas of politics, and the period saw the proliferation of Workingmen's parties (some spilling into rural towns). Attracting cohorts of master craftsmen, small entrepreneurs, and professionals, though based chiefly on artisans and journeymen, the Workingmen fashioned a program that reflected the outlooks and aspirations of petty producers and skilled workers. They called for a variety of reforms: the abolition of imprisonment for debt and of prison labor; the repeal of mechanics' lien laws; and more equitable taxation. They evinced deep hostility to corporate charters for banks and manufacturing companies. They voiced strong support for land reform, principally the availability of cheap homesteads in the West to secure the futures of small producers and relieve the press for employment in the East. Some embraced the more radical agrarianism of Thomas Skidmore (himself a leader of the New York Workingmen). Theirs was an "antimonopoly" political dispensation that both drew upon and fed popular opposition to banks and other concentrations of wealth and power and that imagined more equitable alternatives to the developing market society of merchants and speculators.

More equitable, that is, for men of European descent who already had the materials of respectability, especially skills and tools of trade. The Workingmen's movement of the late 1820s and early 1830s had little interest in the men, most of them Irish and African American, who lacked trade skills and spent their energy digging, lifting, and hauling, and it showed relatively little concern for working women in textile mills and urban slop shops. Some in the movement translated their antimonopolism into antislavery, though primarily to safeguard the status and independence of white laboring men. "Wage slavery," not black slavery, was their cause and concern. In turn, they made a fair showing in local elections—gaining the balance of power in some circumstances—before factional disputes, inexperience, and the intervention of political opportunists doomed their efforts. For many labor activists of the time, the experience would sour them on partisan politics and persuade them to steer their trade unions away from the electoral arena; others gravitated to the Locofoco wing of the emerging Democratic Party.

But it would prove a complex fit. Already in the 1830s, the Democratic Party showed the strong, if not dominant, influence of slaveholders, who might have shared the hostility of free laboring folk to banks and corporations, and might have sympathized with their critique of "wage slavery" (this, too, was the slaveholders' view of the social system to their north), yet had a very different vision of the country's future. That vision assumed an increasingly aggressive and expansionist character as the center of gravity of the slaveholding class continued its shift from east to west: from the Tidewater and Low Country of Virginia and Carolina in the early to mid-eighteenth century, into the Piedmont of the Southeast in the late eighteenth and very early nineteenth centuries, and across the states of the Gulf Coast during the second and third decades of the nineteenth century. By the 1830s, the center, intellectually as well as economically, was to be found in the lower Mississippi Valley with the booming city of New Orleans as its crossroads, launching pad, and communications hub.

More than a shifting center of gravity reshaped the slaveholding class. There was an important transformation in social composition as well. To be sure, the slaveholders who directed the building of the Deep South and the Mississippi Valley were not new to the class; their lineages took them back to the Atlantic coast and interior, to the plantation world of the eighteenth century. For the most part, their experience of mastership had been transmitted to them generationally by slave-owning parents and grandparents. They acquired slaves the old-fashioned way: they inherited them or the resources to buy them. The judge and U.S. senator Charles Tait typified this process. Born in Hanover, Virginia, Tait moved with his slaveholding family to Georgia, where he was educated, read law, became active in politics, and presided over a plantation. He eventually sent his son James out to Alabama to purchase land distinguished, he hoped, for its "Fertility, Salubrity, & Navigation," interested as he was in "cotton and slaves." Soon the Tait clan moved to Wilcox County on the banks of the Alabama River. Charles would be appointed a federal judge there; his grandson would continue westward, heading out to Texas in the 1840s. Entry into the

slaveholding class, even in the boom times, was not easy for those born outside it. A well-placed marriage was a far better gateway than years of hard work and risk taking.

Still, the slaveholders of the Southwest and the Mississippi Valley infused the class with new and different blood. Most were born after the Revolution and grew to maturity as the battle over slavery began to unfold and as the march of territorial conquest was invigorated. They could thereby look out upon the continent and the hemisphere with a mix of relish and apprehension, cautious to protect their flanks yet eager to pursue a slaveholding empire. They had a roughness that came with getting in on the ground but also a sense of hierarchy and command informed by slaveholding forebears, mixing Faulkner's Thomas Sutpen with South Carolina's Wade Hampton. Theirs was a world constructed chiefly around cotton, rather than rice, tobacco, and sugar, and for all the ebbs and flows of prices they had a confidence derived from their position as the major suppliers on the world market at a time of seemingly endless demand. Few Americans, in fact, were more attentive to the fluctuations of the market, in slaves as well as in cotton. They were on the receiving end of the massive forced march of black men, women, and children—known as the interstate slave trade—and needed to break in thousands of enslaved laborers recently torn from a familiar, if oppressive, environment to the north and the east. In their midst, slavery was at its most grueling and dehumanizing, with back-breaking labor, wildly uneven gender ratios, searing separations, and brutal driving. Perhaps most important, their very ascent owed to policies that annexed lands previously claimed by rival powers and forcibly removed the Native populations who stood in their way. The speculator, labor lord, and conqueror together seemed integral to their makeup.

Indeed, however much they might wish to replicate the lifestyles and cultural attainments of the great planters of the Eastern Seaboard—a Natchez newspaper could complain that the big slaveholders of the district had little interest in the prosperity of the town but rather "sell their cotton in Liverpool; buy their wines in London or Le Havre; their negro clothing in Boston; their plantation implements and fancy clothing in New Orleans"—they would not organize themselves and their yeoman allies around an accommodation with the new realities of an emancipationist tide or around an effort to defend themselves from hostile attack. Rather, they would seek to reset the historical clock, avail themselves of whatever forms of political power might be available, and boldly strike out for control of the continent and the hemisphere.

It might in fact have appeared that the most threatening challenges to the slaveholders' designs had, by the mid-1830s, been defeated or averted. The brutal suppression of Nat Turner's rebellion in Southampton County, Virginia, brought some quiet after several decades of widespread slave unrest, and the abolition process that commenced in the 1780s in New England and the Middle Atlantic hit a wall in the legislatures of Virginia, Maryland, and Tennessee. These appearances would turn out to be deceiving; slave unrest and political mobilization would reassert themselves in new ways and the abolition process would find new avenues of development. But another challenge was already brewing, perhaps less noticeable yet in the end no less formidable: the emergence of a new class of manufacturers, shopkeepers, and commercial farmers with distinctive economic horizons, cultural practices, moral dispositions, and political agendas. They had been rearing their heads in port cities, inland towns, and stretches of the countryside—chiefly in the Northeast and the Midwest—for at least three decades. Now they were beginning to find one another.

Market intensification provided the necessary openings for the formation of this new class, and the ranks of the direct producers offered up the early personnel. In rising urban centers like Lynn, Rochester, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Cleveland, St. Louis, and Chicago, as well as in older cities like Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, expanding circuits of trade encouraged well-placed artisans and master craftsmen to move in several new directions. For one thing, they became less involved with the craft work of their shops and more involved in the purchasing of raw materials and in the selling of the finished products, taking on the tasks of suppliers and merchandisers. For another, they began to enlarge and reorganize the operations of their shops, multiplying the division of labor, hiring more journeymen and laborers, and assuming more supervisory responsibilities. Without question, they remained closely associated with their trades, closely connected to the artisans and journeymen in their midst, and closely involved in the productive process. They retained, that is, many of the specific skills, social orientations, and political sensibilities of tradesmen and craftsmen. They regarded themselves as "producers," as people who worked with their hands and their knowledge, who made useful things, who created tangible wealth. But the world of the artisan shop was also unraveling. Although they might still have worked side by side with some of their journeymen, they no longer lived under the same roof. Their residences and neighborhoods were increasingly elsewhere. And they were coming into their own, not as skilled workers, but as employers and manufacturers.

In rural districts along major waterways or newly constructed roads and canals—that is to say, with readier access to supra-local markets—something similar was under way. Many farm owners sought to avail themselves of these opportunities by devoting more of their land to crops they intended to market rather than consume (including newer cash crops like tobacco), by increasing the household manufacture of palm-leaf hats, brooms, or other articles they planned

to sell, and, perhaps, by taking in yarns to be woven or shoe leather to be sewn together by female dependents. Other farmers moved along a path of specialization, raising orchard and garden crops, converting improved acreage to pasture land, and focusing on livestock and dairy products. Still others (a very distinct minority), especially those in possession of larger and more fertile tracts, might look to increase their production and improve yields by utilizing better equipment (plows, mowers, seed drills, and reapers) and spreading manures more systematically. The larger landowners also began to hire farm laborers, not so much from the local population and for short stints as from among the landless in nearby market or manufacturing towns or from among tenant households, many of whom were Irish, English, French Canadian, German, or Scandinavian (depending on the location) and contracting for several months, if not an entire year (subject to stiff penalties for leaving before the contract expired).

Shopkeepers and other retailers who traded with these emergent manufacturers and commercial farmers were alike drawn into a new grid of economic activities and relations. Their horizons were regional rather than local, and their connections were with more substantial (and distant) wholesalers and financiers. Their interest in accommodating traditional practices of barter was fast diminishing, and they increasingly preferred (or needed) to operate on more of a strict cash and credit basis. They kept their books, assessed interest, expected to be repaid, and took recalcitrant debtors to court. Together with nascent manufacturers and commercial farmers, they shared a perspective on the American political economy. They welcomed internal improvements to facilitate speedier marketing and communication. They demanded tariff protection against the importation of foreign goods and raw materials that they hoped to supply. They supported public land policies that promoted settlement rather than speculation. And they wanted easier access to capital and other forms of credit. This is to say that they looked inward instead of outward, intent on developing the domestic, rather than the international, market and face of the economy.

Formal politics was therefore an arena in which the members of this new social class met one another and learned of their mutual concerns. Many of them would gravitate to the Whig Party, favorable as it was to an activist state, domestic economic development, tariffs, banks, and transportation projects. These were the elements of the "American System" that the party and its leader, Henry Clay of Kentucky, loudly touted. Yet their arenas of activity and discovery were far more numerous, and none were more important than those tied to evangelical religion. Protestant revivals began to sweep through much of America in the early years of the nineteenth century but reached their greatest pulse during the 1820s and 1830s, especially where the market intensifica-

tion of the era was being most powerfully felt. Although the reach of revivalism in this overwhelmingly Protestant republic knew no social or racial boundaries, the message of the revivalists seemed to have a special resonance for those women, men, and young people whose fortunes and futures were most clearly linked to the emerging economic order. Preachers such as Lyman Beecher, who moved through Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New York before heading out to Ohio, and Charles Grandison Finney, who set western New York ablaze but also traveled across the Northeast and the Midwest—not to mention across the Atlantic, to England and Wales—no longer spoke in the language of Calvinism, of predestination, of collective sin and helplessness, of the eternal damnation that awaited most human beings whether they chose it or not. They spoke instead in the language of Arminianism, of moral free agency, of rebirth, of personal responsibility for sinfulness, and of the possibility of establishing a direct relationship with God unmediated by ministers or any other members of established hierarchies.

To be sure, the revivalists warned of dangers always lurking, of temptations always presenting themselves, of corruption as the dogged counterpoint of perfection, of the devil as an active force in the world. But they also imagined an immense spiritual transformation that would precede and allow the coming of God's kingdom to earth. For this work, they hoped to recruit a massive army of disciples who would carry the message of Christ's love and convince the doubters that they could choose good over evil and hasten the millennium's arrival. The message, the setting, and the prospects seemed to appeal to a wide swath of American Protestants, especially the young and footloose who searched for new forms of community and those—younger and older—who bore witness to the dynamism and disruption of the market intensification. Yet the evangelical churches began to fill with disproportionate numbers of shopkeepers, small manufacturers, master craftsmen, and artisans, and everywhere they were led to conversion and membership by their wives and daughters. The cultural experience of class in the nineteenth century was, it turns out, deeply gendered.

The central role of women in the making of religious congregations and other venues of spirituality was not distinctive to Protestantism, revivalism, the United States, or the nineteenth century. It was to be found across the centuries, particularly among Judeo-Christian faiths on both sides of the Atlantic, and it reflected both the forms of moral authority that women seized and the means by which they could hold male power in some check. The enormous surge of popular religious enthusiasm in the early decades of the nineteenth century proved no different in these regards. What did prove different was the missionary project with which the faithful were charged and the new openings for public activism that were consequently made available. The associational

impulse that the French visitor Alexis de Tocqueville detected in the 1830s was not simply a manifestation of male fraternalism and political bonding; it also had a strong female component, often linked to church and related areas of social reform that brought women (mostly from middling families) by the many thousands into meetings, organizations, and eventually the streets. Some would find their way into abolitionism and ultimately into feminism. Many others would be drawn to missionary societies, Sunday school unions, Bible and tract societies, societies devoted to the fight against prostitution or the use of tobacco, rescue and rehabilitation societies for the poor, the orphaned, and the fallen, and societies aiming at prison and educational reform. But undoubtedly the greatest number rallied to the cause of temperance.

Perhaps more than any other issue of the time, temperance seemed to encapsulate both the threats to the vitals of a rapidly changing society and the character traits increasingly associated with notions of social respectability. Drinking to excess was, in the eyes of many evangelicals, a surrender to the baser passions, a manifestation of lack of self-control, and a cause of poverty, family dissolution, and vice. "What fills the almshouses and jails? What brings you trembling wretch upon the gallows? It is drink." So reflected the former drunkard John B. Gough. At a time when the consumption of alcoholic beverages—both distilled and fermented—reached unprecedented levels, it was regarded in some quarters as the devil incarnate, and critics worried about what they called popular "enslavement" to "demon rum." "Intemperance," the Reverend Lyman Beecher thundered, "is the sin of the land and is coming in upon us like a flood; and if anything shall defeat the hopes of the world it is that river of fire destroying the vital air and extending around an atmosphere of death." Others, deploying the metaphors of disease and contagion, likened it to a cancer "penetrat[ing] the body politic."

The temperance crusade—for a crusade it was and surely the largest social movement of the 1830s—not only promised to turn back the flood and bring peace and prosperity to families and communities or to remove the cancer and restore the health of the social body; it also defined new forms of personal behavior and social comportment organized around the embrace of sobriety: self-discipline, self-restraint, self-control, thrift, and industry—all in contradistinction to the character revealed by submission to alcohol. Some temperance advocates hoped for moderation. More and more pressed for abstinence. They began by reforming their homes and churches, dismissing congregants who drank excessively. They moved on to their places of work, ending traditions of St. Monday, treating at the grog shop, and breaking for a dram. They formed clubs, societies, prayer circles, and maternal associations. And with the help of grassroots politicking, petitioning, and intimidation—carried on by women as well as men—they succeeded in enacting local and state laws prohibiting the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages. By the mid-1850s, most of the Northeast and the Midwest were dry.

As the dynamics of the temperance movement suggested, it was in the encounter with the embodiments of social ill that reformers both developed their diagnoses and assessed what set people like themselves apart. Evangelical sensibilities no longer countenanced the notion that social differentiation was the product of either divine providence or ascriptive hierarchy. Rather, in their visits to the almshouses, tenements, brothels, jails, and orphanages, a raft of charitable, philanthropic, and reform societies focused their attention on what they considered individual and group "vices." Not low wages, poor prospects, racial and ethnic discrimination, or underemployment, but idleness, ignorance, drinking, gambling, promiscuous sex, thriftlessness, and family irresponsibility paved the path of criminality, pauperism, and dissipation.

Female reformers were especially concerned for the poor women they saw and met, but even their sympathies reinforced a deepening sense of what separated them. In part, it was their own resistance to the vices they described: their rejection of intemperance, casual sexuality, irreligion, and other profligate ways. Yet it was also their insistence on constructing marriages and family lives that served as counterpoints to the rough, competitive, and destabilizing dynamics of public spaces and marketplaces. It came to be called "domesticity," "separate spheres," and "Victorianism," sets of practices and aspirations that did not so much mark the confinement of women in the early to mid-nineteenth century as announce what distinguished an emerging social group from those below (the laboring classes and the poor) and above them (the upper class of wealthy merchants and estate owners). Thus, in their developing efforts to restrict the size of their families, to educate their children (particularly their sons), and to build social networks among people like themselves, these women simultaneously consecrated a new set of values and character traits and established a basis for the elaboration and reproduction of a new class experience.

New Directions

Their cultural and political associations of the 1830s and early 1840s might have enabled an emerging class of manufacturers, shopkeepers, and commercial farmers to avail themselves of the economic rejuvenation that came soon thereafter. Although there is much debate about when the United States reached its industrial "takeoff" point, there is little doubt that in the wake of the panics and recession of the late 1830s and the first years of the 1840s the economy of the Northeast and the Midwest moved more rapidly in the direction of

manufacturing and market agriculture. Between 1844 and 1854, the output of farms, mines, and manufactories grew at a rate that stands out for the entire nineteenth century and both deepened and transformed the linkages that market intensification had been promoting. Indeed, the economic downturn and dislocations might have encouraged a variety of trends—rural to urban migrations, transatlantic immigration, the weakening of fledgling trade unions and artisan producers, the rerouting of capital and credit—that strengthened the position of manufacturers and agriculturalists looking chiefly to the domestic market.

Perhaps the most visible indication of the new directions in which sections of the American economy appeared to be headed was the rapid growth of the railroad. It is true that the first railroads in the United States were built in the 1820s and 1830s, reflecting the efforts of port and interior cities to tap into the trade of their immediate hinterlands. But for the most part, the early roads covered short distances (less than fifty miles), connected existing centers, depended chiefly on locally raised capital, and supplemented existing water transportation. By 1840, about thirty-three hundred miles of track had been laid, almost all of it east of the Appalachians.

The railroad-building boom that commenced in the mid-1840s was of a different character. It established a basic transportation network east of the Mississippi River, increasingly challenging rivers, lakes, and canals as the principal means of transportation, especially in the Northeast and the Midwest. Owing to the immense costs of construction, it also reconfigured an assortment of basic business and financial practices. Capital requirements were generally well beyond the means of individual entrepreneurs, families, or small collections of associates (the bases of most economic enterprises of the time), and so railroad companies developed new and larger organizational structures, began to work with full-time contractors, and needed to seek funding well outside their own regions of operation. Simultaneously, the roads began to recruit a workforce with an enormous range of skills and experiences, and one that grew more than tenfold in the two decades after the panics of 1837 and 1839.

By the 1850s, the new railroad industry played a key role in centralizing the American capital market in New York City, where railroad securities could be bought and sold and a vibrant stock exchange would be established to facilitate the transactions. Ownership and management of the companies would thereby be separated, and forms of accounting and business administration—all of which anticipated the modern corporation—came into use. A variety of technological improvements brought uniformity to the tasks of construction, grading, tunneling, and bridging. Locomotives as well as cars and coaches assumed the designs and functions that would be in place for decades. And although the rails were iron and the track gauges not yet standardized, the railroads turned the dynamics of market intensification into those of industrial transformation.

The new economic features and directions that the railroads encompassed had important resonances in the world of formal politics. Already, the mass political parties that democratization and Jacksonianism helped to construct showed the marks of serious divisions over the future of the American political economy as Whigs and Democrats came to battle about banks, tariffs, governmental activism, and the money supply. But in the aftermath of the panics and recession, more of a coherence in discourse and policy began to emerge. The Whigs, whose strongest bases were to be found in the Northeast, the Midwest, and the urban South, hoped to use the levers of the state and the energies of evangelicalism to advance the march of market relations, intensify the development of the domestic economy, and reconfigure the American character through a mix of moral injunctions, educational initiatives, and political reforms. The Democrats, most formidable in the rural South and the urban North, wished to put the breaks on commercial expansion, limit the powers of the state, curb the cultural projects of evangelicalism, and instead promote the territorial extension of the United States across the continent and, perhaps, throughout the hemisphere. The cultural ambitions of the one and the geographical ambitions of the other would prove to be a very toxic combination.